



OAKFIELD JUNIOR SCHOOL

ITEM 4a

Bell Lane, Fetcham

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To the Members of the Scrutiny Committee
Council Chamber
Pippbrook
Dorking
Surrey

6 March 2018

Dear Members of the Scrutiny Committee

Re: Oakfield Junior School, Bell Lane, Fetcham, Surrey KT22 9ND

We are writing on behalf of Oakfield Junior School, Fetcham, and kindly ask this request is put forward at the next meeting to be held on 14 March to the members of the Committee on our behalf.

Oakfield Junior school is a SCC maintained school in Fetcham which has approximately 250 pupils and includes a centre for pupils with learning and additional needs (LAN). To the side of the school there is a strip of land owned by Surrey County Council (SCC) which is situated between the school and the gardens of a number of houses which are on Gatesden Road. There is no access from the school to this piece of land and until recently there was a secure, albeit overgrown, wire fence along this boundary. These houses have access to this strip of land from their properties and apparently some have garden licences.

Along this fence boundary there is a school path which at a particular stretch near to the LAN Centre has become very uneven, with large cracks forming and the path sloping at an angle. The stretch of the path is at the same level as the strip of land on one side but on the other side of the path it drops sharply to a much lower level. The reason for this deterioration is unclear and so the school contacted SCC, after a survey had been carried out, with regards to the possibility that the trees on the strip of land were the cause and what support could be obtained to fix the path and address the tree roots.

After numerous phone calls, emails and visits from various people SCC sent contractors to Oakfield in August 2016 to cut down some of the trees on this piece of land adjacent to the path. Unfortunately, the trees and foliage which were cut down were not removed by SCC and the school then received a complaint from a resident about this.

Numerous visits have followed and further work has been carried out recently to address the overgrowth on the strip of land. But as there is no access to this strip of land the contractors have had to cut through the fence each time. As a result of years of unmanaged plant and tree growth on the strip of land and the work carried out, the fence along this area has been severely damaged, it is unsecure, broken and falling down. The issues with the school path still remain.

Since this was first raised as a concern in August 2016, the school has contacted SCC and Babcock on numerous occasions and a total of 12 people have visited the site, from SCC, Health & Safety and Babcock but this remains unresolved and we feel no one person is taking charge.

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Our concern is firstly for the safety of our children and visitors to our school. This path is the link between our playgrounds and outdoor classrooms and is in constant use and is a tripping hazard. Our school site is inclined and the path is also our wheelchair access around the external part of the school and is particularly difficult to use due to its condition and angle. Secondly, our school has vulnerable children and children who have special education needs who do not always assess or see the safety risks in the same way as others. Thirdly our concern is the safeguarding of our pupils as the remaining fence is no longer a secure boundary.

On 19 January 2018, the school being so concerned about the state of the path and fence arranged for a Health & Safety Adviser from Babcock 4Sa to carry out an independent Health & Safety Inspection. The advisor recommended the school limit access to the path. However as this is the only pathway that does not involve several steps pupils with bicycles or scooters, parents with pushchairs and wheelchair users still need to access this path.

Furthermore, during the February 2018 half term SCC contractors removed further trees and plant growth leaving the fence in dire condition with some bits held together with plastic ties, and other parts non-existent.

During this whole period the school has received complaints from neighbours about the condition of this piece of land, the lack of husbandry, apparently asbestos present and that it is a haven for vermin. Neighbours have also voiced concern over the deterioration in condition of the fence and concerns for safeguarding of children. In addition, numerous concerns have been raised by parents who are concerned for the safety of their children, the fact that there is no longer a secure boundary fence and the damaged path.

This issue has been passed around and around, with various people coming and going and with no resolution for the school. It has taken considerable time for our staff to meet with these various people, along with numerous phone calls and emails to try to resolve this problem. However, we still we are no further forward.

We are asking if the committee would be able to help us unlock the barriers with SCC so that the school can resolve these concerns, rectify the condition of the boundary fence and path and ensure the children of Oakfield are safe and secure when they attend school.

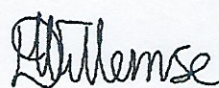
We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind regards



Mrs Yolynnda Delugar

Chair of Governors



Mrs Debbie Willemse

Head Teacher