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June 2015

Important letter to Parents and Carers regarding possible soft bones issues

Dear Parents and Carers

This is a letter we have sent out to identified parents during the last three years.

After a period of consultation involving Calderdale MBC's Health and Safety Manager, NHS Medical Teams, Staff and Governors, I am writing to make you aware of a concern we share with the Headteachers and Governors of both Highbury and Woodbank Schools. Consequently we are sending this letter to all parents/carers of new students who specifically use wheelchairs or may have a bone vulnerability whilst at Ravenscliffe.

All three schools are aware of **a very small number** of children who have sustained broken bones, possibly in the home or school environment in the last 5 years. In these situations it has been found that there is a chance that the students may have had an underlying medical condition which could be referred to as brittle bones or soft bones (osteoporosis). Naturally we have been very concerned particularly when it has not always been possible to ascertain the cause of the injury, or indeed if the injury was sustained on school premises. We fully understand the distress caused to students, their parents and families in these instances and we need to do everything we can that is reasonable to prevent this.

After significant consultation with the School Governors at Ravenscliffe, one of whom is a GP, and representatives from the National Health Service it has come to light that some of our **less mobile students** may be more susceptible to bone density issues. It was stated that: **"There is a high level of risk of osteoporosis in students who are non-weight bearing, especially those with low body mass"** (i.e. wheelchair users and students who have significant mobility issues are far more vulnerable to a bone fracture). It is clear therefore that this condition **may** apply to other students.

As a result of the above, we have made it part of our Transition Policy to send this letter to all parents/carers of our new students with potential mobility issues, who start at Ravenscliffe in September. I am sure you appreciate that the safety of our students is paramount and the supervision and care we aim to give throughout their time in school is always to the highest standards. However we want our students to engage in the full range of activities at school. This involves the use of transport, moving around school, accessing sport, swimming and other activities. We cannot wrap our children in cotton wool. The Council's Policy Statement on Health and Safety reflects that we will do everything that is 'reasonable and proportionate'. To this end I would ask for your understanding and co-operation on this sensitive matter.

As a school we always try to operate on a transparent, honest approach and we would clearly like to guard against any further difficulties of this nature for our students and their families. Given our concerns about this may I ask that you **consider** raising the issue of bone density with your medical practitioner if you have a concern at your next appointment and inform us of any judgements or observations they make.

Yours sincerely

MARTIN J E MOORMAN
HEADTEACHER

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