



The Federation of the Church Schools of Shalfleet and Yarmouth Achieving Together for a Brighter Future

The purpose of the Federation of the Church Schools of Shalfleet and Yarmouth is to educate children in an atmosphere of Christian love where all achieve the very best they can, now and throughout their lives

Headteacher Shalfleet and Yarmouth: Mrs Elizabeth Grainger BEd English (Hons)

A University of Chichester
ITT Partner School



25 September 2019

Dear Parents/Carers

We fully understand you are keen to know what has been going on recently as regards the future of Yarmouth CE Primary School. It has certainly been a challenging time for all involved and we apologise for the delay in communicating with you. A huge amount of work has been going on behind the scenes and due to the complexity of the situation, we felt we needed to fully understand the position we have been placed in before communicating with you. We are aware that Ofsted have visited All Saints CE Primary School this week and could not communicate with you out of respect and courtesy to them whilst they go through that process.

The legal challenge, which aimed to establish that the Local Authority could not propose the move of a Voluntary Aided school such as Yarmouth, was successful in that the Statutory Notice was withdrawn by the Local Authority. Many of you, like us, will have read this in the papers or on-line media during the summer. Within the press release the Local Authority stated they would look to arrange a meeting with the governing body.

Late on in the summer holidays, the Local Authority requested a meeting with the Governing Body to share their current thinking and the options available to them. They made it very clear that they have the ultimate legal power to decide the future of all schools in the area.

They presented their four options as they saw it.

1. To re-instate the Statutory Notice and fight the legal challenge to be the proposers of the relocation of Yarmouth CE Primary School to Freshwater.
2. For the Governors to propose the relocation of Yarmouth CE Primary School to Freshwater
3. For the Local Authority to serve notice to close Yarmouth CE Primary School
4. For the Local Authority to serve notice to close Yarmouth CE Primary School and All Saints CE Primary School and establish a new Academy on the Freshwater site.

This was a very painful meeting and it became clear that we had to consult the Diocese as well as take expert legal advice to assess the Local Authority's options, the legal aspects and the risks they present to the school.

A meeting was held between the Diocese and members of the Governing Body where it became clear that the Diocese were in full support of the Local Authority and their vision for place planning in West Wight. Two main commitments have been made clear by the Local Authority regarding its vision: there will be a school in Freshwater and a school will close within the West Wight.

The Governors presented an alternative option to both the Local Authority and the Diocese, if they would support us consulting with All Saints CE Primary School to become part of the Federation. This option was not supported under any circumstances by either party and the Local Authority made it clear that they would do all they could to block this from happening.

We have been very careful to find out exactly what our position is. Our legal support has advised that the Local Authority can propose to close the school and take it through to the decision stage, irrespective of its Ofsted rating. The Governing Body could take the final decision to the Adjudicator, however the chances of winning this appeal would be highly unlikely due to the local factors involved in particular: the number of children living in Yarmouth and in the wider area; the efficient use of government resources; the travel effect and above all

Shalfleet CE Primary, Station Road, Ningwood, Newport, Isle of Wight. PO30 4NN

Tel: (01983) 760269 Email: admin@shalfleetceprimary.co.uk

Yarmouth CE Primary, Mill Road, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. PO41 0RA

Tel: (01983) 760345 Email: admin@yarmouthceprimary.co.uk



Website: www.fosay.co.uk





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that we would not have the support of Local Authority or Diocese due to their shared strategic vision for place planning in West Wight.

Furthermore, the delay and uncertainty would destroy the school, the Federation and all we have worked for. Both schools are intrinsically linked through shared staffing and resources and are therefore financially dependent on each other.

Consequently the Governing Body recognised that there were only two possible outcomes from the discussions.

1. Agree in principle, as we can do as governors, to relocate Yarmouth CE Primary School, with our existing Headteacher, staff and children including Little Stars to Freshwater, subject to consultation.
2. To wait for the Local Authority to make their choice out of the four options and risk Yarmouth CE Primary School closing. This would mean risking the continued good education for all children, all staff's jobs – including those at Shalfleet - and thus threaten the Federation.

As a result of frank conversations we have now received written assurances that the Local Authority has an 'absolute commitment to making this work for the children' which includes a package of support for the school during transition, whilst we remain committed to our ethos and to enhancing our provision for all children.

Accordingly we have reluctantly, with much sadness and seeing no other choice, agreed in principle and subject to consultation, to relocate Yarmouth CE Primary School to Freshwater in September 2021.

There will be a meeting at Yarmouth CE Primary School for current parents and carers on Friday, 4 October 2019 at 3pm at which the Diocese and the Local Authority will be present. We recognise it is vitally important for you to have the opportunity to ask your questions. A formal consultation process will commence at a later date to be notified in due course. If you require child care for the meeting on Friday, please let us know via the school office and we will make arrangements to support that request.

We assure you that our main concern is to ensure that the school can survive and continue to provide an excellent education for your children under the guidance of Mrs Grainger and her excellent staff. Please may we ask that you are mindful of the day to day work school leaders and wider staff are doing and that you will support them through this very difficult time.

Yours sincerely

The Governing Body

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