

**Portesham Primary  
Parent Briefing Post Ofsted Meeting  
Virtual Teams Meeting  
Wednesday 7th July 2021 at 6p.m.**

**Present:**

Vik Verma- Interim Director of Education, Dorset Council  
Clive Burgess MBE- Chair of Governors  
Vicky Prior- Headteacher  
Sharon Peel- Education Challenge Lead, Dorset Council  
Richard Howes- Education Challenge Lead, Dorset Council  
Linda Rowley- School Improvement Consultant, Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education

Attendance at meeting:

There were 34 log ins / people signed in last night, including Governors, 11 professionals and 23 family emails.

Vik Verma made an initial introduction of himself and then his colleagues introduced themselves.

Vik Verma, Director of Education & Learning, Dorset Council,  
Richard Howes, ECL, Chesil Schools,  
Sharon Peel DC  
Linda Rowley, Salisbury Diocese Board of Education.

The Chair, Clive Burgess and Vicky Prior, Headteacher also introduced themselves.

Vik Verma thanked everyone for attending, said there would be opportunity to share any concerns and ask questions. He said future support for the school would continue, already started and address concerns of the Inspection report.

**Chair of Governors address to Parents:**

Thank you all for joining us this evening. I think we would all agree that a face-to-face meeting would have been everyone's choice. But I am very grateful that you are here on Teams this evening to listen, to ask questions and hopefully to be re-assured that the improvements required of us will be achieved rapidly. The inspection, under the new Ofsted framework criteria, exposed serious weaknesses that will be addressed, and you will hear more from the Headteacher, Dorset Council, and the Diocese.

After the initial shock, your reaction has probably been to consider moving your child to another school. This is completely natural. You want the best for your child and what you read in the Report makes your heart sink. We are deeply sorry for the anxiety that you must be experiencing. The Staff who work so hard for the pupils of the school are also profoundly dismayed by Ofsted's judgements. They are all excellent practitioners who although hurt, will rise to the challenge. There is a spirit about Portesham School which will see it safely on our journey. The children are happy and well looked after. Come into school and see for yourself the atmosphere and the learning environment.

I have witnessed numerous Ofsted inspections. Sadly, in education, the goalposts are moved time and time again. This school was outstanding in the last Ofsted inspection yet now is in Special Measures. Previously, progress that children were making and the data to support that were the main drivers for Ofsted. Now they are not. The Lead Inspector made it abundantly clear that she was not there to look at the progress children were making or to study the school's positive data. As a parent myself, I want to know how my child is doing. This is particularly relevant when your child moves to secondary school. But we are where we are. There are weaknesses there for all to see and we must now move forward together. We will sort out the weaknesses and I am confident that we will be out of Special Measures in no time. The staff are totally professional and 100% committed to moving the school forward.

You clearly have the right to seek a place for your child in another school if after this meeting you are not satisfied that we can achieve rapid improvement, but there is no guarantee that the same situation will not apply there. The new Ofsted Framework will see many schools in the same situation as Portesham. Portesham children are safe, happy and are developing the resilience they need to prepare them for the next stage. Peer relationships here are positive but might not be so in another establishment.

The report mentions the substantial turbulence of the past. It is rare to see such a sentence inserted by Ofsted and the 'turbulence' has had a significant impact on where we are today. For confidential reasons, I cannot go into detail, but there have been a number of complex and time-consuming historical issues that have had a dramatic impact on leadership and governance. The Headteacher returned to a completely different school to the one she left to take up her secondment. Staff morale was at its lowest ebb. Outcomes for children were below expectation.

The HT had no deputy, and a new and largely inexperienced GB. The Headteacher commissioned both a financial audit, and an independent school review by the school's evaluation partner. Both highlighted significant areas of concern. The new Governing Body had little or no experience of school governance. Leadership of the Governing Body was not focused on school improvement but on the management of internal staff issues. There was a reluctance to support the Headteacher to drive school improvement.

The Governing Body since the wholesale resignation of the previous one in 2017 has been dysfunctional and not fit for purpose in the key area of quality of education. The priority was focused on dealing with complex HR issues. As we are a VA (voluntary aided) school, it is the governors who are the employers.

I joined the Governing Body in September 2017 having been a governor in 3 other schools. I was anticipating a dynamic, focused, knowledgeable GB. Instead, there was little strategy and vision for the school, a point made by the Headteacher on several occasions. As one with experience I could see that the Headteacher had to focus on priorities even though they were unpopular in certain quarters. Such was the chaos in governance, it was crystal clear to me that Portesham could no longer remain an independent, isolated school. It had to join a family of schools, a Multi-Academy Trust.

