



Cotham School, Cotham Lawn Road,
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Ms Emma Burgess and Ms Helen Powell
We Love Stoke Lodge
c/o email: welovestokelodge@gmail.com

21 October 2019

Dear Emma and Helen of We Love Stoke Lodge

Cotham School Playing Fields, Stoke Lodge

I am writing to you in advance of our meeting with the Bristol Mayor on Thursday.

At this meeting, I hope we can agree some ways of working that we can take forward.

Cotham school has provided the Bristol community with access to the school playing fields when not in use by the school. This is a huge concession on the part of the school and one that will only be supported going forward if the community who most benefits from this arrangement respects and finds a way to work with the school. Unfortunately, 'We Love Stoke Lodge' and supporters are continually finding ways to work against the school.

I am at a loss to understand how you and your community colleagues feel that the continual trail of complaints, FOIs, and direct action including vandalism at the playing fields can be considered as fair, reasonable or acceptable behaviour by a local community.

Your campaign of hostility is impacting on my health and wellbeing and that of my staff and governors.

Over recent years, we have consistently said we would work with you on an enhanced community park and the provision of perimeter walkways on our leased land around the fenced part of our school playing fields.

However, we now seem to be in the position where 'We Love Stoke Lodge' and supporters are on the one hand still campaigning against the school by seeking to undermine the provision of facilities on site and the use of the school playing fields, and on the other, taking direct action to damage and to vandalise our playing fields by seeking to apply rules and constraints to the detriment of the operation of the school. This includes providing misinformation to Bristol City Council to disrupt works that will assist the school in making access to the playing fields easier and more consistent for the community.

You and your supporters are now taking action to create enhanced perimeter walkways on school land beyond the school fence without any respect for the same rules you seek to apply to the school in their use of the school playing fields through your campaign. You have undertaken a considerable amount of unauthorised changes to our land over the last couple of months beyond the fence area. We are aware that you have cut back trees and shrubs, put in footpaths, laid bark chippings on some of these paths and created ramp access to the perimeter. None of this work has been undertaken with the agreement of the school or, via the school to gain the necessary approval of the City Council.

We have also become aware of your organised and concerted efforts by local people to wear down routes across the playing fields. These have now made the site uneven and potentially dangerous to our students when playing sport. I will therefore be closing the playing fields for as long as it takes to repair the damaged grass areas.





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This is necessary to ensure the safety of our students but is clearly additional and unnecessary expenditure that we have to find diverting valuable school funds away from the running of the school.

The school will now be putting in place a necessary protocol which will need to be adhered to when you or your group would like to undertake works on our land beyond the perimeter fence. It will mean that you must seek the approval of the school for such works. On receipt of a request, we will then consider the application, seek any agreement required by Bristol City Council as landlord and let you know if it is acceptable to go ahead.

Until we have agreed a way of working, I ask that you do not undertake any more unauthorised work on school land.

I look forward to meeting you on Thursday.

Yours sincerely

Ms Jo Butler
(Headteacher)

