

Appendix 5

Mr David Shakespeare
Bucks County Council
County Hall
AYLESBURY
Bucks HP20 1UY

18 January 2001

Dear Mr Shakespeare

I am writing on behalf of all Heads and Governing Bodies of all the Special Schools in Buckinghamshire with reference to :-

- a) The Council's decision to place Special Schools under the Children and Young People portfolio rather than the Schools portfolio.
- b) Your letters on this subject sent to a number of interested parties who wrote to you in November/December 2000.

This letter has two very simple aims. The first is to say that the entire executive team represented by this letter, a rich mix of educationalists and general managers, genuinely doubt the workability of this proposal and its wisdom. We would wish to draw your attention to the following key points :-

1. The move flies in the face of current Government inclusion policy, as well as every move forward in Special Education in the last 30 years.
2. Your letters do not answer the key question of why these Special Schools are not in the Schools portfolio where they would logically be found. The decision to place Special School staff under a non-educational management structure raises legal, structural and other issues including added pressure on recruitment and retention.
3. It is only a particular minority of vulnerable or disadvantaged children within Special Schools who need additional support from Social Services. It is not the schools themselves.
4. The lack of awareness of parents' concerns and views which have not even been sounded out.

These are merely the headlines among other related issues and this leads me on to the second aim of this letter – to issue an urgent request. We need a meeting with you, preferably by the end of January. The professional group represented here needs to talk with you and with relevant members of your team in order to explain more fully the potential problems, based on the points above, and also some ideas for better ways of moving ahead.

We fully appreciate the political imperative behind the recent announcements on the Portfolio/Cabinet style of Local Government which is to be adopted. It is neither our responsibility nor our concern to attempt to interfere with such a high level decision. We do believe, however, that the almost total lack of proper consultation with the day-to-day deliverers of the Special Education service, let alone its clients, has resulted in the selection of an unwise, unwanted and unworkable option.

The sooner this is brought out into the open and debated properly, the better the educational interest of Buckinghamshire's Special School pupils and parents are likely to be served. There is a need for some short term "pain" of accountability and debate in order to achieve the longer term gain of correctly constituted portfolios.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Butcher

Chair of Governors

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