

BEST Newsletter October 2008

improving homework

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.

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 the pyramid. This of course happens at the moment but rarely between the lower and the upper schools. 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.

shared teaching and learning

There are a range of initiatives starting up over the next few weeks. A group of Advanced Skills Teachers from SWCC are visiting Derwent Lower School to speak with teachers and pupils about classroom organisation and to see first hand how the curriculum is delivered. This is part of a wider strategy to improve teaching and learning at SWCC and in the pyramid. The upper school teachers are interested in developing methods of teaching that will help students to work independently and improve their problem solving skills. In too many cases students are told what methods to use and then practice them without developing a real understanding of what they are doing. GCSE is very much about problem solving and to gain at least a grade 'C' student need to be able to apply their knowledge in a range of situations, analyse, evaluate and produce reasoned answers.

more schools to consult

Southill, Shefford and Shillington Lower Schools are about to start the consultation stage of joining BEST. All three schools have received confirmation from the DCSF that their 'expression of interest' to become early adopters has been accepted. Other schools are discussing joining BEST at governor level including, St Mary's Stotfold, Stondon, Roecroft, All Saints and Campton Lower Schools. These discussions may well lead to these schools making an expression of interest and starting the consultation process during this term or next. Roecroft

Lower School are to put in an Expression of Interest, which takes the number of schools in the pyramid investigating the acquisition of trust status to 13.

The Voluntary Aided Schools - St Mary's Clophill, Meppershall and All Saints are also getting together with BEST to explore and investigate what the partnership between BEST and VA schools can do to develop teaching and learning.

continued overleaf ▶

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.

In line with the **BEST** strategy to raise the aspirations of young people 226 year 11 **SWCC** students visited Hertfordshire University on Wednesday 15th October. A similar number (200) were out of school for the entire week beginning 20th October for work experience. In addition, the University of Bedfordshire and **BEST** are organising for undergraduates and **PGCE** students to 'Champion' universities and further and higher education by visiting, speaking and working with children and young people, as well as adding their own enthusiasm for learning in classrooms to support teachers in schools across the pyramid. Similarly, **SWCC** 'Champions' will be working in lower and middle schools to make a positive contribution to their local community, support teaching and learning and to use their local school for personal study.

BEST strategic leadership

The first **BEST** Conference took place on Monday 29th at Shefford Lower School - headteachers and chairs of governors met to decide the future leadership structure and the strategic direction of the trust. The presentation and feedback presentation will be linked to this update. The main strategic directions the Heads and Chairs of governors identified were, Standards and Achievement, One School One System and

The **BEST** project manager, **Ian F Kite**, attended the Co-operative Trust Schools Conference to find out if the co-operative model for involving parents, staff, students and the local community in the trust were one that might be adopted by the trust.

more schools to consult

BEST is also facilitating the development of the ICT resources at Langford Lower School. A meeting between **Adrian Miller** the Assistant Principal i/c Engineering and the Langford Headteacher **Chris Watson** has resulted in a plan to create an ICT suite in the converted bungalow on the site. It is hoped that the suite will also be available for the community to use.

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