

BEST Newsletter November 2008

shared teaching and learning The initiative lead by Robert Bloomfield Headteacher, Adrian Rogers and Dr Al Mistrano and involving a team of Advanced Skills Teachers are observing good practice in lower school classrooms and setting up a teacher exchange process by which to 'outstanding' practice that Ofsted have reported upon in many of our lower schools can inform teaching and learning at SWCC and the middle schools. A meeting of middle and the upper school heads will discuss Dr Mistrano's paper at their next meeting.

learning logs

The use of a project based 'Learning Log' in lower schools is an area for development which has already taken hold at SWCC replacing the more traditional methods of setting specific 'homework for practice'. Students are set a research project and are expected to present their findings not only to the teacher but also the class, lessons can use the knowledge and facts that the class have collected to discuss, analyse and evaluate problems. A similar initiative to provide the opportunity for Newly Qualified Teachers to visit schools across the pyramid is also underway. It is hoped that teachers in each of the three phases will be able to work with colleagues to broaden their experience and appreciate a pyramid wide perspective building toward an 'all through' concept.

It is hoped in the future teachers will be able to share their expertise with each other directly by visiting the classrooms of their colleagues, not just within the school but across all BEST schools. This, of course happens at the moment but rarely between the lower and the upper school. Similarly, it is hoped that students from SWCC will take a more regular interest in their local lower school by visiting to help in classrooms and perhaps take a more direct role in teaching sports, music, drama and other subjects where they have a particular talent.

Teachers in middle schools are already involved in this project which will provide one of the many strands of continuity that will make 'the all-through school' a reality.

more schools to consult

St Mary's Stotfold, Roecroft, Campton and All Saints lower schools have joined the other 12 schools in making an 'Expression of Interest' to the specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

The Southill, Shefford and Shillington Lower Schools public consultations have taken place. The results of these consultations can be found on the **BEST Web** www.best-schools.org.uk

The **BEST** Statutory Proposals are being drafted. These have been delayed due to the need to incorporate the possibility that the schools will form a Co-operative Trust. Discussions are due to take place this month with the Co-operative College.

extended school and community use ICT project

BEST is also facilitating the development of ICT across our pyramid of schools and has entered into discussions with Courtlands and Partnership Education with a view to developing an all through data and communications system for the benefit of tracking pupil progress 2+ to 19. In particular **BEST** is looking to provide a centralised children and family services team that will support the aim of 'early targeted intervention and support' for pupils and families. Meetings with Courtlands, Partnership Education, Netmedia as well as the Beds CC ICT Development Team to explore the possibilities and technicalities of providing a single ICT infrastructure for data and communications across the pyramid are taking place. A development team lead by Tim Walker Headteacher at Hitchmead special School is examining what would be required from such a system and is producing a development plan.

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building links with the tertiary sector

Discussions with the Local Authority, **BEST** and University of Bedfordshire with a view to enhancing the delivery of Modern Foreign Languages in **BEST** schools are underway. One of the many ideas is to have university students available to visit schools on a regular basis working with teachers and children to develop and resource language immersion situations. The students would create a street or situation where languages can be spoken in context and then move it from school to school. This would become a regular feature of the languages curriculum. **BEST** is also working with the Harpur Trust to create a language school that would take place on Saturdays and be available for all people in the locality.

Langford and Roecroft, Etonbury and Sunnyside Special School are amongst the first schools to join this project. Further school representatives are expected to join Catherine Thornhill of the University of Bedfordshire in a meeting later this month to discuss the details and arrange a pilot scheme to commence in the summer term.

In line with the **BEST** strategy to raise the aspirations of young people it was reported last month that 226 year 11 SWCC students visited Hertfordshire University. In addition students are also visiting London University and on Monday December 15th a professor from the University of Hull will be giving a 1 hour 30 min lecture to the SWCC year 12 Geography students on erosion of the Holderness Coastline. This is the major case study for their AS exam and will give them the extra depth needed to succeed. It is hoped that University Champions – perhaps students who live locally – will join a similar project as the SWCC Champions and make themselves available to the schools in the pyramid to work in the same way – providing specialist skills, leading activities and raising the aspirations of our children and young people.

SWCC champions

Four SWCC Champions now have places at pyramid lower schools, Southill, All Saints Clifton, Raynesford and St Mary's Stotfold. These students will be working with young people in classrooms and providing extra activities within the Extended Schools Programme. Principal of SWCC Rob Robson wants young people to be connected to their community and feels that this initiative is one way in which this can be achieved. In return the schools provide a place for students to study without the necessity of travelling into Shefford.

building links with the primary sector

Discussions have taken place with Sue Tyler and her team of Early Years and Extended Services Childcare Development Officers at Beds CC. A highly productive meeting has led to a series of visits to pre-schools and nurseries to explore the idea of trust and what benefits membership of **BEST** and the strategic development of Early Years in partnership with **BEST** might mean for childcare within the SWCC pyramid.

BEST strategic leadership

Groups of teachers are now working on the key strategy strands of Special Educational Needs provision and Raising Standards and Performance across the pyramid. These groups are being lead by Headteachers Adrian Rogers (RBMS) and Tim Walker (Hitchmead). Other leadership partnerships will follow to develop strategies; The All through School, Powerful Seamless Learning and Recruitment and Retention.

engineering

Robert Bloomfield Middle School have launched their engineering website www.rbms.org.uk And have a range of initiatives underway.

BEST partnerships

Talks with Pearson Education and the Cooperative College continue. John Knott from Pearson is putting together a paper to demonstrate possible benefits of forming a partnership with Pearson Education which he will present to **BEST** in December. Mervyn Wilson and Sean Rogers of the Cooperative College will be meeting members of the Steering Group also in December to take the initial discussions forward. Work with the Innovations Unit has also been productive with a scheme to link leadership and masters qualifications with the strategic work to be undertaken by staff on behalf of **BEST**. Further talks with Gonville Caius College, Cambridge are planned during December.

Talks are underway with Nurture Landscapes discussing the possibility of a **BEST** wide grounds maintenance service.

BEST is looking for a long term catering partner to develop a catering strategy for the future, healthy, children friendly meals that encourage parents and children to use the school catering service.

SWCC Shefford Road, Clifton, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5QS
t : 01462 629900 f : 01462 629901 e : best@swcc.beds.sch.uk

www.best-schools.org.uk