

## BEST Trustees' Meeting

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020, 10:00-12:00

Virtual meeting via Google Meet



### Attendees

Chair: Ilona Bond (IB), Vice Chair: Paul Walker (PW), CEO: Alan Lee (AL), David Shelvey (DS), Claire Mycock (CM), David Morgan (DM), Alison Wilshaw (AW), Craig Smith (CS) and Nafia Baust (NB)

**Apologies:** Tony Sanderson (TS)

**Minute taker/Clerk:** Yvonne Humphries

**Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest:** DS Declared that he is the Chair of the Overview and Children services scrutiny committee for Central Bedfordshire Council.

### **Election of a new Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees; as per article 82 of the articles of association**

Three nominations received via the Clerk for IB to remain as Chair and PW to remain as Vice Chair.

**Decision:** The trustees voted unanimously to keep IB as the Chair of Trustees; IB accepted the position.

**Decision:** The trustees voted unanimously to keep PW as the Vice Chair of Trustees; PW accepted the position.

*CS, NB & AW join the meeting.*

**Approval of Trustee minutes:** Extra-ordinary Trustees' Minutes 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 approved and signed.

**Monthly cash flow and management accounts:** The cash flow and management accounts for BEST are received on a monthly basis by IB, PW, DS, DM and AL on behalf of the Board of Trustees, all of whom confirmed that they are happy with the accounts and are satisfied that the Trust is financially sound.

### **Declarations of Pecuniary Interest**

YH confirmed that the Trustees have all completed their 2020/21 declarations of interest via GovernorHub.

### **BEST Subsidiaries**

DS shared the legal advice sought. The parent board (BEST) can oversee all three subsidiaries. However, as per the charity commissioner, independence is required when dealing with both charities and non-charities. This is largely owing to situations where a Board may be unable to make a unanimous or majority decision – a 'Conflict Policy' in which the Trustees are each assigned to one of the subsidiaries would address this. The board are in the process of recruiting an additional two Trustees (using Academy Ambassadors); this will ensure the board is large enough to assign amongst the three subsidiaries. The current Board for the subsidiaries would become a committee of BEST and undertake a role similar to that of an academy local governing body.

**Action:** DS to liaise with the legal team regarding formalities/paperwork.

**Action:** Once the above-mentioned paperwork is in place, IB and PW will schedule a meeting with the B.E.S.T Board of Trustees.

AL confirmed the Nursery Managing Director (MD) has been made aware of the impending changes and supports the decision. **Action:** DS as Chair of Trustees for the nurseries will contact the MD for a discussion.

DS advised that there is no formal governance documents for LTD companies.

**Action:** AL to align governance across the trust – the subsidiaries are to be integrated into the current BEST Governance Handbook.

### **Board Self-Audit (Board Discussion)**

Trustees each completed a board self-audit and discussed their findings. AL would like to work on converting any areas identified as '3' to '4'. **Decision:** The BEST profile needs to be raised amongst LGBs and through induction.

**Action:** CS to discuss the BEST induction for Campton with IB and PW.

### **Trustee Update**

IB advised that she has been in contact with Academy Ambassadors (AA) for support in recruiting two additional Trustees – an odd number of Trustees is preferable. IB started the process in the summer term; two applications from candidates with a financial background received to date. IB has stipulated a preference for someone from an estates/construction and/or legal background. A third applicant contacted BEST directly during the summer term – interview suspended owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Action:** IB to contact the independent candidate to advise that interviews will take place in October.

### **September Reopening/Risk Assessments**

During the school's summer closure, CS as COO together with the BEST Operations Support Officer completed the schools second risk assessment (The first risk assessment took place prior to partial re-opening during the summer term). CS confirmed that all of the assessments were positive and that re-opening process was successful, albeit with some live learning and managing of Comms in relation to parental/carer concerns.

IB commended how well all the executive team have worked together during these challenging times.

IB has visited the new Pix Brook site to welcome the new staff. The school opened on time and looks fantastic.

### **BEST Teachers' Pay Award**

Trustees reviewed a paper presented by AL, in the context of the STRB report (July 2020) and HR recommendations. NB confirmed that the proposed pay awards of 2.75% (and the larger percentage increase for teachers at the bottom of the pay scale) are accounted for within the trust and school budgets.

**Decision:** Not appropriate to move away from the national pay scales at this moment in time.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously approved the proposed pay award of 2.75% (or more where appropriate). Awards to be paid in November following parliamentary approval in October and backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

### **BEST Support Staff Pay Award**

NB confirmed that the proposed 2.75% support staff pay award has been included within the trust and school budgets.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously approved a 2.75% pay award for support staff. Payable in October and back dated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

### **Student Outcomes**

AW provided the trustees with a report prior to the meeting 'Summer 2020 Analysis'.

