

Coverack School Consultation

Please send your comments to the following contacts:

- MP derek.thomas.mp@parliament.uk
- Parish council <https://stkeverneparishcouncil.org.uk/contact-us/>
- Southerly Point MAT trustees. Chair: Kevin Thomas; Vice Chair: Sean Davis, Simon Tregonning
- Coverack school governors
jludbrook@st-keverne.cornwall.sch.uk
tom.hackett@st-keverne.cornwall.sch.uk
jrainbow@manaccan.cornwall.sch.uk
sfawcett@st-keverne.cornwall.sch.uk
jknights@manaccan.cornwall.sch.uk
knightingale@manaccan.cornwall.sch.uk
cjames@st-keverne.cornwall.sch.uk
- Send comments to the Falmouth Packet
emma.ferguson@packetseries.co.uk
- The MAT administration kteague@southerlypoint.co with the Subject: Coverack Consultation.

Please remember to keep complaints factual and not emotional

Suggested questions for consultation meeting/ administration email address

1. Could we see the 3-year budget plan for the school?
2. Who owns the school building and grounds, and what would happen to the funds if it were sold?
3. We request that you extend the consultation period for a further year in order to: a) allow the community to support the school in proving that pupil numbers will rise, and b) give parents a fairer chance of finding a place in a good local school?
4. Why did you only give parents 2 days notice about the meeting and why was the wording (the shape of the school to ensure the quality of educational provision at Coverack) so vague? When details about the meeting were requested, why was this ignored?
5. When were the school governors informed of this decision?
6. In the minutes of both governors meetings in 2020 it states that the numbers in all three schools are "healthy". Yet in your consultation letter it states there has been "speculation circulating about pupil numbers at the

school". Doesn't this suggest that no forethought has been put into the planning for pupil numbers?

7. The Coverack school improvement plan states that "wellbeing is embedded into school culture". Given that our pupils have had two years of inconsistent staffing and two lock-downs, followed by an unexpected class closure how can this be true? Why did you choose to announce the proposal the day before an Inset day and half-term, without explaining changes to the pupils? At least two families will now also be suffering the worry of lost jobs.
8. If the MAT is planning to include the village toddlers group as part of the school why have you not communicated with the leader? If you had communicated with the leader you would know that there are 19 babies and toddlers potentially joining the school in the coming years.
9. Why has wrap-around care not been set up at Coverack in recent years?
10. What other staffing scenarios did you consider in order to reduce the deficit over a number of years? For example, employing a cheaper lead teacher; running a 11/2 class structure with the support of the community. In what way does Coverack School benefit from the (70-80k?) salary paid to the executive headteacher?

TWO OF THE KEY FOCI OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE SOUTHERLY POINT MAT:

- Resilient people who show respect for others and contribute as active citizens to their communities
- Outstanding leaders at all levels through the schools and Trust who are confident, proactive and effective

An example letter

Dear...

I am writing to express my alarm at the proposed closure of the Key Stage 2 class in Coverack School. Please read my comments regarding the following points:

- Unfair consultation period
- Mental health of pupils
- Concerns regarding leadership

On 25th May, with less than 48 hours notice, parents were invited to a consultation meeting on 27th May to discuss the "shape of the school to ensure the quality of educational provision at Coverack". Given that the title of the meeting was so vague, I requested further details about the purpose of the meeting and received no response. Many other parents did not attend this meeting as they were either working or were unaware of its importance. The Southerly Point M.A.T. proposed the closure of the Key Stage 2 class in Coverack School from September 2021 and established a consultation period of just four weeks. However, as this announcement took place on the final day of the school

term, ten days of this period fall during the half-term holiday in which the trustees, governors and teachers are unavailable. As a parent of a pupil in year 6, I believe this short notice to be extremely unfair. The local schools which I would wish to send my child to are full, so if the closure goes ahead within this time-frame, I will not have a fair choice of schools.

I am extremely worried about the mental health of the pupils at Coverack School. Not only has the staffing at the school been inconsistent over the last three years, the children have faced unprecedented mental strain due to COVID 19. I am appalled that this announcement has been made so soon after emerging from the second lock-down and furthermore on the evening before the pupils broke up for the holidays. Had this announcement been made earlier, the school could have provided explanations and reassurance for the children who are, understandably, very upset by the proposed changes. At least two families will now also be suffering the worry of lost jobs because teaching assistants with children at the school had their contracts terminated on the same evening.

