



West Hill Primary School

(a partner in the SMILE Learning Trust)

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Headteacher: Cheryl Boulton



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Dear Parent/Guardian

Re The School Playing Field

We are pleased to offer our support to the Devon Air Ambulance Trust by agreeing to the use of the school playing field to operate a night time landing area serving the West Hill community. This follows an initiative by a local group and will be subject to West Hill Parish Council funding. In practice once fully equipped any use would be under total control of the Air Ambulance in conjunction with the Ambulance Service with whom they coordinate.

You may have also noticed from West Hill Parish Council meeting minutes there has been a recent request for us to open the school playing field outside of school hours for general community use but we have resisted this for a number of reasons which we want to share with you.

Although the main area is a school playing field this is linked to other areas which are set up and used for other purposes, such as the Forest School area, the outdoor classroom and the trim trail. Over the years even with 6 feet high gates in place there have been acts of antisocial behaviour with damage to trees and equipment and removal of Forest School equipment onto the main playing field. This creates not only unwelcome expenditure as property has to be replaced or repaired, but school staff have to take urgent corrective action the next day prior to use by the children.

Safeguarding is a fundamental part of every school and this is why we were advised by Devon County Council to install higher gates to the school playing field following our safeguarding audit in December 2016. These have two purposes, to ensure children are in a secure environment when on the field and to keep that environment free from any outside interference or disruption which may impact on planned learning activities.

Our view on not leaving the School Playing field permanently open outside of school hours is supported by Devon CC and the Police who have both been consulted. We have also consulted with the other schools in our local learning community and note that none of them allow community access to their sites for the same reasons listed above.

Whilst we have accommodated and explored the request from the Parish Council, we hope this has helped to explain why schools do not allow community access to their land outside school hours. At the end of the day the pupils at West Hill Primary School are our priority and must come first.

Yours sincerely,

The Governing Board