Wednesday 22nd January 2020

Dear all signatories of the letter regarding water bottles,

Re: Water bottles.

Firstly, I wanted to thank you for taking the time to write such a considered and reflective response regarding your issue. You have clearly taken a lot of time to try and consider both sides of the argument and I truly appreciate you giving me the opportunity to respond to your concerns.

Your concerns, as I understand them:

1. Paragraph 1: Bottles introduced recently (suggesting no warning) and the decision to make them a requirement for all pupils.
2. Paragraph 2: The environmental argument is undermined by the ‘half-hearted attitude of some users’ and why don’t we try it without making it statutory to see if people change their attitudes to looking after their own property.
3. Paragraph 3: The bottles being recycled has made the water taste funny and the pen has rubbed off and they do leak sometimes.
4. Paragraph 4: The design is not to your tastes.

Let me address each point in turn.

Firstly, I wanted to remind you that this idea was shared with you in assembly since before PGL (October) after our visit from Delphis, a cleaning company who only use eco-friendly products. Unfortunately, I had not received a clear letter of dissent until today – after the bottles have been tested, designed, purchased and handed out. If you can share your well-considered concerns before purchases are made, this would allow your voice to carry greater weight. However, I also believe that, based on the current arguments shared, the decision would have remained the same. Let me see if I can convince you further:

The bottles have been deliberately designed to match House colours. This is a critical factor in allowing the school to teach children to be responsible for their property and, in doing, support the environment. The school will be able to identify the House which is best looking after their bottles (the least in lost property) and reward that House for their efforts – a team effort. In paragraph 2 you suggested that people will look after their property if they are allowed to bring their own bottles in. Unfortunately, the lost property evidences this is not true.

You also state that the positive effects on the environment are diminished because your hearts won’t be in it. I am happy to report that your attitudes towards the bottles will have no impact on whether you are, smiling or not, supporting the environment. I would like to think that this small change can make not only a big difference to our local environment but sends out a strong community message – Little Green Junior School cares about the environment and is willing to do something about it – one step at a time!

In Paragraph 3 you state the water tastes funny. All of the bottles have passed all manufacturing requirements to be safe for use. Is it possible that your negative attitude towards the bottle has impacted on your enjoyment of the water? You also state the pen rubs off. It does. We used indelible ink to mark the bottles but are open to new ideas – perhaps the name labels you suggest could be tried – please let me know how this works. You also state the quality is not great and that they leak. As I stated earlier, the school spent a week testing the bottles both in school and on PGL. I used my bottle for the whole of PGL with no leaks and no breakages (and I did throw it round a bit.) The bottle does need to be screwed tight and the mouth piece clicked into place to ensure a seal. Ten other bottles were also tested and none were reported to be defective. If, in the larger batch we have purchased, there are some broken bottles please return them and we will send them to the supplier. I can also add that the water tasted delicious!

Finally, you state the design is not to your tastes. As you say, *‘this is not a major issue.’*  and I agree. When weighing up the benefits to our environment; to developing the children’s sense of responsibility; for supporting children to make a difference, I and the staff at Little Green feel that these benefits justify the decision. This is after having carefully listened and considered your own well written arguments.

In truth, only time will tell as to how well people choose to look after their new bottles and I hope that some of what has been written here helps you to see the potentially huge benefits this action could bring to our local and global community. If just one whale is saved because it hasn’t eaten a plastic bottle discarded in the ocean, surely that is worth the sacrifices you are being asked to make.

Thank you again for a beautifully written and considered letter. I do hope the time you can see I have taken to consider your points and respond thoughtfully demonstrates my respect for your well-considered opinions and your voice as students in Little Green School. That being said, it is important you also understand the difference between being respectfully heard and being agreed with. If I have managed to explain the bigger picture of this decision to you, I hope that you will be able to join me in supporting this initiative and, who knows, saving the planet – one bottle at a time!

Yours sincerely,

Mr Roberts

Headteacher