



Bonneygrove Primary School

Headteacher: Mr Craig Hamilton BEd (Hons.), NPQH

Dark Lane

Cheshunt

Herts

EN7 5ED

Tel: 01992 307900

Email: admin@bonneygrove.herts.sch.uk

26th June 2023

Dear Parents / Carers

RE: Children with rashes across the school

As some of you may be aware through active 'WhatsApp' groups, some of our children have a red rash (looks like bites) on their bodies (legs, arms and torso). We believe we have identified the insect responsible. The insect is actually a moth – and in its initial stages. It is known as oak processionary caterpillar.

Oak processionary moth caterpillars are covered in thousands of tiny hairs. These fine, barbed hairs are called bristles or setae. The bristles break off readily, become airborne and land on the skin, clothes, or hair. They are so small (between 0.2 and 0.3 millimetres) that they can easily penetrate the skin, and because the hairs are barbed, they stick into your skin.

The toxins on the bristles contain a protein that the body does not recognise. This generates a response in the body's immune system and releases histamine in an effort to expel the protein or 'foreign invader'. This can cause various symptoms, depending on which part of the body is affected.

What sort of symptoms do they cause?

If the hairs or toxins come into contact with the skin, most people get allergic skin reactions. The symptoms generally appear four to eight hours after exposure. The most common skin reactions include:

- Itchy rash.
- Red patches, bumps, and blisters on the skin.
- Burning sensation.

If the stinging hairs of oak procession caterpillars come in contact with the eyes, they can cause eye problems within one to four hours, such as:

- Itchy eyes.
- Red, irritable eyes.
- Swollen eyelids.
- Watery eyes.

We have contacted a specialist to support in removing the nests and hopefully this will eradicate the problem.

I am hopeful the removal of the caterpillar nests will take place in the next few days.

Yours sincerely

Mr Craig Hamilton
Headteacher