



16th July 2018

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Flood at Goffs Academy

I thought it important to write to give further background information on the very serious flood that Goffs experienced last week, and to explain why we were compelled to close for two days.

At around midday on Saturday 7th July 2018, one of the sprinkler heads in the Sixth Form Quiet Study Room on the first floor activated. As a result, the school's entire water reserves, stored for activation in the event of a fire, discharged via the sprinkler system. A very serious flood ensued, breaking through the ceilings of the ground floor and flooding classrooms, the Restaurant area, Reception and the Hall, as well as rooms and the corridor on the first floor. Some of you may have seen the video footage which highlights the volume of water that exited into the building. It is no exaggeration to say that those of us first on site were literally wading through water.

Given the extent of the damage and the amount of clear-up needed, it was immediately apparent that the school would not be able to open on the Monday. Aside from needing to clear a significant volume of water from the site, and clear affected rooms, electrics needed restoring to the building, and the fire safety systems needed re-setting and pressurising. I therefore asked Ben Peace, Principal, to activate the closure message system for parents so that you had as much notice as possible. It was absolutely our intention and hope to open on the Tuesday. Unfortunately the absolutely woeful response of the building contractors made this impossible.

Despite a very clear Service Level Agreement between the school and the contractors, Interserve Kajima, the school received absolutely no support from their management on the Saturday, notwithstanding our emergency calls, and very limited support on the Sunday. When senior management finally arrived on site on the Monday, Ian Denchfield and myself were keen to understand what had activated the sprinkler before re-opening the school. Having done our own initial assessment on the Saturday, our concern was that a serious design flaw meant that a minority of sprinkler heads had been fitted in roof windows with fixed blinds underneath them. Effectively this trapped heat around the sprinkler, and we suspect that the temperatures on that Saturday led to the sprinkler head believing it had detected a fire and activating. Having seen how much water came into the building in a very short period of time, we were keen to ensure that the sprinkler system was fully fit for purpose before bringing students back in.

It took until Tuesday lunchtime for Interserve Kajima management to ensure that the necessary checks and changes were being made, despite relentless pressure from the school. Only when we had been assured that the building was absolutely safe and all systems were able to operate as they should, were we prepared to contact parents saying that we would open on Wednesday. Whilst I have no doubt that the closure caused many of you much inconvenience, you will also share our determination that safety comes before everything else.



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Interserve Kajima's response throughout has been entirely inadequate - acknowledged by them - and is something that we will be following up both politically and within the DfE. The school expects to receive financial compensation for the forced closure, and whilst this is of little comfort, it is at least money that we can feed back into provision for students. The Board of Trustees will be meeting with senior Interserve Kajima management, whilst Ian and I will oversee a full programme of repair and redecoration over the summer.

I will take this opportunity to thank the Goffs cleaning contractors who have been superb throughout; one of our caretaker's, Daniel Hounslow, who was on duty and responded so very well at the point that the system activated; our on site Interserve electrician, Doru, who drove twice from his home in Luton to try to help us, and all of the Goffs staff who pitched in with a huge clear-up both throughout the weekend and on the Monday and Tuesday. Our grateful thanks go to them all.

Yours sincerely

Alison J Garner
Executive Principal

Andrew Clarke
Chair of Trustees

Ian Denchfield
MAT Chief Financial Officer



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