# Newark Academy criticised for isolating pupils who shaved heads to support cancer-stricken friend



A secondary school in Nottinghamshire, Newark Academy, faces considerable backlash after the reported isolation of students who shaved their heads to support a classmate battling cancer. This act of solidarity was sparked by a group of boys who aimed to show their support for a friend diagnosed with testicular cancer and undergoing chemotherapy. While their gesture was heartfelt, school authorities deemed the head shavings a violation of the school's uniform policy.

Parents have strongly criticised the school’s response, describing it as dismissive of the compassion exemplified by their children. One parent expressed outrage on social media, emphasising the importance of solidarity, empathy, and support during difficult times: “These things can only be learned in life, not in school. Shame on those punishing these young men for being decent human beings!”

The situation has drawn significant attention, not only from the local community but also from politicians. Johno Lee, an Independent Councillor, articulated his dismay upon confirming the reports, insisting that such stringent enforcement of rules is unjust when confronted with acts of genuine kindness. He stated, “These boys should not be punished for showing solidarity with a friend,” highlighting the potential damage to the school’s reputation.

In stark contrast, there have been several instances across the UK where schools have embraced similar gestures of support. For example, at Outwood Academy Hasland Hall in Chesterfield, a group of Year 9 boys shaved their heads for their classmate Liam, who is battling Non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Their actions not only raised nearly £2,000 for the Teenage Cancer Trust, but were also celebrated by staff and the school community for their empathy and solidarity.

Similarly, at a school in Doncaster, a boy faced criticism after he shaved his head in support of his friend battling cancer; however, the school later reinforced its commitment to supporting students who engage in charitable acts. This highlights a varied approach among different institutions regarding the balance between adhering to policies and recognising meaningful gestures.

Newark Academy, which serves over 1,100 pupils aged 11 to 18 and received a “Good” rating from Ofsted in its last inspection, defended its actions despite the backlash. A spokesperson acknowledged the students' compassion, asserting their commitment to maintaining the agreed standards and rules that are clearly communicated to all. They are currently reviewing how to reconcile these policies with exceptional circumstances, indicating an awareness of the complexities involved.

The teenager’s family has also set up a fundraising page to assist with hospital-related costs and to support his family during this challenging time. They praised the boys for their solidarity, stating, “The support from them has been absolutely amazing.”

Such incidents reflect a broader societal conversation on how educational institutions should respond to acts of kindness among students. As schools navigate this complex terrain, the challenge remains to uphold established policies while fostering an environment in which empathy and support for those in need can thrive.

Ultimately, actions like those taken by the students at Newark Academy and their peers across the UK underline the profound impact of solidarity in times of hardship, reinforcing the need for schools to consider the deeper lessons of compassion over rigid adherence to rules.

**Reference Map**Paragraph 1:
[[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14735651/School-banning-pupils-prom-shaved-heads-cancer.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)Paragraph 2:
[[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14735651/School-banning-pupils-prom-shaved-heads-cancer.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)Paragraph 3:
[[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14735651/School-banning-pupils-prom-shaved-heads-cancer.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)Paragraph 4: [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-derbyshire-59605939),
[[3]](https://www.doncasterfreepress.co.uk/education/doncaster-school-slammed-by-parents-after-boy-shaves-his-head-in-support-of-friend-12-who-has-relapsed-with-cancer-4201137)Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14735651/School-banning-pupils-prom-shaved-heads-cancer.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490),
[[3]](https://www.doncasterfreepress.co.uk/education/doncaster-school-slammed-by-parents-after-boy-shaves-his-head-in-support-of-friend-12-who-has-relapsed-with-cancer-4201137)Paragraph 6:
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[[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14735651/School-banning-pupils-prom-shaved-heads-cancer.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)Paragraph 8:
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14735651/School-banning-pupils-prom-shaved-heads-cancer.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-derbyshire-59605939> - Ten classmates at Outwood Academy Hasland Hall in Chesterfield shaved their heads to support their friend Liam, who was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The boys, all Year 9 pupils, raised nearly £2,000 for the Teenage Cancer Trust. Their teacher praised their empathy and solidarity, while the school's head expressed pride in their actions. The Teenage Cancer Trust highlighted the importance of such fundraisers in providing care and comfort to young cancer patients.
3. <https://www.doncasterfreepress.co.uk/education/doncaster-school-slammed-by-parents-after-boy-shaves-his-head-in-support-of-friend-12-who-has-relapsed-with-cancer-4201137> - A Doncaster school faced criticism after a 12-year-old boy shaved his head to support his friend Tommy Wilkinson, who had relapsed with cancer. The boy was reportedly placed in isolation for breaching the school's uniform policy. Parents and the community expressed outrage, with some calling for complaints to be made to the school. The school's spokesperson stated that no student was placed in 'reflections' in respect of this incident, emphasizing their support for students supporting charitable causes.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-berkshire-66775565> - Thirteen schoolboys in Reading, Berkshire, shaved their heads in solidarity with their friend Harry, a 9-year-old diagnosed with bone cancer. The boys, along with Harry's father, raised £24,500 for the Young Lives Vs Cancer charity. Harry's father expressed gratitude for the support, noting that Harry felt less alone during his treatment. The boys' selfless act highlighted the strong bond of friendship and community support during challenging times.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-68539445> - Teenage footballers from AFC Pogmoor in Barnsley shaved their heads to support their teammate Owen, who is undergoing chemotherapy for Ewing sarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer. The team raised over £2,600 for Owen and his family. Owen expressed deep appreciation for his teammates' support, emphasizing the importance of camaraderie during his treatment. His mother highlighted the significance of such gestures in raising awareness for rare cancers.
6. <https://www.lincsonline.co.uk/grantham/news/boys-shave-heads-to-support-cancer-patient-charlie-9069220/> - A group of schoolboys in Grantham shaved their heads to support their friend Charlie Tatchell, who is battling cancer. The boys raised over £400 for Charlie and the Teenage Cancer Ward at Queen’s Medical Centre in Nottingham. Charlie's family and friends praised the boys' gesture, highlighting the importance of such support during challenging times. The school's uniform policy was discussed, with suggestions made to raise money in alternative ways.
7. <https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/sheffield-schoolboys-shave-heads-for-friend-with-cancer-78470> - Four schoolboys from Ecclesfield School in Sheffield shaved their heads to support their friend Joshua Dunford, who had been diagnosed with cancer. The boys, all Year 7 pupils, wanted to ensure their friend didn't feel embarrassed about losing his hair. Their teacher praised their selfless act, and the community recognized the boys' empathy and solidarity. The story gained attention after the boys' act of kindness went viral on social media.