



25th April 2017

Dear Parents,

With regard to the recent announcement of a General Election on Thursday 8 June we are writing to inform you that the Oakley schools will be closed as the site is to be used as a polling station. We realise this is regrettable in the light of the fact that we are closed next week for the same reason but we have no say in the matter. We do not volunteer the school as a polling station and are governed by Statute; Rule 22 of the Parliamentary Election Rules which states 'schools have a duty to allow their rooms, if requested, to be used as a polling station. Owing to the importance of providing locally accessible polling stations, the use of schools and public rooms for the purpose of polling is protected in legislation.' We do not receive any income for this use of the school.

After the flurry of different polling events last year, several parents as well as the schools themselves contacted the local council. The response referred us to the above legislation and pointed out that both the School and East Oakley Village Hall are used to accommodate the whole village. We were told that Polling Stations are reviewed every few years and in a recent review there were no practical insurmountable issues with the school as a polling place (e.g. heating, lighting etc) and only one comment was made during the review, (this referred to disabled access), so no alternative venues were considered.

The schools cannot operate for reasons of safeguarding as the site is open to the public with increased traffic on site and gates that have to be open all day.

INSET (IN Service Training) days are set and published more than a year in advance. The school year is 195 days with a statutory five days to be taken at the schools' discretion for training and development purposes with the children receiving their legal requirement of 190 days. Oakley schools plan to take INSET days at the same time as much as possible, recognising that this makes it easier for parents who have children in both schools. Dates are published at the beginning of the new school year (usually during the previous summer term if at all possible) and reminders are given throughout the school year. We try to link INSET days to school holidays to make it easier for parents to take extended breaks if they wish but have to work around the key work of the schools such as the assessment timetable. Sometimes dates are planned to allow several schools to work together and schools often pay for outside speakers and trainers who are booked and paid for many months in advance.

The sudden announcement of a General Election in June with only a few weeks warning has caught everyone by surprise. We have no alternative other than to take an additional extraordinary closure on this date and although we do have an INSET day at the end of June this is already planned for and cannot be changed.

We hope this makes it clear to parents that these matters are outside the remit of the school; they have come as much as a surprise to us as to you. Extraordinary closures are never ideal and are avoided as far as possible by schools. We are very fortunate this year that we have not had to close and lose days for snow or other extreme weather conditions. The schools do not gain financially or in any other way and staff come to work as normal. They are an inconvenience to us as much as you. Both schools are currently looking to reschedule or cancel things planned for this date as well as reviewing planning to decide how we can cover the curriculum and lost learning.

If you have any questions, please do make an appointment with either Headteacher to discuss these matters further.

Sally Harvey

Headteacher Oakley Infant School

Steve Rich

Headteacher Oakley Junior School