

Letter to the Community of St Andrew's C of E maintained school.

Over the last few weeks, we have received questions from the wider school community around the reasons and longevity of restricted access to the school grounds. It is clear there is a passion and a heritage for the school being a central part of the community. This has to be appreciated and valued. In this document we have tried to explain the reasons behind any changes, answer common concerns, and suggest options for moving forward. Hopefully you will understand that the length of the document reflects our listening and the desire to reach a way forward. We have considered views of all our stakeholders from those community members who contacted us along with parental views. It is structured around a central section of 'Frequently Asked Questions'.

Background:

- Following advice from the Devon Legal Team, the Diocese, Health and Safety and Safeguarding, we will no longer be able to allow 'free access' to the school site. However, we have a strong desire work with the community to develop 'controlled access.'
- The school and governing board have a duty of care regarding the safety and risk for all of those on the school site and the school site itself. Without supervision, we can't ensure the safety of all but yet would still remain accountable. The use of the site therefore, needs to be structured in a way that is safe for all. We cannot discharge our duty of care with signage alone.
- We have planned a further review with Health and Safety and the Safeguarding team in the Autumn Term 2021. The most recent Health and Safety review was satisfied for school use only. Work during the school holidays is part of our preparation for future controlled access.

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions.

1. What is meant by the term 'restricted' or 'controlled' access?

Restricted or controlled access means where access is permitted through a nominated leader who would take responsibility as key holder to supervise a session e.g. Table Tennis club, Football, Field time etc. The nominated leader will then check, take responsibility for and close the site at agreed times with the school. The entrance and exit would be via the Modyford Walk gate. As currently, this could not take place during the school day, during breakfast/after school clubs or during holidays clubs during the school holidays as at these times, the site must be closed to safeguard children.

2. Why have the gates been installed at the front and blue gates at the side? There is no mention of the need for added security in the most recent 2017 Ofsted report.

Following a significant intruder incident in the school, security was reassessed by the Local Authority, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and the Diocese. There had already been plans to install increased security, but the safeguarding incident accelerated the process. Gates and an intercom system were installed following consultation and advice for the safety of all.

3. How is the pool allowed to be open during the summer when a statement from the Governors has stated that further Health and Safety advice must be gained?

The supervised pool sessions are run by the PTFA. The PTFA have received the appropriate resuscitation training. The PTFA have a Risk Assessment for the pool and site for these supervised sessions. The PTFA have signed as keyholders for these activities on the days that the caretaker can maintain the safety checks and chemicals for the pool. The PTFA are responsible for the opening/closing of the site and checking the facilities for safe use. The guidelines for pool use were created by the PTFA/Health and Safety and are adhered to by the PTFA team just as they have been

in previous years. The pool and field will be accessible for families who wish to use the pool. The Foundation playground area, other playgrounds and the sports surface are not permitted for use at this time.

4. What has changed since the 1970s and since February 2020?

Since the school was built, Safeguarding and Health and Safety procedures have changed. From much of the correspondence, this is appreciated but what has not been clear, is why there are changes from February 2020.

Following the 18 months of the pandemic, we have had the opportunity to reflect on all of our policies and procedures. We have also reflected on systems that have been in place for many years. We started asking the questions such as

- How do we ensure that that we fulfil our duty of care when we are not on site or delegated the responsibility to another?
- Is this still right for right now?
- Are we following the latest guidance?
- How do we Risk Assess for times the school is not open

We then consulted with Health and Safety, Safeguarding, the Diocese, Babcock, our Local Authority School Improvement Partner, National Association of Headteachers and the Devon Legal Team. We were strongly advised that our position or choice should be 'restricted' or 'controlled' access for nominated leaders/groups to supervise or no access at all.

