



Greenway Primary
& Nursery School



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Head Teacher: Katharine Ellwood

Friday 24 January 2020

Dear Parents and carers,

School Site Security

Background

We are writing to you further to our letters dated 22 November 2019 and 19 December 2019 and school newsletters. As a school we constantly review our safeguarding arrangements to ensure that they are fit for purpose and that children are safe. We take advice from the Local Authority and value feedback from staff and parents/carers.

You may recall that Greenway Governors discussed the issue of site security and safety at the Personnel, Finance and Premises Committee (PFP) on Thursday 21 November and it was agreed that we would trial an arrangement until Christmas in which the side gate exiting onto the alleyway leading to Gilbert Way would be locked with a combination padlock from Monday 25 November. **Our aim was to ensure that the site is secure at all times, but in particular during the school day, and that no unauthorised persons are able to walk through the site.** Notification was sent to all parents and carers of the combination number required to open the padlock and we requested that all parents/carers using the side gate ensured that the gate was locked when they entered/left the site.

Unfortunately, the side gate was left open on a number of occasions and the first padlock was removed altogether. An update was sent before Christmas reminding everyone to take responsibility for locking the side gate.

We continued to monitor the position but found that on most occasions the side gate was still being left unlocked. As you may know, we do not have a full time Site Manager or staff capacity to enable us to open/close the side gate at the start of the day; at lunchtime pick up; and after school. **In our letter dated 19 December we stressed that if the situation did not improve, we might have to consider locking the gate permanently.**

We lost a second padlock over the weekend of 11/12 January. The padlocks have cost the school £80. We did not replace the second padlock because Governors were considering next steps - this now leaves the site open during the school day and outside school hours.

School Site Security issues

By way of context, we have on some occasions, had members of the public enter our school grounds during the school day, probably as a short cut to the town. On those occasions we have followed our safeguarding procedures and have asked them to leave the school site immediately. School staff should not be having to do this.

Contractors working at the school over the Christmas holidays replacing the library roof observed some families making responsible use of the school site. However, they have also provided us with some concerning feedback.

They observed:

- Youths on our school roof
- Other youths playing football on St Thomas More school roof
- Families not respecting the school site by allowing children to play and destroy some of our Early Years equipment.

Two weekends ago the bins from the playground were moved to enable youths to climb up onto the school roof. Our kitchen fan which sits on the kitchen roof has been damaged twice by unknown individuals accessing the roof and this has incurred cost to the school. In the past we have found drug paraphernalia, including nitrous oxide canisters, which our part-time Site Manager has collected on his daily risk assessment of the site.

The police are aware of these incidents and regularly drive up to the school site to check the area in the evening and during the weekends/holidays.

Next steps

After reviewing the position on Wednesday 15 January, the PFP Committee decided that we now need to take permanent action. You will understand that we must ensure our site is secure, both during the school day and after hours, whilst also taking into account the financial constraints within which the school operates. Governors were extremely concerned that the side gate had been frequently left open and two expensive padlocks had been taken.

Governors agreed that the green and pleasant open site is one of the considerable attractions of Greenway and also noted that many families have taught their children to ride their bicycles on the playground at the weekends. However, our safeguarding duties are paramount and the school simply cannot allow unauthorised persons access to the site during the school day or after hours.

As of **Monday 27 January** the following will apply:

1. The side gate exiting onto the alleyway leading to Gilbert Way will be permanently locked.
2. When the school is closed in the evenings; at weekends and during the holidays we will lock the main gate and the pedestrian gate to the school on Crossways. These gates will be unlocked in the morning and closed at night

during term time, therefore access to the school will be maintained for the school community.

3. Parents/carers will be able to exit and leave the area via the St Thomas More main gate at the start and end of the school day but not at lunchtime. The St Thomas More main gates are locked at 9.10am and reopened at 3pm every school day. **Greenway parents/carers/pupils should not use the St Thomas More side gate to access the Greenway site. Pupils will be reminded of this at school.**
4. When the playing fields are in use by outside providers at weekends, we will make arrangements with those using them to lock the gates on departure.

We are fully aware that these arrangements will cause some parents/carers inconvenience (particularly for Nursery families) but trust that you appreciate that the safeguarding of our pupils and staff and the security of the school site are our primary concern, particularly when property is being damaged and costs incurred by the school.

If you do use the side gate regularly, then you might not be aware that if you continue walking up the alleyway and then turn right into another alleyway this comes out onto Crossways, where you can then use the main entrance to the school.

We will continue to closely monitor matters and we thank you in advance for your cooperation on this matter.

Regards

Katharine Ellwood
Head teacher

Elizabeth O'Reilly
Chair of Governors

