



Balcombe CofE Primary School Hurst Education Trust (HET) FAQs

In all that we do we are guided by God

1. **Why has Hurstpierpoint College set up the Hurst Education Trust (HET)?**

In short, because it believed it was the right thing to do.

The College has been enormously successful in recent years. It has doubled the number of pupils to nearly 1,300 in a fifteen-year period, it is financially secure and has been recognised as an outstanding education provider in the area. It has invested heavily in campus development and has a wide range of academic, sports and arts' facilities that through the Trust can be used by local schools.

Whilst many independent schools are preoccupied on outright academic performance, important though that is, Hurstpierpoint College ensures that every child achieves their potential and can become the best they can be. This ethos is far more closely aligned with the inclusive nature of maintained education, making it a well-matched partner for an Education Trust for maintained schools.

The senior staff of the Trust are provided to the Trust at nil cost and the back-office facilities (for example, HR, Health & Safety, IT support and many more) are provided at no more than 'at cost', ensuring substantial savings for the school upon joining.

The College also recognises that the Hurst Education Trust will strongly benefit its own pupils and staff and provide personal growth and development opportunities for all.

2. **How many schools does HET envisage will join its Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**

The Trust is keen to remain a geographically local Trust and for its primary schools to be within an approximate 20-minute/mile drive of the College. The proposed geographical area is not only for practical purposes (including the ability to transport pupils to the Hurst College campus) but is also intended to ensure that the Trust retains a family feel in its work with schools.

Whilst the national political appetite for academies may change over time, the intention is for the Trust to remain a small Trust with between 7 and 9 primary schools and, eventually, one or two secondary schools. The Trust's aim is that all schools continuously improve and innovate so they offer an outstanding provision to both the current and future children.

3. **Which other schools have already joined HET?**

Schools currently in the MAT are Albourne C of E Primary School, Ditchling (St Margaret's) C of E Primary School and St Wilfrid's C of E Primary School, Bolnore Village Primary School is currently going through the consultation process to join HET. Other schools are considering joining HET but, until these schools have consulted with their own parent, carer and staff community, it is not possible to give further details.

4. **Why is HET interested in our school joining it?**

The Trust is seeking good schools with a strong sense of their own identity and ethos, which should fit well with the Trust's vision for our schools. HET believes that schools will benefit from being part of the Trust where they contribute and collaborate more broadly with other schools within the Trust. The nature of the Trust is to collaborate thoughtfully in a 'high trust', model.

5. **What does HET see as the benefits to it of our school joining HET?**

The Trust operates a highly collaborative model of school improvement. Trust Heads work closely with each other and the HET Director of Education sharing resources, and ideas which drive improvement. Each school brings its own strengths and areas for development. The Trust hopes that schools joining will play an active role in the HET, helping to further build capability

and capacity, sharing their practice and helping to shape the strategy and quality of educational provision across the HET schools. As part of the early discussions, a visit to the school will be arranged by HET's School Improvement Partner and Director of Education and this will help HET develop a better understanding of where schools might add most value.

6. What benefits are there for schools joining the HET?

Through collaboration with the Trust and its existing schools, the Trust aims to provide schools with a range of benefits, summarised below:

- I. Increased access to a School Improvement provision which is both of high quality and tailored to meet the individual needs of the school. This provides an opportunity to add additional and free up current leadership capacity through collaboration with those within the Trust and other schools.
- II. Access to a wide range of efficient and high-quality back office and administrative functions, e.g., HR, payroll, health and safety and other services which are provided within the membership fee.
- III. In addition to the facilities available within the school, pupils are able to access to facilities and arrangements provided by Hurstpierpoint College (e.g., sporting, and academic facilities, the pool, the Theatre and Chapel together with transport as needed.)

7. What are HET's priorities and how will it be ensured these are a focus in all schools in the HET?

In alignment with its vision and values, HET's priority is to ensure all schools deliver an excellent education and experience to every child in every school, making sure they are given every opportunity to be the best they can be. In practice, this is achieved through several strands with a clear focus on learning and teaching, enabling leadership and the wider staff to direct more time at pupil-benefitting activities, taking a shared/collaborative approach across the Trust, developing all staff through effective use of CPD and, wherever possible, enabling pupils to engage with the broader aspects of extracurricular activities of sport, drama, music, etc.

