

Oakengates Lights – 27th November 2009

Report to Council from Cloud 15

Wrockwardine Wood Arts College would like to thank the Council for giving us the opportunity to work with them on the Lights ceremony once again. It is a valued link with our community and also a valued opportunity for our students to work on an outside event.

Overall:

We feel that the event was a success:

- ✿ Large crowd
- ✿ Good feedback from people on the day
- ✿ Larger number of Junior Schools than ever before
- ✿ No major problems on the day
- ✿ Publicity better – got a colour picture in paper – still room for improvement

Problems: (Please see points for improvement below, for suggestions to solve these problems in future)

- ✿ Noise from Generators: Comments were made from a few members of the audience that it was difficult to hear performances on the main stage, because of the proximity of the generators needed for the stalls. Our technicians could not increase the volume any further, without causing feedback. The same problem was experienced at the bottom stage, with a large fairground ride immediately next to the performance area.
- ✿ Lighting in Theatre Square: Once again the big overhead flood was not working.
- ✿ Communication with Salvation Army: They had been asked via Sarah Ralten (member of Salvation Army and staff at WWAC). Message came back that they had taken another booking at Newport, but that a quartet including Malcolm Hampton/Peter Ralten would play. Then message came back to council meeting that they hadn't been asked, no-one would be playing and they were offended. Also that they had felt sidelined last year. We knew nothing about any of this and don't know why or where communication broke down and why any offence was felt. (Only thing we can remember from last year is that the lack of lighting on main stage + Howard Bell running over their allotted time slot, meant that the S.A. had played in front of the stage, rather than on it and their time had to be cut because VIPs arrived. If this caused offence, it was obviously unintentional and no-one spoke to us to say that it was a problem for them).
- ✿ Queenswood were not on main stage: From our point of view, there was no problem with Queenswood – it was a shame that they weren't on main stage, but the reasons were obvious. We were a little upset on the day, when politics were introduced into this, after we had organised things fairly. Schools were booked in as per their request and in the order that they replied. Invitations were sent to Junior School on 13th October.

Replies came in and were booked in, in the following order:

Wombridge – Booked in for 3.30 – 3.45pm

St Georges – Booked in for 3.45 – 4.pm

Priorslee – Booked in for 4 – 4.20pm
Redhill – Booked in for 4.20 – 4.35pm

See below the string of e mails received from /sent to Liz Willoughby (Dept Head) on 9th November (read last one first).

From: Willoughby, Elizabeth
Sent: 09 November 2009 12:01
To: Bradbury, Olivia
Subject: RE: Oakengates Christmas Lights

Thanks for getting back to me so quickly.

The bottom of Market Street at 3:30pm sounds good to us. How long a slot do we have? Our children will also be doing a lantern parade around the area, so we need to plan the activities carefully!!

Once again, thanks for everything, especially at such short notice!!!

Liz

From: Bradbury, Olivia
Sent: 09 November 2009 11:09
To: Willoughby, Elizabeth
Subject: RE: Oakengates Christmas Lights

Hi Liz

Sorry to hear you've been unwell.

No-one booked you a slot and we've had a fab response from junior schools this year, so we've booked people in right up to 4.35. We'd love you to come, so would this still be possible? You can have as long as you want from 4.35 onwards, or if you needed to be earlier, you could perform at the other performance venue at the bottom of Market Street at 3.30, but it obviously isn't as nice as the main stage. Hope you can still make it. Please can you let me know asap, as we're sorting programme out tomorrow. Thanks and best wishes, Liv

From: Willoughby, Elizabeth
Sent: 09 November 2009 09:24
To: Bradbury, Olivia
Subject: Oakengates Christmas Lights

Hi liv,

I have been off sick for a while, so am not sure whether anyone from Queenswood has actually booked us a slot to sing at the switching on of the lights this year. If not, is there space for us? And if they have, what time will it be??

Sorry for the vague email,

Look forward to hearing from you,

Liz Willoughby
Deputy Head Teacher
Queenswood Primary School and Nursery

As you can see, Queenswood was given the opportunity to perform on the Main stage for as long as they wanted from 4.35pm, or at the bottom of the street from 3.30pm. They opted for the latter.

It would have been impossible, and very bad form, for us to have contacted other schools after Nov 9th and told them they had to re-arrange and come later. Buses had been booked and letters sent out to parents. However, the comment was made to me on the day, that the “other” schools should have been moved to make way for Queenswood. Hence the lengthy explanation!

I also had phone calls from a council member asking me to contact Queenswood because “they didn’t know what time they were performing etc”. I e mailed Max on 23rd November, showing him a mail from Queenswood’s administrator, showing that all arrangements had been made properly and Queenswood did know what was happening.

Communication with MTA: Verbal contact and invitation had been made through one of our Cloud 15 members, who is also a member of MTA. No response was made and then there was a late flurry of response, but all via word of mouth with “go-betweens”. Unfortunately, MTA did not communicate their sound needs and arrived only with a memory stick, then an incompatible CD, resulting in sound problems.

Points for Improvement: These are points that we will take on board and act on more quickly next year.

- ✿ More press coverage – more needed and earlier
- ✿ Lantern Parade should be timed into the Main Stage events, so that the children can all come on stage and perhaps perform a song with their lanterns.
- ✿ Communication:
 - Verbal invitations not good enough – all must be in writing.
 - If schools don’t reply to us, we will send a reminder, stating that from their lack of response, we presume they are not able to attend. This will hopefully avoid the situation with Q’wood, where staff absence caused a problem.
- ✿ More careful look at performance area positions.
 - We would like to make Theatre Square the 2nd vocal performance area as it is a much nicer area. If interest from schools etc remains high, then Theatre Square could be given an equal standing with the Main Stage – more lighting – higher profile etc. Rock Bands would be more appropriate at the bottom of Market Street, where they can compete better with noise from generators!
 - Careful positioning of stalls/attractions next to the main stage. Can these be stalls that don’t require loud generators?
- ✿ Flyers – we had agreed to make flyers, but a 2nd one was produced, unbeknown to us, with inaccurate timings on. This 2nd flyer was in colour, looked better – had more access to professional resources etc – we need to combine and get one good and accurate one next year.