



End of the road for high-fiving lollipop man

The London press recently reported that a lollipop man, who was threatened with suspension for the apparently dangerous activity of high-fiving children as they crossed the road, has resigned.

The lollipop man in question, Bob Slade, 65, helped children crossing a road near a primary school in Plymouth.

Parent Barbara Laws said his actions were "not dangerous" and it was a "ridiculous" situation. However, Plymouth City Council said that whilst those on patrols can be "friendly", their "full attention must be on the road".

Ms Laws however, explained, "He had his hand out anyway to hold back the traffic and as the children crossed they would pat the hand that he was holding out. In my opinion that's not dangerous. I think if you spoke to any of the parents they wouldn't think it was dangerous - if we had we would have asked him to stop."

Mr Slade said he was "upset" by what had happened. Speaking to the Plymouth Herald, he said he had been doing the job for more than four years without a single accident.

Ms Laws said he was "doing the job very well" and following his resignation no-one was patrolling the road.

"It was all down to a decision which we [parents] don't understand," she added.

A spokesman from Plymouth City Council said: "We take the safety of children very seriously and school crossing patrols exist to make sure children can cross roads as safely as possible.

"To do this they must hold out the lollipop with one arm and hold their other arm outstretched to signal that all traffic must stop - this is well established signalling that should be understood by all drivers.

"While patrols can be friendly, their full attention must be on the road and they must watch the traffic closely at all times.

"It [high-fiving] was one of a number of safety issues raised with the school crossing patrol before he made the decision to resign."

The authority added that it would be recruiting a replacement "as quickly as possible".

Although there is no indication that Mr Slade intends to bring a claim, it is possible that he may try to argue that the threatened suspension was a breach of trust and confidence and therefore a trigger for constructive dismissal. However, assuming that Mr Slade would have been paid during the period of suspension, and the period was relatively short and simply to conduct an investigation, it is difficult to see him having a strong case for a constructive dismissal claim. After all, it is quite possible that following the investigation, the council may have accepted that high-fiving did not pose a safety risk and therefore no disciplinary action was required. However, regardless of whether or not Mr Slade brings a claim, it is difficult not to feel sad that he's lost his job just because he's tried to be "down with the kids".