

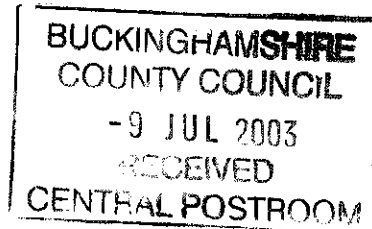


HIGHCREST COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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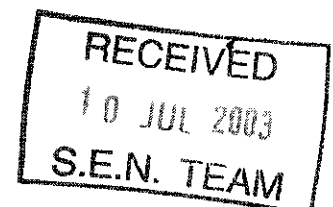
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I would like to register my objection to the closure of Verney Avenue Special School (Star Newspaper 26/06/2003). As far as I am aware this was the first public announcement and yet pupils and staff have already been moved with effect from September 2003. Verney Avenue is the only Secondary Special School in Wycombe. Whilst I support County's Policy on inclusion it is evident that mainstream school is not appropriate for a minority of pupils. These include not only pupils with very challenging behaviour difficulties but also pupils who simply cannot cope with 6 consecutive lessons, 9am-3pm. Having worked for 8 years in Verney Avenue and having visited other Special Schools it is evident that these schools can adapt their curriculum and time-tables to accommodate such pupils' needs whereas although mainstream schools can modify the former, the latter is much more difficult with large numbers of pupils.

Having visited large numbers of Primary Schools this year I am aware of the great difficulty that they have at the moment to get a statutory assessment passed. Therefore, I have been told that significant numbers of pupils are joining Year 7 on School Action Plus who are extremely needy and challenging pupils and who, in the opinion of their Primary School, should have a statement. As only pupils with statements can go to the Secondary Special Schools, is this part of Bucks' Policy to reduce the number of statemented pupils and then the number of Special Schools?

In May 2003 I visited a Primary school where there were a number of prospective Highcrest pupils. In October 2002 I had already rejected one pupil from that school on the grounds that the school and County had said that he needed a Special School and that his parents were advised to take him to visit Verney Avenue School. On May 8th the school were still of the same opinion but on May 22nd an Educational Psychologist visited and said that the pupil could now go to Highcrest.



This pupil is working towards level one in all areas and even on a one to one basis loses concentration very easily. He would have been an ideal pupil for Verney Avenue School but since it is closing he is being pushed into mainstream education.

There is another pupil at Highcrest whose parents requested he went to a special school before he joined year 7 but County ignored their requests and he has been 'included' at Highcrest but has been deeply distressed. As he is not a behaviour issue the nearest appropriate special school is over 40 minutes drive away in Winslow but the pupil suffers from travel sickness. – Verney Avenue would have been an ideal school for him.

Significant numbers of pupils are therefore coming up into year 7 without statements who will be unable to cope with a standard mainstream timetable. These pupils would previously have all gone to special schools. They will be unable to cope with 6 lessons (even differentiated ones) 5 days per week. They will need a different regime of morning lessons and afternoon activities (including life skills) or they will end up failing and being excluded as behaviour problems. They need a programme similar to one that they would have received at special school or if mainstream can't give them that, they need their special schools back! At present mainstream schools do not receive enough funding for such costly adaptations.



Mrs P Steel
SENCO