



PRESTON GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Dear parents

Whilst it is not usual or necessary for a school to justify every operational decision, due to the volume of discussion, complaints and comments around the issue of the parking around school and how the school systems are perceived to impact on this I have decided to write to you today.

As part of much wider measures to reduce the risk to our school community from COVID-19 and as part of the DFE and Local Authority public health requirements, changes were made to how parents and children accessed and departed the school site. These measures were carefully considered, and only put in place following stringent checks and full approval from: Governors, Unions and the Local Authority Health & Safety Team.

Options	Considerations
Staggered start and end times to the school day	<p>Although we implemented this initially, due to lack of social distancing by parents around the class lines & subsequent complaints about this from other parents we reviewed and revised our system</p> <p>We received parental feedback about waiting in between drop off times from parents with more than one child especially in bad weather</p> <p>This was disruptive to the school timetable & learning</p>

<p>No access to the school site at all by parents</p>	<p>This has been adopted by several schools. This didn't feel right to us and our ethos to keep parents completely off site.</p> <p>This also may have caused more issues with parents & children lining up on streets & over driveways</p> <p>This would have disrupted the school day and learning, and the day would not have got off to a prompt start</p>
<p>A one way system through the school site</p>	<p>This would have inconvenienced parents who would have parked at either end of school and then had to walk around to collect their car</p> <p>This would have inconvenienced parents being dispersed across the whole site and would have involved staff to guide parents off site</p> <p>We felt that this option would have generated more feedback from parents</p>

The system we decided to adopt of a one-way loop onto and off the school site, although not perfect, had the following benefits:

- This system had worked well during the key worker provision and lockdown
- It allows a very prompt start to the school day and learning
- The site clears quickly and parents are not on site longer than needed which helps with social distancing
- Children are more settled and independent at coming into school themselves, a skill that we seek to promote
- The main entrance has benefits such as: it is overlooked and can be monitored by the school office, which is in line with DFE guidance (Nov 2019) 'Main vehicle and pedestrian access points should ideally be overlooked by the school office/reception. Other secondary site access points should be kept locked unless required for deliveries or other specific needs'
- The bike racks are located at that side of school, so that children cycling could no longer cycle down the path & across the yard on their bikes from Malvern Road gate (a previous health & safety concern and issue raised by some parents)

- All children are present in their class line promptly and not lingering on play equipment (a previous health & safety concern)
- Although it is only one entrance, we trust that parents can manage this safely and the gate opening time (which has been extended) allows for gradual flow of parents & children onto the site so that there should be no bottlenecks at the gate

Although not on the school site and therefore not the responsibility of the school, we are aware that there are traffic and parking problems around school on the estate. This is however not an issue purely since Covid or changes to our school systems. This has been ongoing matter for over ten years on the estate.

We continue to work with the Local Authority to help find suitable strategies to help alleviate these issues by:

- Requesting the camera car to regularly monitor the parking
- We aim to become a School Street as part of the Local Authority initiative to make schools a car free zone
- We are looking into alternative parking arrangements for parents
- We encourage children to walk, cycle or scoot to school
- Working with Sustrans to promote sustainable travel to and from school

You can help us by:

- Parking responsibly, legally and safely near school
- Only drive if it is absolutely necessary
- Report dangerous driving or parking to the local police
- Contact the council highways department about unsafe parking
- Continuing to walk if you previously used the Malvern Road gate, and not driving the short additional distance, adding pressure to an existing issue

The recent decision to close the Malvern Road gate at the end of the school day is temporary and is due to having no site manager or member of staff to open the gate. The gate will open at home times once our replacement site manager takes up post on **November 22nd**. The gate will be opened from this date at **3.15pm**.

In response to various feedback from parents, we address the following points raised:

You said	Our response
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<p>'I have witnessed children almost being hit by cars, a parent almost had her foot ran over'</p>	<p>If you witness dangerous driving or parking please report this to the local police</p>
<p>'I would hate to see an ambulance or fire engine have to battle their way through the double parked cars'</p>	<p>So would we, but that is why there are yellow zig zag lines outside school which forbid parking around the site entrance at school entrance & exit times.</p> <p>If you witness dangerous driving or parking please report this to the local police.</p>
<p>'there is absolutely zero thought process or concern for any of their children or their families'</p>	<p>As you can see from the above, we consider, in great detail, systems and procedures before we implement them and these are monitored and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>The wellbeing of the children and health and safety of all on the school site are an absolute priority.</p>
<p>'this chaos did not occur pre-Covid'</p>	<p>Unfortunately it did. We have records going back over ten years from residents and parents, and newsletters that have referred regularly to parking issues outside the school gates.</p> <p>We acknowledge that using one gate may cause some additional pressure, however this requires parents to be especially considerate and vigilant when parking – and only drive if absolutely necessary.</p>
<p>'Is it not possible to create temporary solutions until staff shortages are resolved? Eg. a parent volunteer network to collect the key and open the gate...or a year 6 pupil rota to open the gate at 3.15'</p>	<p>These are both significant safeguarding risks and are not options we can consider.</p>

<p>'I am unable to understand how one staff member cannot be released to open the gate'</p>	<p>Although this was not a duty for a member of support staff other than a site manager, we tried hard since Mr Patterson left (2 weeks ago) to keep the Malvern Road gate open at the end of the school day but this was not without complication.</p> <p>We implemented a rota for TAs to open the gate but due to working directly with children this meant the gate was occasionally opened late.</p> <p>This resulted in several parental complaints. We have reviewed this and have decided to close the gate temporarily at the end of the afternoon, until we have a permanent site manager with the role of site security to ensure a consistent opening time of the gate.</p>
<p>'Would it not be possible to fit an electronic sensor as on the other entrance?'</p>	<p>This would be at significant cost to the school. This suggestion is not a short-term solution and the matter resolves once we have a permanent site manager.</p>
<p>'this is adding more time to journeys in the awful weather'</p>	<p>We expect that children come equipped to school in appropriate clothing for bad weather for this short additional distance.</p>

Our operational decisions made by the Senior Leadership Team are made to ensure the health & safety of the whole community on site. Whilst other sectors of society may have had restrictions lifted, we are still currently working under COVID risk assessment like every other school. As such, nothing will be changing until our risk assessment is reviewed again. If there are ever any changes to systems or procedures in school, these will be communicated in due course.

Thank you to those parents who have communicated in a civil manner and raised some fair points which I hope we have addressed above. I would appeal to the better sense of parents in not being swayed by incorrect or exaggerated comments made by other parents on group chats or social media.

I will not be responding to individual emails, as I have been made aware of a social media campaign and I am currently working with North Tyneside legal team

regarding some of the derogatory and defamatory comments that have been made.

Thank you to all of the parents who have been supportive during these times, your positive comments have been really appreciated. May I reaffirm that although some decisions made by the senior leadership team may not be convenient for all parents, please be assured that they are considered carefully and based on thorough guidance from the Local Authority, Health & Safety team and the Department for Education.

Thank you for your ongoing support and cooperation

Tracey Taylor
Headteacher