



Parking problems are not our fault, say angry Stratton parents

Car parking problems at St Catherine's Catholic Primary School in Stratton St Margaret. PARENTS of children attending a primary school in Stratton St Margaret are fed up with being blamed for the parking issues. They spoke out after the head of St Catherine's Catholic Primary School said she was ashamed of drivers' behaviour when an ambulance was blocked in nearby Gay's Place by parents collecting their children last month. Lisa Kerry, 28, is one mother who has to negotiate traffic to drop off and collect her 10-year-old son everyday. She said: "I think it's disgusting that you build a school where there is absolutely nowhere safe to park. "There are only three or four spaces for all the parents who have to drive here, and I have to wait at the bottom of the road waiting for it to clear before I can drive up and fetch my son. Meanwhile, he's looking for me and getting worried because he can't see me. "In the morning I have to get to work in town for 9am. If I walked it would take too much time and I'd be late. It always gets jammed up and there's not enough space. " During the school sports day last Thursday, Davenwood and the neighbouring roads were jammed from 9.30am with parents' cars. Dorothy Coward, who has lived on Gay's Place for 39 years, was one of the residents affected by the parking. She said: "It was absolutely terrible. They were double parked, up on the lawn, on the pavement. "I was shopping with my daughter at the time and when we came back we could only just about get through, but my daughter had to pull the wing mirrors in. " Most parents agree that parking at the school is a problem but think it is only down to one or two irresponsible drivers. Alan Carter, whose grandchildren attend the school, said: "There is a problem with parking but some parents make it a lot worse, parking on residents' drives and blocking up the roads. "But it is only the handful of people who do it that cause all the problems. It's only the odd one or two and they make it difficult for everybody. " Police have recommended that parents park in the car park of the Kingsdown pub while dropping off and collecting children from the school, but parents say the distance is too far to walk. One mother, who did not wish to be named, said: "I haven't parked there because there is no back entrance to the school. "So first you have to cross a very busy road and to do that safely you have to walk down to the pedestrian crossing near Kingsdown School. You have to use it because you don't want children to cross the road where there isn't a crossing. "Then you have to walk back up to the crossroads, down a pathway and then walk all the way around the school to go in through the main gate. " Last week, councillors called for Swindon Council to work with schools, parents and police teams to find solutions to the parking problems around schools. Coun. Julian Price (Lab, Covingham and Dorcan), the Labour group's shadow lead for transport, said: "While the case of the ambulance not being able to get to the hospital is unique, dangerous parking and driving from a few irresponsible parents is common. "I know of some schools crying out for more action by the council. They tell us there will be casualties if action isn't taken and there have already been near-misses. " Clare-Marie Burchall, head teacher at St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, said: "The governing body is looking at solutions to the thorny issue. The school is planning to operate a walking bus in September, and is working with Jane Deeley, Swindon Borough Council travel advisor, to create five-minute walk zones around the school. "

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