With no succession plan, and no-one queuing up to take on the role, I became Chair of Governors in September 2019. I was determined to bring about change. The Governing Body made up of committed volunteers, was strong on finance but weak on curriculum; it was too low in number, too inexperienced in monitoring and governors needed training. We strengthened the curriculum committee, brought in our SEP to train governors, the FGB began to focus on support and challenge of the Senior Leadership Team, but it was never going to be enough. The historical issues had not disappeared, far from it: As the employer, I was devoting a

disproportionate amount of my time dealing with matters unrelated to vision, strategy, monitoring, challenge, and recruiting. And then in March 2020 we went into lockdown and the priorities changed.  
END

A presentation of slides for the Parents followed:

### **Portesham School Governance**

- Governors must have a clear and strategic vision for the curriculum.
- Governors must have robust monitoring procedures that are focused and effective.
- Governors must have the confidence and skills to effectively support yet challenge the school leadership

Vicky Prior said support is available and Richard Howes and Sharon Peel will continue to work closely with school on the Action Plan. Linda Rowley will also add support from the Diocese.

### **Portesham School Governance: Future**

To achieve this, we need:

- To strengthen the Portesham School Governing Body.
- To provide bespoke governor training especially curriculum monitoring.
- What have we done so far?

We have:

- Turned to experienced governors from other establishments to join us including three experienced Chair of Governors from the Minerva Trust primary schools. Their knowledge and experience will enable the Governing Body to focus on the above and hold the school leadership to account to ensure rapid progress is achieved.
- Sought bespoke governor training from partner organisations and the School's Evaluation Partner.

### **Portesham CE VA Primary School**

The way ahead, dedicated staff working in partnership with all stakeholders

Action planning:

Maximising the impact of support and challenge available:

- 1) English Hub
- 2) Jurassic Maths Hub (NCETM)
- 3) National Leader of Education (NLE)
- 4) Local Schools (MLT)
- 5) Education Challenge Leads
- 6) Salisbury Diocese Education Advisors (SDBE)

### **Areas for Improvement**

Improvement Planning

- A precise Action Plan has been written in response to identified weaknesses and is being implemented.
- The Action Plan will be shared openly with the school community.
- Regular updates about the impact of improvements and progress made towards targets will be shared through newsletters and on the school website.

#### Monitoring

- Robust and rigorous monitoring of the Action Plan will be implemented, with external partners (the 'Team Around the School' TAS) contributing expertise to validate judgements.
- Monitoring will focus on the impact of work undertaken on the quality of education for all pupils, including those with SEND.

#### SEND

- Work will be undertaken to ensure that children with SEND are able to access learning across the curriculum through learning activities matched precisely to their needs.

#### Reading

- Early reading has been prioritised, new Book Bag Books have been purchased and training for all staff has been secured.
- Reading interventions are in place for children who have fallen behind with their reading.
- Reading for Pleasure, and home reading, will be promoted, supported, and celebrated.

#### Curriculum

- We are accelerating the planned curriculum review cycle so it will be completed by the end of this calendar year.
- Learning Pathways and Knowledge Organisers will ensure consistency across subjects in both the knowledge and skills that children are expected to learn.

Vik Verma said that moving forward we will still provide support and continue through the Autumn term from Dorset County and the educational team.

Richard Howes thanked the school staff for the warm welcome saying the children were well behaved, polite, and enthusiastic.

### **The Role of Dorset Council**

- Members of Dorset Council have worked in conjunction with the school in devising an action plan to address Ofsted's recommendations and drive rapid improvement.
- This plan feeds into a Statement of Action that Dorset Council sends to the Department of Education.
- Dorset Council has a statutory responsibility to work with, or for working with Portesham Primary School. This will involve regular Team around the School (TAS) meetings.
- The TAS meetings bring improvement partners together to support and monitor the school's action plan and the progress made to address all recommendations made by Ofsted.
- Dorset Council are committed to working with staff and the governing body of Portesham Primary School.

Vicky Prior said the Action Plan will be shared with parents in a user-friendly format. It will be clear and transparent. There will be regular updates. The Action Plan is also shared with the Departments of Education who will hold us to account and move out of Special Measures.

