

PRESTON GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mrs T A Taylor, B.Ed hons (Primary), M.Ed, NPQH

Response to complainant following investigation by the Chair of Governors

Date:

Dear

I have received a large number of complaints from parents about the Malvern Road gate at Preston Grange Primary School. I would like to thank all parents and carers who have raised their concerns through the appropriate channels. A copy of this response letter has been sent to everyone who made a complaint. I have also asked Mrs Taylor to publish this letter on the school’s website so that it is available to every parent/carer of the school.

As Chair of Governors, I would like to assure you that I have taken each complaint seriously, and I have followed the school’s complaint process to ensure that all aspects of the issue have been considered thoroughly. In investigating the complaints, I have been in contact with officers at the Local Authority and sought professional Health and Safety advice and legal advice. I have made recommendations which have been shared with Mrs Taylor for her consideration and are referred to within this letter.

Upon reviewing the complaints received, I have categorised the main concerns under three headings:

1. Concerns about the Malvern Road gate remaining closed causing an access issue to the school
2. As a result of the gate being closed, vehicles are causing congestion around the school and causing danger to pedestrians and frustration to residents
3. Communication from the school regarding this matter has been unsatisfactory

These three headings have formed the basis of my investigation into this matter.

**Conclusion of the first part of complaints**

Concerns about the Malvern Road gate remaining closed, causing an access issue to the school

**I uphold the decision** made by Mrs Taylor and the SLT team at PGPS to be cautious in re-opening the Malvern gate completely whilst still following the health and safety measures outlined in September 2021 Risk Assessment which continues to protect staff and the school community from Covid 19. The risk assessments throughout the Covid pandemic have been supported by North Tyneside Health and Safety team, and the Chair of Governors, as being robust. Whilst many areas of society have relaxed stringent measures and social distancing, North Tyneside schools are cautious in relaxing measures and expect Headteachers to be vigilant in ensuring their school and grounds are a safe environment. As we are now facing a new threat of a mutant strain from South Africa, called Omicron, which has the potential to be more resistant to present vaccines, and has a speedier infection rate than other strains, this supports the school’s determination to maintain present restrictions and safety measures.

Mrs Taylor has outlined her reasons for the closure of the gate at the start of school in a letter to parents dated 4th November 2021, although it needs to be noted that this is an operational decision by the school in the interest of the safety of pupils and staff, and was not a requirement for her to explain her reasons.

However, When PGPS and North Tyneside agree that Covid restrictions and safety measures can be relaxed, then school may revisit the issue of reopening the Malvern gate entrance. At this time, school should consider whether it is feasible, and how health and safety issues can be addressed.

**Conclusion of second part of complaints**

As a result of the gate being closed, vehicles are causing congestion around the school and causing danger to pedestrians and frustration to residents

**I fully support parents’ concerns regarding the volume of vehicles** parking around the school site at key times when dropping of and picking up pupils, and the danger this presents to pedestrians. I ascertained advice from Mr Michael Jervis, Health and Safety Advisor, North Tyneside Advisor re Health and Safety around the site, and he responded with:

“I am constantly dismayed about the amount of cars around school sites, and this is not a specific problem to Preston Grange Primary School.

He made three site visits to PGPS at key times of dropping off and picking up children. He observed that there was a lot of congestion and parents parking quite dangerously. However, he could not comment on whether the situation would improve if the Malvern gate were opened at the beginning and at the end of the day, as he had only witnessed the gate opened/shut at home time, and there was no discernible difference in the volume of traffic. He agreed that this was not the responsibility of the school, and would require measures to restrict or redirect traffic, or promote other methods of travelling to school. This is not a school or police matter, but a responsibility of the Highways Department.

With regard to whether the emergency services could access the school main entrance, this is obviously a concern, which again is an issue to be explored with the Highways Department, and to explore whether the zig-zag lines at the main entrance and signage are sufficient in preventing congestion when dropping off and collecting pupils from school, or other measures preventing parking put in place.

**Conclusion of third part of complaints**

Communication from the school regarding this matter has been unsatisfactory

**I find that there has been a lot of communication** from school to home detailing the changes, via text, newsletters and emails. Mrs Taylor initially responded to questions, queries and concerns by replying individually to emails and texts. When the volume increased and the messages became more demanding, with social media spiraling, a letter was sent to parents on November 4th explaining in great detail the reasons behind her decisions. There has been difficulty at times in contacting the office, but this is due to the circumstances school is presently facing. With one office worker (recently appointed), and Mrs Taylor having to man the office, answer phones as well as other office tasks and her own work, there are going to be times when contact is challenging. A new Office Manager has now been appointed, who will begin her new post in January, and this should alleviate the concerns of not being able to contact school or have queries answered.

I hope that you will find the conclusions of my investigation satisfactory, however, if you are not satisfied, and wish to seek a review, you may put your concerns in writing and send it to the Clerk of the Governing Body at the school address, within 10 school days. If you do wish to seek a review, you must give grounds for moving to Stage 2 in your letter. If you have not taken up your right to review within 10 days, I will consider this matter closed.

Yours sincerely

Miss V.A.Lamb

Chair of Governing Body