

Education & Learning

County Hall

Topsham Road

Exeter

EX2 4QD

Statement from Dawn Stabb 12/02/2019

Devon County Council's Head of Education, Dawn Stabb, says: "I am very sorry not to be able to attend tonight's meeting. But I'm afraid it was called at very short notice and I have a prior engagement.

"As some of you may know I was born in Ilfracombe and my children went to the town's schools. I still live in North Devon so I hope you will believe I am well aware of local issues and the importance of community.

"Firstly, I'd like to say a few words about federations. They are a very successful part of education in Devon and more than half of our schools have a formal partnership with at least one other school.

"Federations allow schools to have the best leadership available and to share teaching expertise and costs.

"But it's a different model than many parents are used to. The executive headteacher leads the federation and sets overall policy on matters such as the curriculum and staffing.

"But for parents the day to day face of the school is often an assistant head or a head of teaching and learning and that can be quite a jump.

"I am aware that there have been a number of issues raised by governors and former staff from Ilfracombe over the life of the federation.

"And I can assure you that I have read all the emails I have received very carefully.

"I am confident that the leadership of the federation has worked hard to address these issues. I am well aware that there remains work to be done and how the school engages with parents is a key part of that work.

"The decision on whether or not to de-federate is entirely a matter for the governors but I am of the opinion that keeping the federation in place and intact remains the best option for both school communities.

"The quality of the leadership has been endorsed by Ofsted. A senior inspector, Sue Frater, had this to say about Goodleigh and Clare Grant just two years ago:

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Indeed, you are now sharing your good practice with another school.

You have overseen a significant increase in the number of pupils because the school has a well-deserved reputation for the quality of its provision.

You have successfully created a culture in which all pupils are welcomed, cared for and nurtured, both academically and in their personal development.

Parents value the ethos of the school, which they describe as developing their children's love of learning.

You, the head of teaching and learning and the staff are successful in providing an inspiring curriculum which engages all pupils in learning.

A lot of the concern that has been shared with me has focused on the fact that Ilfracombe was an outstanding school. Since this inspection in 2008 there have been at least two major changes in the Ofsted inspection regime which have consistently placed more and more emphasis on achievement and the quality and standards of the school.

The inspection report that has been quoted was in the Autumn term of 2017 and was conducted by a team of four, led by a senior inspector, Tracy Hannon, who previously led an outstanding school in Exeter.

Some of the findings which have not been highlighted include:

The local authority intervened in 2014 to broker temporary leadership. Since the current executive headteacher's appointment, the school has engaged well. The executive headteacher's fervent drive for improvement has been effective. Effective guidance from the local authority has steered the school back on course.

The most recent leadership regime has prompted significant changes for the better. The executive headteacher leads with a strong moral purpose. This has galvanised staff to work together to improve outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes for Year 2 in 2017 reflected a much more positive picture than over the last few years.

These judgements by Ofsted of the leadership of each of the schools and the federation were in separate inspections over a year apart. Both inspections were led by former leaders in education with the rank of Her Majesty's Inspector, one of the most senior ranks Ofsted has. Please reflect on these judgements in your debate.