

North Devon Hub Consultation – Parents, Careers and Stakeholders

Wednesday 24th May 2017

The parent, careers and stakeholders consultation was attended by 26 people from Ashleigh C of E Primary School, Bishops Tawton Primary School, Bratton Fleming Community Primary School, Holywell C of E Primary School and Pilton Infants'. The following questions were asked:

Finance:

1. Is there an increased cost to the school by joining Ventrus?

There is no explicit charge for joining Ventrus; one the aims of the organisation is to reduce costs to school of existing services by group purchasing power and using internal capacity wherever possible.

2. What percentage does Ventrus top slice?

Ventrus does not operate a top slice policy. However, each year schools do commit to an element of central purchasing, of both shared services and resources including software licenses that schools require to operate successfully. This is an annual agreement, led by the Heads of Schools, therefore the amount centrally purchased could be deemed top-slice but it is actually taking an existing commitment in the schools budget to a central procurement strategy.

The vast majority of employees in the Trust are based in schools, the Finance and HR teams are centrally resourced but actively work with and alongside schools to support school improvement. The central costs for staff working as network support in the academic year 2016/17 was equivalent to 4.5%.

3. Do the schools have control on how the budget is spent?

Heads of Schools alongside their Executive Headteachers are actively involved in the budget setting process. Individual schools look at their needs, staff requirements and income to attempt to set a balanced budget. Colleagues then work collaboratively on setting a consolidated balanced budget for the whole Trust.

4. Who decides which school receives funding from the budget? Would the Head/Governors be overridden by Ventrus re how money is spent within their school?

Individual variances for funding allocations in schools are part of a dialogue between Headteachers and the Executive Team. Local Governors perform a monitoring role of in-school spend.

5. How much transparency is there with the budget?

Budget transparency is a key feature of our organisation. Budgets are submitted to the Finance Committee and Local Governing Bodies on a termly basis and to the EFA on a regular basis.

6. What happens with the PTA fundraising money?

Funds raised by PTA stays within the budget of the school that raised the funds. Decisions re allocation of these funds remains the responsibility of the Head and PTA.

School Improvement:

1. What difference will parents see within the first year?

Parents will hopefully notice incremental improvements in the quality of Teaching and Learning across the school and a widening/breadth of opportunities for the pupils. However, we would not expect parents to notice seismic changes to culture, values, staffing or the day-to-day operation of the School.

HR:

1. Have the schools that already joined Ventrus seen any redundancies since joining Ventrus?
No.

Ventrus:

1. Is Ventrus in talks with any schools within South Devon?

We are in very early stages of having discussion with a few schools in the South Devon area.

2. If joining Ventrus makes the schools admin team more efficient will there be cuts with the admin teams?

It would not be reasonable to comment on individual school circumstances but it is unlikely there will be a significant reduction in hours within the administration teams within schools. We cannot guarantee this until we have undergone a due diligence process with individual schools.

3. Can a school decide to leave Ventrus MAT?

There are mechanisms in place for re-brokerage of schools, this would require agreement from the Multi-Academy Trust and Secretary of State or would be as a result of school failure.

4. How does Ventrus stand up against a C of E only MAT?

It would not be reasonable to comment on the performance of other Multi-Academy Trusts. However, it is important to note that Ventrus currently has four Church of England Primary Schools, all of whom have been recognised for their work in developing Christian Distinctiveness through their SIAMS inspections, Ventrus has a positive relationship working with the Diocese of Exeter.

5. What date will schools join Ventrus?

It is anticipated that the schools will join Ventrus in early 2018, ideally January or February.

6. Will the five schools join together or separately?

The Governing Bodies and Headteachers for Ashleigh C of E Primary School, Bishops Tawton Primary School, Bratton Fleming Community Primary School, Holywell C of E Primary School and Pilton Infants' have stated that they would prefer to join at the same point. This is largely due to the principle of coming together but also the practical nature of group conversion being more efficient.