

SCHOOL ENFORCES DOG BAN ON PENARTH PLAYING FIELDS

- **Teachers forced to clear dog mess from fields**
- **Dog owners “abusive” to staff**

A dog ban is to be enforced at Victoria School Playing Fields in Penarth in an effort to stop illegal dog fouling and problems caused by nuisance dogs.

The ban will come into effect on June 7th and the school is liaising with the Vale and police about enforcement. Anyone found taking their dog onto the field will face a fine.

Governors hope that the move – which comes as the Vale Council installed new play equipment - will make the field a safer and more popular facility for the whole community.

They decided to enforce the ban because a minority of owners are continuing to allow their dogs to foul the playing fields. Victoria Primary School head teacher Tina Taylor has personally had to clear the fields of dog mess before children can use it for sports or play

Chair of Governors Chris O'Callaghan said: “It is really sad that we've had to enforce this ban because many people use the field to exercise their dogs in a responsible way.

“But it's completely unacceptable to have dogs fouling a school playing field. We have put up bins specially for dog mess – and there are new signs which clearly show that this is a school field. But none of this has made any difference.

“I think parents would be horrified if their child came home covered in dog mess just because they had been playing on the school field. And that's not even taking account of the really serious health risks if children have to play around dog mess.”

Mrs Taylor and staff have faced aggression from dog owners when they have asked them to clear up after their dogs, or to walk them on a lead.

“I can have more than a hundred children down at the fields on a lunchtime – and it's really unreasonable for people to be walking their dogs off the lead. But when I've asked people to put their dogs on the lead they have become aggressive and abusive.

“Even on sports day, when the whole school and hundreds of parents are using the field, I've had abuse from dog owners who insist on walking their dogs there.”

“Pupils have a right to use their school field without having to worry about dogs running wild and our staff shouldn't have to waste their time clearing up dog mess. If the field was part of the school grounds people would not expect to exercise their dogs there. Dogs are banned from educational land and we need to enforce this .”

Governors had considered a range of options – including closing the playing fields to the public. But they rejected this option because they wanted the park to continue to be an asset for the whole community.

New play equipment has been put in by the Vale Council and they hope more families than ever will enjoy the field over the summer months.

Ms O'Callaghan said: “It's a great place for local children to play football and other sports. We want to see local families, as well as the pupils of Victoria Primary School, making full use of the field. We hope they'll now be able to do this without having to worry about dog mess or aggressive dogs. “

Notes to Editors

- Toxocariasis is a disease which causes asthma, epileptic fits and eye disorders. Symptoms can last for up to two years. It's spread through earth or sand contaminated by dog faeces. It most commonly affects children under five years old.
- Failing to clear up after your dog is illegal and can lead to fines of up to £1,000.
- For more information on the dangers of dog fouling see:
<http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/KeyIssues/DogFouling/Default.aspx>

