

Friday 20th October 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

Following a series of serious incidents in derelict buildings across the Bay, Torbay Council and Devon and Cornwall Police are issuing a warning to help reduce unauthorised access and keep people safe.

During the past few weeks there has been an increase in the number of people accessing empty buildings, with vandalism, anti-social behaviour and injuries from broken glass.

Although the buildings were secured, people are breaking in, so we are working with the building owners to re-secure the buildings. Police and private security are not on site 24 hours a day at these premises but are regularly trying to secure the buildings and stop entry by dispersing those trying to gain access.

Issues include:

At least three children have suffered significant cuts to themselves resulting in hospitalisation in the Emergency Department, with one receiving ten stitches for a serious cut from smashing broken glass in one of the empty buildings.

Although Urban Exploring has become popular on social media, people are not aware of the short and long-term risks such as risks posed by a lack of maintenance, structural instability, fire and electrical hazards, possible toxic substances, and lack of emergency services access. Asbestos in the buildings, when disturbed, is linked to serious health risks when the fibres are inhaled when airborne, which in later life can lead to lung cancer, asbestosis, and other lung conditions.

As some of these buildings are derelict and not maintained, many also contain pigeons which pose serious health risks, with their droppings containing pathogens, bacteria and fungi that can also lead to a variety of lung issues and infections over time.

A Devon and Cornwall Police spokesman said: "By entering derelict buildings, people are putting themselves at risk from any potential dangers within."

"Should emergency services and other partners have to respond to incidents as a result, they would also be putting those individuals at risk as well. Those found on premises could be subject to a criminal investigation and their details shared with Torbay Council."

Councillor Hayley Tranter, Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities, said: "Empty buildings, whether abandoned or derelict, pose significant risks to anyone entering them, and being derelict there are reduced chances knowing anyone is in there if there is an accident."



Pencalenick School, St Clement, Truro, TR1 1TE



01872 520 385



info@specialpartnership.org



specialpartnership.org



Brunel School

Brunel School
170b Torquay Road
Paignton
TQ3 2AL

Telephone: 01803 665522
Email: admin@brunelschool.org

"We are particularly concerned that in some instances, people are not only entering these buildings but are causing vandalism and putting their lives at risk due to smashing of glass windows, smashing of asbestos tiles, and accessing the buildings through dangerous areas. Asbestos is linked to serious health risks when the fibres are inhaled when airborne, and there is also a serious risk to health posed by the droppings of pigeons in the buildings."

Yours sincerely,
Brunel School



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Trust



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info@specialpartnership.org



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