8. How will a school retain their identity if they join HET?

Each school continues to maintain its own unique identity within its community, including links with local churches and other local organisations. For example, the name of the school or uniform does not change, and the school maintains its own vision, ethos and values. Practically, logos, websites and other marketing or other similar materials are school specific although the Trust does ask schools to acknowledge their partnership with the Trust.

9. Will a school's priorities be personal to a school or shared across the Trust? Will the school continue to set its own priorities?

Each school has its own priorities. There is usually commonality between schools, and these often feed into Trust-wide priorities.

The initial due diligence process between HET and the school will identify the needs and priorities for the school – which are not usually any surprise for the school and in line with the schools' own priorities as set out within the School Development Plan. It is important to note that this process is conducted with the school, and not to it. The outcome of the due diligence, including agreeing priorities, should be as a result not just of data, but discussions with the Headteacher, senior leaders and governors. Priorities will be agreed with the Headteacher. The relationship between the Director of Education, School Improvement Partner and senior leaders on an ongoing basis is key to enabling the continual assessment of needs, which will change over time, and ensure that these needs are appropriately prioritised in agreement with the school.

10. What guarantees are there that the Trust won't change in the future? What is HET's succession planning for the CEO and CFO roles and would schools be involved in the recruitment of a new CEO?

The Trust's articles of association establish it as a charity with a focus on providing education. It is established in partnership with the Diocese of Chichester, and therefore shares their principles in the provision of education and support for the communities it serves. The Diocese of Chichester is the majority partner in the Education Trust and any substantial changes will require consent of the Diocese. The Trust is also held to account by the Government, through the Department of Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner, which are focused on ensuring that it continues to make high quality provision for children.

The Trustees of HET have broad succession plans in place should any of the executive team leave the Trust. It is highly likely that the next CEO and CFO will come from within the HET. It would be anticipated that schools would be represented on any CEO appointment panel as it would be very important that stakeholders are involved in the appointment process for this crucial role. Any new CEO would need to buy into the values and vision for the Trust, which are overseen by the Board of Trustees as a whole.

11. Are all ties relinquished with West Sussex County Council?

The relationship with the Council changes. The Council will no longer be accountable for the schools but remains responsible for safeguarding and for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

12. How long are we committed for? Could the school change these arrangements at a later date?

Conversion to academy status is currently permanent. That is why the governors need both to undertake a detailed due diligence to satisfy themselves that this is the right way forward for the school and to consider carefully all views that we receive as part of this consultation.

13. If there is disagreement about direction, how will this be handled?

Whilst it is hoped unlikely, any significant disagreement about the direction of the HET would be escalated to the Board of Trustees and, if necessary, the Members. As a Church Majority Multi-Academy Trust, 60% of the Members are appointed by the Diocese of Chichester and therefore any final say on the direction would, in essence, be in the hands of the Diocese in this circumstance.

14. How would our Governing Body change if we joined HET?

The Trustees of HET, who are appointed by its members (60% of whom are representatives of the Diocese of Chichester and 40% of whom are from the College) have responsibility for the overall strategic direction and performance of the whole Trust – and, like a Governing body, are appointed based on their experience and skills that they can bring to the Board.

All schools within HET have a Local Governing Body to whom much of the day-to-day and school specific strategy is delegated through the Trust's Scheme of Delegation. The Scheme of Delegation (which can be found on the Trust's website) details specifically the responsibilities of the Members, Trustees and Local Governors. There is little practical change for an individual Governing Body. The Trust insists upon parent and staff representation and strongly recommends representation from the local Church.

15. How would the HET listen to and respond to our school voice e.g., pupils, parents, staff and our local community stakeholders?

