

Update on our playing fields at Stoke Lodge

We understand that individuals still entering the field through gaps in the fence caused by wilful vandalism are being reminded by the police that access to our playing fields is with the consent of the school and at present consent has been withdrawn for the reasons previously stated by the school. We have been re-assured of this by Inspector Chris Starr of Avon and Somerset Police. We are also aware that the police have undertaken a leaflet drop to those living locally and unfortunately this advice continues to be ignored by a small number of determined supporters of the unconstituted group We Love Stoke Lodge. Some of these individuals will never accept that the playing field is part of Cotham School's premises and will only ever be satisfied by the removal of the fence. These same people have repeatedly demonstrated their desire to have the field registered as a Town and Village Green (TVG). They have now submitted 3 separate TVG applications in what can only be viewed as an attempt to remove the school's ability to operate the field as part of our premises.

Our students deserve to be able to return to the playing field that is hygienically ready for them to use. We do not yet know when we will be asked to re-open. This will not be possible if the current behaviour of members of the public continues. The effect of dog faeces takes more than a year to get rid of. We know this as we have worked hard for a year to ensure the cleanliness of the field after years of dog fouling. We need to have a secure perimeter and are not prepared to replay the arguments we have put forward for years now as to why this is the case. Our fear is that our playing field, part of our premises and our external classrooms may not be accessible when the school opens fully again which may be Term 6. All of the school's hard work over the last year to provide decent facilities for our students is being ruined by this selfish criminal damage. It is not 'mischief'. It is not ok and we don't see any other school, State or Independent, being subjected to it.

However, we are determined to repair this criminal damage because our site needs to be clean and secure in the same way as our main premises need to be clean and secure. We need to be ready for our field to be used by our students and our plans are to shortly mark it up again to prepare for our summer PE curriculum. Over the next few days, we expect our contractors to be able to work without harassment when they are working on our school premises. This includes those repairing the fence as well as any others maintaining the field or marking it up for sports. This has not always happened in the past and we hope they will be afforded that now. Like all schools we are working hard every day during 'lockdown' to support our students and their families however we can. Many of our students live in parts of the City with no green space, many have no gardens and they have been inside for five weeks already. In contrast, outside the fenced playing field at Stoke Lodge there is 6 acres of additional green space that can be freely accessed!

WE CALL ON WLSL TO PUBLICLY CONDEMN THE VANDALISM AT OUR SITE, TO DESIST FROM CALLING IT 'MISCHIEF' AND TO CALL FOR IT TO BE HALTED THROUGH THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS AND IN ALL THEIR COMMUNICATIONS IN THE FUTURE.