

BEST Trustees' Meeting

10 May 2022, 10:00am – 12:20pm
BEST House, Conference Room

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

Chair of Trustees: Ilona Bond

Vice Chair: Paul Walker

Apologies: Craig Smith

Governance Professional: Yvonne Humphries

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: None

Approval of previous minutes:

- Trustees' meeting minutes 15 March 2022 – minutes approved and signed electronically

Matters Arising

Pre-read: COO Termly H&S Report distributed prior to the meeting – see report for more details.

GDPR: No reportable incidents since the last trustees update

Safeguarding: No reportable incidents since the last trustees update

Health & Safety: No reportable incidents since the last trustees update. The previously reported 'Riddor' incident is still being investigated.

Trustees reviewed and discussed the H&S report. Trustees questioned why RBA had a high proportion of incidents compared to other schools. AL, who presented the report in CS' absence agreed to find out and report back at the next trustees meeting. **Action:** CS to provide update at the next trustees' meeting.

Monthly Cashflow and Management Accounts

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.

Capital & Estates Committee Update

Pre-read: Capital & Estates Committee minutes distributed prior to the meeting – view minutes for more detail.

- ETA sixth form – Should open September 2023. The finances are in place – a great achievement
 - Pendleton Centre – Year end showing a £15,000 surplus, this will be paid towards the 'Covid years' deficit
- ETA have expressed an interest in running the Pendleton Centre when the contract between Stevenage Leisure, CBC and BEST comes up for review next year; Trustees asked for caution when considering commercial risks/contracts
- Capital Works – Over the past four years, SCA funds have been spent and work undertaken to ensure all BEST schools are safe, warm and dry. The next phase is being considered with a greater focus on Wellbeing
 - Wellbeing Gardens – The official opening of the ETA wellbeing garden will take place next Thursday. BEST aim to complete a further two wellbeing gardens by the end of this academic year. All remaining schools (with the exception of those due to relocate under the schools for the future programme), will be completed next academic year
 - Strategic Focus – There are no major projects to be completed. Looking to adopt of a hybrid model with a portion of funds being spent on works to help improve wellbeing.

Subsidiaries Executive Committee Update

Pre-read: Subsidiaries Executive Committee minutes distributed prior to the meeting – view minutes for more detail

- BEST House is financially stable, this is largely attributed to the £56,000 service charge paid by Shefford Nursery. Benchmarking undertaken – the charge is at the mid-point and therefore deemed reasonable
- LVA and Arlesey do not pay a service charge. Trustees concluded the nurseries are one legal entity and they therefore collectively need to look to break even
- All nursery indicators look positive. **Action:** YH to share Executive Nursery Reports with trustees going forward.

Shefford Nursery Ofsted Inspection

Pre-read: Shefford Nursery Ofsted Report distributed prior to the meeting – see report for more detail

Pre-read: Nursery Action Plan distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more detail

Pre-read: Nursery Manager Support Plan distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more detail

BEST Executive explained that they were disappointed with the report and have since raised a complaint in regards to the process. Despite AW's several phone calls to the nursery during the inspection, the inspector failed to alert the trust to the fact Shefford nursery were at risk of an 'Requires Improvement'. The complaint was not upheld.

An immediate review was undertaken by AL (CEO), IB (Chair of Trustees) and CM (Performance Committee Chair); the review involved individual meetings with the Nursery Manager and Director of Education. An external review by a national nursery provider, Busy Bees, was also commissioned; the review raised concern.

Lessons have been learned e.g. BEST nurseries need to support each other and a member of the BEST SI team needs to be present at inspection times.

Next steps:

- Action Plan drawn up in agreement with the Nursery Manager – focus on supervision and staff interaction
- Support Plan with agreed milestones in place. Horizon HR are supporting AW
- Agreement in place for the three nurseries to support each other
- Executive/SI cover now in place to support with inspections during these times
- An external review from the EYS National Lead is scheduled for 17 May 2022
- AW has fortnightly meetings with the Nursery Manager
- Saturday opening mornings are taking place – staff voices are being collected

New Appointments Update

AL, IB and PW supported by Campton Academy's Chair of Governors conducted assessments centres for the Principal vacancy. There were two strong candidates. Sarah Fraher the current interim Principal has been appointed.