The Trust requires each Local Governing Body to have appropriate parental representation and strongly supports parental engagement through both this medium and less formal groups such as engagement with PTAs or class representatives (where applicable.) The Trust will, during the

coming academic year, introduce stakeholder engagement with staff, parents and, where appropriate, pupils via online questionnaires. The Trust is also developing a Staff Forum.

16. Will Balcombe School still be accountable to Ofsted?

Yes - the school will still be subject to both Ofsted inspections and section 48 SIAMS Church inspections as it is now. The Trust will be accountable to Ofsted and the DfE (through the Regional Schools Commissioner).

Staffing

17. Will the senior leadership team remain in its current form if we joined HET? If not, what changes would be made?

The appointment of the Leadership team is delegated to the school and therefore the Trust would not introduce changes. If changes were suggested by the school (e.g., upon any change to individuals in these positions) the Trust would hope to be part of the interview process by invite from the school given the importance of these positions.

18. MATs can propose changes to contracts on areas like working hours, the place of work, holiday entitlement – Is HET planning to do that, or again is it written into the contract that this would never happen?

Staff are protected by the Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment regulations which means they transfer to the Trust's employment on their current pay and conditions of service. There are no plans to make any changes to places of work (unless by mutual agreement, for example, a promotional opportunity) or holiday entitlement. As with any employer, staff restructuring could take place, if necessary, in the future, but this is no different to what the school or Local Authority is able to do. The Trust would need to declare any planned changes as a measure. The only measure is the change in pay date from the 24th of the month (or the preceding working day) to the 23rd of the month. Staff remain in their current pension scheme with no change to benefits.

19. Is union membership and involvement encouraged in the Trust?

Key Trust staff have well-established positive relationships with Union colleagues. The Trust has committed to a recognition agreement with the major education Unions (so that Unions are recognised and consulted with). The membership of Unions is neither encouraged nor discouraged; this decision is for each individual member of staff to make. The Trust have agreed to work to national terms and conditions for both teaching and support staff.

20. What career opportunities can HET offer Senior Leaders and teachers in the Trust?

As the Trust grows, HET envisages that all staff will have the opportunity for professional growth and career development, taking on cross HET responsibilities and leading initiatives. For Leadership staff, this is likely to be opportunities to lead whole-Trust initiatives, support leaders in other schools or provide promotional opportunities to leadership positions in other schools, including Executive Headship should an opportunity arise.

21. We hear that back-office functions are more “centralised” in a multi academy trust. What are the implications for all our administrative and site-management staff, especially SBM’s salary?

Whilst common in some Trusts, HET does not centralise the SBMs role unless it is asked to assist in some functions (e.g., both Albourne and Ditchling now have Operations Managers with the Trust providing additional support. This was at the request of the schools.) Trust-wide working does provide for some efficiencies, and short-term absences can be well managed by the Trust if needed. The SBM (or equivalent) is a key role within the School and the Trust ensures that

these roles are remunerated properly. For existing staff, no downward change would be proposed.

- 22. Our teachers are expensive, but we have a skilful teaching team – we have heard of a few years down the line MATs getting rid of expensive staff and replacing them with much cheaper, more malleable teachers. What guarantee do you have for our staff that this would not happen?**

The recruitment of teachers is delegated to each school and in accordance with any agreed budget. Therefore, the decision to employ experienced or less experienced teachers is down to the senior leadership for each school to manage, supported by the Trust as requested.

- 23. Would support staff be maintained at the current levels?**

The recruitment of support staff is delegated to each school and in accordance with any agreed budget. Therefore, the decision to maintain support staff levels is down to the senior leadership for each school, supported by the Trust as requested.

- 24. Schools are struggling in terms of arranging visits of Educational Psychologists, Speech Therapists, attendance etc – is that an aim for the HET to employ staff such as these?**

Yes, although first the Trust needs to ensure that it understands the collective need and nuances required of these services prior to facilitating these services. This exercise would involve the Headteachers of the schools to ensure the Trust is appropriately responding to the requirements of the schools.

- 25. Who carries out the Headteacher appraisal?**

The Headteacher appraisal involves the CEO, Director of Education and the School Improvement Partner (Justin Smith) together with representatives from the schools' governing body; this is often, but not exclusively, the Chair of Governors.

