

## **Red Class- 2008/9 -Parent Meeting- 7.30pm, 31 January 2008**

### **The Last Five Years** (A summary of achievement so far)

In 2003 the school was assessed by OCC as being 'Of Concern'. There were just over fifty children here, and while that might seem to be 'the good old days', there were **well-grounded** fears that the school might be closed. Plaster was **falling off** the walls, carpets were so threadbare they were **dangerous**. Children walked about in **carpet slippers**. **Lunchboxes** were kept in front of **radiators**. **Anyone** could have entered any door in school while the classes were in session. **Resourcing was poor** and the quality of teaching was **variable**.

Since then we have refurbished almost the entire school. We now have four withdrawal teaching spaces. The new office is now a welcoming place for parents and visitors. We have interactive whiteboards and networked computers in every class, with wireless laptops. We are very well resourced. We have excellent teachers, with an additional classroom. We now teach the children in two-year classes at most. We are looking toward converting the Church to be a school hall, which will enable the church itself to stay open, while giving us the drama, sport and meeting place we have always needed.

The National College of School Leadership made Mr McTegart a facilitator to help other small schools develop like ours. Oxfordshire asked the Headteacher of this school to help when a local school was in difficulty. The Diocesan Board of Education has asked Mr McT to look into ways schools can attract new headteachers. Oxfordshire County Council have asked Mr McT to join a working party to help raise standards of education in the County. Ofsted rated this school very highly.

No wonder people want to come here. Welcome to success, and with that come responsibilities and consequences.

### **Some misunderstandings-**

- 1) At the moment there are only **26** children in Red Class, with virtually full time LSA support. This is **much** better than most schools.
- 2) From September 2008, when the current Year four children move up, there will be 35 children in Red Class, not 36.
- 3) Admission of a child into this class in January did not present class size prejudice because it had been clearly demonstrated that the class were taught efficiently in the period September – December 2007. **With only 26 children in the class there was no problem with this.**

That said, we do have a situation here that has been foreseen and Mr McTegart has been working on the solution for a long time. The reason we have not announced our intentions before this was in order to ensure we had a sufficient budget in the next financial year and afterward to meet our needs. This was finally confirmed by OCC on Monday of this week, and the findings presented to the Finance and Personnel Committees of the Governing Body. We are now agreed that we can fund our solution.

### **Our Plan for the Way Forward**

- **The Governors of Stoke Row School will not admit any more children above the planned admission number in any age group, save those categorised as 'Cared For' and those with statements of educational need, where Stoke Row is named as the designated provider.**
- **Any other applications will be considered by the Governors' Admissions Panel and, if the planned admission number for the year has already been reached, the applicants will be advised that their only route to admission is through appeal, which is their legal right.**

## Plans for September 2008

- We will employ an additional full-time teacher to work with Year 5 children.
- We propose to draft one of our current LSA staff to work with Red Class in addition to full time support from the existing LSA.

This gives two full-time teachers and 1 ½ support staff to 35 children. In the mornings, a ratio of one adult to nine children far exceeds normal levels of support. In the afternoons, a level of better than 1:12 is still far in excess of usual adult/learner ratios. Red Class will still be registered together, using the existing Red Class Building as its base. The large area of the room (72sq metres) is easily big enough to accept 35 learners working together.

Each morning, for Literacy and Maths, Year Five children will be working initially in the Reading Room, with the new Year 5 teacher, supported by a Teaching Assistant. This room is to be refurbished and equipped with its own networked, interactive whiteboard. The teacher will lead the initial part of the lesson, as is the case now throughout the school, with the whole group on the carpet. After this, one working group will work with a LSA in our recently refurbished upstairs room, lovingly referred to as 'The Attic'. The other two groups will continue working in the Reading Room, with tables and chairs unstacked and ready. This reflects current practice. Our children are very familiar with this in English and Maths and we have proved this is an effective method of teaching with differentiation. All this furniture is on order now, so we can develop efficient systems for storage and setting up, and have the use of the room sooner rather than later. The Interactive Whiteboard, costing around four thousand pounds, will be ordered as soon as possible in the new financial year.

In the afternoons Red Class can be taught together, with two teachers between the whole group, along with the help of a Learning Support Assistant. Depending on the timetable, any one of these adults can remove a group to work either in the Reading Room or in the Attic. Use of teaching expertise becomes possible, with PE led by a more 'specialist' member of staff, Humanities, ICT, Art and DT or Science, and additional Booster classes also being available. At the end of this 2008/9 academic year, the funding exists to maintain this additional teacher, who can then either release existing staff or be used themselves, to offer additional academic inputs to children throughout the school.

### Questions

How big is the Reading Room? Is it large enough to take 18 children for the starter sessions?

- Yes. The area taken by the group when we took photographs (with them sitting comfortably as they would in a normal classroom) was less than half the floor area.

Why not turn the Conservatory into a classroom?

- It's too bright to use an interactive whiteboard. Views in three directions would be very distracting. It's not secure enough with the outside door. Using the old entrance door for the office compromises security for Green Class. The temperature in the Conservatory is seasonably variable. When it is windy, when it rains, and ESPECIALLY when it hails, the noise is much too loud to allow teaching activities to take place.
- Most of all- if we redefine that space as a classroom, it raises the potential school numbers which this site cannot take and which we do not want.

Why not add an extra classroom?

- We can afford this **or** we can afford an additional teacher. We would never get planning permission. It would put more pressure on our limited open space AND it would mean our classroom size was boosted, with the result that our school numbers would also have to rise. Nobody wants that.

Why not partition Red Class?

