

Newsletter 2010 No 1

Update and Summary

The documents referred to in this Newsletter are available at www.best-schools.org.uk or by contacting best@swcc.beds.sch.uk

Bedfordshire East Schools Trust Ltd (BEST) is a foundation and charitable company limited by guarantee. The land and building assets of Samuel Whitbread Community College, Robert Bloomfield and Etonbury Middle Schools, Hitchmead Special School, Derwent, Langford and Gothic Mede Lower Schools are held in trust. The transfer of these assets is has been underway since 1st April 2009. Three Church of England foundation schools are also Associate Members of BEST; Henlow Middle, Raynsford and All Saints Clifton Lower Schools.

BEST is looking forward to more schools in the SWCC catchment joining during 2010.

BEST is constituted as a Cooperative Trust; The Board of Trustees will be elected from the community which comprises the Samuel Whitbread Community College catchment. Community members and organisations will be able to become members of BEST. Members can then be elected to the Regional Forums, which are based around the catchments of the three middle schools and then onto the BoT. Details of these arrangements can be found in the BEST Ltd Memorandum and Articles of Association.

We will be working on building membership over the next year.

The formation of Bedfordshire East Schools Trust Ltd is a far sighted innovation. Partnerships of schools are a key element of the Governments 21st Century Schools Strategy, Every Child Matters as well as the Central Bedfordshire Local Authority (CBLA) Sustaining Communities Strategic Plan, the CBLA Local Area Agreement, the CBLA Children and Young Peoples' Plan and the CBLA Educational Vision. Details of the educational vision and development plan for BEST are explained in the PowerPoint presentation 'The Purpose of BEST – Governance, Structure, Action and Delivery' and show how BEST fits with these national and local strategies.

This innovation is, without question the unique opportunity for our schools to be at the very core of their communities and transform education for the benefit of all children, young people and their families.

The documents highlighted above are the key to the BEST Education case. The BEST vision, missions and action plans (which constitute the BEST manifesto) along with the BEST Memorandum and Articles of Association make clear the full scope and range of this radical systemic change to the way integrated and co-located children's and families services will be delivered in the 21st century.

The part that BEST plays in these developments is explained in the BEST Ltd Organisation Chart.

The strategic development of BEST schools is also going through radical change. Five strands of work have been identified under the umbrella group, Raising Achievement for All. *The BEST Development Plan* explains these in more detail. However in summary;

Raising Achievement for All; lead by BEST Headteachers. This is significant because this group will create the educational environment in which the other strategies can flourish

Whole Families Matter

Seamless Learning

Training Trust

Community Cohesion

Infrastructure Resources and ICT

Each strategy is being developed by a cross phase leadership partnership, a think tank of staff from each of the schools. The aim is to broaden the participation in these groups by opening them up to learners, parents and members of the community via the membership. Within 18 months individuals will be able to become members of BEST and participate in these groups.

Work has already been undertaken and the details of the strategies that have been developed are available from best@swcc.beds.sch.uk

The object of BEST is as follows;

The Object of the Trust is to advance the education of the pupils at the Schools, to advance the education of other members of the community, and otherwise to benefit the community, it being acknowledged that in carrying out the Object, the Trust;

It must (where applicable) have regard to its obligation to promote community cohesion under the Education Acts;

It may promote education in a manner consistent with the values and principles established by the International Cooperative Alliance;

It shall conduct its affairs in a manner consistent with the values and principles established by the International Cooperative Alliance.

And has established the following principles;

- All through pedagogy – ethos, curriculum, children and family services (0-19+)
- Collective responsibility for all learners

- Collective responsibility to raise standards
- All phases/schools working collaboratively
- All phases/schools working cooperatively
- All phases/schools working collectively
- Working with and for the community
- Accountable to the community
- Democratic membership drawn from;

The membership of the trust is made up of four main groups;

- Schools (governors, staff, learners, parents),
- The Community (individuals and organisations)
- Trustee Partners (education primary and tertiary sectors/ CBLA),
- Trust partners (national and local business, financial and commercial organisations)

In addition to the education case, BEST is a limited company with charitable status and forms the trading arm of the trust.

BEST Ltd is a charitable limited company (company no. 6865093; registered charity no. 1132611) and has established a trading arm to manage assets, provide resources and services for its schools and community in collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Unitary Authority, the Cooperative College and the Cooperative Group. To this end the BEST Ltd Chief Executive Officer is a member of the CBLA Children's Trust Board, is a member of the Cooperative Network Board and is working closely with the CBLA Director of Children and Family Services, CBLA Capital Planning Officers and the CEO and Principal of the Cooperative College.