- 26. Will we be expected to change our current staff appraisal process to align with one already in place with the trust?**

No, with the exception of the Headteacher as detailed above.

- 27. How extensive is HET's knowledge and provision for children with SEND?**

The Trust is developing a strong provision for SEND across the existing schools coupled with healthy links with the Local Authority SEND team as evidenced by our work at the three schools within the Trust. The Trust both at the Centre and within the schools can offer advice and support to schools for SEND pupils.

- 28. What staff CPD will you need to provide for your schools in the future?**

Examples of training provided to date include fully funded training to enable the successful introduction of new learning schemes. At the start of the new academic year, HET will be providing safeguarding training for all staff. There will be a joint HET INSET day at the start of the Spring term, which will provide CPD for all staff - the Headteachers will collaborate with the Director of Education to decide on the needs of the staff and the shape of the training to be provided on this day. Six sessions have been planned across the next academic year when staff from the schools will join together to share best practice in writing moderation and subject network groups. Staff are also encouraged to, and do, visit their counterparts in the other schools. The Trust is currently working with the HET Heads to shape the CPD offering for next year. We hope to provide CPD opportunities for training at all levels.

29. How will staff absence be managed? Will there be triggers and what is the expectation of managing absence of staff?

There should be no change. Triggers remain the same, and schools should use these to initiate conversations with staff who meet these triggers as now. The Trust's HR team can provide support and advice or can be directly involved in more challenging cases, as required.

30. Do you provide staff insurances e.g., long term absence / maternity, or do we continue to use current providers?

Schools are free to decide whether to buy in a staff insurance plan or self-insure. The Local Authority model is not available to academies, but there are significant numbers of providers in this marketplace and details can be discussed with the SBM.

31. What would the CFO's role be with SBM?

The SBM and CFO (or Deputy CFO) will work closely together on a day-to-day basis, with the CFO providing support as needed. The CFO does not line manage the SBM (this management relationship remains directly with the Headteacher), but there is a line of accountability between the SBM and CFO.

32. Are there opportunities for our SBM to have professional development opportunities?

Yes. This will be discussed with the SBM after a suitable period of embedding within the Trust.

33. If staff are on funded professional development pathways, could they continue?

Yes, there is no need for these to be changed.

34. How could the HET support with recruitment and retention of staff?

Each school would have access to Access Recruitment which streamlines the recruitment of staff and is being introduced following feedback from recent joiners about the process of applying for roles within schools. Staff development opportunities are shared across the Trust and provide opportunities to retain staff within the school or wider Trust. Recent informal feedback has suggested that schools being part of the Hurst Education Trust was a key element in the decision for some applicants to apply to work at the school.

Curriculum / Academic

35. Will conversion to the Trust have an effect on the class sizes and/or mix of years as they are now? Who will make decisions on class structures?

How we organise the school depends on the number of children admitted in each age group. Converting to academy status within HET will not be a reason for changing either class sizes or the mix of years. The leadership of the school retains the responsibility for allocating classes and structures the school in the best way it sees fit to do, as it does now.

36. Academies can determine their own term times. Will Balcombe School have to change our term times if we join HET, or would we be following the usual term structure?

HET thinks it is important to ensure that our term dates match those of local schools and will therefore continue with the same arrangements as we have now. This avoids the situation where parents send their children to more than one local school with differing term-times.

37. What difference will the pupils be aware of, if any, during the transition and moving forward?

We do not expect pupils to notice any practical differences whilst in school during the conversion process, or once the school has converted.

After conversion, there will be an increased use of the College facilities and they will occasionally see Hurst colleagues in school working in partnership with leaders. There may be some shared activity – including, for example, sport and arts - with children from other schools within the Trust. Otherwise the changes are behind the scenes, with opportunities for staff to share and enhance good practice with other schools in the Trust and the College.

