



2015-2016

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An Lester Trumach - The Packet Ship

Dear Parents

The government's intention to require all schools to convert into academies was announced in the budget statement last week. Over the past days, this policy and reaction to it, has been widespread, giving confirmation, if any was needed, that as our letter of 29th February explained, there has been a period of mounting pressure to take steps in this direction. The minutes of the previous week's extraordinary Full Governing Body meeting recorded the fact that governors felt they were "bullied into this position" although there was then unanimous support for a decision to join Cornerstone because it offered a partnership based on our shared values and the practical support of the Learning Institute (tLI). Unfortunately, the education world, and especially the academy part of it, is moving particularly quickly at the moment and even before the meeting with parents, developments behind the scenes meant that the role tLI could take was diminishing and in fact we now know that the company will be dissolved on 31st August 2016. We were due to convert the following day! We spoke of Cornerstone's partnership with The Learning Academy Trust (TLAT) at the meeting with parents and believed that the provision of this more experienced business was positive, however aspects of its governance have caused us some serious concern. The governors acted immediately with professionalism to demonstrate all due diligence and to ask challenging questions of the directors of what is now 'Cornerstone within TLAT'. As a result of this process all parties have agreed to terminate discussions and Marlborough has withdrawn from the process.

I think the governors and school staff believe we have had a lucky escape and certainly there has been a sense of some relief in school today. We know we have decisions to make in future but, if anything the government's repetition of its stated aim, and the response that it has faced, has bought us more time to consider options. Our investigations and discussions over the past weeks leave us just as unconvinced with regard to the academy process and indeed we have more questions as to its morality. However, having taken the steps we did, we do think we have learnt from the experience and that Marlborough is in a far stronger position and better equipped to manage its own destiny.

I would like to thank all the parents for your support of the school and the governors. From the meetings we held and other discussions it is clear that there was very little appetite for the idea of conversion but that there was a recognition of the situation and great trust in the governing body's integrity and ability to make the right choice for Marlborough. For my part this is an affirmation that we can uphold the values and principles of our community school, and it is encouraging that around the country there is also a strong and determined voice in defence of a system which has been in place for many years to support children in school. Two petitions have been opened on the government website in response to their desire to impose academy conversion on all schools. You may wish to add your name to these petitions, both of which have already reached the 100,000 target in rapid time, but which continue to monitor public feeling as the totals grow!

Hold a public inquiry and a referendum over turning all schools into academies:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/124747>

Scrap plans to force state schools to become academies: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/124702>

Quite apart from the dubious value of the outcomes of conversion and the money going straight out of education as legal fees (£25,000 per school) the time and effort the process takes is debilitating and diverts energy and attention that should go to children and learning. The muddle of the DfE's policy has been compounded by appalling leadership with regard to the assessment of pupils and the questionable use of flawed data to judge school performance. You may also like to consider signing a third petition:

Cancel the end of Key Stage 2 SATs tests for 2016:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/122038>

<http://marlborough.eschools.co.uk>



Jess to go on Air

BBC
SPOTLIGHT



BBC cameras came into school on Monday as local Radio and TV have heard about our amazing kitchen team. Jess will be live on Radio Cornwall on Wednesday morning at around 07:30 BBC with clips of her and children being aired currently and throughout the day. A television report featuring the kitchen and dining room will be aired on Wednesday at lunch time and during the local BBC's evening news slots.

Last Week				Total		
1 st	Freeling	25	7	1 st	Fox	44
2 nd	Swiftsure	24	5	2 nd	Swiftsure	41
3 rd	Chichester	23	4	3 rd	Freeling	40
4 th	Fox	22	3	4 th	Pelham	30
5 th	Pelham	20	2	5 th	Walsingham	24
6 th	Walsingham	19	1	6 th	Chichester	27

Canoes and Cross-Country

Well done to Miriam who entered an 8km canoeing race on the River Axe in Devon and came 3rd in her class (Junior Under 12s K1) At one stage she had to get out of the canoe and carry it so she did really well. Zak competed in the County Cross Country finals and came second. Well done to him.



Sports Relief 2016

Thank you for your support – the children's contributions raised £87.13.

The **Infants' Inter-Packet Multi-Skills Tournament** took place last week – thanks as ever to Mrs Morgan continuing to lead the afternoon with her extraordinary energy (although she has asked me to remind her that next time she 'retires'...!). The table right shows the results...

1 st	Fox	41	7
2 nd	Walsingham	40	5
3 rd	Chichester	38	4
4 th	Swiftsure	37	3
5 th	Pelham	31	2
	Freeling	31	2



The Big Dig Continues...

Competition

As mentioned at the parents meeting and in last week's newsletter, the focus of much of next term's learning will be on healing and developing our worn out grounds! We are very keen to enrol as much help as you are able to offer... in class, outside or in any fund-raising activity - especially the sponsored cycle ride we're planning for later in the Summer term!

During the first 'Open Learning' week back after Easter the classes will plan a topic or activities to address different aspects of our outdoor environment. It would be wonderful if parents would be able to join us for some of that time and/or for later in the year when we intend putting some of the ideas into practice. This is an enormous project but we will not allow ourselves to be put off by the challenge... if it takes us a few years to see every plan come to fruition that gives us more time to do an even better job! The main thing is that we are able to put together a practical but inspiring plan and that we make an effective impact on the grounds before next winter. At the same time, and of value even beyond this, the opportunity for the whole school family to work together on such a major task is, we all know, of massive importance for building our school community team: we've seen that in past Big Digs and hope that everyone feels able to join in as much as they want.

To get started... we'd like to invite every child to take part in a special Big Dig competition. Over the Easter holiday, please talk about ideas for play and learning exploration possibilities that we could develop in the school grounds (both main site and at the school field). Take photographs, explore the net and make films or presentations, create drawings and/or models from your imagination... and then bring your finished work into school for judging on Friday 15th April... and, just so there are no accusations of 'cheating' let's make an unusual rule that Mums, Dads and grandparents etc are actually allowed to help (the prize will reflect any family input)!

Swimming and Watersports

Next term sees the return of swimming lessons for y1 and y4 for 6 weeks from Tuesday 19th April (y0 and y2 lessons will start after half term on 7 June). Please note we do need to ask for a voluntary contribution of £3.00 per week to help cover the cost of the coach transfers – we would also appreciate any offers of adult helpers with supervision on journeys and with changing! Thank you.

Watersports Activities for y3 and y5 will start on Monday 9th May – again to help cover the costs of this fantastic opportunity (which Elemental UK offers to Marlborough on a not-for-profit basis) we do need to ask for a £12.50 contribution per session (£100 for the whole 8 week period). If you have any queries or need to discuss this, please do not hesitate to arrange to speak with me.

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