



Friday 24th March 2023

Dear All

On Wednesday evening this week the governors and I enjoyed an excellent discussion with parents and carers on the topic of academisation. As regular readers of this newsletter will be aware, the governing body has been considering what potential advantages and risks there are for Marden if we were to go down the route of academisation, and it was good to broaden that discussion this week. An important aspect of our discussion was considering what we want to achieve as a school, and what it is that is dear to us, in other words, what is it that we must try to futureproof. These are the essential ingredients that produce the excellent outcomes we enjoy for our children, and we spoke about the following four things:

- Enhancing opportunities and outcomes for our children
- Ensuring that our staff can flourish as professionals, have career opportunities, and enjoy well-being at work
- Building strong support structures and networks with other schools and professionals
- Continuing to enjoy our own unique identity, autonomy and excellent reputation

Probably the biggest question which arose during the evening was, 'Will academisation help us to achieve these things, or are we better off staying as we are, a Local Authority maintained school?' Certainly we are in a strong position currently as a school with good student outcomes, sound finances, and a happy school community, and so another question which came from parents was 'If we have this now, why would we do anything to risk upsetting that?' These sorts of questions reflected the value of such discussion, enabling open, honest and robust thinking which is so essential to have within a community looking for the best opportunities for all its members. The governing body will be meeting shortly after the Easter break to discuss these questions further, and I will let everybody know how that progresses via this newsletter.

As a school we value our personal communication between staff and parents/carers. Our main form of online communication is via the [School Gateway](#) and through our reporting system. School Gateway allows parents and carers to view their child's attendance, achievements, reports, timetable, and to book extra curricular clubs, as well as provide access to useful links for booking parents evening appointments and our payment system, ParentPay. Reports are emailed out three times in the academic year and parents/carers

are able to see their child's progress. In terms of our Marden values, we aim to encourage direct communication between parents/carers and their children in terms of their learning at both home and school. A good example of this is the recent evening we held for Year 9 parents/carers where they came in to look and talk about their children's books with their children. As a school, this was a valuable opportunity to include all parties in conversations around learning alongside a remote Parents' Evening. Opportunities are coming up for Year 8 (April 25th) and Year 7 (June 13th) and a revision evening is planned for Year 10 on Thursday 4th May.

This week, Year 9 students have been involved in a 'Respect Day' as part of their personal development. The aim was to enable students to explore the importance of respecting themselves and having positive relationships with those around them. The day began with a talk from Chris Hemmings about healthy masculinity and how social expectations placed on young men can be damaging to both men and women. The students engaged extremely well, with some thought provoking and insightful questions asked at the end by our students. Students then moved into workshops delivered by a variety of external speakers, including an empathy workshop delivered by Chris. Show Racism the Red Card delivered sessions on unconscious bias and how to be an ally while speakers from the Blue Sky Trust explored the concept of self respect. Students have already identified this event as a really positive experience and gave some brilliant feedback:

'I learnt that you have to listen to yourself and not what people want you to do, and you are your own person and you don't have to do something to get social credit.'

'Chris had a perspective that really resonated with me.'

'I enjoyed that we learned things that apply more in social situations and more about ourselves.'

We look forward to running similar days for other year groups in the future.

On Friday 17th March a group of Year 8 students took part in a sports leadership activity at Marden Bridge Middle School. They enjoyed working as a team, and showed great communication and enthusiasm. They worked in teams playing dodgeball and basketball using their voice, body language and movement round the court. Feedback from staff and students was that everybody had a great time, and that our students, of course, represented Marden in great style. Well done everyone.

On Tuesday the Year 11 and Year 9 netball teams played Kings Priory. Both teams dominated the play with quick and effective passing. It was lovely to see the Year 11 team pass on some hints and tips to the Year 9 team. Both teams won comfortably with Year 11 winning 18-1 and Year 9 winning 11-1. On Thursday evening the Year 9 netball team were back in action against Whitley Bay High School. The girls put in a

phenomenal performance with some excellent link up play and some outstanding shots. The team ended the season victorious with a 10-1 win!

The Year 7 boys football team travelled to Wellfield on Wednesday afternoon, for their first league fixture since November. On a heavy pitch, the boys started cautiously, moving the ball around well but lacking the goal they were looking for. Midway through the first half, an in-swinging Marden corner found their captain who fired home from close range. This seemed to spark the team into life, and quickly added a second goal to take a 2-0 lead into the halftime break. More pressure from Marden forced a string of fantastic saves from the Wellfield goalkeeper, but the relentless pressure paid off, with two more goals for the captain to complete his hat-trick. Wellfield managed a late consolation goal but the game belonged to the boys from Marden. Final score 4-1

On Thursday, the Year 8 rugby team competed in the Northumberland County 7's tournament at Newcastle University. The team played magnificently, with every member of the squad managing to score at least one try across the tournament. Many of the opposition coaches complimented the way the team played for each other and the spirit with which they played their games. In the end, Marden won 4 of their 6 games, finishing in third place overall.

The Year 9 boys football team played North Gosforth Academy in the Quarter final of the league cup on Thursday night. In windy conditions and on a challenging pitch, the boys played some really good football and created a number of early chances. The boys eventually won 3-0, reflecting a great squad effort and they look forward to the semi-final after Easter.

As you are aware, it is against the law to use a privately owned e-scooter on public paths, roads or bridleways. Students should therefore not bring an e-scooter to school.

Next week we are looking forward to our Year 10 students taking part in mock interviews on Monday. We have over twenty employers coming into school to give each student a one to one interview, complete with feedback on interview technique, so this will be an excellent developmental experience for all students concerned.

Thank you for your continued support and take care.



Mr M. Snape
Head Teacher