

Ref: JK/MMcC

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Dear Parent / Carer,

It is with some regret that I write to inform you of concerns expressed by staff and members of the public at the behaviour of a significant minority of young people at break and lunch time. As you know, I took up post in February, and I am absolutely committed to maintaining and enhancing standards in many areas of school life and for the ultimate benefit of pupils.

Since the start of term, I have noticed a continuation of a pattern I had observed since taking up post. While many pupils behave well during break and lunch, school staff are currently spending a disproportionate amount of time cleaning up after young people, particularly on the floor of the street area, in school grounds and on Grassyards Road. In addition, members of the wider community have passed on information in relation to irresponsible behaviour as it relates to road safety. Finally, a very small minority persist in smoking at the school entrance and in the path of nursery pupils entering via the school gate.

The main issues are in relation to litter and irresponsible behaviour when crossing the road. I do not believe that it is acceptable for our staff to have to tidy up six bin bags worth of litter on a daily basis. The fact that six bin bags were filled in one school day suggests that dropping litter is a wide scale problem. With this in mind, I have decided to allow pupils five school days to rectify the issue before I am left with no choice other than to close the school gates during interval time. We are very fortunate in that we have vast school grounds in which young people can socialise and I see no need to open the gates if it means that my staff are tasked with picking up disproportionate amounts of litter in and around the gate area. I am reluctant to extend this to lunch time but may be left with no choice if young people fail to address this issue as a matter of urgency. Alternatively, opening the gate for a reduced amount of time during lunch is another option under consideration.

I understand that some families may not agree with me. However, I make no apologies for believing that our young people are of an age where they should know how to use a bin and how to cross a road safely. The reputation of our young people is important to me and anyone passing or visiting the school at the moment would be rightly concerned by some of the behaviour and disregard for the environment shown by some of our pupils.

To provide some context, only the Head Teacher, three Depute Head Teachers and a small number of classroom assistants are available to supervise during break and lunch. On average the ratio of staff to pupils is one member of staff for every one hundred pupils. Our legal obligation is to supervise the school and school grounds, as this is where our health and safety responsibility lies. It is not feasible or practical to monitor every area of the school and the local area during break and lunch time.

I trust that despite a potential difference of opinion on this matter, you will understand my point of view as custodian of the school. The issues outlined are very easily addressed by our young people and I encourage all parents / carers to directly discuss the content of this letter with their child.

A text message will be sent to all parents / carers on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September and will outline the success or otherwise of allowing young people one week to address the issue of litter and road safety. Should young people respond to staff and make use of the bins, I will allow the gate to remain open. If no improvement is forthcoming, the gates will be closed for at least one school week.

In relation to smoking, I have some natural concerns for the ten or so young people who smoke at the school gates on occasion. PC Lynch and I are in the process of directing pupils to smoking cessation services. Given the fact that nursery age pupils enter via the school gates at various times of the day, I have made it clear that smokers should not gather in this area.

Should those young people who choose to smoke persist in standing at the gate unless directly challenged by a senior member of staff, I will be left with no choice other than to remove the privilege of leaving school at lunch time (on an individual basis). Please be assured that smoking cessation support will always be offered to those struggling with nicotine addiction but choosing to smoke at the school gate in the presence of three and four year olds cannot be tolerated for obvious reasons.

I would also like to ask that some consideration is given to mourners who are attending funerals or paying their respects in the graveyard across the road. As we all know, grief is a powerful and often harrowing experience. To be met with disorderly teenagers running across the road and dropping litter near the graveyard is something that local families could do without when attending funerals or visiting graves.

Finally, I am confident that many of our young people do use the bins, cross the road safely and avoid smoking at the school entrance. However, the issues expressed are re-occurring at a rate that I cannot condone, and as such I request your support on this matter.

I am of the belief that the expectations outlined herein are completely in keeping with very basic standards of decency and respect and trust that I will find widespread support on these matters.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'J. Kane', written in a cursive style.

**Mr Kane**  
**Head Teacher**