

Change of Age Consultation

- An overview of the current position
- An Executive Headteacher perspective on Change of Age
- An opportunity for parents to share their views and comments
- A question and answer session

An Overview of the current position

The most important thing in all of this...

“The Collaboration of the Pinvin CE Federation and Himbleton CE First School will put the education of our children first and above the Change of Age. Whatever the outcome we will continue to work with all our feeder schools, partner schools and the High School. We will continue to drive for high quality transition and will be respectful of colleagues. We have no wish to criticise current provision in any setting; this is not our role. We will not provide comment on the First School or High School provision in this forum; the educational quality and offer is a matter for Her Majesty’s Inspectorate, Ofsted.”

“We will though challenge the proposal because our heart is for the pupils, families and staff we serve”

Our Collaboration commitment

- ▶ We remain very committed to working with Heather Thompson, the Head at Inkberrow First School. Relationships have always been strong and will continue to be so moving forward. Inkberrow provide us with some fantastic pupils who achieve well in the formative years and then continue to do so with us.
- ▶ We remain very committed to working with Phil Hanson and his team at Pershore High School, furthering our links and looking at ways we can extend this in the future. We will always put education first and will be wanting the students that move on from St Nicholas to get the very best GCSE results and recognise our pivotal role in this.

The Education System

Globally, nationally and locally there are a range of educational models that serve families and serve them well:

Primary/Secondary

Infant/Junior/Secondary

First/Middle/High

Lower/Middle/High

Nursery/Primary/Secondary

All through schools

Any system **will work effectively**. We believe we have this currently in the Pershore Pyramid. No system is perfect though. The very best Headteachers and Governors work together to tweak and refine what is being offered and will constantly self-review.



An Executive Headteacher perspective on Change of Age

Executive Head View

- ▶ Educational Rationale
- ▶ Business Case Rationale
- ▶ Questions of Transparency and Pyramid Wide Solutions
- ▶ Precedents
- ▶ Small Schools Protection
- ▶ Summary (A time to reflect)

Educational Rationale

- ▶ GCSE Outcomes of the 3 tier system are slightly stronger than 2 tier in national data, with evidence that Disadvantaged and the Most Able do particularly well (Shared previously)
- ▶ Our Middle School outcomes are strong: R-7, 5-7 and in year progress in each of the middle years, we are performing well (Very happy to share our internal data)
- ▶ National concern around Year 7 in the Secondary system - 'The Wasted Years' Report 2015 and a shortened KS3
- ▶ We specialise in small schools, as a rural based Middle School and tailor our approach to meet this need
- ▶ Middle School provision of earlier specialist teaching: DT/Art, Modern Foreign Languages and PE from trained secondary specialists
- ▶ There are specialist facilities and access to these for pupils of Primary age
- ▶ The Avonreach proposal contains no detail of the curriculum offer for pupils in Year 5, 6 and 7
- ▶ Nationally and globally Middle School or Intermediary Education works and is effective. In places it is growing as a solution to a more seamless approach

Business Case Rationale

- ▶ In the proposal there is no financial costing in terms of how the additional money will be invested by Avonreach, what the staffing profile will look like and the sustainability of this
- ▶ There appears to have been no work conducted by the Avonreach MAT on the impact of this proposed change on the rest of the Pyramid, including for some very small schools
- ▶ There would be a loss of funding to the Middle School in any change of age; in the first year alone £88,000 would be lost if Inkberrow First School retained Year 5 pupils. This would increase over time as less pupils would be in the system
- ▶ There would be staffing implications, that would result in potential redundancies within the Middle School

Questions of Transparency and Pyramid Wide Solutions

- ▶ There is yet to be clarity on the Pathways for all the schools involved as no consultation has taken place on admissions that should proceed this process, this is deeply concerning
- ▶ ‘Making significant changes to an open academy’ published in March 2016 states: “Where proposals are likely to have a significant impact on other local provision a full business case will usually be required to provide evidence that the education of children in the area, as a whole, will not be compromised.”
- ▶ There has been no discussion of this proposal prior to the date that the consultation was published
- ▶ There have been inconsistencies in meetings held by Avonreach MAT with pyramid schools on the proposal, with some included and not others
- ▶ There have been inconsistencies are evident in how the information has been presented on the different Avonreach websites
- ▶ The proposal does not identify the evidence sources: "It is well evidenced that there is a dip in pupil attainment following transition to another Key Stage or to another school.”
- ▶ The Avonreach MAT are now publishing through their schools more detail, but there is a question as to whether this should have been published in the first place

