



## **Post Ofsted inspection report parents/carers meeting**

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

The meeting started at 6.00pm

### **Speakers:**

- **Marion Standing, Consultant Headteacher**
- **Alice Boon, Reading Borough Council, Senior School Standards Officer**
- **Kirsteen Roberts, Assistant Director, Oxford Diocese and Chair of the Strategic Management Board**
- **Lorraine Doyle, Chair of Governors**
- **Fiona Craig, Director of Education, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education**

### **Governors present:**

Lorraine Doyle (Chair of Governors), Mark Richardson (Vice Chair), Reverend Jo Williams, Christine Price-Smith, Harvey Smith, Elizabeth Hodge.

### **Marion Standing, Consultant Headteacher**

MS welcomed everyone to the meeting, including children and staff and explained that she had been employed as the Consultant Headteacher to provide support to the school for as long as it was needed. MS explained that she had been a Headteacher for more than ten years and was experienced at supporting schools through difficult periods. MS stressed that she didn't feel that St Mary and All Saints felt like a special measures school. MS noted the areas in the OFSTED inspection report that had been positively commented on including early years, music and PE and reminded everyone that safeguarding is considered to be good. MS stressed that the school agreed with the Ofsted findings and that there were things that needed to improve.

### **Alice Boon, Reading Borough Council, Senior School Standards Officer**

AB explained that she was attending the meeting to explain to parents and carers the actions that the Local Authority has taken following the OFSTED inspection. AB explained that the LA has used their legal powers to intervene as they have concerns about school standards. The LA has removed the delegated powers from governors for the budget and performance management of the Headteacher. AB noted that schools nationally are having to reduce their budgets and many are making staff redundant. The direct management of HR by the LA will ensure this is kept under review. AB explained that the LA and the Diocese have acted swiftly to be able to work with partners to have direct control and accountability over the school. The LA has appointed a Strategic Management Board. The Local Governing Body remains in place for now; the LA had appointed Lorraine Doyle who is a National Leader of Governance. Lorraine will continue as the Chair of Governors, a role she took on in the summer. AB explained that her job was to do whatever was

necessary to add capacity to the school and that LA funds had been sourced to support this. AB welcomed the appointment of MS as the Consultant Headteacher and the positive working relationship with the Diocese and Regional Schools Commissioner.

**Kirsteen Roberts, Chair of the Strategic Management Board**

KR explained that she is employed by the Diocese who had been asked by the LA to support the Strategic Management Board. As the Chair of the SMB it is her responsibility to ensure that the school moves forward from the position it currently finds itself in. KR explained that the other members of the Strategic Management Board are Kirsty Bennet, the LA HR lead and Steven Davis the LA Finance lead. KR explained that she was working closely with the senior leaders in the school to stabilize the school and move forward as quickly as they can. KR acknowledged that standards are not what they should be and that collectively parents have been let down. KR stressed that this evening was the first stage in the process of working with parents and that their thoughts would be invaluable to taking things forward. KR explained that parents could contact her at any time with questions.

**Lorraine Doyle, Chair of Governors**

LD thanked everyone for attending and explained that she was also the Chair of Governors at a secondary and primary school in West Berkshire and that as a parent she had experienced a school going into special measures so could understand the feelings of parents. LD stressed that she shared the ambition of parents/carers that this should be a GOOD school and that whilst she was disappointed with the outcome of the inspection she was in complete agreement with the report that standards in the school are not good enough. LD explained that Governors would be working carefully to ensure that the action plan for improvements was implemented and that standards of teaching and learning improved so that children could make good progress and thrive at the school.

**Fiona Craig, Director of Education for the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education**

FC stressed that the school's fundamental Christian principles around caring for every child would continue and that the school now had more support than it had ever had to help the school to improve. FC acknowledged that it takes time but she felt the school had the right team together to make a difference.

FC explained that the school had first entered Special Measures in 2014 and had been given an order to become an academy. As the school is a Church school, it was, along with the governors, the Diocese's job to ensure the right academy trust solution for the school and they have been looking at this for the last two years. Four would-be sponsors had been approached but none had progressed past initial stages. FC stressed that she was not ready to say that any Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) will do –it needed to be the right MAT and that currently they are in discussion with a strong MAT so things might move forward very quickly.