In the minutes of both governors meetings in 2020 it states that the numbers in all three of the executive headteacher's schools are "healthy". Yet in the consultation letter it states there has been "speculation circulating about pupil numbers at the school". This contradiction is clear evidence that there could not have been serious forethought about the implications for reduced pupil numbers. The village toddlers group has not been consulted regarding numbers: there are 19 babies and toddlers potentially joining the school in the coming years. I am convinced that if the school had been led effectively and with vision, it would have recruited more pupils. However, it seems that provision has been compromised over the last few years as the canteen, wrap-around care, clubs and trips have been gradually cut. It is worth considering which other schools in the area have issues with reduced numbers and if there is a correlation between pupil numbers and leadership.

I would urge you to support Coverack's community in our complaint against the disgraceful treatment of pupils, staff and parents. Please back us in our request to extend the consultation period for a further year so that the community may support the school in proving that pupil numbers will rise, or to give parents a fairer chance of finding a place in a good local school. One of the key foci of the strategic plan for the Southerly Point M.A.T. is to produce "Resilient people who show respect for others and contribute as active citizens to their communities". We call on the Southerly Point M.A.T. to demonstrate this attitude in the community of Coverack.

Yours sincerely,
Eseld Parker

Another example letter

Dear Mr Thomas,

We are writing to you to convey our dismay about the proposed closure of the junior provision at Coverack Primary School, effective from the end of the summer term. This has been compounded by the appalling way the Southerly Point Trust has notified us of the consultation process. Parents were sent an email on Tuesday 25th May just before the end of the school day inviting us to attend an urgent consultation on Thursday 27th May about " the shape of the school to ensure the quality of the educational provision at Coverack." This sentence in no way implies the seriousness of the meeting, many parents were heading away or were unaware of the need to attend. The next day was an inset day and this was followed by half term so the chances for parents to respond in only a 4-week period has been whittled down to under 3 weeks.

The consultation letter that was then handed out states that parents were not made aware of this issue before as "Given the restriction during Covid we have not been able to bring parents together for a consultation." Firstly, the law changed on the 17th May to allow groups of up to 30 to meet outside which would have allowed an earlier meeting and secondly Covid has not prevented written communication, explanation letters or earlier consultations of which there has been absolutely nothing. Donna Bryant, Executive Leader, stated during the consultation meeting that this was a hurried consultation as the Directors were unaware that they needed a 4-week consultation period!

The Trust's plan for the early years provision to be successful has not even included a single consultation with the village playgroup leaders! Given that there are 19 or so potential children moving up the year groups, and a upturn in people relocating into Cornish villages from out of county, isn't a rushed closure of KS2 premature? Will parents be attracted to send their children to Coverack School if at the age of 7 they must change schools? Moving schools is renowned for creating anxiety in children, will people want to add an unnecessary move into the mix when you should be able to expect to stay at the Primary school you chose until Year 6.

Coverack has had a Primary school for over 100 years and to make such a significant change seems worthy of a more considered consultation period

where parents and village/local stakeholders can be fairly consulted. This is a hurried move through the backdoor.

Although Southerly Point state this is the only way to save the school there seems to be little or no consideration for the mental health of the 17 or so juniors. They have all faced a severely challenging and hard time throughout Covid and have been catapulted back and forth to school which in no doubt effects their learning and social interactions. To then uproot them to start again and integrate into another school is going to be incredibly stressful. Our daughter will be starting Year 6 and will have to go through the trauma of a school move whilst trying to succeed in her SATS only to have to move again in 3 terms. To have made this hurried announcement as the children have only just started to settle after the last lockdown seems unbelievably cruel and mercenary. This will also involve several parents of Coverack school children losing their jobs and income.

We would be most grateful for your input, support, and advice. Coverack School has the support of our local community and as parents we would not be doing our duty without questioning this hurried process and the massive effects it will have on the mental wellbeing of our children.

Yours Sincerely

Zoe and Peter Holmes