

Remaining parents rally around school in wake of Ofsted report



TOP CLASS: MP Tim Yeo, back centre, with children, staff and parents at the school on Friday.

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Parents have expressed anger and frustration at a decision to put a “fantastic” village primary school into special measures.

Leanne Pugh, whose daughter Isla, five, attends Monks Eleigh Primary School, felt so strongly about the school’s situation she helped organise a visit by South Suffolk MP Tim Yeo on Friday.

Following an Ofsted inspection in July, the school was judged inadequate, resulting in more than half of its pupils being removed by parents, and the entire board of governors resigning.

Mrs Pugh, an early years professional from High Street, Bildeston, said she organised for the MP to come to see if he could support the beleaguered school.

She said: “I think a lot of parents were very sad to leave this school, and some were quite tearful. I love this school; it works really hard for the children who are happy, relaxed and so well-mannered.

“We need to get the word out to everyone that the school has reassurances from the local education authority that funding is in place for the school to stay open, and it will turn around.

“We asked Mr Yeo to come for a visit and to do what he can to support us,” she added.

Former school governor Barry Drewitt, who resigned along with six other governors earlier this month, said: “The children here are fantastic – they form wonderful friendships. The Ofsted report came as a shock and a complete surprise.”

And another former governor and supply teacher Alison Russell said: “Why was it that back in May a Suffolk County Council inspector said the teaching here was good, with some aspects that were outstanding?

“Then, a month later, Ofsted said it was an inadequate school. We were astounded – people found it absolutely shocking.”

Parents expressed disappointment that the school, which ends a two-year partnership with Boxford Primary School at the end of the year, had lost pupils as a result of the Ofsted report.

From 18 pupils two years ago, the school roll had increased to 37 children at its height, only to fall back to 16.

Jordan Marshall, from Squirrels Mill, Bildeston, whose daughter Isabelle, five, attends the school, said he thought parents should have been smarter when making a decision about whether or not to keep their children at the school.

“The children work in a happy and relaxed environment,” he said. “You need to trust your intuition.”

Sam Howieson, parent to four-year-old daughter Olivia, said: “I think a lot of parents left because of the Ofsted report - people just thought they had to leave. But I’ve seen some of them since and they are not happy, I think they would rather the children were back here.”

Katie Griffiths, from Back Lane, Monks Eleigh, said she attended the primary school, as did most of her family, and was delighted her son Alfie, five, had just started.

She said: “We are so devastated about what has happened, and we do not want the school to close. It would be such a shame for the village.

“We are glad to see a new headteacher is starting in the new year and I hope that everything is done so that the school continues in the village.”

Executive headteacher Rob Giles, who is also headteacher at Boxford, said: “All staff are doing their utmost to ensure the children at Monks Eleigh have a vibrant and stimulating curriculum. I am pleased that, from January, Karen Harman will be taking up the headship.”

He said the aim was to ensure pupils continued to enjoy joint opportunities between the schools, despite the official link ending on December 31.