



# Highcliffe St. Mark Primary School

(A Church of England Foundation School)  
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**Headteacher: Mrs C Barker**

09 April 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you are enjoying the Easter break. I am sorry to be emailing you during your holidays but I have been aware of some adverse social media activity about some of the work that we have had done whilst the children have been away from school. I had intended to let parents know about this once we returned but, given some discussion on social media I would like to explain why this work was carried out now so that you can reassure the children that it is necessary.

This involved the felling of the Leylandii trees along the fence by the infant building.

There were a number of reasons why this work was necessary which I have outlined below:

- We have been experiencing repeated flooding within the infant building. On one occasion, this resulted in the temporary closure of some classrooms and the children had to be relocated whilst we dealt with floodwater. Some parents will remember this happening. A professional survey, which included sending cameras through the drainage system to find out why this came in through the drains on the roof, was undertaken and it was found that the Leylandii tree roots had made their way through and up the drains. Some drains have collapsed and some large roots were completely filling other drains. Although we were able to remove some, we were advised that they would return in time. These roots have caused serious damage to the drains beneath the playground and also within the building itself. Something which we still need to find the money to sort at a later date.
- The roots of the trees were not only undermining our drainage system but also beginning to undermine the foundations of the actual infant building.
- The roots of the trees were lifting the surface of the playground making it impossible to keep on top of the trip hazards that this caused. Our first aid records are proof of the amount of incidents where children and adults were tripping over raised areas of the ground at the front of the school where these roots were growing.

I would like to assure you that all relevant advice was sought including BCP and professional tree surgeons before this decision was made. The tree surgeon checked that there were no nesting birds in the trees before removing them.

In preparation, we planted 20 sapling trees, more appropriate for the grounds of a school, in other places away from the school building last year which we received through support from the Woodland Trust. We plan to plant more this year, too.

I will be inviting our Eco team to help to research and plan for the replacement planting along this stretch of the fence as I would like to include some species of hedgerow native to the UK and which would promote biodiversity more successfully than the Leylandii.



Finally, as a Green Flag with distinction school, a decision to remove trees would not be something which we would take lightly but on balance, it was the only decision which we could make given damage already caused and the threat to the school buildings which the Leylandii posed.

I hope that my letter gives the thorough explanation needed to alleviate any concerns. I hope that you all enjoy the remainder of the Easter break.

Best wishes

Claire Barker