38. How would you ensure that our curriculum remains accessible to all pupils e.g., SEND?

Inclusion within HET based on John 10:10, that all children within our schools are equally respected, valued and should flourish and, with appropriate adaptations and support, regardless of their background and starting points, have access to the full curriculum both academic, pastoral and the wider co-curriculum. This requires all HET schools to have a detailed knowledge of their children and have a robust SEND policy and procedures which identify individual needs and puts in place research-based interventions and provision which facilitate children's access to the full curriculum and activities within the school. This should be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Inclusion also requires the school to create a learning environment where all differences are respected and celebrated, and all children are treated of equal value. This should be strongly reflected in whole school values and seen, for example, in the rich diversity of book choices in the library and texts choices in lessons; displays around the school; daily worship and assemblies.

39. What autonomy will our school have in setting its own curriculum? Will we have to adopt the same curriculum as other schools in HET?

The primary aim of the Trust is to ensure the very best standards of teaching and learning across all its schools. The Trust understands that there is not a 'one-size fits all' model for schools and, whilst the preference is towards a level of collaboratively agreed and shared curriculum, modified as required for each school, there is no absolute requirement for this should an individual school have a sound and evidenced-based rationale for maintaining a different curriculum or model.

40. Teachers in our school have autonomy over their pedagogical approach; typically, dependent on who is being taught, what is being taught, and what happened in the previous sequence of lessons. Will teachers retain this autonomy?

Again, the primary aim is to ensure the very best standards of teaching and learning. Naturally, this will be bespoke to the needs of each schools' children and context. The Trust would positively encourage adaptive practice and teachers using their experience and knowledge to build their lessons on previous learning. So, teachers do have autonomy over their approach if it is seen to be effective, appropriately sequenced and have a positive impact on pupil outcomes. However, it would be hoped that all teachers would be open to new ideas and practices, particularly those that are effective in the other HET schools.

41. How does collaboration on curriculum matters work in practice?

During the current academic year, the schools within the Trust have reviewed the curriculum in each of the core subject areas. Working parties were tasked to look at current practice and research, including that of the DfE and the Education Endowment Foundation into best practice. The key aim is for HET schools to adopt the best available curriculum and, where possible, to have some degree of alignment to enable staff and schools to work closely together for the benefit of pupils.

42. What primary school experience and knowledge of the primary curriculum do your HET School Effectiveness Partners have?

Justin Smith, the School Improvement Partner, is a very experienced Primary Headteacher and Executive Headteacher. Prior to his current role, he was Chief Executive of the Primary First Trust where he was responsible for several rapid improvements, including Special Measures to Outstanding and in 2010, received the accolade of being the Headteacher for the most improved school in the country. Justin is an advisor to the DfE and has an expert knowledge of leadership and management within the education sector and is a published author in this sector. Michelle Zeidler, the Trust's Director of Education spent most of her career in the secondary maintained sector, working closely with partner primary schools. At Hurst, her role has been as Deputy Head Academic, which is a role encompassing both the Prep Schools (ages 4 – 12) and the Senior School (ages 13 – 18). Michelle has worked closely with HET Headteachers over the past 18 months and during this time, was appointed Interim Headteacher at Ditchling whilst the substantive Headteacher was recruited. The Board of Trustees include several current and recent Headteachers, including a former Ofsted inspector and the current Director of Education and Deputy Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester.

43. How often is a school to be monitored by the Trust's School Improvement team?

The Trust's School Improvement Partner (SIP) and Director of Education work closely in tandem with the Headteacher and other members of SLT to identify strengths and areas of development for the school. Weekly visits by the Director of Education and up to twice termly visits by the SIP, mean that leadership has regular and readily available coaching and advice for improvement, closely aligned to the SDP. The CEO is also a regular visitor to the schools to discuss issues surrounding the strategic vision. As the Trust and the School develop the relationship, it is likely that the frequency of the visits will be reduced as necessary and by mutual agreement.

44. What monitoring will take place on a termly/ yearly basis?

Trust monitoring is primarily qualitative through regular visits and quantitative using termly assessment data, currently by utilising Puma and PIRA testing.