This first year post acquisition has been concerned with establishing the governance and structural arrangements by which BEST will operate. The interim Board of Trustees consists of representatives from each of the member schools and a chairperson. Executive trustees include representatives from CBLA and Bedfordshire University. It is hoped that the University of Hertfordshire and Bedford College will join the board to take the educational vision forward providing comprehensive education pathways for our young people 0 to 19 and on to 25+. Over the next year we will be working with the Cooperative College to promote membership and establish the regional forums. Within a year elected community trustees will be joining the board. Members of BEST will be able to influence the educational provision in BEST schools for young people 0-19+.

Democratic trusts create an wonderful opportunity for all of our schools to raise achievement for all and develop sustainable cohesive communities.

We are yet to establish partnerships with fellow charities; however we have links with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) having been commissioned to deliver two projects, *Learning Futures* and *Learning Away*. In association with Extended Schools we have developed a range of all-through Academies (all through extra-curricular clubs and activities) which will bring children and families of all ages together on learning programmes culminating in a learning away experience. We hope that the similarities of vision and objectives will lead to a more formal partnership and in time PHF will be represented on our board.

It is anticipated that vertical learning will become more mainstream and feature significantly in our vision for an all through curriculum. Further details can be found in the Academies

Whilst the Board is working towards the advancement of education and community cohesion, the trust is also looking to secure additional sources of income for the benefit of the community, children and families.

A bid to the DCSF Co-location Fund in February 2009 was successful and the CEO with our trust partners, LowC Consultants, LowC Construction, Hanson Leddington Architects and officers from CBLA Capital Planning and School Organisation, has formed the Co-location Board to oversee the project. The Co-location Board is working to create a co-location facility featuring a purpose built 0-4 Nursery and office and consultancy space for; NHS Bedfordshire, Bedfordshire PCT, Extended Schools, Training Trust and the Community Police. All stakeholders and the community will have access to the 64 seat conferencing suit and catering facilities. The Co-location Board is accountable to the BEST BoT and Partnership for Schools (Pfs).

The project is at planning stage and it is anticipated that building will start in April 2010.

BEST Ltd is also investigating the possibility of creating a web based shop to provide all the resources a child might need to be an effective learner in BEST schools. Our partners include Viglen Ltd, Total Promotions Ltd and Extra Step Ltd. This will be a one stop shop where; stationary, equipment, uniform and learning devices can be bought and delivered direct to the home.

With the co-location, webshop and other projects in mind, it is BEST Ltd's intention to bring together a range of trust partners to deliver capital projects, resources and services to our schools. BEST will work closely with the Local Authority, as a team we will be attending the CBLA Carbon Reduction Workshop, we hope that working with CBLA many of our proposals for reducing the CBLA carbon footprint will result in successful bids to the CBLA capital programme.

Once our trust partnership framework is in place BEST Ltd will be organising a workshop for key personnel to create a BEST Sustainable Energy and Transport Strategy.

BEST Ltd is bringing together a framework of local and national business partners. This framework will tender to design, build new and refurbish old schools and community facilities to reduce their carbon footprint and increase sustainability. We will be including input to the Building Schools for the Future programme. Our designs will also significantly reduce schools' energy costs. The scope of this framework is under discussion and development but will be finalised over the next year.

It is our intention to make a significant reduction in the BEST and CBLA carbon footprint.

CBLA have stated their aim to devolve and commission partnerships of schools to deliver children's and family services over the next two years. Details can be found in An Educational Vision for Central Bedfordshire. We are currently in discussions with the lead professionals at CBLA for the children and Young peoples' Plan, An Educational Vision for CBLA, Integrated Children and Family Services and Sustainable Community Transport.

It is BEST's intention to provide a robustly governed and well structured delivery framework which will be commissioned to raise educational achievement, deliver integrated and co-located children's and family services and children's workforce training, a sustainable community transport system and significantly enhance community cohesion.

Lands and buildings transfers are taking place. Initial work has been undertaken to identify educationally redundant land and buildings, the development and or sale of which will provide the trust with working capital. We are in discussions with the lead for CBLA Capital Planning concerning these transfers and developments. These assets may also be refurbished for rental / lease which will provide some revenue. Capital funds will be used to develop new facilities, for example a Multi Use Games Area at SWCC, a nursery at Langford LS and Children & Family Service Centres at RBMS and Etonbury.

As one of the first multi-school co-operative trusts BEST has developed a high level of expertise; in line with CBLA strategy we are working with other groups of schools which wish to acquire trusts and federations. This work may well result in an income stream for consultancy. The Cooperative College will be sending the CEO of BEST to be trained as a Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) Consultant later this year. We are working closely with the Cooperative College and have been accepted as a cooperative organisation by the Eastern and Central Values and Principles Committee of the Cooperative Alliance.

We are looking forward to a Cooperative Trustee partner joining our board.

If you have any further queries or you would like to know how you can join the trust contact us at best@swcc.beds.sch.uk