No national data is available for comparison. An increase in results is seen across both SWA and ETA; the improvements seen at ETA were significant and impressive. Furthermore, ETA continue to obtain good results amongst their disadvantaged and SEND children. Disadvantage/SEND results across both SWA and Central Bedfordshire are lower than national comparisons over time.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously agreed that SWA need to see an improvement in their disadvantaged and SEND attainment and progress data going forward. IB, AL and AW are already in discussion with the Principal regarding this and strategies are being implemented.

AL advised that ETA are going from strength to strength. However, due to the close proximity of the newly opened PBA, ETA are under pressure owing to a reduction in pupil places - this is not sustainable for the long-term.

### **BEST Strategic Objectives and Action Plans**

Trustees reviewed and discussed the 2019-20 and 2020-21 BEST Strategic Objectives and Action Plans.

The document is put together by the Central Executive Team, collated by AL and shared throughout the year with the Principals and wider school improvement team. It is a live document owned by all, tasked to achieve the objectives.

BEST rebranded four years ago with a clear Vision, Mission and Operating Principles. During which BEST has expanded from six to ten schools (includes a free school); BEST has financial stability and working towards reserves of 5%; the nursery provision across the trust is growing and all schools are Ofsted rated 'Good' or above. ETA did expand too quickly and received an 'RI' rating from Ofsted in November 2017 - the school turned this around quickly and were rated 'Good' by Ofsted at their last inspection with elements of outstanding. SCA joined BEST with a 'financial notice of correction' – this is now corrected.

During 2019-20, BEST achieved two successful Ofsted Inspections. However, COVID-19 cut the year short and Crisis Management activated. Trustees' commended the Executive Team for the work undertaken across the whole trust during these challenging times.

The 2020-21 plans looks to offer more standardisation and alignment across BEST, whilst delivering two tier. Reserves need to move towards 5% and no school or nursery should fall below an Ofsted rating of 'Good'. The Executive Team are accountable for delivering the plan – CS, the growth strategy; AW, educational standards; NB, financial sustainability - overseen by AL as CEO.

**Sixth form provision:** SWA Sixth form has a maximum 225 student places available in year 12. This accommodates just over half the of their Y11. Currently, ETA has no post-16 provision. Consequently, around 350 pupils each year are not offered provision post-16 by BEST.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously agreed to support the sixth form growth strategy declaring it a “moral Imperative” to be able to offer a 16+ educational offering to all BEST students.

**Action:** Central Executive Team to undertake research in regards to course offerings and a proposed base.

### **BEST Growth Strategy**

#### **Pix Brook**

The school was able to open at the start of the academic year owing to the successful completion of the phase one building works. Phases two and three are scheduled to be completed during and shortly after October half term.

**Action:** An official opening of the school will be organised in due course.

ETA will use the temporary PBA site as a new reception area and year 5 block for their school.

#### **Campton**

Transfer of Campton Lower School to BEST has been delayed as CBC are unable to locate the deeds – CS is working with a legal team and CBC to resolve matters and is pushing to try and have the transfer completed by 1/11/2020.

#### **2 Tier Update**

CBC have commissioned Concertus to undertake the feasibility studies in relation to the Schools for the Future programme. Most of the feasibility studies across BEST have now taken place. However, two of the studies need to be re-scheduled as the brief provided to Concertus by CBC in relation to ETA and SWA did not match BEST's plans. The LVA application to become a Primary school will go to the Head Teachers' Board next month.

**Decision:** Trustees and Executive happy to support new feasibility studies for a PAN of 210 at ETA and SWA. May need to consider a PAN of 240 at ETA to allow scope for sixth form provision.

### **Review and approval of Policies**

**Decision:** Trustees' unanimously approved the Admission Policy 2022-23 for consultation during the autumn term.

**Decision:** Trustees' unanimously approved the Safeguarding Policy for distribution and use across BEST with immediate effect. (Each school to provide contact details for LADO and their LGB Safeguarding Lead.)

### **Matters arising/compliance**

**GDPR:** 0 Reportable Incidents. One referral to ICO but the case was closed - no GDPR breach.

**Safeguarding** 0 Reportable Incidents.

**Health & Safety:** H&S audits to take place in November – CS will present the full report to trustees next meeting.

### **COO Update**

A newly appointed Communications Manager will join BEST on 2/11/2020.

### **AOB**

Trustees discussed staff wellbeing, a review of which has been included within the BEST Action Plan. Mindful of the continuous efforts of school staff (without the respite of the usual school closures) and the need to read, digest and then act accordingly to the 219 pieces of government guidance and advice received since the COVID-19 outbreak - AL and IB will be discussing well-being with Principals at their appraisal - which are scheduled to take place this week.

**Next meeting:** Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 @ 9:30am

*J. Bowd* Minutes approved and electronically signed 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020