The School Improvement team has expanded to include a Director of Science; Joanne Boniface has been appointed. Joanne will join an already highly effective team in supporting BEST schools – a requirement of the new white paper.

BEST Governance Handbook (BGHB) Update

The 7th edition of the BGHB is currently being updated to reflect the changes rooted within the Governance Handbook, Academy Trust Handbook and Ofsted School Inspection Handbook. No comments or suggestions were received from BEST Governance community during the BGHB consultation which ran from 4 March – 1 April 2022.

Policies for Approval

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

Decision: The following policies incorporated recommended changes by the unions and were unanimously approved by trustees for trust-wide distribution:

- Family Related Leave Policy
- Appraisal Policy
- Disciplinary Policy – Approved subject to the correction of a couple of typos
- Redundancy Policy – Discussion: BEST HR confirmed 3.3 has been checked and signed off by Horizon HR

Decision: The new BEST 'Cyber Security Policy' was unanimously approved by trustees for trust-wide distribution.

Info only: The Capital & Estates Committee approved the BEST Health & Safety Policy on 26 April 2022. Trustees received a copy of the policy and confirmed they were happy with the Committees' decision.

Request: Future changes to be tracked or highlighted within the proposed policies.

2Tier Update

BEST have received queries from parents/carers expressing concern about how the transition over to 2tier will affect their child's school journey. The concern/confusion has been further impounded by the clusters' phased transition.

BEST is disappointed to learn CBC will not commence feasibility studies of their schools until after the summer; it was previously believed these would be completed by the summer i.e. end of term. These delays create longer periods of uncertainty for BEST and its community.

CS conducted tours of SWA, RBA, ETA and PBA with Gareth Cheale from CBC who confirmed RBA needs to be made 'secondary ready'. **Action:** Trustees would like CS to encourage CBC to start the RBA feasibility studies ASAP.

BEST's hands are tied in view of transitional planning until the Capital/Revenue has been approved by CBC Executive. However, this will not happen until the feasibility studies have been completed.

Trustees discussed the balance of transitional planning whilst waiting for CBC's approved plans and concluded planning should begin whilst ensuring standards are maintained.

BEST Value: Compassion

Pre-read: BEST Mindfulness and Compassion PPT. distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more detail

- All BEST academies follow the same termly cycle in obtaining stakeholder views: 1. Pupil 2. Teaching and Learning (Parents) 3. Staff/wellbeing. The results of the latest Staff wellbeing surveys were reviewed – the results are pleasing
- Central Team surveys are being completed this term – results will be shared next trustees' meeting
- The Wellbeing 'Internal Scrutiny' is in progress – the process is being led by Juniper
- The BEST Wellbeing Charter is being updated and will be included in the next edition of the BGHB
- BEST aim to launch a 'virtual mindfulness space' from September 2022.

AOB

An electricity dispute at PBA is currently being investigated. The electricity bill is £101,000 and believed to be accruing at approximately £10,000 per month. PBA are unable to change suppliers until the balance is settled. PBA have not yet taken ownership of the building from CBC – BEST will discuss the matter with CBC and possibly seek the advice of an independent electrician to try and resolve the matter.

The Keeping Children Safe in Education (KSCIE) updates annually each September. Updates are likely to include mandatory Safeguarding training for all Governors and Trustees.

Request: Are trustees agreeable to being added to 'Smartlog' for the purposes of Safeguarding training?

Smartlog is a portal used BEST-wide for delivering compliance training and policies. The system creates an audit trail of activities undertaken by each colleague and certificates are awarded for completed training.

Decision: Trustees unanimously agreed to completely annual safeguarding training via Smartlog.

Trustees confirmed the current schedule of meetings works well i.e. Tuesdays.

Action: YH to produce a 2022/23 meeting schedule.

Next Meeting: 21 June 2022

J. Bond Approved and electronically signed 21 June 2022