45. Do academies have to partake in testing our children that the government currently requires? For example, the reception baseline testing, year 1 phonics testing, year 2 SATS, year 4 times tables and year 6 SATS?

Academies have greater freedoms to operate outside of the national curriculum (although, as with most Trusts, HET would advise schools to operate closely to it), but children are required to take end of key stage tests where this is a requirement set by the DfE.

Internal testing will be a decision for each individual school to make. The role of the Trust in this regard will be to advise and guide and provide challenge and support where it is needed.

46. What is the HET vision for EYFS provision? Will schools be able to apply their own approach?

The Trust sees the quality of EYFS provision to be the pivotal to the success of pupils as they journey through the school. Indeed, the reception year is arguably the most important school year in the life of the child. Each child should experience a rich environment in which, regardless of starting points, they can access a wealth of creative opportunities which are highly engaging and ignite their love of learning. The Trust is interested in excellence and any practice which delivers this will not be changed, but, indeed, we will look to "magpie" outstanding practice across all schools. Currently, all schools follow their own approach, but the fundamentals of best practice remain the same across all schools. Our current schools, and Bolnore who are joining us in the autumn term, are making EYFS a focus, particularly the development of their continuous provision and providing early writing opportunities in the outside areas.

Achievement

47. What assessment and tracking systems are in place for schools in the HET? Is it an expectation a specific system will be used, or can a school use what has worked well for them?

The Trust currently uses Insight Data Tracking, but this can be discussed in more detail with Senior Leaders at the school. The Trust does require information to be shared by the schools, and an online system such as Insight lessens the workload in sharing this information in the format required. However, it would be possible for a school to utilise a different data tracking system provided there was a sound reason for doing so and the school understood that additional work to share data with the Trust may be necessary.

48. What will happen if a school within the trust is under-performing – how will this be tackled and what sanctions lie at the end?

The focus of the Trust is to improve and develop good schools to a position where the pupil experience can be described as outstanding, whether utilising the Ofsted descriptor or otherwise. Where there is underperformance, the school improvement led by Justin Smith and Michelle Zeidler will support and guide as appropriate. Clearly, it is expected that the leadership team will be actively involved in the design and implementation of any strategy to deal with any underperformance. In the unlikely event that such intervention does not yield the right result, the Trust may look outside of the Trust to provide external resource to assist.

49. Will schools be able to carry out own data analysis?

Yes. The Trust currently uses Insight Data Tracking, but this can be discussed in more detail with Senior Leaders at the school. The Trust does require information to be shared by the schools, and an online system such as Insight lessens the workload in sharing this information in the format required. However, it would be possible for a school to utilise a different data tracking system provided there was a sound reason for doing so and the school understood that additional work to share data with the Trust may be necessary.

50. Will HET want to be involved in pupil progress meetings or can senior leadership continue to carry these out without any direction / reporting to HET?

The Trust is not involved in pupil progress meetings, although broad outcomes of these meetings should be discussed with the Director of Education as part of her visits to the schools.

51. How will accountability for pupils' achievement and progress be arranged in the HET?

The Trust team is held to account by the Board of Trustees and the Department for Education. Staff within schools are held to account through the line manager, up to the Headteacher. The Headteacher is held to account both by the School's Governing Body and is responsible to the Trust. This is broadly the same relationship as now, with the Headteacher responsible to the Local Authority in addition to the Governors.

Finance

52. Will Balcombe School have the same level of funding which we currently have, or will this be increased/decreased? Is there a restriction on how it is spent?

Revenue funding for academies is calculated in exactly the same way as for maintained schools, based largely on pupil numbers. The Hurst Education Trust will make a charge (3% of core funding) to provide services for its schools, replacing services which schools currently purchased from WSCC and other providers.

A detailed review will be conducted but a potential net saving to the school is envisaged. If this is the case, it will then be redirected back into the classroom for the direct benefit of the

pupils. The potential saving arises because of the way in which HET is structured, with its staff and many of its back-office services being subsidised by the College. This allows the membership cost to be significantly lower than for most Trusts (usually between 5% and 7% for primary academies).

