

10th September 2021

HEAD OF SCHOOL: Mr I Bacon

Dear Parents and Carers,

Regarding Car Park and Pick-up/Drop-off

As we reach the end of the first week, I wanted to write to you about the challenges facing us at the start and end of the day regarding traffic and outline some of our priorities and the measures we have taken to try to address the situation.

Watling Academy is fundamentally designed to be a school for children living in the localities of Whitehouse and Fairfields and those areas that are close by and therefore the aspiration is that the majority of students will cycle or walk to school. As Whitehouse and Fairfields are areas still very much in their infancy we are delighted to welcome children from further afield in Milton Keynes who have chosen Watling as their school of choice and I fully understand that for many of those children, coming to school in the car may be the only option.

Every family has to make the most appropriate and practical arrangements for getting their child to and from school be that via bus, car, cycling or walking.

However, during the course of this week the number of cars arriving at Watling Academy to drop-off or pick-up has significantly outstripped the capacity of our car park and the ability of the local area to cope with the volume of traffic. This has resulted in numerous complaints from local residents, complaints from parents in possession of a Disabled 'Blue' Badge that non-disabled drivers are parking in disabled bays and significant frustration from parents generally. I understand and empathise with each one of these concerns.

The facts of the matter are:-

- We have a maximum capacity of 120 parking spaces once a small number of staff cars have been accommodated
- On some days this week nearly 300 cars have arrived to drop-off or pick-up students
- There is very little available space to drop-off or pick-up on Barrosa Way as much of the road near Watling Academy is either a bus lane, a school safety (no parking) zone or local residents use it for parking

As a Leadership Team we have spent a significant amount of time discussing how the traffic situation can be best managed and are aware that there is probably no ideal solution. We have adjusted some systems throughout the week to try and alleviate the congestion but fundamentally the danger is that we push the problem elsewhere, away from the car park, negatively impacted the local community with whom we want to build a positive relationship.

Respect / Responsibility / Kindness

We have therefore decided that we must focus on the following priorities: -

- Safety of children within our car park
- Safety of children as they leave our site, cycling or on foot
- Maintaining provision for disabled parking
- Working in partnership to support our neighbours and the wider Whitehouse community

As a school which has a strong focus on sustainability, making positive choices for the environment we have a responsibility to encourage green travel to and from school where possible so please could I ask that you support us by:-

1. Encouraging your child to walk or cycle to school if at all possible
2. Look at possibilities to use public transport – the X60 stops at both the Fairways junction and the Crownhill roundabout on the V4, the Number 1 bus is more limited in where it travels from but it does stop just across the road from Watling Academy next to Whitehouse Primary School
3. Consider car shares if travel by car is the only option
4. If you do drive into the car park, please avoid parking in a disabled space if you do not have a 'blue badge', please park in a space to drop-off or pick-up, don't double park or block others in and be understanding and patient – it may take 10-15 minutes for you to get out when the car park is busy

I am also encouraging staff to walk, cycle, use public transport or car share where possible.

I have spoken and directly met on site with representatives from the Council to highlight the problem but currently Barrosa Way falls under the remit of the developer, L&Q, and not the Council.

At that meeting it was agreed that:-

- No construction traffic on Barrosa Way during school drop off and pick up times
- A temporary bus stop will be put in place, further down Barrosa Way
- Discussions are ongoing regarding a formal crossing (zebra or pelican) outside Watling Academy on Barrosa Way

There are currently traffic calming works on Barrosa Way and H4 Danstead Way which are not helping the situation. Both L&Q and the Council are going to work on completing these as quickly as possible. This is likely to be mid-late October.

I will continue to monitor and review the situation but fundamentally the situation will only be eased if less children travel to and from school by car.

Many thanks for your support and understanding.

Yours faithfully



Mr I Bacon
Head of School