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TO MEMBERS OF THE LEGCO COMMITTEE

Hong Lok Yuen International School was established over 24 years ago. It caters for children from 3-13 years from both Chinese and Expatriate families. Currently our cultural mix is about 50% children with a Chinese background and 50% non Chinese speaking. We believe ethically and morally that as an International School we should cater as far as possible for students with slight to moderate special educational needs. This includes gifted, very able and less able children who are under achieving, and in particular 'those from non-Chinese speaking families.'

In particular for the last few years we have tried to accommodate as best as possible children who cannot access the local school system and who have special educational needs. This includes specific learning difficulties, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, ADHD/ADD visual and auditory memory difficulties, communication difficulties, sensory intergration, fine and gross motor difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. We also offer small group intervention programs for children identified to be achieving below expected levels for their age but without a specific diagnosis.

However it has been challenging as we have determined to accommodate their needs without jeopardizing the quality of education for other children. It has immense resource implications in terms of providing additional staffing, classroom resources, specific teaching and intervention programmes, appropriate withdrawal workspace, professional training and resources for staff and parents and sourcing and referring to other appropriate professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, OT and Children's Centres.

Our school is a non-profit making parent run school and the only income we have is fees. Over the last 2 years we have introduced a scheme whereby parents agree to and pay an extra charge for additional individual assistant teacher to support their child to be included in the mainstream in the classroom and for individual withdrawal sessions for children with dyslexia to follow a specific daily dyslexia individual program for 40 minutes. This has not been easy in terms of recruiting the right personnel for positions and making the conditions for staff and terms for parents reasonable and administratively efficient. Additional assistant teacher support is also provided from the schools budget. This currently needs to be increased, to support children who have not yet had a diagnosis or whose diagnosis does not warrant full time individual classroom support.

The role of our highly experienced Learning Support Co-ordinator is crucial in the success of planning provision and support across the whole school from pre nursery to Y8, as well as

specific programmes for individuals and small groups. Our dedicated and committed teaching staff have to differentiate planning and teaching in order to accommodate an increasingly wide range of needs and abilities within each classroom, which can span 6 year levels. In order to be able to fully support our Inclusion policy, continuing professional development for teaching staff, often out of school hours, has been essential to provide appropriate teaching and learning experiences for individual children with a range of needs.

HLVIS is accredited by the Council of International Schools, whose accreditation protocol includes a standard regarding special educational needs.

At our 5 year visit in October 2007 these were the observations -

a) Observations, including responses to significant developments

"The school has good Learning Support services. A full time Special Needs coordinator is assisted by a team of full and part time teaching assistants who provide assistance to about 50 children who require support or remediation. There are detailed plans for children with different learning needs.

Teachers are benefiting from the training provided by the Coordinator in SEN and EAL friendly teaching strategies.

At the start of the 2006-2007 academic year, the roles of the EAL and SEN coordinators were separated. There is however a very positive working relationship between the teachers responsible for each area, and they have worked collaboratively to develop common formats for reports, work records, and referral systems. Both coordinators are involved in whole school needs identification, assessment and enrolment screening.

Parents pay additional fees if their child is receiving individual SEN or EAL support. There are two children with autism at the school and one of these has a therapist paid for by the parents.

There is no policy in place to address the needs of gifted and talented students. However, the SEN coordinator is planning to liaise with the Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau in developing support for such students.

The Visitors were impressed by the genuine desire of those in Special Needs education to enhance the provision for students in their care.

There were however various areas needed for attention. In particular this include-

b) Suggested Areas for Attention

- *A review of staff to ensure adequate personnel.*
- *Clarification of the screening process at the point of admission to all concerned."*

To attend areas for attention, will require a significant amount of funding, which currently as a school we do not have.

As we are becoming well known for a school which offers personalized education and caters for individual differences, our demand is growing to provide special needs education for the gifted and less able. Without any additional financial support, we are now in a position where we are having to turn expatriate families away.

For Hong Kong to become a global city which is attractive to expatriate families it is vital that the government provide financial support to independent non-profit making schools such as ours.

Throughout the world - for whatever reason, there seems to be a rise in the incidence of diagnosis of children with learning needs, both mild and moderate.

International Schools by their very nature should offer an inclusive education. It not only benefits those children with learning needs, but other children themselves benefit enormously by being in a safe educational environment where they experience a world where not everybody is like them and the fact that some children ARE different.

This coming year, we will be carefully monitoring the special needs programmes we are providing and also the financial sustainability of our school to be able to afford to be inclusive.

As we plan to extend into secondary education, to develop an International Secondary School in the Northern New Territories, (International College Hong Kong) and are currently in the process of submitting an expression of interest in this to the government, it will be vital to gain financial support from government or an external benefactor if we are to be successful in our mission to be inclusive.

If any you have queries or would like to visit our school, please don't hesitate to contact us. The Principal would be pleased to meet with you.

Elaine Goddard-Tame
Principal



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