All other funds remain in school and each school has autonomy in deciding how the budget allocated is spent, though the Trust will act as a critical friend, exploring options with the school. As a small Trust, the Hurst Education Trust are also able to bid for capital funding on behalf of its schools if needed.

53. What assurances can HET give that financial viability will be in all schools in the HET? Many trusts are finding that they are having to bail out primary schools; how will that work in the current climate of underfunding of state schools, as many schools are likely to set a deficit budget in 2-3 years?

Given the national funding challenges within the education sector, it is quite impossible to give full assurance for all and any school that may join the Trust in the future. However, the Trust (and those that work within it) have an excellent track record of managing challenging financial situations within school environments. All Trust schools have set a balanced budget for the 2023-24 period and the Trust will be carrying forward reserves into 2023-24 that will be added to in year. Academy Trusts may not set deficit budgets. During the due diligence exercise, a medium to longer-term plan for any school is considered to ensure that it can remain viable and not create unacceptable risk for the other schools already within the Trust.

54. Will schools still have autonomy to raise their own funds and retain them in full. E.g. from community events, PTA?

Yes.

55. How will the HET manage to support schools if a large capital spend is needed e.g., new boiler etc.?

Large-scale expenditure would be funded by bids to the Condition Improvement Fund and, once the Trust reaches a certain size, by an allocation from the Schools' Condition Allocation (SCA) funding. Schools continue to receive their Devolved Formula Capital Funding.

56. How are EHCPs funded? Is the same level of top up funding available as is possible from the LA?

There is no change to EHCP funding upon conversion.

57. Will control over our devolved budget be written into the contract and is there a guarantee that will always happen?

The delegation of the budget to the school is contained within the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, available on the Trust's website. The Trust would seek to provide support, advice and guidance as much (or as little) as is needed and would only have a greater involvement should the school be unable or unwilling to set a balanced budget or work towards doing so.

58. Would we still be able to retain our current catering provider and would we have autonomy to change if we needed to?

Yes, although the Trust will develop a Trust-wide catering option that schools may opt to join at a later date (within the next 3 to 5 years.) This, however, remains a decision for each school to make individually.

Systems

59. Will the data management system be maintained (Bromcom) or will we need to adopt another new system?

The Trust uses Bromcom for the pupil MIS (although does not use Bromcom for financial/accounting systems.) The process to move onto the Trust system from the current LA licence is seamless.

60. Will we be able to retain existing IT solutions for things like SCR and Parent / carer consultations?

Primarily, yes, although further conversation would be useful to understand the systems in place (for example, the Trust uses HR software which generates the SCR and therefore a dual system would create significant additional work for the person responsible for the SCR).

61. We have an ICT company we have used for many years; will we still be able to use them, or do you have an alternative?

The Trust is beginning to embed an IT support provision, provided out of the College, in conjunction with Class Technology Limited (CTS). CTS have provided IT to the College for many years and are very experienced in providing IT support to schools, both within the maintained and independent sector. Whilst it will not be compulsory for schools to change providers to the Trust's IT solution, it is hoped that schools will recognise the increased level of service and value for money and will choose to join at a time appropriate for them

62. What HR work would be under HET's remit?

The Trust's HR team provide advice and support to each individual school on an 'as-needs' basis. We recognise that some schools have a greater capacity and understanding of HR processes and would prefer to do much of the work at school level. However, for those schools who require greater involvement, the Trust will support the school through any appropriate HR processes, including attending meetings with staff if needed. A wide range of policies and model letters, contracts and other HR paperwork has been developed by the Trust and these will be made available for the school to use. The Trust works closely with the main education unions and meets with them termly.

63. Does HET have a designated HR and payroll team or will some / all of those functions come back in to schools to manage?

The Trust has a HR and payroll team, headed by the Trust's Director of HR, Sue Atkinson.

64. Will Inset days always be joint days, or can schools decide their own dates and focus for these?

It is anticipated that one INSET Day per year would be jointly held, and in agreement with the Headteachers. Schools are otherwise free to decide their own dates that suit them.