# Mother challenges Gateacre School’s hand-raising rule amid claims of undue pressure on pupils



Rachel Hughes, a mother from Liverpool, has found herself at the centre of a heated disagreement with Gateacre School regarding the headteacher's controversial policy requiring students to raise their hands in a manner some parents interpret as a daily 'salute.' This practice, instituted by headteacher Nabil Jamil, has sparked concern not only from Ms Hughes but from a number of other parents who feel that such demands may impose undue pressure on young students.

At the heart of the issue is a rule that instructs pupils, including Hughes' 12-year-old son Ayden, to keep their hands raised during the morning routine. Ms Hughes claims that when Ayden initially reported the practice to her, she dismissed it as typical childhood exaggeration. However, upon confronting Mr Jamil directly, she alleges he suggested that if Ayden refused to comply with this rule, she should consider transferring him to another school. In contrast, the headteacher argues that the hand-raising is not intended as a salute but as a method for gaining students' attention and fostering a calm start to the day.

In response to concerns raised about this approach, Gateacre School has defended its decision, asserting that the practice of raising hands is a commonplace technique used in many high-achieving institutions to maintain order and focus. A spokesperson for the school remarked on the importance of maintaining a supportive environment, emphasising that the complaints represent merely a small fraction of the overall parent community. They noted, “Our unwavering priority is to cultivate a caring and supportive environment where high standards are expected.”

The situation at Gateacre School is exacerbated by ongoing reports of dissatisfaction among both parents and staff. Recently, an overwhelming majority of teachers voted in support of strike action due to what they describe as a "culture of bullying and fear" within the school. The National Education Union indicated that 80 per cent of staff backed this decision, citing heavy workloads and poor management practices. This unrest may amplify the concerns surrounding the headteacher's initiatives, placing added pressure on the institution to balance the expectations of parents, students, and teachers alike.

Further complicating matters, Gateacre School has faced scrutiny from the Department for Education in the past. A warning notice was issued in 2016 regarding significantly low standards in pupil performance. The persistent educational challenges may have cut into the trust parents have in the school's management, prompting reactions from concerned families like those of Ms Hughes.

Interestingly, the controversy does not exist in isolation. Other educational institutions have faced similar dilemmas. For instance, Nathan Bulley, headteacher at Heckmondwike Grammar School, resigned recently amid allegations of staffing troubles and declining student behaviour. This broader trend of leadership instability in schools highlights the delicate balance that must be maintained in efforts to enhance educational environments.

In Ms Hughes' view, the current measures at Gateacre have deviated from what she perceives as positive behaviour support, leading her to question her decision to send her son to the school. Her struggles echo the sentiments of other parents who have taken to social media to voice their frustrations. One parent recounted seeing students standing in lines with their hands raised, describing the scene as "bizarre." Another reported that her child experienced discomfort from repeatedly complying with the hand-raising rule, further illustrating the potential negative impact of such expectations on student well-being.

The ongoing disagreement illustrates the complex challenges faced by modern schools as they attempt to implement strict discipline policies while also nurturing an inclusive and supportive environment. As Gateacre navigates these choppy waters, it remains to be seen whether the headteacher's vision for discipline aligns with the expectations of the community he serves.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864), [[2]](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864), [[2]](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/teachers-vote-strike-city-school-30808378), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/warning-notice-to-gateacre-school)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/head-top-grammar-school-quits-15645715), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2022-12-09/best-headteacher-in-britain-suspended-over-investigation)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864), [[1]](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/mum-son-row-school-over-31684864> - A mother and her son are in conflict with Gateacre School in Liverpool over the headteacher's request for students to 'salute' each day. The headteacher, Nabil Jamil, defends the practice as a strategy to ensure a peaceful start to the day, while some parents, including Rachel Hughes, express concerns about the approach and its impact on students.
3. <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/teachers-vote-strike-city-school-30808378> - Staff at Gateacre School in Liverpool have voted overwhelmingly in favor of strike action amid claims of a culture of 'bullying and fear.' The National Education Union reported that 80% of staff voted for industrial action, citing issues such as excessive workloads and adverse management practices. The first strike day is planned for February 5, with further action dates throughout the month unless meaningful negotiations occur.
4. <https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/head-top-grammar-school-quits-15645715> - Nathan Bulley, headteacher at Heckmondwike Grammar School, has resigned following allegations of a 'mass exodus of staff' and deteriorating student behavior. Bulley, who had been on paid leave for the last two weeks of December, stepped down after a brief tenure. The school's chair of governors dismissed the claims, emphasizing the school's strong reputation and high standards.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/warning-notice-to-gateacre-school> - The Department for Education issued a warning notice to Gateacre School regarding unacceptably low standards of pupil performance. The letter, dated May 12, 2016, addressed concerns about the school's performance and outlined the need for improvement to meet educational standards.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2022-12-09/best-headteacher-in-britain-suspended-over-investigation> - Karen Hutchings, headteacher of New Park Primary School in Liverpool and Chief Executive of the Sail Academy Trust, has been suspended pending an ongoing investigation. Hutchings, previously named 'Headteacher of the Year' in 2016, is known for turning around failing schools. The academy trust confirmed the suspension but provided no further details at this stage.
7. <https://edexec.co.uk/gateacre-school-axes-almost-30-jobs-and-cuts-lessons-to-save-cash/> - Gateacre School in Liverpool plans to cut nearly 30 teaching and support staff positions as part of a cost-saving initiative. The school also intends to reduce lesson times in various subjects due to a significant budget deficit, partly caused by declining student numbers. The consultation process with affected staff is underway, with final decisions expected in March.