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Bohunt Horsham Headteacher: Ms G Ayling BA (Hons)

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Dear Bohunt Horsham Families

RE: Road Safety at Bohunt Horsham

Road safety is always high on the priority list in schools and secondary schools in particular, the statistics are worrying and for secondary school age children we are always especially concerned as they develop their independence and so many travel to and from school without an adult for the first time.

Cycling and walking to school:

This year, our first with all five year groups, highlights an issue that you will know has been concerning us for a while: road safety. Originally, the plans for our school and the rest of the Mowbray development had a timeline that meant by this point we would be taking a large proportion of our students from the new houses in that development. The house building was delayed far beyond the delays we experienced, they struggled with the new requirements for 'water neutrality' and so there are still relatively few houses built and occupied. What this means of course, alongside the fact that we've been oversubscribed almost every year since opening, is that almost all of our families come from the areas of Horsham that sit just the other side of the A264. In turn, this means very heavy footfall on the pedestrian / cycle route from school across the dual carriageway. This concerns us because the infrastructure, when tested at planning stages, was not intended to be used by such large numbers.

To counter this risk, there are some of the things we do:

- Ask students not to use the roundabout crossings and only to use the bridge – this is because the roundabout crossings do not have sufficient space at each stage to hold hundreds of pedestrians and students would run the risk of being edged out into very fast moving traffic.
- Hold assemblies and run tutor time activities informing and reminding students of this rule.
- Run regular but unexpected staff patrols down to the bridge to check on this.
- We have also asked the local highways, town planning and district council representatives to look at this use as a matter of urgency. We will repeat this request again this year with higher usage.
- Shared a travel survey with families to try and get accurate information on methods of transport to share with external agencies to
- Requested additional traffic calming measures both north and south on Rusper Road.
- Encourage safe cycling to school by running catch up bikeability courses and ensuring all students wear cycle helmets on arriving and departing the school site.

Dropping off and picking up by car:

We are also seeing increased use of our car park. Only 541/975 families have completed the [travel survey](#) but of those, 221 have told us they intend to pick up and drop off by car. We can assume that the real number is at least 50% if not 100% higher. In the design and planning stages the architects and travel consultants worked with us to deliver space at the front of school for visitors, those with accessibility needs and a small number of families who travelled to and from school by car.

The school car park includes a drop off space for the mornings – when families do not linger waiting for their child but simply drop and go and parking spaces for 50 families who need to pick up at the end of the day. The car park has a one-way system, which is marked on the ground and shows you cannot turn right as you enter and it is intended that you turn left to leave the exit.



Figure 1: Bohunt Horsham car park one way system

It is true we have not needed to enforce these rules until we reached the capacity we are this year and so car park users have some questions about this, which I would like to address here:

- **Why can't I turn right when I come in if there is a space right there?**

This is because of the congestion it causes at the exit. When cars are delayed from exiting the car park, delays back up around the car park and back onto the roundabout which is unsafe.

- **Why can't I stop at the front of school and pick up my child there where I drop them off in the morning?**

This is because if all 400+ cars do this, as many did last year, it reduces the number of cars that can get into the car park and slows down the traffic entering the car park, again causing a back up onto the road and roundabout which is unsafe.

- **Why can't I turn right when I exit the car park?**

This is because when the traffic is stopped from exiting the car park, by waiting for a gap to be able to turn right, traffic is backed up through the car park and onto the road/roundabout again.

- **Why aren't there enough signs demonstrating this?**

Good question! The school wasn't delivered with sufficient signage in the car park and so we are investing in additional signage for the space ourselves.

- **Why aren't there enough spaces for everyone?**

The school is intended to serve its local community and, as a secondary school, it is expected that the majority of students will travel independently. We really do not have capacity for this many families to use the car park every day, the Department for Education will not build schools in largely suburban areas with large car parks, it is expected that the majority of students will come from walking or cycling distance which they determine as a 3 mile distance.

