

BEST Trustees' Meeting

27 September 2022, 10:00am – 12:00pm

BEST House Conference Room



Attendees: Ilona Bond (IB), Paul Walker (PW), Alan Lee (AL), Claire Mycock (CM), Tony Sanderson (TS), David Morgan (DM), Jerry Tonge (JT), Craig Smith (CS), Alison Wilshaw (AW) and Nafia Baust (NB)

Meeting Chair: Ilona Bond

Governance Professional: Yvonne Humphryes

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: None

Approval of previous minutes:

- Trustees' meeting minutes 21 June 2022 – minutes approved and signed electronically
- Trustees' Extraordinary meeting minutes 22 September 2022 – minutes approved and signed electronically

Action: YH to distribute the approved Extraordinary minutes to AW, Victoria Blackmore and Rachel Taylor

Matters Arising

Pre-read: COO H&S termly report distributed prior to the meeting – see report for more detail

GDPR: No ICO reportable incidents since the last trustees meeting

Safeguarding: An external Interim Safeguarding Audit has taken place at Shefford Nursery – Each area passed.

Health & Safety: CS provided an overview and confirmed the compliance continues to improve and no concerns to flag. **Action:** To enable like for like comparisons across all BEST schools, going forward trustees would like the report to include the incident percentage per head.

Trustees queried the incidents recorded as 'Acts of Violence'. CS said this category is broad and not as shocking as it may appear – such incidents are dealt with in line with the Schools' Behavioural Policies and reviewed centrally.

Monthly Cash Flow and Management Accounts

Pre-read: Trustees' P11 Monthly Monitoring summary distributed prior to the meeting – see summary for details NB provided and summary, advising August is looking good and likely to provide a buffer for this academic year.

Question: Do you feel BEST are in a good position to 'weather the storm'?

Answer: Energy costs have been capped for six months – Most schools have a buffer and as a trust we can cope. Budgets are set in June and much can change by September, the budgets are likely to be exceeded.

Financially nurseries have recovered well. In the process of closing of the last financial year, funds will be added to reserves. BEST can celebrate being in a good financial position.

The Cashflow and management accounts for BEST are received on a monthly basis by the Finance and Audit Committee members i.e. DM, AL, IB, PW and JT on behalf of the board of trustees, all of whom confirmed they are happy with the accounts and are satisfied the Trust is financially sound and confirmed the accounts are in line with forecasting.

Subsidiaries Executive Committee Update

Pre-read: Subsidiaries' Executive Committee meeting minutes 13 September 2022 distributed prior to the meeting The nurseries are looking good with a higher number on roll than usual for this term. Outcomes suggest much has been achieved and finances are improved. Central team support has been significant but the results pleasing.

Nurseries are fully staffed and morale improved according to 'staff voices' surveys.

Ofsted readiness training is now taking place. **Action:** AW or SI team member to train to be an Ofsted Inspector.

AW has been working closely with Shefford Nursery to support them and address the post-Ofsted action plan – much improvement has been seen and confident of an improved outcome at the next Ofsted inspection.

Trustees discussed at length the formal complaint raised with Ofsted in regards to the Langford Nursery Inspection.

Decision: Trustees unanimously support AL in escalating the complaint to the Regional Director at Ofsted.

BEST House: The Outside/In Office has now been vacated – a decision is to be made in regards to room usage.

BEST School Staff Pay Award Update (Teachers & Support)

Awaiting parliamentary approval to the STRB recommendations on 14 October 2022. AL confirmed BEST have budgeted well and in a strong position to meet the pay award (Teachers = 5% & a Support Staff redress at approx. 10%). Trustees were asked if they are happy to approve the pay awards in line with national figure for implementation in readiness for implementation in November, back dated to 1 April 2022 for Support Staff and 1 September 2022 for Teaching Staff.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved Teacher and Support Staff pay awards in line with the parliamentary nationally approved rates to be announced on 14 October 2022 (backdated as per the above paragraph).

BEST Strategic Objectives and Action Plans

Pre-read: BEST Strategic Objectives and Action Plan 2021-22 review document distributed prior to the meeting

Pre-read: BEST Strategic Objectives and Action Plan 2022-23 document distributed prior to the meeting

AL referred Trustees to page 10 of the 2021/22 Action Plan and provided a summary overview of the '12 big ticket items'. Each year, BEST strive to be better than the previous year.

- All schools are a minimum Ofsted rated 'Good'
- Educational outcomes in line with national average and better than local average – this said, some schools could and should do better
- BEST is financially secure and continues to grow stronger
- Central Executive team members sit on boards external to BEST
- 144 BEST staff members have received Mindfulness training
- 80 staff members have accessed an internal mindfulness social platform – 'Yammer'
- BEST Nurseries are doing well financially
- Shefford Nursery received an Ofsted rating of 'Requires Improvement' in February 2022 – staff training and interventions have been put in place – satisfied they should secure a 'Good' rating at the next inspection
- Langford Nursery received an Ofsted rating 'inadequate' as a safeguarding consequence in July 2022, a decision BEST contest and have raised a formal complaint over; the complaint is supported by industry experts.