Sharon Peel referred to the Teams around School meetings, the first of which is on the 16th July, where Improvement Partners will work together to monitor progress and ensure rapid action.

### **The Role of Salisbury Diocese**

The SDBE will continue to provide:

Pastoral support to the HT and school leaders. Support during the academisation process.  
Advisory support for the promotion of Religious Education and collective worship.

Linda Rowley gave a brief outline of the Board of Education's pastoral support. LR met with School in February and will continue to do so. Foundation Governor support will be given and representation in conversation through the process of academisation. LR referred to SIAMS, an annual visit of Church Schools and collective worship.

### **QUESTIONS FROM PARENTS**

Q. Action Plan, who will see this?

A. Vicky Prior said this will be talked through with partners on the 16th July and will be available the last week of term. This must be formally submitted, a process adopted and monitored.

Q. Will the school bring back POPs or a similar PTA group

Vicky Prior said she would love to see this return. Reluctantly this was not a school decision, it just fell apart. It would be good to build into the planning and engage with the community.

Q. So when and what daily changes will we see as parents and the children see as part of an academy?

Q. Can the Chair of Governors comment on whether they think the failed Ofsted report is linked to the school being forced to become an Academy, as has occurred with other local schools.

*Response was heard and therefore recorded by clerk*

How will the school measure the progress and progression of the students to see how effective the action plan is? The End of term reports came home with no benchmarks or assessment criteria covered.

Vicky Prior briefly explained the MAT situation and her secondment. Being part of a MAT has always been part of a long-term plan. The Governing Body has done extensive work towards this, but which one will not be known until the autumn term.

The Chair confirmed that Ofsted report has forced the situation and we have been heavily involved in discussion since last year, in discussion with CEOs of Academy Trusts for the reasons already stated. It was already recognised we did not have enough capacity as a stand-alone school and now will relieve us of the burden to be able to concentrate on quality education for children.

Q. How will the school measure the progress and progression of the students to see how effective the action plan is. The End of term reports came home with no benchmarks or assessment criteria covered.

A.

*Response was heard and therefore recorded by clerk*

*Additional note. The school produced reports in line with guidance provided by the DFE. As a direct response to parent feedback the school provided 'in house' data for each pupil 16.7.21.*

Q. Does that mean that you are not going to be able to choose which Multi Academy trust you join?

Vik Verma explained that a school being placed in Special Measures has a DoE Academy Order placed in it. We will work with Dorset Council and Salisbury Diocese to ensure the right match and fit for the school and community. It is hoped to be a within a Dorset familiar community.

Parent comment:

Concluding, said her heart sank. This report does not reflect the school and has been involved with school before and after the turbulence reported.

Zoe said there is incredible support for Vicky, and we are all here to support her. If the PTA were to return, I would be in full support.

Parental comment:

Totally agree with everything willows mum said .

Parental comment:

Very well said!

Parental comment:

Well said!

Parental comment:

Well said Zoe. This last year with covid has been challenging and disrupting for the children, will joining a Multi Academy mean changes to staff structure or staff changes?

*Response was heard and therefore recorded by clerk*

Parental comment:

As a parent who has had 2 children at the school for 10 years, I would agree 100% with Zoe's comments

Parental comment:

We make Willow's mum words our own. The best decision we made last year was to move our son to Portesham. And we are grateful for all the support we have received so far.

Vicky Prior thanked Zoe.

Parental comment:

Q. What aspects of the inspection report do you feel were fair? It seemed at the beginning that CB was saying that all practitioners were excellent, and the goalposts keep moving almost excusing things, is this the feeling that the school has?

Vicky Prior said one aspect of the report was fair comment, and this was being only part way through the curriculum review. This was impacted by Covid – 19. We will be accelerating through this next year's work, maximising support available.

Vik Verma With Academy Trust staffing, more support and help for a smooth transition, we will continue to support children's education. He referred to concerns and anxiety of parents about next year and general transition to normal academic year. He asked Parents not to make any sudden decision to move children. We are all committed as a partnership.

A wider commitment for us in a strong community to bring school to an Outstanding School again.

He said he was grateful for the parent attendance at what is a difficult time of day for parents. If there are any more questions, please email these to school.

Vicky Prior said the support around school is empowering as a team. Staff are passionate about driving improvement for children.

The Chair thanked the parents, saying we have a crucial job, with anxious times. Please have the confidence in us. Thank you.

Vik Verma thanked the speakers.

Meeting ended at 6.45 p.m.