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Dear Parents/Carers,

As many of you are aware, I posted a message to the residents of Barham on the Barham and Kingston Facebook page last Thursday. This is not something I have ever felt the need to do before but the number of complaints about parking that we are dealing with is unprecedented and parents have never been abusive to neighbours as some are now. When I first started as headteacher at Barham, I received about one complaint a year but it has become almost a weekly occurrence. This still involves only a tiny minority of parents but unfortunately, it does tarnish the reputation of the school.

For those of you who are not on Facebook, this is the message:

Facebook

Message from Alison Higgins (co-headteacher at Barham Primary School)

To all the lovely residents of Barham, I am so sorry about the behaviour of the small minority of parents who park inconsiderately, dangerously and sometimes illegally along Valley Road, The Street and The Shrubbery. We are receiving more and more complaints about abusive behaviour when parents are rightly challenged too. Despite frequent reminders to parents, the situation seems to be getting worse. We have contacted the police and the Parish Council to see if they can support us in finding a solution. We have considered staggered entry times but other schools that have trialled this, have found it to be a logistical nightmare. Unfortunately, the majority of children at Barham have to be driven to school because they live outside the village. These children are lucky to be attending a school which is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and I'm very sad that some of parents do not respect the village and our neighbours. Our children on the other hand, do know how to look after the environment and know that they should be considerate towards others. We are planning an assembly about safe parking so that they can support their parents to make the right decision about where to drop them off.

To the parents that might be reading this that drive their children to school, please park sensibly and safely. You know we do not penalise you or your child for arriving late.

To our neighbours that might be reading this, feel free to take a photo of the car and contact the police. We are still considering how we can improve the situation so that your lives are not affected.

The purpose behind this post was to reach the Barham residents who have no connection with the school. Mrs Taylor, Mrs Duhig and I are spending a considerable amount of time dealing with complaints. Recent incidents have included a frightened villager seeking refuge



in the school from an abusive parent, an NHS worker being prevented from leaving for the hospital on time because they were blocked in and a passing motorist from Elham unable to attend a hospital appointment because parents were blocking the road. It is important for the residents to know that we are taking their complaints seriously.

Mrs Duhig posted the following comment on Facebook highlighting where you can park your car safely:

We've been informed by Hettie at The Duke of Cumberland that parents are welcome to park in the pub car park. This is going to be a great help for everyone in the community and we're really grateful.

So the pub and village hall car park, plus the very end of The Shrubbery, are looking like safe and considerate options.

We are incredibly grateful to Hettie who, after seeing the post, offered up the pub car park for parents to use but please only use it for drop off/pick up times and refrain from using it for day/evening events at the school such as the production.

Many of the suggestions in the comments and from parents' emails have been considered. For example, lengthening the drop off window from 8:30am but this would mean teaching assistants would have to be paid for the additional time. Our TAs play a critical role in supporting our vulnerable pupils at the start of the day. At the moment we do not have the funds for this. Opening the playground up from 8:30am has also been considered, as has a walking bus from the village hall but these also have implications. All these solutions would possibly ease the situation at drop off times but not at pick up times or whole school events during the day/evening.

If, as the polls are predicting, Labour form the new government, free breakfast clubs in every primary school are likely to be implemented as this is one of their key pledges for education in their manifesto. This will be funded and will solve some of the issues over parking at drop off times.

I would like to thank the parents who have emailed and commented with positive suggestions and understanding. Your support has been much appreciated. Please remember that we know that the vast majority of you are considerate and park safely.

Finally, as I wrote in my final sentence in the Facebook post, we are considering how we can improve the parking situation but, in the meantime, please think about safety when parking and respect our neighbours and this beautiful village, especially next week when we have sports day and a parent assembly.

Yours sincerely



Alison Higgins
Co-headteacher