- **Why can't you stagger the end of the school day?**

That is certainly something we have considered. However, to do this as a relatively small school means creating multiple versions of the school day which seriously limits our ability to assign the right teachers to the right classes. So, a maths teacher who teaches year 11 period 6 can't also teach year 7 period 5 because the timings clash. We are not a big enough school to be able to do this without seriously impacting the quality of education.

- **Is all this working?**

In short, yes. With such large numbers using the space, the car park is clear much faster than it was last year.

Picking up and dropping off in local areas:

Understandably, to avoid this congestion in the school car park, many families are using local areas such as Mowbray and Lemmington Way instead. We receive up to five calls a day from these local residents complaining or informing us of unsafe driving practices. Yesterday we were informed that families were stopping on the 40mph dual carriageway of Rusper North and allowing children to run across the road to parked cars. This is incredibly dangerous and urge families not to do this.

Verbal abuse and intimidation:

In order to ensure teaching staff are free to run clubs after school and attend vital meetings, our premises and IT teams have stepped in to support with managing the car park whilst users learn these new rules. Mr Wesley, Mr Roberts, Mr Arfat and Mr Day have been out in the car park each afternoon supervising safe use

for drivers and our students. I am saddened to report that every day for the last two weeks, this team has experienced an average of five incidents of verbal abuse from drivers including insults, swearing and threats and aggressive, dangerous driving. This is simply unacceptable. I have also been out in the car park most days to support them and challenge this abusive behaviour and I ask families to treat staff members with respect. They are stepping outside of their areas of responsibility to ensure the safety of our community and do not deserve to be treated this way.

Encouraging buses to serve the school directly:

Of the 541/975 families that completed the travel survey, 96 told us that they would use public transport instead of driving their child to school if it served the school directly. These are not large numbers but again, as every year, we will take the results to the bus companies and ask them to support us in this. We have heard from [Jeremy Quin MP](#) that the 200 intends to extend its route and serve the school from the spring of 2024 and we await confirmation of that.

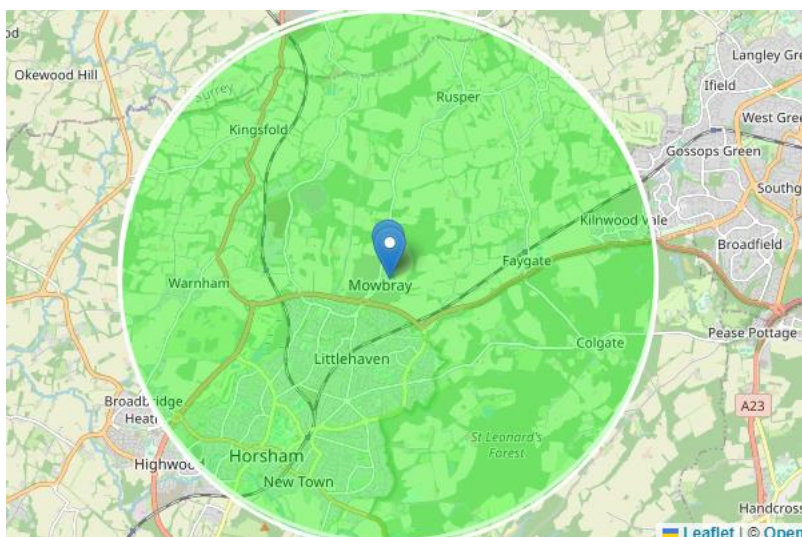


Figure 2: 3-mile radius from Bohunt Horsham

What can we do to help?

In my next meeting with the Parent Reference Group, I will be asking them for their support / in organising carpooling, walking caravans of groups of students and campaigning the public transport services on behalf of our families. The government has a '[statutory walking distance](#)' of 3 miles for young people aged 8 and over. Roughly, because this distance is measured by the 'shortest route along which a child... may walk with reasonable safety', the radius of three miles from our school is shown in the map above. If just a few of the families travelling to and from school by car felt able to encourage their child to walk or cycle, that would help enormously. Finally, please do treat school staff with respect in our car park, when we ask you to do something it is because we want to keep the community safe.

Yours faithfully,

Ms G Ayling
Headteacher