



Minutes

Name of Meeting	Yarmouth Primary School Parents Meeting
Date and Time	Friday 4 th October 2019 15.00
Venue	Yarmouth CE Primary School, Mill Road, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight
Attendees	Carla Bradshaw Chair of Governors & 5 Governors Richard Vaughan – Deputy Head of Strategic Development HCC Martin Goff - Head of Service Information, Transport and Admissions HCC Peter Leonard - Archdeacon for the Isle of Wight Jeff Williams – Director of Education Diocese Rob Sanders – Deputy Director of Education Diocese 8 Yarmouth Primary members of staff

Mrs Carla Bradshaw – Chair of Governors

A presentation was given on behalf of the Governors for the Federation of the Church Schools of Shalfleet and Yarmouth (Appendix 1). The presentation described the Governors journey of what has happened in the past month regarding the local authorities need to manage primary school places on the West Wight.

Q- Are the minutes of the meetings held available?

A- The minutes of the Governors meetings are available. There are no notes of the meetings with the Local Authority or Diocese.

Q- A Freedom of Information (FOI) request has been made for all of the notes and should be released.

A- Section 36 of the Act applies.

Q- Why was do nothing not an option?

A-It was considered! It is not an option the local authority believes can be followed as it will not result in a reduction in the overall number of schools in the area. Keeping five school open with the number of pupils forecast going forward is simply not viable.

Q- How will the federation work without All Saints?

A-The federation will continue in the same way as it does now. All Saints are not part of the current federation.

Q- The number of pupils expected and population forecasts for the medium to long term have not been taken into account. The schools funding formula has extra in the short term therefore we are equipped to fight this.

A – the local authority has fully considered the relevant data around populations and pupil numbers going forward. The schools funding formula would not be able to support five schools based on the pupil forecasts provided by the local authority.

Q – How would you make sure a relocation is successful and does not impact on children’s education?

A-Mrs Grainger is key to this and along with the governors and local authority would drive the process. In June we were being done to, now we have been asked to fully engage and support the process. We need to consider how to integrate the two communities? Little Stars preschool will come with us. The Local Authority will not seek to change the current age range of 2-11 years. We will have a seat at the table as a partner and as a result of that be able to fully engage and input on future decision making.

Q- Keep jobs promise Little Stars are coming with us. I thought the local authority was not in the business of closing good schools. Stakeholders spoke clearly and were ignored. Parent body has lost faith in the local authority. The governors are being dictated to all smoke and mirrors.

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A -Little Stars would relocate along with the school, the school is 2 to 11. The local authority would rather not close any school, but situations arise where a reduction in the number of schools serving an area is the right and proper solution, this is one of those occasions. The governors are not being dictated to, the local authority and diocese are seeking to work with them to ensure the best educational outcomes local for children. Stakeholders from the various communities spoke clearly during all the consultation events, it is simply not possible to have a solution that provides the outcomes all the different groups involved would like.

Q-How do you ensure continued good outcomes. Parents won't opt for their child to go through this process as they have one chance at primary education.

A-We can't promise the future, but we can very carefully plan and manage the way forward. Both the diocese and local authority have significant experience in matters of school reorganisation and by working in partnership with them the governing body and school leadership team can make this proposed relocation a success for all involved.

Q-Uncertainty over the next two years it's a crystal ball for us parents.

A-Preferred choice currently is to keep Yarmouth on this site and keep All Saints site operational for a period of time with the required additional support in place. The proposed Implementation Group will very carefully consider what works best for the children during the transition phase. The sooner we can conclude this matter and have certainty on the way forward the better for all involved.

Q-Concerning strategic management, staffing and resourcing this has been glossed over. Parents should have been at the centre of the decision making.

A – None of the issues you mention have been glossed over, nor will they be going forward. Governors are fully engaged and will absolutely ensure children's, parents / carers and staff best interests are kept at the heart of this.

Q-What legislative mechanism do you have to close the school? Can you propose and see it through to closure?

A-The school is proposing to relocate, not close. The local authority can propose the closure of a maintained school and Yarmouth is a maintained school. As well as being the proposer the local authority is the decision maker. The governors and the diocese could seek to take the final decision on closure by the local authority to the School's Adjudicator if they wished. Governors feel, following legal advice that it would be very unlikely to succeed in fighting a proposal to close given the circumstances that exist. I would reiterate that the local authority is not in any way proposing the closure of Yarmouth at this point. It is proposing the closure of All Saints'.

