



Case Study

The Harbour Schools Partnership



The Harbour Schools Partnership (formerly Tarka Learning Partnership and Ventrus Multi Academy Trust) was formed in April 2025 and has worked with 1decision since 2017, most recently through its Personal Development Quiz. We spoke to Ashley Leeson, Director of School Improvement at Ventrus and now Senior Primary Advisor at the Harbour Schools Partnership, which now oversees 36 schools.

Identifying Gaps in Personal Development

1decision, which now supports 2,000 schools across the UK and international schools in 19 countries, began working with Ventrus when the trust sought more curriculum alignment.

“During those early days, we always had an approach where individual Headteachers would choose their curriculum, and we reached a point where we realised we had a lack of expertise in some subjects,” Ashley explained. “At that time, we also had schools joining us who were using another branded PSHE product. I found 1decision, and with CEO Hayley Sherwood we realised we worked in some similar types of areas and had a connection around the importance of personal development.

“One of my philosophies is that we’re here to teach children to grow up, to be good human beings. Hayley and I aligned on these type of things, so we began a trial... after 18 months or so we reached a verdict that 1decision was the way we wanted to go. The portal supported staff better, it was really easy to use, and I got really good, rapid feedback from Hayley, which I found so valuable and shared with the headteachers. Ventrus started to pilot things like the assessment quizzes for personal development transition, which was definitely a gap for us.”

Impacts on Teachers and Children

After a central purchase, 1decision was rolled out trust-wide.

“Prior to moving to 1decision, we surveyed approximately 250 teachers. Around 70% of our staff had never been trained to deliver it and that is why we made the formal decision to go with 1decision, because this was the only resource that had these modules.

“So, we rolled that training out... the feedback we had from teachers was really positive... staff are now feeling more confident with what they are teaching. Lots of schools moved to teaching the weightier side of PSHE and RSHE to allow more time for children before transitioning to secondary.”

PSED curriculum and assemblies were embedded at the start of each term. “Having 1decision resources shapes the vocabulary people use and if you have teachers using the same resource they’ve got other year group teachers who they can talk about it. We undertook some pupil voice, and we could identify some common gaps in knowledge. It definitely resonates with the children.”

In 2023–24, 20 Ventrus primaries used 1decision’s Personal Development Transition Quiz. “The findings backed up what we knew, in the original schools which had been doing 1decision outcomes were significantly different to the new joiners. They then used 1decision, and we could see a measurable improvement, including through pupil voice.

“As well as overall testing, we split the testing across years five and six and this is challenging as some schools have got three-year groups in a class. However, everyone has found the quiz really valuable.

“Additionally, our one secondary school did the testing for Year 7 and from this, I have a strong personal view that some schools are still leaving it too late to teach personal development, specifically teaching the sex education and relationships aspects at the end of Year 6, just as children are moving on to new schools with unfamiliar staff.”

Recognition and Partnership

“I’ve been involved in half a dozen Ofsted inspections since where I’ve been able to pull out that data and say, ‘well, actually I can demonstrate this’ and they have said, ‘we’ve never ever seen a school assess personal development in this way,’” said Ashley.

Reflecting on the eight-year relationship, Ashley added: “Hayley Sherwood (CEO) and I just clicked. Every time we gave 1decision feedback, they responded. Hayley is so easy to work with and really, knowledgeable. Overall, we’ve enjoyed a fantastic partnership with 1decision, and throughout this time the resource has grown in its ability to look at things at a MAT level.”

Ashley Leeson Bio

I started teaching in 2000, with a qualification in early childhood development as part of my degree there was a real focus on children’s personal and social development. In 2003, I became a school leader, and over the next ten years I held a range of school leadership roles in local authority schools, from subject leadership to SENDCo, deputy head and acting headteacher. In 2013, I started working in a multi-academy trust (now called The Harbour Schools Partnership) and benefitted from an excellent range of opportunities in executive leadership, working across schools as an executive head, Director of School Improvement, SEND/Safeguarding lead, EYFS lead, Ofsted Inspector, and now, as I am retiring, as a senior primary advisor. I have always had a deep interest in children’s behaviour, and how we as educators contribute to the personal growth of the children we teach, to support them in becoming well-rounded individuals, able to live productive lives underpinned by compassion, kindness, self-control and a drive to be the best they can be.

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