

LMS Centenary Garden FAQs

Did we need a new garden? What was wrong with the previous one?

Green space in our school is precious. We wanted to create an area for everyday use to be enjoyed by many. An attractive environment helps create a positive attitude towards school and supports learning. The previous garden was very small and was unusable for much of the year due to poor drainage. When it rained, the area became waterlogged and was often out of bounds. The school has expanded in recent years and the previous garden did not facilitate the swift and easy movement of girls around the new buildings.

Was the garden design and construction put out to competitive tender?

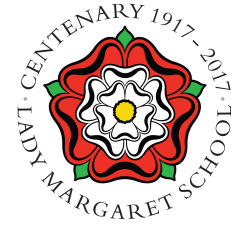
Yes. Three garden design companies presented a variety of design concepts and competitive quotes. Following a full tender process, Charlotte Rowe Garden Design was appointed to oversee the design from construction to planting.

Who created and approved the designs?

Our appointed designer drew up the designs after working closely with girls across the year groups as well as school staff. Pupils were asked for design input, consulted on the scheme and gave opinions on how they envisaged the space working. The final designs were presented to and approved by school, pupils and the PTA at a special presentation in April 2016.

Why is there so much hard landscaping?

Wider pathways (hard landscaping) were introduced as soon as possible to ensure that larger numbers of pupils, recently recruited as part of the expansion programme, could move quickly, easily and safely around the site. The school has to manage large numbers, over a small footprint. Removing tarmac and using permeable gravel has rectified the poor drainage.



£180,000 seems quite a lot of money?

It is a significant investment, but the garden will be used by hundreds of pupils for many years to come. This figure should be compared to the £160,000 we recently spent re-roofing the classroom block, built in the 1990s. Rectifying roofing and drainage issues are not exciting projects. They are expensive but necessary to ensure a safe environment and a school in the best working order.

The cost of adding new pathways has been vital to improve accessibility and 'traffic flow', making it easier for pupils to move around the school. Following the recent investments in new classrooms, changing rooms and other areas of the school's infrastructure the new garden layout ensures that what space we have works cohesively.

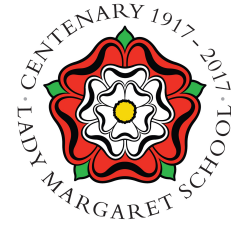
Couldn't this money be used in better ways – for example, in the provision of more teachers or equipment?

No. Discretionary income (ie monies raised by fund-raising) cannot be used to provide teachers. However, the PTA will continue to fund equipment, materials and other activities working closely with the Senior Leadership Team and teaching staff to identify priorities. Funds will come from the other 50% of the profits raised by PTA events and where appropriate, specific charitable trusts.

Why is the PTA fundraising when work has already taken place?

We need to complete the work without delay, particularly the hard landscaping (pathways). The school and the PTA reached an understanding that the garden would be funded by a specific fund-raising campaign and not the school's main budget. The school is using its cash flow and reserves, to pay for the works to be returned over a five year period.

The PTA agreed to arrange fundraising and to make the garden a key project to celebrate our Centenary in 2017. A dedicated fund-raising programme, including approaches to trusts, and corporate sponsors will finance it. Half of the profits from PTA events (such as the summer Garden Party and Christmas Fair) will be allocated to the Centenary Garden fund over the next five years. That amounts to 5 x £15,000 (£75,000). By October 2016 the PTA had handed an additional £25,000 to the school, leaving £80,000 to be raised.



Will there be enough seating in the new garden?

Approximately 27 meters of benching will be installed. That is a considerable improvement on the six garden benches in the previous garden.

Are staff supportive of the project?

Staff recognise the benefits of allowing pupils to leave their classrooms to enjoy a softer, more relaxing, outdoor environment, most days of the year. Staff also look forward to using the space as an additional teaching and learning venue and resource.

We are creating a pleasing environment for pupils and staff that is available to use more often and is designed to link the building around a 'quad' in a pleasing aesthetic, offering students a high quality environment to work and play

Who will look after and maintain the garden? Will the upkeep be expensive?

In addition to enjoying the garden, students will be able to share responsibility for its maintenance. Many of the 742 pupils do not have an outdoor space at home or the opportunity to care for plants and their environment. A low maintenance cost has been addressed in the design.

When will the garden be finished?

It will be completed in time for the school Centenary in September 2017. The majority of the construction took place during the 2016 summer holidays to avoid disruption to school and risk to the girls. Further planting, works and lighting will take place during school holidays and out-of-school hours.

October 2016