Q- Published information in the first instance set-out the closure of All Saints' and an increase in size of St Saviours. Numbers are now available that suggest the original data the local authority used has moved on?

A – I don't know the specific data set that you are referring to. HCC take a strategic overview of the data it pulls in around births, house building etc. Currently while showing a slight increase in pupil numbers in the very short-term we could see as few as 56 pupils in three years' time, this would only require two forms of entry to be available or, 60 places compared to the 119 that currently exist. It is also worth noting that we know proposed new house building very rarely comes forward in the timeframes set-out by developers. This is as true on the Island as it is on the mainland.

Q-Sent through the current figures which are printed and handed out to some. Current year 4 forecast Shalfleet 5 over, Yarmouth 1 over. All Saints 17 and Brighstone 20. If you close All Saints you haven't got enough room. If you close St Saviours only 10 could be accommodated. 1st proposal to expand St Saviours would've been short by 7. Cannot accommodate the numbers therefore forcing them to leave the West Wight.

Q-People have moved here from London specifically for the school and community. You are reducing choice and cannot accommodate the numbers in year 4. How do you justify this when year 4 is too big?

A – The local authority will manage the impact of the closure of All Saints' and it is required to ensure all pupils have access to a school place. There is capacity within the other schools in West Wight and schools' could also take over PAN if needed and agreed too.

Q- Data provided shows that in four years' time numbers at Shalfleet start to decline and All Saints numbers start to increase, this is a concern given what is being proposed. Is this the start of a trend of parents no longer putting their children in Shalfleet?

A-With decreasing numbers in the area, schools will be impacted in many ways. None of us know how this will ultimately play out and we will have to react to the situations we are faced with. I can ensure you that governors and teachers want the best education for your children whatever the future circumstances might be.

Statement - My family moved to Yarmouth to walk to school as I don't drive.

Q- The local authority needs to consider equalities.

A-The local authority as part of its reporting and decision-making process is required to produce an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). An EIA has been produced to support the report recommending the closure of All Saints'. This is a living document and can be updated as and when required.

Q-Multi-million-pound new school with over 800 children now in special measures. How can you ensure it won't happen? Less choice everything hanging on this. What will it look like? All hanging on Lizzie.

Encouraged families to move here. You can't put this formula you have in this school in to in a new school.

A-If we had falling numbers and Lizzie decided to move on and the school was not popular it could become RI, this is to say we cannot manage uncertainty, but can and must manage change. We are proposing to relocate the school, the same staff and governors we have today, I would hope we still have going forward, it those people along with the pupils and parents that make a great school, not necessarily the buildings or location.

Q-I don't drive and can currently walk the kids to school. Why hasn't this been dealt with? How has it gone on for so long, it has brought this school down, feel like were being stitched up.

A-These are issues we will have to address, but that can't be done until a final decision is reached, and we all have certainty on the way forward. It is also the point of the implementation groups.

Q- Seven schools in Petersfield formed a small school's group with shared resources, but not federated.

Heads and Governors meet to ensure the children get a fantastic education. Why could the West Wight or Isle of Wight not work together?

A-Petersfield is a large town and pupil numbers currently allow this approach to work. The five schools across the West Wight work together where possible and support each other if they can. However, we cannot avoid the fact that current and forecast pupil numbers will not support five schools. The reality is that one or two of the five schools would end up with a vast majority of the pupils, meaning the remaining schools would simply become unsustainable.

Q- If all schools were performing well, we could take it on the chin. Assume you have looked at the geography, feels like a new attack on Yarmouth. Patronising language like the Governments surrender bill, hand is being forced.

A-The Governors are not being bullied as has been expressed on social media. A very difficult situation needs to be addressed and the governors have considered their options very carefully, including seeking specialist legal advice. The language being used on social media outlets is not appropriate or helpful to anyone. We need to come together as a school and as two communities to deliver the required change.

Q-Why is the consultation to close Yarmouth?

A-The consultation being proposed by the governing body is on the relocation of Yarmouth not its closure.

Q-Forced upon us by the Local Authority.

A-The Local Authority are not looking to close Yarmouth. The recommendation in the council's report is to discontinue All Saints'.

Q-No option to keep Yarmouth where it is?

A-No. The report recommends the local authority supports the governing body proposal to consult on its relocation to the All Saints' site. The report has yet to go before Cabinet for consideration.

Q-87% of parents said no to the closure and you haven't listened.

A – There is no proposal currently on the table to close Yarmouth.

Q-We have raised educational reasons against the closure and the children's education is collateral damage. Yarmouth has a unique formula. Appreciate a shining new building is on offer but you take everything and dump it.