Marion Standing then chaired a question and answer session for parents:

**Parent/ Carer questions and comments:**

*Parents questioned the impact all the change and instability is having on the mental health of children in the school.*

*Parents commented on the absence of effective communication from teachers and requested weekly emails about pupil progress and what parents can do to support learning. **‘Manage our expectations and we will follow you’.***

*Year 6 parents were particularly concerned about the impact on SATS and the implications this would have for secondary school and future prospects and requested that more be done to support Year 6 pupils in particular.*

*Parents noted that the OFSTED report highlights the turnover of staff and lack of continuity and asked how the school can make sure we get the best staff and keep them. Alice Boon acknowledged the national shortage of quality teachers which is exasperated by the location with nearby authorities able to offer out of London weightings to salary. There is a huge problem with recruiting teachers in the area. AB explained that the Local Authority are making more funds available and that with the support of other Headteachers the school will receive support from other schools who are going to lend staff to the school to assist where they can. Marion Standing commented on the difference that those staff who have been loyal to the school make and welcomed the additional support from the LA advisory team.*

*Parents asked how long the Consultant Head will be in place. Marion Standing explained that she would be at the school for as long as she is needed. FC explained that if the MAT solution happens quickly they, the MAT would probably appoint a new substantive Head.*

*Parents asked if the Consultant Head could stay for 12 months. AB noted there is a need for a permanent solution to build stability and consistency. KR noted that there is a challenge to achieve this immediately and that the SMB would communicate with parents and carers as the move from transition arrangements to something more permanent is made.*

*Parents questioned the focus on business as usual when the business is not working and commented on the shocking report and questioned why parents should have confidence in the ability of the team to get the school out of difficulty.*

*Parents asked why it had taken three years for support to be put in place. KR agreed that parents were right to be angry that it has taken too long but now with the support from the Diocese and LA and her appointment as Chair of the SBM there is a real clarity of purpose and she offered her reassurances that things would be different.*

*A parent (and former governor) asked why the Board of Governors are being retained, saying that the executive committee has not worked and questioned whether it was time for a change. KR explained that the SMB would be reviewing governance and how to move things forward effectively.*

*Parents asked what the practical quick wins were.*

*Parents expressed frustration about homework which is set and then feedback is not given. One parent said **“children mark their own homework”.***

*Parents offered their time and expertise to support learning. Parents explained that they have offered to work with the school in the past but the perception has been that parents don’t*

*understand and are not able to support the school.* KR acknowledged that she had taken this point on board and welcomed the offers of support from all parents/carers.

*Parents questioned why so many Teaching Assistants had lost their jobs and the impact this had on teachers and their children.*

*Parents commented on how infrequently children were reading with an adult in the classroom and identified this as an area for a quick win as part of the volunteer readers programme.*

*Parents questioned who the Key Stage leaders are and asked for this information to be put on the website and communicated to parents.*

The SBM updated parents on the development of the new website which is going live on the 4 December. Marion Standing confirmed that the staffing structure would be shared with parents/carers by email and put on the website.

The SBM also updated parents/carers on a new app that the school will be using to improve communication and to make sure messages and letters are sent out to parents/carers. The SBM confirmed that details of the app and how to register would be put on the website.

*Parent asked for strategic updates on progress and KR agreed to communicate on a regular basis (no less than fortnightly).*

*Parents commented that trust in the school was low.* KR asked parents to give the new team 'one go' to see if they can make the difference everyone wants.

*Parents commented on the strategic language of the discussion and asked what was being done in the classroom to make a difference. "It's all very well having all these managers in place but how will this filter down to my child?"*

*Parents comment that they don't think high ability children are pushed to do their best and the work is too easy.*

*Parents asked if they will receive a copy of the minutes.* It was agreed the minutes would be on the school website on Monday 4 December.

*Parents questioned the timing of parents' evenings and the effectiveness of meetings which were too early in term or where teachers have changed and they were unable to comment on the progress of their children.*

The Reverend Jo Williams introduced herself to parents/carers as the local Parish Priest and Governor and commented on the improvement journey the school had started to make last time before standards dropped back in the last couple of terms. The Reverend commented on how everyone at the meeting cared about the children and their education and welfare.

*A parent suggested having a clear 30/60/90day plan with checkpoints so parents could see what has happened in school during that period.*

*Parents challenged MS's comments about the school, saying "we feel as parents that this is a Special Measures school".*

KR commented on the commitment, energy and effort that the team had but noted that not everything could be achieved overnight.

