

## Consultation on the future of Okeford Fitzpaine CE Primary School

Sherborne Area Schools Trust's ambition is to work together to deliver excellent education to all children within our communities.

### Background:

The number of pupils at Okeford Fitzpaine CE Primary School has been falling for several years, and last September saw only one child join in Reception and we also have only one child registered to join Reception in September 2022. The projected number of students for September 2022 is 17 with the breakdown of year groups as follows:

Reception	1
Year 1	1
Year 2	2
Year 3	2
Year 4	1
Year 5	7
Year 6	3

Whilst as a Trust we have several small village schools, who flourish and deliver an excellent quality of education to our children, we are now faced with examining the experience that the children are receiving at Okeford Fitzpaine Primary and comparing it to that of other schools. We must question whether children are receiving the best possible education as well as social opportunities, with some children having no peers of a similar age. With so many year groups in any given class, it becomes more difficult to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that meets all their needs. Social interactions are a crucial part of a child's development, and we want all children to be able to play, make friends, and take part in team sports with children of their own age, enabling them to develop holistically into well-rounded individuals.

Okeford Fitzpaine Primary was rated as 'Inadequate' by Ofsted in 2018, and whilst a considerable amount of work and resources have been dedicated to improving the school, numbers have continued to dwindle as parents have chosen alternative neighbouring schools.

Alongside this, we have seen the resignation of three qualified teachers and the recruitment of replacement teachers has proved difficult. The challenge of mixed year group teaching is significant and requires high quality teachers and support staff. In addition, the school has a high proportion of children with SEND needs and we need to ensure these are being fully met. The current staffing structure is being heavily supported by senior staff from SAST, including the Trust's School Improvement Director, and local Headteachers, who are

### Delivering educational excellence through aspiration and collaboration

dedicating their time to ensuring a high-quality education is delivered. This is not sustainable for the staff – and most importantly – the children.

### **Proposal:**

At the heart of this proposal is the desire to see all children within our schools receive an excellent education, with no child left behind or disadvantaged. Every child should be given the best possible chance in these formative years, and we believe these children will receive that by attending neighbouring Shillingstone CE Primary School.

We are therefore opening a public consultation on a proposal to merge Okeford Fitzpaine Primary with Shillingstone CE Primary School which is located less than two miles away. Shillingstone is a popular school, with large, airy classrooms, modern facilities, and the capacity to accommodate pupils from Okeford Fitzpaine. The quality of educational provision at Shillingstone would mean a far better experience, and undoubtedly better outcomes for pupils. This is seen as an opportunity to provide the 17 pupils with a more rounded education where they can benefit from peer learning, experience a broad and balanced curriculum and gain from additional social, emotional, spiritual, and cultural opportunities.

We invite all stakeholders to participate in the public consultation so we can hear their views and engage in constructive discussion. The consultation will run from Thursday 16th June to Thursday 14th July 2022. No final decision will be made about the long-term future of the school until the autumn. To submit your feedback please use the following link:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=pi1KxTv1\\_0-91DI2s8nSTGEXzYgP-LNDgL3znAZJ8k5UQUNWVlhFTDdMMIJERDRVnk0zU0ZPNDJKRC4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=pi1KxTv1_0-91DI2s8nSTGEXzYgP-LNDgL3znAZJ8k5UQUNWVlhFTDdMMIJERDRVnk0zU0ZPNDJKRC4u)

We will also be holding a public consultation event at Okeford Fitzpaine Primary on **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July from 4.30-6.00pm**, where all stakeholders are invited to meet with representatives from the school and SAST.