

Change of Age Response

Newsletter November 2017



Respond to the consultation and make your voice heard. Please copy us in, so that we can also represent your views:

consultation@pershore.worcs.sch.uk

office@st-nicholas.worcs.sch.uk

A MESSAGE FROM MR ANDREW BEST: EXECUTIVE HEAD

This newsletter is intended for all parents of the Avonbrook Cluster of schools, irrespective of the age of your children. It is intended to provide information to enable you to make an informed contribution to the debate on Change of Age. You will have already received, in the Avonreach Multi-Academy Trust schools, an overview of their intentions to move from a three tier to a two tier system. You may also have attended one of the consultations meetings that have been held recently. It is having digested the information from Avonreach that we have put together this newsletter for your careful thought and consideration. The purpose of this document is to both challenge the Change of Age consultation process, pose questions for the Avonreach MAT to consider, provide some statistical evidence and to share a historical perspective. In essence, we feel that we, as schools, are quite rightly challenged through Ofsted, and are therefore duty bound to robustly challenge and question each other. Those who know our leadership team at the Collaboration, know we thrive on a challenge but equally we like to challenge others as well. **There is a lot of detail here but as stakeholders we want you to have the information you need.**

The Middle School Experience Locally

I quoted recently in a Newsletter the performance data of St Nicholas CE Middle School through our GL testing data that is **externally marked** and operates Standardised Age Scores. We have little cohort variation on entry at the Middle School. When looking at our Year 5 baseline as a combined average for English and Maths this year it equated to **103.1**. **If you consider our Year 7 combined, this equates to 108.25 this is very good progress.** This is a school that is performing well above national standard, with pupils well prepared for the Year 8 curriculum. We want our pupils to be GCSE ready and actually begin this process during Year 5 and 6 as we map the path through from Key Stage 2 to 3.

In terms of how the curriculum is delivered this is central to how we operate as a successful school. We are aware of the rural and relatively small cohorts that we take from around 10 different feeder first schools. Our whole approach to transition is unique to us, as we specialise in small schools. To be fair, we are not that big ourselves. This has meant a Year 5 structure that is embedded in the Primary approach but with some specialist teaching in PE, Art, Design Technology and Modern Foreign Languages. This then evolves to a more Secondary model in Year 6 and 7 with a great emphasis on specialist expertise in both the core and Foundation subjects. This is a highly refined and carefully planned approach.

One of the key successes in the last 3 years has been the investment we have made in bringing more High School practitioners into our environment where they can develop their specialist skills with our pupils from a younger age. Madame

The Middle School Experience Locally cont...

Bowden has raised the bar in terms of French teaching and has enabled our pupils to be a step ahead because they have the specialist provision from an earlier age. The Art and Design Technology teaching and provision was only recently rated as Outstanding in an external teaching and learning review. PE provision and opportunity is substantial, with weekly sports fixtures opening the door to children who would not have had this offer traditionally in a Primary School setting.

Case Studies: We are yet to see an example that has worked

In 2013, Mr Best had first hand experience as a Hampshire Inspector of School Improvement. He was called, along with others, to work on the Isle of Wight in the 'aftermath' of the change from a three tier to a two tier education system. The change resulted in only 51 per cent of schools judged 'good' or 'outstanding' and 18 per cent of schools judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted. The government stepped in and ordered improvements to children's safeguarding and education services on the Island, all this a result of change of age.

Many of you will remember the Wyre Forest change of age, which resulted in £126 million being spent, yet evidence shows that standards dropped in the area as a result.

Finally, the 'choice option' is now causing our current Regional Schools Commissioner a headache, with both Redditch pyramid and Blackminster in turmoil, First turned Primary Schools in Special Measures and Tudor Grange Academy unable to fill a single Year 7 place. We are yet to see an example of where a change of this nature has resulted in any improvements.

Change of Age Response

Newsletter November 2017

The Avonreach MAT comprise of Pershore High School, Inkberrow First School, Norton Juxtra Kempsey First School and Cherry Orchard First School. They represent only 4 of the 15 schools in the Pershore Pyramid. We believe strongly in the three tier system which will be heavily impacted with any change. All stakeholders have a right to respond to the consultation and are asking that you do so. To contribute, please email the consultation and copy us in: consultation@pershore.worcs.sch.uk
office@st-nicholas.worcs.sch.uk



The Middle School Experience Nationally

The Middle School route proves to be the most effective for GCSE outcomes. An analysis in 2016 KS4 results reveals that students at 16 in 3 tier system High Schools achieved well in comparison to the national average for all state funded schools.

2016	% Grade C+ English and Maths	% Achieving E Bacc
National 3 Tier (Middle Schools)	67.8%	25.4%
National All Schools	63%	24.7%

There were significant changes to the KS4 exams in 2017 that make direct comparisons with 2016 results more difficult. However the data that supports Middle School, 3 tier systems as successful, remains the same. There is also evidence that goes beyond this data that Higher Attaining pupils and those in receipt of Pupil Premium, perform particularly well.

2017	% E Bacc Grade 4+	% Eng/Maths Grade 4+	% E Bacc Grade 5+	% Eng/Maths Grade 5+
National 3 Tier (Middle Schools)	24%	68.09%	21.61%	45.64%
National All Schools	23.5%	63.30%	21.10%	42.20%

Questions for the Avonreach MAT

- ◆ How have all the schools in the pyramid been consulted as was the case in 2014, with individual meetings held by Avonreach at each school to take questions and listen to parents views?
- ◆ Is there a full business case that the education of children in the area, as a whole, will not be compromised?
- ◆ Are there details as to the cost of the change to the Avonreach schools and wider costings in relation to infrastructure and transport? What detailed analysis has been conducted on current and future provision?
- ◆ What plans have been put into place to address the additional transition points that will be there in a mixed system, with the managing of transition from Year 6 to 7 and from Year 7 to 8?
- ◆ How will the First Schools in the Avonreach MAT implement the specialist provision that is currently available to pupils from Year 5 in the Middle School?
- ◆ Is there enough clarity on how all stakeholders within the pyramid can contribute to the consultation?

Questions for the Avonreach MAT cont...

- ◆ The Department for Education are currently liaising with the National Middle Schools Forum as their transition is deemed to be highly successful. This has been in response to a secondary school dip attainment. We could actually advocate Change of Age to extend our provision to Year 8. We will never actively consider this as we would prefer to refine the system we have, is this recognised?
- ◆ Who would organise the restructure and potential wider infrastructure implications that the change would have. There are a number of small rural schools that are affected and how has this been taken into account in the consultation paper?
- ◆ How does the consultation support the pyramid in recruiting high quality teaching and non-teaching staff by creating uncertainty?
- ◆ How will PHS support pupils to 'close the gap' who did not make the Y6 end of year standard whilst still operating the extended GCSE provision they cite as a key reason for change?