

BEST Trustees' Meeting
21st September 2021, 10:00-12:00
BEST House, Conference Room

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

Apologies: David Morgan and Jerry Tonge

Chair of Trustees: Ilona Bond

Vice-Chair of Trustees: Paul Walker

Clerk: Yvonne Humphries

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: CS interim Chair of Governors at Robert Bloomfield Academy.

2021/22 Declarations of Pecuniary Interest: YH confirmed receipt of all Trustees Pecuniary Interests.

Election of a new Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees: Election Process completed at the last Full Board Meeting – see meeting minutes dated 22 June.

Approval of Previous minutes:

Trustees' Meeting Minutes 22 June 2021 – Approved and signed.

Trustees' Subsidiaries Meeting Minutes 22 June 2021 – Approved and signed.

Trustees' Extra-ordinary Meeting Minutes 7 September 2021 – Approved and signed.

IB chased (20/9) CBC's CEO for a response to the BEST letter sent on 7 September – awaits a response. AL and CS have also tried to make contact but to no avail.

Subsidiaries Executive Committee Update

Pre-read: Subsidiaries Executive Committee Minutes (07/09/21) distributed prior to the meeting

The Central Executive Team (CEO, COO, CFO and Director of Education) meet regularly to discuss the subsidiaries.

For a 12 months trial period the nurseries have no over-arching leader but instead each nursery site has a manager, line managed by AW. Ofsted readiness and financial sustainability work is being undertaken with the nurseries. Staff CPD and alignment of policies with BEST also taking place.

A gentle approach has been taken to work with nursery Managers and their staff to understand the operational and financial workings of the business – radical changes are being considered for implementation to ensure the sustainability of BEST nurseries. Staffing structures/pay scales, holiday clubs and cancellation fees are being reviewed.

Awaiting CBCs revised 2Tier plans – work will then begin on the nurseries growth/sustainability plans.

Trustees raised concerns about potential fee increases and the amount of Executive Team time/costs being absorbed by the nurseries.

Capital & Estates Committee Update – TS

Pre-read: Capital & Estates Committee Minutes (07/09/21) distributed prior to the meeting

First Capital & Estates committee in which the scope and role of the committee were agreed.

A document aligning the committee to helping deliver the trusts strategy will follow in due course.

Schools spending of DFC funds being observed to ensure they are not front-loading spending of funds on IT projects as this may leave little/none for essential maintenance costs that may occur throughout the year.

Details of the Pendleton Centre repayment plan were discussed. Trustees commended CS for his work in resolving this issue.

BEST have moved from AMR to Barkers – the transition went well, and BEST are impressed with the quality of work thus far.

Monthly Cash Flow and Management Accounts

The cash flow and management accounts for BEST are received on a monthly basis by IB, PW, DM, JT and AL on behalf of the Board of Trustees, all of those present at this meeting confirmed that they are happy with the accounts and are satisfied that the Trust is financially sound.

BEST Teachers' Pay Award Update

[Pre-read](#): Draft 2021 STPCD for consultation document distributed prior to the meeting

The consultation that will run until October 2021 recommends the following:

0% Pay Award for teaching staff – except a raise of £250 for those on the entry level

An extra day holiday for the Queens Platinum Jubilee (the bank holiday currently falls within one week school closure – Whitsun week). If approved, Principals would like this day to be taken on the last day of the academic year.

Decision: Trustees unanimously agreed to accept the consultation recommendation.

Action: If consultation recommendations approved, YH to update and circulate the BEST 2021/22 academic calendar.

BEST Support Staff Pay Award Update

National employer for NJC workforce has recommended a pay award of 1.75% for support staff (first pay point 2.75%) – unions are currently reviewing this. NB confirmed this cost is included within school budgets.

Decision: Trustees are supportive of the offer and will make a final decision via email once the unions have concluded their review.

The NJC pay scale does not apply to nursery staff.

BEST Strategic Objectives and Action Plans

[Pre-read](#): BEST Strategic Objectives/Action Plan 2020-21 Review document distributed prior to the meeting (see document for more details).

The document is developed in conjunction with the Executive Team that includes Principals.

The Central Executive team members leading on Finance, Education and Growth have each written a summary page – the pages are included within the review document.

Most items have been achieved. The items not marked as fully achieved include:

Completion of the 'Safeguarding Award' – the decision was made to not pursue the award as the process would have been too expensive. However, Safeguarding does remain a high priority for the trust:

- BEST have bought Safeguarding Pro and all BEST schools have access to this
- Annual external Safeguarding Audits
- A DSL (Designated Safeguard Lead) network has been developed.