*Parents asked for details of the changes which have already been put in place.* KR outlined some of the actions that have already been taken: the LA decision to remove delegated powers from the school; the introduction of the SMB; the appointment of MS as Consultant Head; MS's establishment of an SLT; meetings with SLT to agree the priorities; the arrangements for and holding of the parents meeting to be open and transparent and provide a forum for parents to share their thoughts and ideas and conversations with MATs about an appropriate partner for the future.

MS commented on the learning behaviours that she had been working on with all classes and the approach to using the library which is now happening.

*Parents asked if the Early Years leader is involved in SLT.* MS explained that the Early Years leader was a member of the SLT that has been established since the inspection.

*Parents commented on the need for them to see the difference in the school by the comments their children make when they return home and through changed practices around reading and homework for example.*

*Parents asked if there was any way that they could be involved in the Strategic Management Board.* KR agreed to look at that as an action.

*Parents expressed concern about more staff leaving.* MS explained that there are a number of staff on agency contracts and that she is working on contractual matters with teachers. MS could not guarantee that staff would not leave but didn't expect the same numbers to do so that left after the school first entered special measures.

*Parents stressed how much they care about the education their children receive at the school.*

*Parents questioned whether the decision for TAs to leave who knew their children was just down to money.* AB commented that the way the redundancy process had been done was one of the reasons why the LA had decided to take responsibility for HR.

*Parents asked if this was a one-off meeting or part of a series of meetings.* KR agreed to look at holding more regular meetings with parents. *Parents asked if meetings could be quarterly.*

*Parents asked for reassurance that extra support would be put in place to support Year 6 SATS, parents offered support at weekends for a Saturday school or holiday sessions.*

*Parents expressed frustration that the good Year 6 teachers who achieved good results last year had left the school.*

*Parents asked who they could hold accountable if the children didn't do well in the SATS.*

KR acknowledged the concerns around Year 6 and promised action to support this year.

*Parents questioned if the school had been set up to fail so that it would become an academy.* KR refuted any suggestion that anyone had deliberately set out to fail the children to force an academy solution. *One parent said, "I have been failed by this school".*

KR asked if parents/carers had a sense of it being different this time round, but some parents commented that it felt like Groundhog Day.

KR stated that she was happy to be judged on her actions going forward.

*Parents asked for workshops to help them understand how they can support learning in school.*

*Parents asked for tutors for SATS children.*

*Parents asked for homework to be put online.*

*Parents asked for information to be communicated by email*

*Parents asked if the Year 6 teachers that are in place now will continue.* KR explained that she could not talk about specific teachers but that more details on this will be shared soon.

*Parents questioned why it was not possible to come clean about whether there is an issue with the Year 6 staffing.*

KR closed the meeting by thanking parents/carers for their open contribution and agreed that whilst it was not a comfortable place for the school to be in, she shared the concerns that parents/carers had raised. Parents/carers were given the opportunity to follow up questions with members of the panel after the meeting; there were no further questions so the meeting came to a close at 7.20pm.

#### **Summary of action requested from parents/carers:**

##### **1. Improved communications**

- at least fortnightly updates to parents/carers
- reporting on a 30 day/60 day and 90day plan with milestones
- new website
- communication via email, not letters sent home with children
- website to include information about staff structures and how to escalate requests to members of SLT
- opportunity for parents to meet with the Strategic Management Board

##### **2. Genuine parental engagement**

- Work with parents/carers who have offered their skills, expertise and time to support the school.
- Parents/carers to be respected and listened to
- regular parents/carers meetings – at least quarterly
- parents' workshops to show how parents can support learning
- minutes of all parents' forum meetings to be shared on the website

##### **3. Support for year 6 children**

- clear plans for SATs preparation and support
- consideration of running a Saturday school and or holiday sessions
- consideration of a Tutor scheme for Year 6

- consideration of the mental health needs of Year 6 students adjusting to change and managing their stress levels
- quality teachers and support in the classroom
- parents to be informed if there are any changes to the Year 6 teaching team

**4. More able children**

- Increased challenge for more able children

**5. Reading**

- Reading monitored and opportunities for children to read regularly with adults
- Volunteer reading programme
- Greater and consistent use of the library

**6. Teacher stability**

- more permanent teachers, less turnover of staffing
- more TAs to support teachers
- more stable leadership team

**7. Homework**

- Consistent approach to setting and marking and feeding back on homework
- Homework linked to class room learning

**Carol Flach, Clerk to Governors**

**30 November 2017**