

10th October 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Driving and Parking

Sadly, I need to write, with some urgency, about the way our school community is shamed by how **some** people drive and park outside of Brookside Academy.

Meeting with the Chair of our local Neighbourhood Watch and having to read emails sent in weekly by residents and parents, casts a grim picture on how some people's behaviour impacts upon our community. I have witnessed this myself on numerous occasions; U-turns on a busy road, speeding, double parking, swearing, shouting, blocking, beeping, reversing, near misses... I could go on.

We are a school – an educational establishment that teaches children to develop the life skills they need for when they move to secondary school. We should be a beacon on behaviour and an example to all for how we should live a good life. As your head teacher I am not a traffic warden, police officer or member of Somerset Council. I have no authority over traffic outside of Brookside's gates, but I do care about how safe people are and how they feel. I am having to spend time apologising to people in the community because of rudeness (sometimes even threatening behaviour) towards them on an almost daily basis. The reasons are numerous - as people park in front of people's driveways, on corners and in places that make access really challenging – including making it impossible for the 376 bus to continue its journey causing even further disruption. On occasions, this Road Rage has even been brought into the main reception or school grounds where members of staff have to try to calm people down – often in front of children. It is not acceptable behaviour from anyone, and it brings a dark cloud over Brookside and everything it tries to do to ensure that your children have the best primary school experience they can.

There are three simple school rules at Brookside: which the children know by heart:

- Be Kind
- Be Safe
- Be Responsible

What kind of example do we set when we cannot do this as adults? When we shout at traffic wardens, doing their job or blame the school for how other people are parking or driving? I thank those of you who do go out of your way to make the surrounding school area safe. You are many. It is by far not the majority.

I know it is not easy to park – there is not a school in the country where drop-offs and pick-ups are not a challenging time. There is enough space – just not close to the school.

When you park inconsiderately, without responsibility, you put other people at risk. That is your choice alone – no matter how bad your day is going, and you will have to live with that for the rest of your life. No one wants to hear – ‘I told you so.’ It is the last thing I would ever want, but by parking inconsiderately you are increasing the chances of something going very wrong. So, please, please can you take an extra moment when parking to ask yourself – have I parked Responsibly? Am I being Safe?

We really need you to support us on this because we believe it really does matter to our community.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Walton and John Dodson
Headteacher Chair of Street Neighbourhood Watch Association