AL provided an overview of the 2022/23 Action Plan:

- The plan has six areas of focus in line with the white paper – AL happy with the structure regardless of whether the White Paper remains, since it is in line with the model presented by the Confederation of Schools Trust
- Education introduced and includes more effective monitoring and targeted School Improvement intervention
- Governance remains important
- Wellbeing remains a priority as per the mission to 'Grow the BEST in everyone' agreed in 2016.

Trustees discussed the effects 2Tier is having and may continue to have on staffing and the need to keep morale high, thus the sixth value around human flourish: wellbeing/mindfulness; CPD/Self-Care appraisal targets and executive are currently looking at flexible working.

Decision: Trustees would like 2Tier and ETA sixth form delivered, outcomes maintained/improved and all schools/nurseries achieving above 'Good' in their next Ofsted inspections before considering any further expansion beyond 10 schools. There would need to be clear rationale and benefits for any school joining the school during this period.

Summary of BEST Examination Results 2022

Pre-read: BEST Summary 2022 Results document distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more detail

AW provided an overview of the 2022 overview:

- Key Stage 5 only relates to SWA who have achieved ALPs 3 placing them in the top 25% nationally
- Key Stage 4 attainment 8 data across both SWA and ETA exceeds their data for previous years and both have performed well within the local context; this said, strategies are in place to address low Maths results at ETA. The Progress 8 data will not be available until all the national data is available
- Key Stage 2 data at RBA is pleasing and above National Average. ETA's results were adversely affected by staff losses and six new pupils joining shortly before exams were sat. 2Tier continues to effect staff retention
- Key Stage 1 results are mixed with GMA showing particular concern. AW is perplexed by the GMA's data as the school are used by the Maths and Literacy Hubs as beacons of excellence; AW suspects the issue may be staff knowledge around the criteria of data as opposed to low pupil outcomes – this is being looked into
- Phonics outcomes are good.

Internal Scrutiny

Pre-read: Payroll Report distributed prior to the meeting

The need to physically sign payroll each month was identified; process amended to address this going forward. One paper was missing from the whole sample – the audit went well, see report for more details.

Pre-read: Cyber Security Report distributed prior to the meeting

'Draft' report received only a few days go. There are lots of positives but further discussion with the auditors to challenge some items identified as 'non-compliance' as opposed to 'best practice'. A final report will be shared in due course.

Pre-read: Wellbeing Report distributed prior to the meeting

A pleasing report following a successful audit in which no medium or high priorities were identified. The report states: 'BEST is leading the way for wellbeing in the educational trust sector'. The majority of BEST staff feel valued according to the BEST wellbeing surveys conducted across schools earlier this year. See report for more detail.

Policies for Approval

Pre-read: The proposed policies as listed below were distributed prior to the meeting – see policies for detail

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the 'Managing Allegations against Staff policy' subject to Union consultation. **Action:** 'Suggested' to be removed from section 5.4 prior to submission to unions.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the 'Travel and Subsistence Policy' and 'Capability Policy' for trust-wide distribution; both policies had been updated with guidance from Horizon HR following Union consultation.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the 'GDPR Policy and Privacy notices' for trust-wide distribution.

Action: 'Principal' references throughout the document to be checked to see whether they should include Nursery Managers i.e. Principals/Nursery Managers, prior to policy distribution.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the 'Safeguarding Policy' and 'Staff Code of Conduct Policy' via email on 25 July 2022.

2Tier Update

Pre-read: 2Tier Progress Checker (21.9.22) document distributed prior to the meeting – see document for details

- In September 2023 ETA will be opening a new sixth form
- CMA and GMA will be receiving new builds with increased PANs and a nursery provision
- 2Tier Cluster Plans approved Easter 2022
- The Biggleswade cluster (LSA) will transition to 2Tier in September 2024 – remaining BEST schools in 2025
- The project costs are funded from CBC reserves and section 106 funds. CBC Officers are looking to have plans agreed by 16 Dec 2022 ready for Executive sign-off. BEST can then commence the approval process in regards to admissions and age range changes etc.
- Housing development delays may result in the GMA new build not being complete by 2025; short-term plans for accommodating years 5 and 6 are starting to be considered
- RBA is the most challenging school in terms of estate – awaiting plans due in the next few weeks
- Forward planning to enable PBA and ETA to grow to a PAN Of 240 over time
- The LVA PAN of 30 is being challenged by a strong parental presence as the places available do not meet the demand (52 first choice applications) – BEST with the support of parents are pushing for CBC to increase the PAN to 60 and provide the necessary build
- Revenue and pupil flow are now starting to be looked at
- CS now sits on the Schools Forum, thus allowing insight and involvement over 2Tier plans
- CBC now have an experienced team, overseen by the CEO, managing the schools for the future programme.

Next Meeting: 9:30am on Tuesday 6 December 2022 at BEST House

J. Bowd Minutes approved and electronically signed 06/12/2022