- It can be done, but making two discreet spaces in there makes each one a small space, and less usable. Movable partitions would need structural alterations and would not provide adequate soundproofing. Moreover, making two meanly-sized separate classes of 36 sq metres each, would mean our net capacity was larger and could cause a rise in pupil numbers. Nobody wants that.

There was much discussion and the following points were made.

Some people found the issue of dividing children into groups to work difficult to comprehend, but were assured by both Mr McTegart and Mr Gomersall that classes work like this in every school. Some of those asking questions were parents of children who will be year 6 in 2008/9.

There were some questions from Mr Booker as to the sustainability of funding. Would we be able to maintain such a high level of staffing? They were assured that the additional member of staff would be on a permanent contract.

Mr O'Byrne asked Mr McTegart if his several commitments to NCSL, Oxford Diocese and OCC in school improvement would affect his commitment to the school. Mr McTegart replied that this work was chosen strategically to benefit Stoke Row. The work with NCSL had resulted in the development of the Reading Room, and the Attic. The work with the Appeals Panel had led to a greater understanding of the issues involved and how they might affect Stoke Row. The work on the Diocesan Premises Committee would benefit the school in a swifter realisation of the new school hall. The work with OCC in supporting other schools brought in several thousand pounds income to Stoke Row and further developed staff and curriculum planning. It was important to note that any of these commitments can (and have been) cancelled or postponed in favour of Mr McTegart's commitment to Stoke Row.

There were some questions as to PE and Swimming, but the situation remains unchanged in both respects. There will be no foreseeable changes in arrangements, save the use of minibuses to Henley for swimming. Someone wondered if it wasn't a waste of Mr Gomersall's time to drive a minibus, but it was pointed out that as he is the teacher in charge, he would be travelling anyway, if we used our coach option. Pam Cooper is already qualified to drive a minibus and the new LSA would be appointed with this quality in mind.

There were some questions as to the provision of a school hall which Mr McTegart and Mrs Potter answered.

There was a question from Mrs Lee about schools in the Reading area, namely Emmer Green, Caversham Primary and Caversham Park schools having class sizes of 22-24 children.

Information **directly from these schools** is as follows-

Emmer Green- FS-60, Y1-60, Y2-58, Y3-59, Y4-52, Y5-58, Y6-58 (2 classes/year)

Caversham Primary – FS-60, Y1-60, Y2-60, Y3-60, Y4-60, Y5-60, Y6-60 (2 classes/year)

Caversham Park Primary – FS-30, Y1-28, Y2-30, Y3-29, Y4-26, Y5-34, Y6-30

Mrs Lee's misunderstanding may arise from the fact that in Caversham Primary they accept children in Foundation Stage in September, in January and in April. The current numbers for those groups are 22 and 15, but **all thirty places have been allocated** and the classes **will be full at Easter**.

Mr Thomson queried the fire escape potential for the Attic. On later inspection of the room he said he was very satisfied with the arrangements. He also mentioned the increase in traffic with more children. Mr McTegart pointed out several things achieved so far, and pointed out that having 100 children now, having 105 would not make much difference. **Dangerous and illegal parking** was an issue that was constantly addressed, though when this has been pointed out, it has caused offence, such as in the case of Mrs Lee's friend.

When the forthcoming replacement of the children's toilets was raised, Dr Olliver asked about increasing the number of toilets. This is not possible without substantial redevelopment of the entire school site.

Mrs Clarke stated that she thought her son had not benefited by not being included in groups working with older years last year. She was reminded that many children in those groups and outside them had. As her son will be Y6 next year, this will not arise again. The 'free' and easiest option for the school to address the 'numbers' problem in September 2008 would have been to 'draft' a lower ability group to work with Y3/4 next year. This was not seen by any of our staff as our children's best option.

Mr Gomersall assured parents he would have no problem allowing Year five children the use of Red Class in the mornings when they do drama, or something that needed a large space.

Mr Jones was assured that Mr Gomersall would be fully included in the selection process, so that a working partnership could be easily established. He was also assured that details in the letter from Neil Darlington, to Mrs Potter, (which the school has not seen) in which Mr Dalington mentions a half-time teacher with a full time LSA is incorrect. There is to be an additional **full time, permanent** teacher and a half time LSA for Red Class in September 2008. This teacher would then be available for withdrawal/booster work across the school in following years.

Mrs Gilsean-Wright's view that she would like her son to be with his whole year group does not reflect current, let alone intended practice, for most of the curriculum.

Mrs Potter (Chair of Governors) assured parents that any further applications **throughout** the school **with the exception of our current Year 6 group**, (since there are only 9 children in this group, and the class size is only 26) **which would mean a class would exceed 30 now or in future**, would be referred to appeal.

Ms Corcoran's plea to be notified of any further admissions to school would have to be agreed with the Governors and the issue should be referred to them for a decision.

A breakdown of numbers for next year was requested. These are listed below-

**September 2008 onward- (Provisional)**

Blue Class	FS- 15	Teacher, Mrs Buckley (f/t)	- LSA support- f/t equivalent
Yellow Class	Y1- 13 Y2- 17	Teacher, Mrs Bowes (f/t)	- LSA support- (inc new LSA) f/t plus 0.6
Green Class	Y3- 12 Y4- 13	Teacher, Miss Howse (f/t)	- LSA support – f/t plus 0.4
Red Class	Y5- 18 Y6- 17	Teacher, (to be appointed) (f/t) Teacher, Mr Gomersall (f/t)	- LSA support – 0.5 - LSA support – f/t

Plus input from Mrs Standen across Y1-6 (0.2 fte)

All parents who wanted to inspect the new teaching rooms were taken over to the main school.

If any parents wish to discuss any of these issues further, please arrange an extended meeting with Mr McTegart, who would be pleased to address any and all concerns.

S.McTegart, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2008