

The Vineyard School – consultation follow up

There were two questions that parents wanted additional information on:

1. Overall, has the trust been net positive or net negative for your school?

The Trust has 26 academies and 25 headteachers (two schools share an executive headteacher). Their response to the question was as follows:

Strongly positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly negative
23	2	0	0	0

2. What's the single biggest value the trust adds to you as a head, and the single biggest constraint or cost?

Single biggest value

- Access to a central team of specialists (finance, HR, estates, IT, governance, marketing) reduces isolation and increases professional leverage. They have been life-savers
- When making difficult decisions (staffing restructures, curriculum changes, exclusions, financial controls), you are not acting alone
- Annual quality of education reviews and cluster-led conversations have sharpened our thinking without it feeling performative. I look forward to my meetings with my education director
- Real curriculum and transition work between primary, secondary and specialist settings have improved staff expertise and how we support our pupils
- Access to our specialist schools, advisory SEND leadership and hybrid models have strengthened our mainstream inclusion, increased staff expertise and have improved our provision for pupils with additional needs.
- The clear strategy on AI and digital implementation have upskilled our teachers and TAs to be far more adaptive than previously
- Our IT infrastructure is miles better than it was before we joined
- Instead of having to pay for external consultants at high cost, you can quickly access in-house specialists as part of the top slice
- Trust-wide KPIs, dashboards and comparative analysis have helped improve our decision-making and where we need to focus
- Governance frameworks and business team support reduce risk exposure and empower our LGC to focus on what matters – the school
- Access to capital funds and strategic sustainability planning have improved our buildings out of all recognition
- I have benefited from the leadership pathways and so have some of my staff; access to the structured networks, secondments, BET Tomorrow, NPQs and executive coaching have supported staff aspirations and well-being
- I think that being part of the BET brand strengthens talent attraction and retention.
- My SBM is so grateful for the central team's support; she says it makes her workload much more manageable
- The emphasis on our schools being anchor organisations has broadened my outlook and strengthened local integration and our place in our community (which wasn't always the case)

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- The Trust's financial modelling, reserves policy and risk oversight has provided stability in uncertain times and is on a different level from what I got from the local authority
- I love working with peers who 'get it'. The heads' forums, cluster meetings and informal collaboration reduce loneliness at the top

Constraints from being in BET

- I know why they are needed but the reviews, cluster meetings and reporting cycles take leadership time
- Sometimes meeting clash and this is difficult for small school with a small leadership team
- I expected to have to adopt shared finance, HR and IT systems but it did create additional work initially
- BET has continued to grow during my time in the Trust, and this has meant having to adapt to new structures and processes
- As the Trust grows, communication clarity and agility require constant effort, and I think that this has needed work over the last year. On saying that, it is much better now