It appears to have been a positive year for KS4 and KS5 results. However, the decision was made not to state whether this target had been achieved as due to Covid, the grades are centre assessed.

2Tier continues to be a drain on time with no clear outcomes yet.

[Pre-read](#): BEST Strategic Objectives/Action Plan 2021-22 document distributed prior to the meeting (see document for more details).

Having developed '5 years of BEST' – there are now 4 key questions to explore:

1. How to build a civic partnership, raising the name/profile of BEST within the community?
2. How does BEST ensure that CBC's Schools for the Future plans work both for individual schools within BEST and BEST as a whole?
3. How do we continue to connect provision within BEST?
4. How do we live our new value 'to have the courage to be compassionate'?

BEST Teaching School no longer exists; BEST is part of the Teaching School Hub.

BEST is looking to launch the value of Compassion – introduced in the BGHB 2021-22.

Action: YH to insert the BEST 2016 – Present diagram into this year's Strategic Objectives/Action Plan.

Q: What is the Growth Strategy for BEST?

A: Natural growth should come from the 2Tier plans, taking pupil numbers from approx. 6000→8000 pupils. However, a review needs to be undertaken to ascertain whether we stabilise our structures in line with the national model i.e., Primary and Secondary and then consider growth. Or whether, 10 schools with 8000 pupils is sufficient. The work/review CS is undertaking will provide guidance to help inform future decisions. Awaiting the outcome of CBCs 'rapid review' intended to recalibrate the Schools for the Future plans in the first instance.

Matters Arising

Pre-read: H&S Overview document distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more details.

Health & Safety: 1 reportable Riddor incident and another serious non-reportable incident since the last trustee update.

H&S Audit Actions Plans are currently being reviewed. Smart Log is used across the trust – the platform is an efficient way of recording training and staying compliant through monitoring.

GDPR: No reportable incidents since the last trustees update.

Safeguarding: No reportable incidents since the last trustees update.

Policies for Approval

Pre-read: All proposed policies distributed to trustees for review prior to the meeting.

Recruitment Policy

Decision: Trustees present unanimously approved the Recruitment Policy for distribution and use across BEST subject to Union Consultation/ approval.

Managing Allegations of Abuse Policy

Decision: Trustees present unanimously approved the Managing Allegations of Abuse Policy for distribution and use across BEST subject to Union Consultation/approval.

Safeguarding Policy

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the Safeguarding Policy for distribution and use across BEST with immediate effect.

Admissions Policy 2023

Context: In previous years BEST would consult with Principals during the summer term (on this occasion it would've been summer 2021); obtain trustee approval in September; a 6-week consultation period begins during the autumn if there are any changes to the policy and trustees then review consultation responses and sign off the final admission policy for trust-wide implementation. However, admission arrangements for 2023 are uncertain owing to the CBC's Schools for the Future programme, in which the Shefford/Stotfold cluster are due to move from three to two tier schooling. BEST Compliance Officer, LL, has raised concerns and sought guidance from two CBC Officers, one of whom is the Admissions Manager – they know there is a problem but unable to offer a solution. The RSC has been contacted too but there has been no response. LL has kept a clear record of communications.

Decision: Trustees present unanimously approved to make no changes to the admission policy i.e. the school structures will remain 'as is'; BEST cannot consult on a 'Plan' that is currently under review. A footnote should be included to advise that BEST is currently unable to consult on the 2Tier Plans, as there is no agreed structure to fix the arrangements too.

The Langford community would like the LVA PAN increased from 30 → 60; trustees are supportive of this but would need CBC to fund the required expansion works. **Decision:** Based on current classroom availability, the LVA PAN will remain at 30. Both financially and operationally, a PAN of 45 is not viable.

2Tier Update

CBC Officers advised CS that the CMA relocation and growth plans are part of the 'Growth' agenda, not Schools for the Future programme (SftF), as such, these plans should remain unchanged. CBC are conducting a "rapid review" to recalibrate the Schools for the Future Programme – there is some unease amongst some trustees and BEST staff as to what this may mean for BEST schools. Trustees await CBCs report, due by October half-term.

AOB

- BEST Governance Conference 2021 scheduled for 9:30am on Saturday 16th October.
- Trustees presented with copies of the new 'BEST of BEST' and 'Celebrating five years of BEST' brochures.
- **Action:** CS to ask LGB Chairs for their annual LGB reports.

Next meeting: 7 December 2021 @ 10:00am – BEST House Conference Room

J. Bond Approved and electronically signed 07/12/2021