



St Katherine's School



23 May 2019

Dear Parents/Carers

UK Youth Climate 'Strikes' – 24 May 2019

Many of you will be aware that a day of student 'strikes' is being proposed in a number of cities on Friday 24 May to protest against climate change.

This is a difficult issue to balance for schools. We agree wholeheartedly with the sentiment of such action and are fully supportive of students being active participators on such important issues which will have a significant impact on their lives. However, the notion of a student 'strike' on a school day is inevitably problematic for schools.

We hold a strong position on the attendance of students at school to ensure the continuity of education and to sanction a day's absence from school would be contradictory to that position. We also have a duty of care to safeguard all students in our care and there are no guarantees as to the level of supervision, by the police or other authorities at the event.

Please see overleaf a letter I received today from the Police, highlighting these concerns.

Thank you for your support in advance.

Your sincerely

Justin Humphreys
Headteacher

Headteacher: Justin Humphreys

St Katherine's School, Ham Green, North Somerset BS20 0HU

T: 01275 373737 E: school@stkaths.org.uk www.stkaths.org.uk

St Katherine's School @stkathsschool



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Dear Head teachers,

As you will know that there has been a surge of support for protest and protest groups linked to the environmental impact of global warming. This is an important issue and naturally attracts the interest of young people who want to show they care about their planet and to influence those in power to do more.

Police have a duty to support protest set out in a range of legislation including the Human Rights Act. It is an important principle of our country that people can protest and the police role is to prevent Crime and Disorder not to prevent people expressing their views. In fact we positively facilitate protest on most occasions.

The main organisers for a series of Bristol based youth led protests have done a good job in mobilising young people to attend. They are following the guidance for organisers of static based protest and are supported by their parents. They work well with the police and deliver the protest as planned. They are not however able to control what happens outside of their influence or after their protest is finished.

I do have concerns which come from observing two previous youth led protests on College Green as the Police Silver Commander. Not only young people attend and I saw a whole range of adults, some from local protest groups but others who were unknown to the police. Many of the young people were not in the company of parents and I saw the unknown adults talking to them. I saw what I can only describe as coercion from adults to get the young people to march at the end without planning or the following of the safety rules. Without stewarding of any kind the young people occupied the road and walked amongst moving traffic at great danger to themselves. I also witnessed criminal acts of damage including people walking over the top of cars. I am of the opinion that this was encouraged by the adults.

I also received intelligence that young people were being invited to adult led protest activity.

I want to stress that I am not trying to prevent protest or to undermine the planning of the one scheduled for next Friday however I remain concerned for the safety of some of the young people who will attend.

I would therefore recommend that it can only be for parents to consent that any child under the age of 18 be present at a protest when they would otherwise be in school and it will be for the parent to determine how to keep their child safe in these circumstances.

I hope this information assists you.

Supt. Andy Bennett
Bristol Police Commander & Force Hate Crime Lead

Avon and Somerset Police
SERVE. PROTECT. RESPECT.

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