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A letter to parents from John Powlesland.

The children's new publication (and I hope it lasts) has given me an opportunity to say something to parents. At present the prospect is that the school building may well be knocked down in a few years and the school itself is under close scrutiny by the Department of Education. If we are to continue to function in a satisfactory way and retain the unsurpassed example of cultural freedom which we offer to education then it is essential that parents should support the staff I do not mean just the old theme that people should come to working parties, help to repair the building etc, immensely useful that this is, but I mean that everyone should have more positive concern for the school.

Recently parents were urged to write to the Department of Education saying what they thought of Kirkdale, but not many, if any, did as far as I can discover. This would have been most valuable. I was very happy when one day a short while ago, there were 3 mothers and one father helping during the afternoon. Mothers and fathers should always be welcome at all schools and they are much more important than teachers to their children's education.

This is one of Kirkdale's achievements, that mothers and fathers may come in and out when they like. If you don't feel welcome you should say so. There should also be more discussion between staff and parents in groups; at present this is initiated by staff, seldom by parents. In such discussions I think we would know more if we tried to remember that, whenever we talk about our children, we are talking at the same time about ourselves.

I have something to say also about money. Kirkdale is chronically short of money. If we had more we could have more and better equipment, better paid staff etc. No one wants to increase the fees. There must be other ways of raising money. The absence of money is the eternal ghost at all Kirkdale activities in and out of school. If we had twice as much income, your children's school lives would be significantly enriched.

I mentioned "repairing the building". I should have mentioned decorating as well. Decorating can be really rewarding, in case you didn't already know this. The big room at Kirkdale has butterflied from an old barn into a very interesting and attractive place. Most of the ideas for this came from Flip Green and a number of parents carried them out. The worst part, sanding the floors, with its dust and noise, was done free and gratis by Bob Lodge's brother Terry and his friend Keith, I suppose because they are fond of Paul and Jason. (A similar transformation has been achieved in the Bees – see Virginia's report – Ed.)

We need chairs and other furniture, which do not have to be new; ask the staff what is needed because you may be able to supply it.

The school should be a bright pleasant place, and if it is, the children will treat it better.

John Powlesland.

Transcribed from the original by Amaryllis Elphick 2012