Precedents

- ▶ There is no evidence nationally that a mixed system of this nature has been successfully implemented
- ▶ The examples of a mixed system are only in Worcestershire with Redditch and Blackminster accepted by most as having a detrimental affect
- ▶ Pershore is even more complex than Redditch and Blackminster due to the number of schools involved and the rurality of the location
- ▶ Nationally there have been some very dramatic examples of the negative impact of changing age e.g. Isle of Wight and the Wyre Forest
- ▶ Where more successful changes have taken place nationally e.g. Northampton Town, planning and protections have been put in place

Small Schools Protection

- ▶ Parents choose the Pershore Pyramid because it is a gradual and natural progression with a strong and well established number of small schools
- ▶ Effective management is more significant than size in determining school performance and our small schools are successful in the Pyramid
- ▶ In 1999, after inspecting every primary school in England, Ofsted reported on the comparative performance of small schools, which it defined as those with fewer than 100 pupils. It found that small schools achieved markedly better test results. This could be at risk
- ▶ Local transport is an issue and the proposal has as yet to show the impact on transport and whether transport places are guaranteed at Year 7 for Inkberrow First School pupils

Summary

- ▶ In my view a consultation should have a strategic overview of what is being proposed but sitting behind it should be a detailed strategic plan. This plan should include detail as to what the proposed change would look like, with a clear educational and financial case. This should also include a view on how this will impact other schools and what can be done to mitigate disruption.
- ▶ The consultations proposed changes are not part of an any overall strategic plan for the Pershore Pyramid and no real work has been done to explore stakeholder views beyond the Avonreach MAT schools, the impact of future pupil numbers on places in schools, issues around funding and continued sustainability of schools, staffing expertise and suitable accommodation for children remaining in small village schools.
- ▶ The Local Authority have made it clear to heads and governors that they are not proposing any review of the three tier system in this pyramid themselves: they cannot fund any changes which have not already been planned and there is no money for new infrastructure. There is no shortage of places so no need to effectively duplicate schools places in Year 5, 6 and 7

Summary

- ▶ There are no clear, evidence based educational drivers for the change
- ▶ A mixed system within a pyramid is financially and educationally unsound. It creates two systems within one, provides complex points of transition that would lead to educational disadvantage, especially for some of the pyramids vulnerable families.
- ▶ The proposals from the Avonreach MAT are all being carried out without a wider, full and transparent consultation with other effected schools, there is no coherent strategic educational or business plan for the changes and a lack of rationale. This is forcing schools to have to work out individually how to move forward rather than working collectively.
- ▶ The timescale suggested for change is unrealistic when there is both a lack of information for parents and as yet an educational pathway that has not been approved by the Local Authority

Summary

- ▶ The experience of all other areas restructuring from 3 tier to two tier is of major disruption to children's education for several years. This is despite those restructures being strategically planned for and fully funded by their Local Authority. In this situation, there is no plan and no funding.
- ▶ Unstructured change has not worked as is the case in Redditch and the Blackminster pyramid
- ▶ There is a real danger that good and excellent teachers will be lost in the potential restructuring and it is good teaching which makes the difference to children's progress, not structures and processes.
- ▶ The uncertainty about the future of the pathway in the pyramid and the provision for pupils beyond first school may make parents look to other schools out of catchment. This could damage all the schools in the pyramid. The question around pathways and admissions in the meetings I have attended has been ambiguous at the very least.

Summary

- ▶ One of the saddest thing about this proposal is that it doesn't do anything to help the very real concerns in schools about the difficulty of hiring teachers and seriously squeezed budgets.
- ▶ The current 3 tier system is effective but we all recognise there is always room for improvement. That should be our focus. Working together should be our core business.
- ▶ Market forces are dictating more choice in education with greater autonomy under the governments Academy and Free School programme. Indeed for a much longer period of time we have been working in a system of parental choice. There are successful Academies, there are successful maintained schools, equally there are failing academies and failing maintained schools. Choice in itself is positive and there is plenty of it with the added option of a strong independent sector. The downsides are that with the autonomy and a mixed system comes the need for both serious regulation and cash. As it stands, the government simply doesn't have enough money, people, power or rules to make a mixed system as being proposed by Avonreach work.

Summary

- ▶ For parents, the system also becomes complex. In a mixed system, do you now send your child on the Primary route to Pershore High School, potentially moving your child away from their friends? If I have traditionally sent my child from Tibberton because I prefer the Pershore High School 3 tier route will I now go back into Droitwich?
- ▶ Headteachers and Governors, for the second time in three years are being distracted by the proposals rather than focusing on teaching, learning and provision. Avonreach MAT schools should be working with others to create the highest quality 0-18 provision as a collective. All schools in the pyramid should be focused on school improvement and securing outstanding education across all phases.

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