Monday 5th February 2019

Parking Consultation

Dear Parents and Carers of St Marys,

On Friday 25thJanuary a meeting was arranged in the church to provide parents with explanations for the parking decisions.

In the event we received apologies and some points of view in advance of the meeting, however we did not have any parents arrive for the meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you my perspective on the parking situation.

In January 2018 when Mrs Burt and I arrived at St Mary’s to share the INSET day with staff they explained their concerns about the small playground in front of the school being filled with cars and creating potential hazards when parents and children were in the playground at the start of the day and especially at the end of the day. That day we reviewed these processes with staff and introduced a new safer system as part of an updated risk assessment.

This resulted in all staff and visitors parking outside of the school. Staff did not tell us that the car park outside of the school belonged to the parish. We learned this in the weeks after our arrival.

Since that date, parish and school have worked together to find a solution which will work for our school staff, make the start and end of the day safe for children and parents, emergency vehicles being able to enter the site should the need arise and at the same time to work for the parish.

The car park does belong to the Parish. Whilst I appreciate that this is inconvenient for parents and often for visitors and sometimes staff, it is the reality.

Most schools have the challenge of having limited staff parking, no parent parking and needing to seek solutions with neighbouring communities.

One of our parents emailed to say that of course parents would be pleased to work with the parish if parents were notified of meetings/ funerals and other official parish business. However, even if the parish agreed to this, due to small size of the carpark and the staff arriving for work, it would be unsafe for parents to be able to use this space for drop off/collections.

I am very sorry to report to you that since the start of the term parish staff have had their cars damaged and at least three times have been subjected to parents verbal aggression including swearing. I understand this is borne out of frustration but we should all remember that these are people are doing a day’s work and should not be treated in this way.

I do appreciate that having a space in front of the school seemingly unused when we as a community are having to juggle and negotiate can seem unreasonable but consistently parish staff and members of the community are unable to make use of the space. They have meetings at all times of the morning, day and evening and need to have access to their spaces.

At home I have a drive way but live in a busy street where families each have two or three cars. A neighbour does not have a car in his driveway but nobody thinks it is acceptable to park their car in his drive.

I enjoy seeking solutions to problems but currently the only solution for this is that we all accept that the car park belongs to others not us. The spaces we do have allocated to us are for staff members only so they can arrive ready to start work.

I would also ask that if you find yourself or notice others feeling frustrated with staff from the parish team, that you direct that frustration to school not them.

I have noticed and very much appreciate the efforts that so many parents quietly make to ensure that their children arrive and are collected on time by making arrangements that result in walking part of the way to school. I also appreciate that you do this in all weathers and know that it does have a cost to you. Thank you all for your continued efforts.

In the last few weeks I have visited and spoken to other schools locally and further afield. Most schools are challenged by the drop off and pick up arrangements that result from modern families driving and travelling much further distances than previously.

Whilst we are keen to seek solutions to this issue there are no obvious short cuts other than to continue to work with all of our neighbours and do what we can.

If you do have any thoughts please do email, write or speak to me.

My very best wishes

Mrs Mannix