

The Shareholder Committee of the Dorset Centre of Excellence

5 June 2023

Commissioners Report

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr B Quayle, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): Cllr

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to the enhanced cooperation between Dorset Council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) and the progress made in the recovery plan previously described in earlier meetings.

Recommendation:

Shareholders are asked to note the progress made and support the continued cooperation between the council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence.

Reason for Recommendation:

Progress continues to be sustained enabling the company to focus on welcoming more children to the school and developing the business plan.

1. Report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to the enhanced cooperation between Dorset Council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE). Regular contract review meetings have continued

focused on the performance of the school, with continued engagement between the Managing Director of DCOE and the Strategic Commissioner for SEND and Commissioner attendance at the Board has continued. Regular operational meetings are in place to support conversations about individual children and to plan admissions.

- 1.2 Contract management continues to focus on assessing progress on the priority action plan, stability and operation of the school and preparation for any future Ofsted Inspection. Nearly all actions in the priority action plan are complete and Commissioners have requested a revised plan incorporating learning and the results of the future Ofsted Inspection.
- 1.3 Commissioners can report that the Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Directors are making overall good progress. A summary of progress against some critical areas is provided below:
 - **Governance:** regular Board meetings with functioning sub-committees are in place. These are meeting regularly and operating effectively to provide assurance, support and challenge to the executive leadership team.
 - **Recruitment and retention:** recent open days and recruitment activity has been successful in supporting recruitment of new teachers which will support the planned growth into the next academic year. All teaching vacancies for September are filled with clear plans for recruitment of teaching assistant vacancies.
 - **Ofsted preparation:** external advice and assurance has been sought focusing on curriculum, culture and safeguarding. The report identified many areas of strength and contract management focuses on tracking progress of the delivery of the improvement plan submitted to the Department for Education following previous inspection activity.
 - **Pupil growth:** Current numbers on roll are expected to be 56 at the end of term with a phased plan for growth over the next 3 years as the staff team grows and more classrooms are made more available. Transition planning is underway for these additional pupils with an induction pack and other activity being planned to start engaging with families to support a steady start.
 - **Key Performance Indicators:** the report for Spring Term 1 and 2 has been reviewed. There are no notable performance issues.

Work is underway to further improve performance against KPIs such as pupil participation in Annual Reviews and pupil progress.

- **Pupil Experience:** in the recent survey of pupils the majority of pupils feel supported by teachers to do their best, are challenged and feel safe. The approach to 'over coming barriers' to enable pupils to progress is holistic and, although at early stages, is being used to plan for individual pupils, with plans to develop its use further.

A coordinator has been appointed for Annual Reviews, with a focus on creative approaches to supporting pupils to have a strong voice in the review; this will be important in increasing pupils' participation. Other pupil voice activity includes a school council and forums.

- **Community Engagement:** progress is being made in community use of the leisure facilities with a local SCUBA club planning to use the facilities again and a small group of Friends of Shaftesbury Swimming planning to pilot community swimming sessions, this will be used to develop an effective delivery model in the near future to allow a model of delivery to be refined. In May DCOE hosted and supported an event for the North Dorset Cycle Ride; providing practical resources and obstacle course/games. It is positive that DCOE also used this as an opportunity to engage with local stakeholders on generating new ideas on how to support local organisations going forward. Future plans include working with Shaftesbury Town Council regarding establishing a Park Run for the local community within the grounds and exploring options through the master planning work for the site.

- 1.4 The enhanced co-operation agreement remains in place, however the executive leadership team and the board of directors are now in a place where the support from Dorset Council officers has significantly reduced. A summary of the position against each is provided below:

- Fortnightly contract reviews continue.
- Regular operational meetings continue but are not required to be on a weekly basis.

- Admissions process – joint working continues to identify new pupils to attend this term and beyond.
- On-site presence of DC officers – this continues to be at the expected levels.
- Commissioner attendance at the board continues.
- Joint approach to complaints and communications – DCOE are fully leading this, with no input from Dorset Council required.
- Recruitment activity – continues to be successfully led by DCOE.
- Support Offer – all DC support offered continues to be accepted and action taken as a result. This is primarily focused now on planning for growth.

- 1.5 The company has been working on the development of the business plan which will be presented in the exempt part of this meeting.

2. **Financial Implications**

- 2.1 Following the previous shareholder committee, commissioners have worked with the company to agree a new block contract for the summer term, with a planned increase in numbers over the summer term. Fee price has been maintained at the previously agreed rates.

3. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

- 3.1 None identified at this stage.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 4.1 The health, safety and wellbeing of children and employees is of paramount importance so close collaboration between Dorset Council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence will continue.

5. **Other Implications**

None identified

6. **Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

7.1 Not required for this report

8. **Appendices**

None

9. **Background Papers**

None