A – We all know that this school has something that is lovely about it. Some years ago, Yarmouth only had 63 pupils on roll and governors were close to handing the keys back. The proposal on the table will make the school much more secure as we move forward. We are not funded at the same levels as we were in 2013. The reality of schools funding is that £14million is being promised this year, that hasn't arrived in our bank balance yet, but that will only cover the increasing costs and then if it is not re-occurring, we would have the fund the shortfall the next year.

Q-Have to secure what is here.

A-Part of what it is, is the quality of its people we can take them with us.

Q-If three schools were to federate would you get more funding?

A-No. While federation would allow for certain things it would not bring with it additional funding. You could have a situation where one school in the federation takes most of the available funding, clearly this would cause significant issues for the other two schools. There would be no support from Schools Forum to support the federation in this example. The governors have exchanged correspondents with the LA to seek clarity around future financial and other support during any transition phase. This LA has been responded positively.

Jeff Williams – The Diocese have asked the Local Authority to make a commitment and they have. The diocese does not differentiate between Shalfleet, Brighstone or Yarmouth as they are all C of E schools. The reality of the situation is difficult and the processes that need to now happen are very challenging, there is much to consider and deal with. The Local Authority and Diocese have a vast experience in the moving of school sites and will minimise the impact on the education of the children. I can give you absolute reassurance that the Local Authority has not in any way tried to stitch any of us up.

Q-School reorganisation on the Island hasn't historically got a good track record.

A-Understand that and our communities are unique, and we need to understand that, however as communities Yarmouth and Freshwater also have a great deal in common. Governing bodies are made up of local people who represent the communities they come from. We are all united on securing the best education for the children now and going forward.

Statement - Reticence on my part, I live in Freshwater and went to All Saints' but chose Yarmouth for my children because we love it. This is not snobbery. Nasty things have been said and I don't condone that. Support people within the community to accept the fact that it's the way to go.

Q-Why is the closure of the All Saints site no longer an option?

A – Population figures clearly show the need to maintain a primary school in Freshwater. It's clear that most of the children attending Yarmouth do not come from Yarmouth. We know that over the years Yarmouth as a location has changed markedly, it is no longer affordable to the majority and a large number of properties in the area are now holiday and / or second homes.

Q-How does investing in the All Saints' site increase employment opportunities?

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A – A multi-million pound investment in the All Saints’ site from the governments Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP2) will bring with it many local business and employment opportunities. These will in the main come in the form of jobs created by the construction work its self and opportunities for local firms to form part of the projects supply chain. PSPB2 has always identified the All Saints’ site as an area for investment, it is not a recent decision. Three options are being considered by the PSBP Board, significant refurbishment, new build and new build but maintaining the listed part of the existing school building. The outcome of the Boards decision is yet to be announced.

Q-Will it be achieved within 18 months?

A-Design is relatively straight forward, and work is progressing on all three of the options mentioned above. It remains everyone’s ambition to deliver the final solution by the start of the academic year 2021.

Q-Does PSBP include fitting out a school with furniture?

A-if the solution is one of the new build options, it would be expected that new furniture is included.

Q-How do you justify spending millions on that?

A – PSBP2 is a government funded programme which has always included a level of investment in to the All Saints’ site.

Q-New building is the white elephant in the room, the success hangs on a handful of teachers. We are asking the head to replicate current her standard there, it is a big gamble. It’s a larger more expensive school, how do you maintain a good Ofsted, will still feel like a Freshwater school?

A-No guarantees, it will be a challenge, but with the strength in depth of our staff and the support of the Local Authority, Diocese, Governing, it’s an opportunity we can make a success.

Q-Look at the situation in Ventnor how does this situation compare? Look at studies there is always a dip in education standards.

A-Cannot compare to Ventnor as each situation is different. The Governors have a clear understanding of the importance of head teacher’s role in making this a success should it progress. In June we were not aware of how this situation might progress, now we are far better informed. The Diocese along with the local authority will provide challenge and support to ensure the commitment is there to make this work for all involved. Governors will challenge equally hard the local authority and diocese to ensure the support required is available when needed.

Q-St Boniface was a good school, became a large school and went into special measures.

A-You can never be 100% in situations like this, but the Diocese has 160 schools some are good, and some have dips in their performance for a whole host of reasons. What we do know is that the head teacher and all her staff are totally committed and will do all it takes to make this work.

Q-Will some of the All Saints teachers remain at the school?

A-Potentially, but that is a situation yet to be fully discussed and determined.

