

William Fletcher Primary School
Where Everyone Counts
Rutten Lane * Yarnton * Oxfordshire * OX5 1LW

October 1, 2017

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of our parents, staff and the full governing body, I am writing to you to express our deep concern over the decision to cease funding for school transport between the villages of Yarnton and Begbroke and The Marlborough Church of England School.

As you will be aware as part of cost saving initiatives, Oxfordshire County Council elected to terminate funding for transport to Secondary school back in 2015. From then until the end of this academic year (2017/2018), The Marlborough School has covered the costs, from monies from their allocated funding.

Quite appropriately, The Marlborough School are not able to continue with this funding arrangement. These monies are after all, designed to support the learning needs of pupils and not their transportation issues.

Whilst we respect the decision taken by The Marlborough School, we are to be left in a position where the children of Yarnton and Begbroke will not have access to free school transportation for the school of their choice. We find this situation unacceptable.

Cllr Hudspeth, in an email to Anna Isles (Yarnton Parish Councillor and William Fletcher School Governor) on September 12, 2017 wrote "... *Yarnton families are able to choose to send their children to their nearest school, Gosford Hill, to which they will receive free transport, or to continue to send their children to their catchment school, The Marlborough. If parents exercise their right to prefer The Marlborough over Gosford Hill, the financial responsibility for home to school transport remains theirs... In the absence of transport provided by either the Council or The Marlborough School, would not the Stagecoach S3 service provide a reasonably priced alternative to get from Yarnton to Woodstock?*"

This response indicates that Cllr Hudspeth may not be completely aware of the difficulties this poses for our families in Yarnton and Begbroke.

William Fletcher School is part of the Woodstock Partnership with strong links to The Marlborough School for many years. Traditionally, the significant proportion of our Year Six children goes on to The Marlborough School at Year Seven. This automatic flow has been established via many years of considerable effort and close working between our two establishments.

Whilst we are by no means adverse to forging links with other neighbouring schools, to ignore our existing links with The Marlborough would be somewhat futile.

We work closely with the Marlborough School to ensure that all of our children, from as early as Foundation Stage, have access to opportunities – both academic and sporting. Consequently, many of our current pupils have siblings at The Marlborough School and the expectation is very much that they will attend alongside.

Whilst we are informed that Gosford Hill is our geographically closest secondary school, few of our pupils seek places there. The journey between our two villages

and Gosford Hill, requires transportation to travel along the already heavily congested A44 and into Kidlington. It cannot have escaped your attention that the area towards Pear Tree is often cited on national travel broadcasts as clogged-up or at times impassable. To suggest that providing transport to Gosford Hill via this inevitable route is a better use of time and resources than travel to The Marlborough School is without question, ill informed.

We understand that school transportation to The Marlborough School will continue to be provided for those children eligible for the Pupil Premium grant. As such, it is clear that busses will still be running. These same busses will undoubtedly pass by our children and they are forced to embark upon their own privately resourced journey to the same destination.

Suggesting that parents might fund this transport, either privately or via public transport, is again an assumption that all would be in a physically or financially viable position to do so. A massive assumption based on nothing more than geography.

Clearly Oxfordshire County Council have paid little mind to the many negative factors in play here.

- The area around The Marlborough School is notoriously congested at school drop off and collection time. Adding more privately resourced traffic to this, once common access to school transportation ceases, will inevitably create further over-crowding.
- The potential impact on the safety of pupils, staff and the public cannot be ignored.
- Equally, the environmental impact of increased numbers of vehicles must not be minimised.

As far as we can see, these aspects have not been considered.

Cllr Hudspeth has to date failed to recognise the clear arguments in favour of providing free school transportation to The Marlborough School.

As parents, staff and Governors of William Fletcher School, we would urge you again to reconsider your position and recommence the funding of School Transportation between the villages of Yarnton and Begbroke and The Marlborough Church of England School.

Yours sincerely

Trish Amesbury
Chair of Governors
William Fletcher School