

LETTER TO PARENTS from HELEN SWAIN, HEADTEACHER

Re: SAFEGUARDING

I mentioned in a recent Newsletter that Bousfield Governors were reviewing the safety and security of the school. We have to acknowledge the fact that times have changed, and what was once acceptable for school security is no longer the case. We do not want to create a fortress, but we do need to provide a secure and safe environment, as well as an attractive place to study.

I appreciate that this is a cultural shift for many of us, but we really do need to consider the safety of the children and the wider school community. Having discussed this with Governors, I have sought advice from the Local Authority Health & Safety Buildings' Officer, the School's Link Adviser and an Ofsted consultant, and they have independently suggested various ways to improve the safety and security of our premises.

It was generally agreed that we review all access to the building, as the current freedom of movement presents serious safeguarding issues. However, it was also accepted that we did not want the "open and welcoming" culture of the school to be affected by any operational changes. As you know, the school site is listed and so amendments to the building have to go through a long agreement process with English Heritage. The Governing Body is restricted in what can be altered and this has created additional difficulties when considering the safety of pupils in the building and within the school boundary. The Governing Body has set aside a budget so we can be advised by an architectural company which specialises in listed school buildings.

The main problem is that there are two main entrances, but many doors which lead directly into the building once on the school site. Internal staircases mean that "zoning" for safety is difficult, as there are many routes around the school once inside the building.

We have therefore come to the following conclusion:

Access through the gates will be restricted. The big gate at the back entrance will be kept closed, and entry will be through the pedestrian gate at the back and the pedestrian gate at the front. The big gate at the front is for access to the staff car park only. Children should not run around the car park and the pond.

The pedestrian gates will be open between 8.50 – 9.10 am. Between 9.10 am and 3.25 pm the pedestrian back gate will be locked, and entry will be via the front pedestrian gate only. At the end of the day, both gates will be open at 3.25 pm and the back gate locked at 4.00 pm. Access before 8.50 am and after 4.00 pm will be restricted to the front entrance. We will ensure that both entrances are manned by staff during opening times. The gate to the Nursery will be opened at 3.15 pm for Nursery parents only.

We currently use a video and voice entry door release system, which is controlled by the admin team, so that people are monitored as they enter the building. We will be upgrading and developing the CCTV system.

All visitors to the school, other than parents, must report to the Reception Desk and register their details in the Visitors' Book. Visitors will be issued with a pass displaying their name. Passes should be returned to the Reception Desk at the end of the visit. Visitors will not be allowed to walk around the building unescorted.

We would ask parents to ensure the following:-

- Gates are fully closed behind you when you enter and leave the premises
- Doors are not wedged open
- You do not allow someone else to "tail gate" you onto the premises
- Only staff release the doors
- Lateness is reported to Pam on the front desk

We are changing the arrangements for dropping off and collecting children from clubs before and after the normal school day. As mentioned previously, access before 8.50 a.m. will be restricted to the front pedestrian gate.

Breakfast Club: The front pedestrian gate will be locked, so please ring the bell and, from 7.55 am, a member of staff will release the gate. You should then take your child to the back of the school so they can enter the Junior Dining Room via the fire escape stairs in the playground.

French and Spanish Clubs: The front pedestrian gate will be locked, so please ring the bell and a member of staff will release the gate. You should then take your child to the back of the school so they can enter via the fire escape stairs in the playground.

Choir: The front pedestrian gate will be locked, so please ring the bell and a member of staff will release the gate. Children can then enter from the main door near Pam's desk at 8.15 a.m. They will be responsible for taking their own bags and coats to their classrooms after Choir.

After-School Clubs: Please enter via the front pedestrian gate, and collect children from the front door of the school. When the club finishes, the organizer will bring children to the front reception area, by Pam's desk, from where you should collect them. Parents will not be able to walk through the building. Please ensure you carry an umbrella in case you have to wait outside in the rain.

Parents' Evenings: Entry and exit will be via the front entrance only, and children will not be allowed access to the playground.

We will be improving the signage on the gates and doors. With these new measures, we are trying to ensure the safety of all our children without losing the culture of a warm and welcoming school. Please may I ask parents to ensure that grandparents and nannies are also aware of these new arrangements.

Thank you very much indeed for your co-operation.

