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## **Statement from Cotham School, Bristol regarding Stoke Lodge Playing Fields.**

Since lockdown, we have made our car park available to NHS staff and have also made over three thousand face shields for NHS and social care workers (with no plans to stop). Our staff team has been stretched to the limit keeping as many aspects of the school going as possible whilst working on a myriad of challenges we could not have foreseen ahead of the pandemic.

As the City and the Country respond to the challenge of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Cotham School has not only had to change how the school operates, providing distance learning for our 1500+ students and on-site provision for key/critical workers, the school has also faced an onslaught of vandalism at its playing field at Stoke Lodge.

We have suffered this vandalism since the instalment of a fence at the site but it has continued at an unrelenting pace since our last statement and since the playing field was closed in line with Government instructions.

The vandalism has now escalated – to date in excess of 20 fence panels have been removed, bent or simply unbolted and chucked to one side. Today it has been reported that the gates have been glued together so our groundsmen cannot access the site to cut the grass and carry out other maintenance tasks.

These actions have been described by some as the work of a 'Fence Fairy', a 'bit of mischief', 'pranks' or a 'bit of a laugh', but most will agree that this is unreasonable, uncalled for and unsolicited damage to the property of a Bristol school. The costs to arrange and repair the fence and remove the glue are now escalating to an even more unreasonable degree.

In the light of this high level of vandalism and on police advice Cotham School has now made a planning application for additional CCTV cameras to enable us to monitor the site and to dissuade further vandalism.

Cotham School condemns these actions, and is asking local people to support us in finding those responsible for causing the damage and by helping to stop this once and for all. In due course the government may lift its lockdown on sports pitches and community access may then be possible again at the school's playing fields. However, this arrangement can only happen if those responsible for such uncalled for and rampant vandalism desist and behave in a fair and proper way by respecting school property and the arrangements for access we have always tried to put in place.

Friday 15 May 2020

