



Buckinghamshire County Council

Head of School Organisation David Ayres

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Dear Mr Snudden

KING'S WOOD INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS – AMALGAMATION

Mr Mooney has received your letter of 20 December 2001 along with the attached documents. He has asked me to thank you for your letter and to respond to you on his behalf.

I am sorry to learn that you feel that you have not received an appropriate response to the points which you set out in the two formal response papers on behalf of the governing body of King's Wood Infant School to the proposals to amalgamate the two schools. You will be aware that there has been a considerable amount of correspondence in the form of letters and e-mails since August and I had understood that all the points that you have raised have been responded to. Nonetheless, I will try to summarise the Authority's position and the reasons behind the decision to combine the two schools on the junior school site rather than the infant school site.

In the report provided by the Property Management Section on the assessment of the two sites, it is true to say that a number of favourable comments were made by the Architect regarding the building and site of the infant school. You set out these comments in your report. You also acknowledge that the conclusion in the architect's report was that the junior school site offers the better location for the 420 place combined school. The architect then goes on to spell out the reasons behind this conclusion.

You say in your report that the only key issue raised against the infant school is to do with the lack of space for a playing field for team games. You also state that there is no requirement for playing fields for team games for children at Key Stage 1 and 2 and that with the National Curriculum, physical activity takes up a small proportion of children's time at school and with HM Government encouraging schools to sell off playing fields for development, it would seem that this would be likely to be of even less importance in future.

I regret that you are misinformed on all three substantive points. There is a requirement for team game areas for children at Key Stage 2. There is also considerable concern about the health and physical fitness of young children and I am sure that you will have seen reference to relevant reports in the press over the course of the last year. It is, therefore, likely that far from being of less importance in future, physical activity will be of greater importance. You also state that the Government is encouraging schools to sell off playing fields for development. This could not be further from the truth and, in fact, recent legislation along with detailed guidance from Central Government, has been produced. I refer you to the document "The Protection of School Playing Fields and Land for City Academies", which



aims to ensure that existing school playing fields are protected to provide for the future needs of schools and their communities and to protect land that is needed for City Academies. A copy of this guidance is available on the DfES internet site at www.dfes.gov.uk.

You have previously indicated that planning permission for the extension of playing field areas through the removal of parts of the copse on the infant school site will be permitted by Wycombe District Council. I am surprised that you continue to raise this point because, as I indicated to you in my letter of 16 August, we have specifically followed up this point, both with BCC planners and with WDC planners, and whereas we have not received a formal response from the planners (because we have not made a formal application) the very strong indication is that the County Council would be unlikely to secure agreement for the cutting back and clearance of some of the copse area and therefore it will not be possible to meet DfES requirements in respect of team game playing areas. We have not been able to confirm the advice that you report you have received from Wycombe District Council.

As far as inclusion of pupils with disabilities are concerned, the point is acknowledged that the junior school site presents more difficulties than the infant school site. However, as the architects advise, these difficulties can be overcome. I can also confirm, as was set out to you in my letter of 23 November 2001, that the Council's brief to the architects who will be carrying out the full feasibility study includes, as a fundamental requirement, that movement of disabled pupils on the junior school site should not be hindered, as is currently the case, because of existing changes in level.

As far as the resource implications are concerned, I remind you that the architect identified costs of nearly £600,000 within the next two years at the infant school, largely to external walls, windows and mechanical services. As far as the junior school is concerned, costs of nearly £113,000 were identified within the next three to five years largely to roofs, electrical services and re-decoration.

While I accept the point that you make about the decision relating to one site or the other not being based purely on an estimate of refurbishment costs, there is a considerable difference in the amount required to bring the existing buildings back up to the required standards and, in the longer term, it is likely that the infant school because of its greater age and method of construction is likely to require a greater level of maintenance than the junior school.

I hope that I have been able to provide a response to the points that you raise. May I also remind you that if the Governing Body wishes to lodge an objection to the proposals set out in the statutory notice, this should be done by 12 January 2002.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Ayres', written in a cursive style.

DAVID AYRES