Bridgewater Primary

Together rain or shine

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Oak Processionary Moths





Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to inform you that during a survey of our trees this summer, two oak processionary moth (OPM) nests were identified in our forest school area. We want to ensure you are well-informed about how we are managing the situation and how we can work together to keep our children safe.

What are Oak Processionary Moths?

These moths are a notifiable invasive pest, accidentally introduced to the UK in 2005. They have been spreading out from London to surrounding counties, including Hertfordshire. As the caterpillars mature, they develop thousands of tiny hairs, which get left behind in their nests once they emerge as moths. The hairs contain an irritating substance which can cause skin rashes, sore throats, eye irritation, or breathing difficulties. In serious cases people and animals can develop an allergic reaction.

Safety Advice for Children

We have briefed our staff and have spoken to the children how to recognize oak trees, the caterpillars, and their nests. We have fenced off the areas around the affected trees. Please help us by reminding your child of the following:

- Do not touch any caterpillars or their nests.
- Stay away from any nests found on the ground.
- Inform an adult immediately if they see a nest or hairy caterpillar, and do not approach it.

What to do in case of contact

If you or your child accidentally come into contact with the caterpillars or their hairs, the NHS recommends:

- Gently remove any caterpillars with tweezers. Try not to disturb it, because this could cause the caterpillar to release more hairs.
- Rinse the affected skin with running water and air dry.
- Use sticky tape to pull any remaining hairs from the skin.
- Wash contaminated clothing at a high temperature.

If a rash or other symptoms develop, please contact your GP or call NHS 111.
If your pet comes into contact with the hairs, contact your vet.
This poster from the Forestry Commission provides more information and includes instructions on what to do if you see the caterpillars or their nests in the local area.

School Actions

Please be reassured that the safety of our pupils is our priority. We are regularly monitoring our oak trees and have sought expert advice, taken advice from HCC and notified the Forestry Commission. At this point in the year the caterpillars will have gone through the pupation process and emerged as adult moths.

We have been advised that we are eligible for the Forestry Commission to fund surveillance and treatment for oak processionary moths, to prevent their further spread.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our school community safe.

Andrea Bettridge
Headteacher