



Leamington School

Phone: 07-827 5747

Fax: 07-827 8196

Email: principal@leamington.school.nz

Lamb Street

Cambridge

1 November 2010

Minister of Education
Hon. Anne Tolley
Parliament Office
Private Bag 18888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Dear Minister

Leamington School is a primary school in Cambridge that prides itself on focusing on meeting the needs of its children. We have “raising student achievement” as the bottom line goal for everything that we do at our school. Because of this, the students at our school achieve very high standards. We know our students achieve high standards because as a BOT, we receive regular, detailed information from our Principal and teachers about how students are progressing. As part of this detail, we know that our school successfully identifies the children who are underachieving, those who are achieving to a level consistent with their age group, and those who are achieving above the expected level. The school identifies these children, and puts in place the necessary resources and differentiated teaching programmes to meet their needs. We know this because we regularly get reports on the impact of these programmes, along with data that shows the impact this is having on achievement. This information is regularly shared with our school community through our school newsletter. We also know this because the Education Review Office identified the school’s use of assessment data as a strength of the school.

Our school was excited about the prospects for 2010, and had a carefully laid plan in place to fully embed the last stages of the Revised Curriculum into our school. Teachers were clear about what we were hoping to achieve, school leadership had ambitious but achievable plans in place to meet these goals, and our community was fully behind us.

Sadly, the rollout of National Standards has derailed this process. We, as a BOT, had confidence in our Principal and teachers to find a solution to the issues that were being raised around National Standards so that our children would not be adversely affected. Time has come, however, for us as a BOT to formally, publicly and genuinely express our concerns over the confusion that the implementation of National Standards has caused our school and schools like ours all across the country.

We want to make it very clear that we have not come to this decision quickly or easily. To speak out against the Minister and the Ministry of Education is something we take very seriously.

Continued...

www.leamington.school.nz

Principal – Mike Malcolm Ph 0277 407 303



Leamington School

Phone: 07-827 5747

Fax: 07-827 8196

Email: principal@leamington.school.nz

Lamb Street

Cambridge

Continued...

We also want to be very clear about the fact that this BOT, our Principal and teachers, support the Government's policy about having a National Standard. However, the development, implementation, timeline and heavy handed approach that is being used to force these standards on our school is simply unacceptable. We are angry that the education of our children is being used for political purposes by this government. We are deeply worried that these standards are being forced on schools without being trialled and that these concerns are, for all intents and purposes, falling on deaf ears. These are our children and their education is vital to us, it is more than a portfolio, more than a policy, more than a term in government.

You minister, are aware of the big issues but it appears that you are avoiding the many concerns being expressed by a growing number of groups. Issues like unrealistic timeframes for implementation, under resourcing of implementation, fundamentally flawed standards that are confusing and unworkable for trainers, Principals, teachers and children. League tables and the effect this will have on narrowing the curriculum and starving our children of experiences in some of the other key curriculum areas like the sciences, physical education and the arts. Issues like labelling children as failing from 6 years old and informing parents that their child is failing the "aspirational" level of attainment and trying to explain why the levels of attainment this year are out of step with norm referenced data that has been trialled, moderated and trusted nationally and internationally for many years.

Minister, you need to know that we, as a BOT, are worried about what is being forced upon our children. Up to this point we have had faith in our teachers and Principal to find a way forward that will avoid the dangers that are inherent in the National Standards rollout and implementation. We have had faith that you would work with our educational leaders to find a solution as you have said you would. However, nothing seems to have changed, our pleas are being ignored. You need to know that our concerns are shared by those in our community who have taken the time to find out more about this issue. Their feedback to our principal and teachers is to do everything they can to protect our children from this educational disaster.

Our message to you minister is clear:-

1. We support having a National Standard, but not these ones.
2. We have no confidence in the current National Standards and do not believe they will achieve the outcomes that are intended because they are fundamentally flawed. They will not raise student achievement for those children who are at risk of failing in our education system.

www.leamington.school.nz

Principal – Mike Malcolm Ph 0277 407 303



Leamington School

Phone: 07-827 5747

Fax: 07-827 8196

Email: principal@leamington.school.nz

Lamb Street

Cambridge

Continued...

Continued...

3. We urge you Minister to listen to the voice of parents who want you to start working in true partnership with our educational leaders to develop a set of standards that we can feel proud of, and that will take the New Zealand education system to a whole new level.
4. To trial these new standards that will be developed and adequately resource the school to implement them. We agree with you that high literacy and numeracy standards are vital to all children and because of this, we cannot afford to get this wrong. Our children deserve nothing less than to be aspiring to a National Standard that we can all feel proud of.
5. Put in place a framework to prevent the creation of league tables to stop our curriculum from being narrowed as this has the very real potential to stifle the creativity, the ingenuity, the number eight wire mentality that we New Zealanders feel so very proud of.

Minister, we are not asking for you to respond to us in writing.

We are asking you to respond by listening to the parent community of New Zealand and by working in partnership with our educational leaders to bring about the changes that are needed.

We look forward to watching for your response.

Yours sincerely

The Leamington School Board of Trustees

Janine Silva – Chairperson

Carol-Lynn Hill

Moana-Roa Gate

Shelley Walker

Angela Jenkins

Paul Evans

Mike Malcolm - Principal

cc Louise Upston, Rt. Hon. John Key, Hon. Phil Goff, Hon. Trevor Mallard

www.leamington.school.nz

Principal – Mike Malcolm Ph 0277 407 303