5. Is there a right of way through the school?

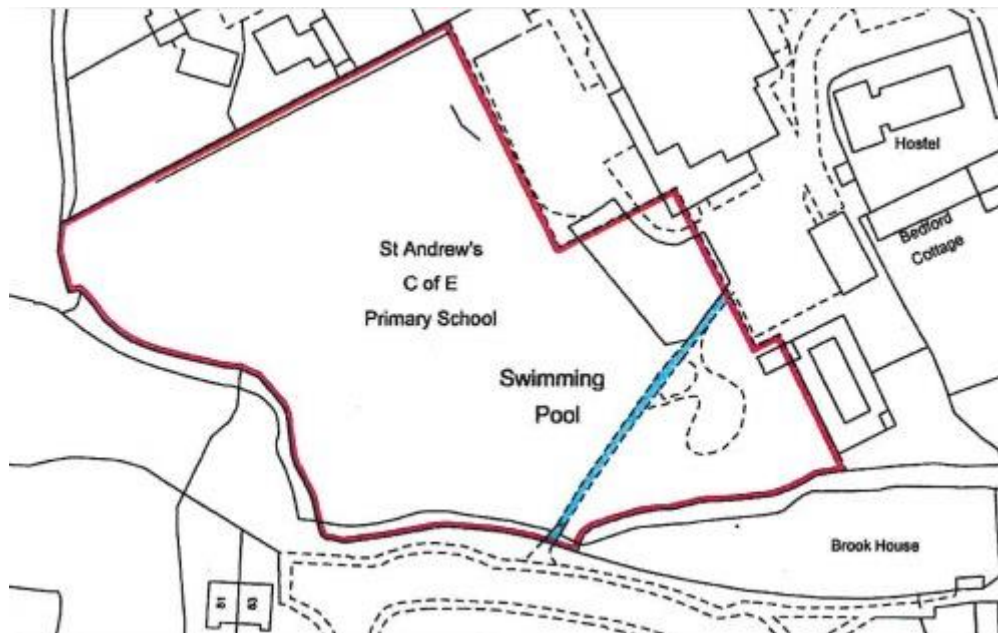
There is a right of way through the school as shown on the title deeds and map. However, the right of way is assigned for the 'Trustees' and 'Title owners' and 'Occupiers.' The Trustees were the Vicar, Church Warden and Headteacher. They are now the Governing Board. The Occupier is the school. The Diocese are the owners of all of the land except for the field. The field is owned by Devon County Council who entrust the field to be used by the school as the Occupier. There is no other right of way or public right of way across the school site.

Title Number : DN511231

C: Charges Register continued

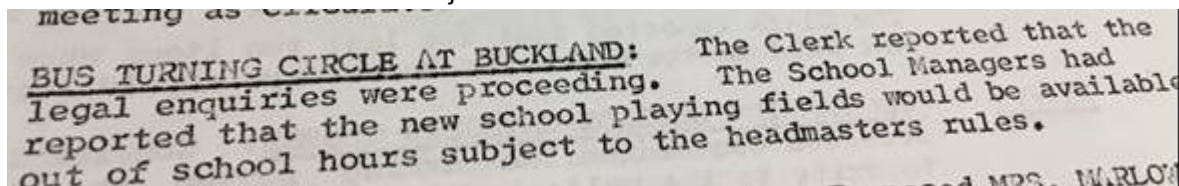
"TOGETHER WITH a right of way on foot for the Trustees and their successors in title owners and occupiers for the time being of the property hereby conveyed and all persons authorised by them in common with the Council and their successors in title the owner or owners for the time being of the land shown edged green on the said plan annexed hereto over the footpath edged blue on the said plan for the purpose of access to and egress from the property hereby conveyed".

NOTE: The land edged green referred to comprises the land in this title. The footpath edged blue referred to is tinted blue on the title plan.



6. Are the school allowed to occupy the field and control access?

Following consultation with the Devon Legal team, the Devon Estates team and the Diocese, we have been told that there is not any recorded covenant or written agreement to say otherwise. The Parish Council minutes from when the school was built record that the field was used at the discretion of the headteacher or 'subject to the headmaster's rules.'