Q-Small schools are better for Children. We live in Totland but prefer Yarmouth it doesn’t seem so strict. There is a reputation at the school and bullying extends past the playground. Have experienced it fist hand. You can’t replicate what we have in Yarmouth at a larger school.

A-In terms of standards and outcomes we can of course replicate those on a different site, they are down to people not buildings or locations. All schools have difficult situations to deal with, many are never heard about beyond the head teacher’s office or, governors’ meetings and discussions.

Q-Our neighbour sends their children to Freshwater and we talk about this situation. The rhetoric coming out on social media works both ways.

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A – We are all very aware of the upsetting and inappropriate language and messages that have circulated around this situation to date. It is now time for all involved to come together as one and take things forward to a positive conclusion.

Q-The reputation will be difficult to get rid of.

A-Children who attend Yarmouth and All Saints' already mix in many ways outside of school including scouts, swimming and church. We all now need to build on these existing relationships, the school and it's staff will work hard to build upon this.

Q-Will you make room for new governors to join if the school relocates?

A-The Governing Body will not be made any bigger. We will continue to have governors who represent a wide range of groups and communities. If we move to Freshwater and opportunities arise for new governors to join we will ensure they continue to be representative of the school and communities it serves.

Q-I have fallen in love with every aspect of this school. I have helped to try and future proof it and make it greener with the outdoor classroom which is fantastic. There is no community voice and this will devastate Yarmouth.

A-As a Governor I have lived here all of my life and it has changed a lot in recent times. Did you read the letter in the County Press? People have sold and continue to sell houses in Yarmouth to people coming in from the mainland, these families almost never have primary age children in them. There are very few children living here now-a-days and the numbers that are here cannot sustain a school.

Q-We are personally not in a position to live locally due to house prices.

A-It is a very expensive area and there is nothing to suggest that will change.

Q-Has the carnival committee collapsed?

A-No! The committee is up and running with a few new members.

Q-I am from Japan the town is very good. What have you learnt from the past mistakes made at Ventnor?

A-The Diocese and local authority continually learn from previous projects and always look very carefully at any problems and/or mistakes made. We know what is being proposed will be a significant challenge, but amongst us we have the knowledge and skills required to make this a success.

Q-The children will not be able to walk to school.

A-The implementation group/s will look at all the implications of what is being proposed, transport requirements will need to be fully explored and where required appropriate solution put in place.

Q-The West Wight is first on the hit list for the school reorganisation.

A-We know the issue we're trying to resolve on the West Wight is an issue we will also have to face and resolve on other parts of the Island at some point. How you resolve the problem will not always be the same.

Q-Cllr Brading has struck a lot of fear into us with the proposed 210 capacity school. Are we thinking far enough ahead? Don't have the evidence to challenge.

A – The work that is being considered for the All Saints' site will deliver a school that has a net capacity of 210. By doing this we future proof the site as best we can. It does not mean that a relocated Yarmouth will operate with a PAN of 30, which equates to 210 places. The school currently has a PAN of 15 and it is for governors to decide if going forward that is a number that might need to change.

Q-Is this the least effective of all of the options? Would the federation then have to close Shalfleet.

A-No, the proposals we are discussing should strengthen the federation.

Thank you all for attending. The committee report is going to Cabinet on Thursday 10th October for consideration.

Post meeting note to include information on Sparsity:-

Sparsity

27. Schools that are eligible for sparsity funding must meet two criteria:

- they are located in areas where pupils are a significant distance from an alternative should the school close
- they are small schools

28. For the pupils for whom the school is their closest compatible school, the factor measures the distance (as the crow flies) from their home to their second nearest compatible school and the mean distance for all pupils is then calculated. Since the pupil population changes each year, it is possible for a school to be eligible for sparsity funding in one year but not in the next.

29. The school eligibility criteria for sparsity funding are as follows:

School phase	Maximum average number of pupils per year group	Minimum average distance to second nearest compatible school
Primary	21.4	2 miles
Secondary	120	3 miles
Middle	69.2	2 miles
All-through	62.5	2 miles

On the Isle of Wight the 'Sparsity' factor has been introduced into the funding formula, however it applies to a limited number of schools as indicated by the guide above. From local knowledge the Sparsity factor could apply to a number of schools such as: Brighstone, Chillerton & Rookley, Godshill, Shalfleet and Niton in terms of distance, however they do not all receive funding due to pupil numbers. In addition, in some years they may be eligible for funding on distance whereas in other years they may not. It depends on the pupil cohort in school at the time.