

Dear Editor

In response to Mr Tyrrell's letter last month regarding the safe supervision of our children at playtimes, I should like to make the following response:

* Our school administrator answered the call. I was with children in the dining hall, but took the phone on passing the office and so listened to Mr Tyrrell's concerns.

* I explained that the children are closely supervised in the playgrounds, where we have three members of staff on duty during the lunch-break. There was no 'debris' blowing on site at the time and staff were of course monitoring the children's safety.

* We are fully staffed, and at no time in our conversation did I suggest that we have shortages or internal problems.

* I explained to Mr Tyrrell that, as I was in the hall when he rang, I had not personally overseen what the children were wearing as they went out to play.

* Staff working with the youngest children ensure that they go out wearing coats on cold days, with either staff or our older playtime buddies assisting with zips etc.

* I reported that the older children (in the Key Stage Two playground) were given more responsibility for taking out their coats, but that sometimes they then chose to remove them. It would be the judgement of the member of staff on duty as to whether they should insist that coats be worn. Although it was very windy at the time of our conversation, it was mild.

* Mr Tyrrell is incorrect in stating that there were only two adults outside, there were three. Staff do not take out drinks at lunchtimes. They also patrol the playground area and do not remain in one place. Staff are trained and supported in their duties.

* I have responded to Mr Tyrrell's letter in our school's newsletter as his comments regarding the school's attitude to health and safety and the well-being of all our children were completely inaccurate and unfounded. Parental response has been extremely supportive of the school with no expression of concern.

* Having worked with young children for many years I can confirm that they get very warm when running around at playtime and will often take their coats off outside.

* We are not complacent and are always working with staff, children, parents and the community to improve what we do for the children's well-being, happiness and learning.

* I have frequently made invitations in this magazine for members of the local community to visit. Surely that is how best to appreciate our school and the pride we share in our hard-working children, staff, governors and parents?

LESLEY CLARK

Headteacher

Marcham C. of E. Primary School

Dear Editor

I am writing in response to Mr Tyrrell's letter in your last issue regarding the children playing outside at school recently.

I am the mother of two of these children at Marcham School (age 6 & 4) and find it quite bizarre that anyone would think the children aren't safe and should be kept inside when the weather is bad. I am confident that the staff at school would make the appropriate decisions on whether the children should go outside or not. And as most children of this age (and of course older!) have so much energy they have an urgent need to be outside for fresh air and a way to release all that energy after being in a classroom all morning!! I can assure your readers that my children are more than capable of deciding whether they want to wear a coat and would much rather play without the interference of a bulky coat - that's fine by me - they will soon let you know if they get cold plus it is an ideal way to let them experience the consequences of their decision! And it's not the fresh air that makes children ill but being kept cooped up indoors for too long in warm conditions where the bugs can thrive! And as for social problems - well honestly! Don't parents have any responsibility?

And finally, I would point out that if I witnessed an adult loitering around the school watching the children through the hedge I would probably call the police!! (you can't see the children easily since the new gate was put up). Sadly in this day and age people should have more sense.

MOTHER OF TWO HEALTHY, LIVELY, WINDPROOF CHILDREN

Dear Editor

We were saddened to read the letter from Mr Tyrrell in the last edition of MADnews. We are not sure what he thought he would achieve by writing in such a way about Marcham School.

Does he not realise that children need to run around in between lessons and in doing so do get hot; which is not the case for the staff who are supervising them. Has he never tried to force a 4 year old to wear a coat when they don't want one? I for one am perfectly happy with the way that my children are encouraged to learn how to look after themselves and are supervised by the staff at the school.

If Mr Tyrrell would really like to stand up and be a voice on behalf of parents at the school, please can he ask us of the issues that do concern us in the village, rather than making an attack on the staff that do a fabulous job with our children day in day out. We can think of a whole list of things to get him started... people who don't clear

up after their dogs, people driving too fast around the village and people parking in places that make it hard for our children to cross the road...

PAUL AND JULIA DAVIES

Dear Editor

I was very disappointed to read Mr Tyrrell's letter in the last issue of MAD News. I have two children at the school who really enjoy going there. The children and I have great respect for all the staff and were concerned when we saw them being criticized by Mr Tyrrell in MADNews.

My children enjoy their playtimes and with the energetic running around they do may chose to take their coats off. I am more than happy with this as my children are encouraged by myself and the staff at school to be independent and make choices about whether to wear a coat or not if they are getting hot. I am sure that Mr Tyrrell will agree that it is better to have active children, running around without coats on than children who are inactive and just 'stood around' with coats on.

I also totally disagree with his comments about the school and its staff 'having a complete disregard for health and safety.' As a parent I am more than happy with the health and safety management across the school and the importance the staff place on this. Perhaps if Mr Tyrrell visited the school rather than making comments from his 'external observations' he would be aware of this.

It is Mr Tyrrell's final sentence that I find the most concerning. His accusations of: 'children around here falling ill or ending up with social problems if this is the teaching they receive from the services that are supposed to teach them and offer them protection.' My children are healthy and do not have any social problems - how irresponsible it is for him make such accusations. The teaching my children receive is excellent and again if he arranged to visit the school he would see this for himself - perhaps he should also read the school's Ofsted report.

RUTH ATKINS

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Write to MADNews and let others know what you think about current events