7. Why have we not been included in the Duck Race or Fayres this year?

The PTFA Duck Race and all Fayres were cancelled in 2020 due to Covid restrictions. In 2021, the Duck Race went ahead following our Risk Assessment as advised by the Local Authority and DfE. We have been operating in 'class bubbles' since Autumn 2020. The PTFA Duck Race was thoroughly enjoyed by the children in their bubbles but due to guidance around gatherings, we could not invite parents as we normally would. This has been true this year for all other events.

8. Why did the school spend so much money on the grounds and outdoor classroom instead of investing in the grounds for community access?

Learning, education and safeguarding of the pupils is at the heart of all decision making around expenditure and schools are held into account by Ofsted and the DfE.

Outdoor classroom - The outdoor classroom was funded by the PTFA and has been so valuable during the pandemic - providing a safe place for a class bubble to meet a visitor or learn in a well-ventilated area as advised by the DfE. The PTFA worked hard to fund and set this up. It is a vital resource for teaching, learning and the pupils. It has also provided a safe space for staff to meet at a distance where they have not been allowed to mix due to the restrictions.

and equipment - Schools have a duty to provide children with a minimum of 60 minutes exercise a day. This includes PE, daily mile, break and lunch time. Due to the fact that the field can't be used all year round, a sports surface was installed to ensure all year-round sport/PE/activities. The sports premium grant was used for this installation and the equipment. Sports premium is ringfenced and can only be used for PE/Sport. It is designed for increasing pupil activity and exercise in school.

Ofsted hold schools to account for how the funding is spent for the benefit of the pupils to improve the quality of provision of PE and daily activity.

'The PE and sport premium can help primary schools to achieve this aim, providing primary schools with £320m of government funding to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of the PE, physical activity and sport offered through their core budgets. It is allocated directly to schools so they have the flexibility to use it in the way that works best for their pupils.' <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools>

9. Why has the school been slow to communicate?

The school has been operating in bubbles since March 2020 both inside and outside. To ensure safety of pupils and lessening the chances of transmission, bubbles have accessed different parts of the school at different times with thorough cleaning in between. As you are aware, we have had staff/children isolating and bubbles closures throughout the pandemic. Until the lifting of restrictions as part of Roadmap 4 was announced, we could not consider any kind of opening to the public or mixing of groups. We have also wanted to seek advice from various teams and gather the correct advice and documents. This has taken time.

Moving forward

Whilst free access to the Foundation area and other areas of the school site is not appropriate, we understand that a community group may wish to request to use the field which would be part of the controlled access plan. We wish to engage with community groups who may want to organise access in a safe way. For example, a nominated leader who wishes to run a Table Tennis club could become a key holder for the Modyford Walk gate.

Use of the school site during the holidays is also being explored through Active Devon and Fit and Fed programmes. There may be an opportunity to provide healthy meals and holiday clubs for those on Free School Meals or Disadvantaged. Support and for those families, where parents have to work throughout the holidays, is also being considered. Wrap around provision continues to be an important school offer through breakfast club, after school and holiday clubs.

For this Summer holiday, as we have stated, there will be controlled access to the swimming pool and field at supervised times during the first and last weeks which is also when the school caretaker can maintain the pool for safe use. Thank you to those who have volunteered to support. Please be aware there will be maintenance and improvement activities during some of the holiday.

It is our intention to work more closely with the Parish Council to seek ways of achieving controlled access. We will be improving communication by providing the Parish Council with a termly update from the school and more frequently when significant events are planned. Again, we thank those who expressed their concerns in a passionate but constructive way.

This has been a very challenging and difficult time for all those involved with the school. I would like to reiterate my thanks to the parents/carers, school staff and wider supporters who have continued to put the children's welfare first, often at some personal sacrifice.

'May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give us (all) the same attitude of mind toward each other that Jesus had..' Rom 15:5