

BEST Trustees' Meeting
27 January 2026, 10:30– 11:45am
BEST House, Conference Room



Attendees: Ilona Bond (IB), Alan Lee (AL), Tony Sanderson (TS), Maggie Farrar (MF), Akhtar Ahamed (AA), Alison Wilshaw (AW), Kim Rowe (KR) and Mark Liddiard (ML)

Apologies: Nafia Baust (NB) and David Morgan (DM)

Chair: Ilona Bond

Governance Professional: Yvonne Humphries

Procedural

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: None

Previous Minutes (Trustees 9/12/2025 and AGM 9/12/2025): Previous minutes reviewed and unanimously approved for signature.

Matters Arising

Pre-read: Termly Health and Safety Report distributed prior to the meeting – see report for more detail

Safeguarding: Safeguarding Audits will take place during the Spring term. There is one piece of new legislation from 1 April 2026 regarding the use of 'reasonable force'. BEST Director of SEND & Safeguarding is liaising with SENCOs and DSLs to ascertain the significant changes to policy/practice with a view to producing a paper for a trust-wide update.

GDPR: No reportable incidents since the last trustees meeting. Guidance and training continue to be offered. AI guidance is building in traction – this is something Partnership Education are looking into at the moment, together with an approved AI tab on the school website landing pages.

Sustainability: Schools are working with 'Let's go Zero'. RBA have a juice bottle recycle machine the children enjoy.

Health & Safety: ML was happy to take any questions on the H&S Report shared prior to the meeting.

NB though not present, raised queries/approvals via Governance Professional, YH.

NB Question: What criteria makes the accidents at LSA and PBA not RIDDOR Reportable?

Response: NB was provided with a full written response. However, for the purposes of these minutes, the summary is as follows: Reportable if the injury arose out of, or in connection with a 'Work Activity' in which the pupil went directly to hospital for treatment due to one or more of the following: Lack of supervision; Misuse of Equipment and/or Defect in the equipment.

MF Question: Are CNS H&S Compliance checks as a result of size/volume or is it something cultural?

Response: ML advised it's likely a combination of the two; new ways of working and some systems not in place.

However, ML is confident improvements will be seen with the new Principal (starting April 2026) and future audits should align to other BEST schools.

Subsidiaries' Executive Committee Update

Pre-read: Subsidiaries' Executive Committee meeting minutes (13/1/26) distributed prior to the meeting – see minutes for more detail

Pre-read: Director of Education's Nursery Report distributed prior to the meeting – see report for more detail.

AL as Chair of the Committee provided trustees with an overview. The Nurseries show a surplus of £152,570. The nursery provision across all three sites are strong, with good outcomes and leadership. From April 2026 there will be an increase in the minimum wage from £12.21 to £12.71 per hour and the nurseries pay scales have been revised accordingly – this will affect the bottom line.

BEST House continues to make a surplus. However, new boilers are required; three quotes have been received and costs will be in the region of £44,000. There are insufficient surplus monies to cover the cost – this will need to come from sinking funds. BEST House is currently subject to getting too warm/tripping or being too cold and taking several hours to heat up. After many years of 'nursing' the boilers, this needs to be resolved for the nursery pupils who use the building.

NB Suggestion: NHS hire rooms for training—is it worth making the local GP surgery aware of the conference facilities. ML advised a review and subsequent plan for BEST House usage is currently being conducted. ML advised most rentals are regular long standing bookings that require minimal supervisor i.e. they have a key etc. Types of bookings matter, as one-two hour adhoc bookings would require more staff time/supervision.

Leadership

Request: The Executive Principal across GHA and LVA has asked to reduce their working week from five to three days. There are two effective Vice Principals in place who could step-up and this would support potential succession planning/CPD.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the request for one year and subject to termly reviews.

Request: The recently appointed (helped when CMA Principal stood down) Executive Principal across RBA and CMA, does not wish to continue with this role after this academic year – they wish to focus their full time into RBA. CMA's Head of School has expressed an interest in becoming CMA's Principal for three days per week and remain Assistant Head at RBA two days per week. They have a cheery disposition and are well respected, having worked hard to improve staff morale and connect/provide a presence with the parent/carer and local community.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the Executive Principal stepping down from CMA and the Head of School becoming Principal at CMA three days per week at the end of this academic year.

Policies

Pre-read: Admission Headlines (September 2026) distributed prior to the meeting – see document for detail.

Pre-read: The following policies were distributed prior to the meeting for review and consideration:

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the Grievance Policy subject to Union Consultation.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the Teacher's Appraisal Policy subject to Union Consultation.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the Support Staff's Appraisal Policy subject to Union Consultation.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the Equality Policy for immediate use. Minimal change = LGB to LCB.

Admission Arrangements September 2027:

Background: LVA have a PAN of 30. However, in recent years, to meet the needs of the local community, BEST have approved a temporary PAN of 45; this is not been approved on a permanent basis owing to site/capacity restrictions. CBC have verbally offered BEST up to £500,000 of section 106 monies and the ability to self-manage the LVA build; once the build has been delivered BEST will formally raise the PAN to 45.

Request: CBC have asked BEST Trustees to approve the temporary PAN of 45 for a further two years (Sept 26 & 27).

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the request subject to written confirmation of their offering.

Background: A Making a Significant Change application has been submitted to the DfE to convert CNS into an all-through school from 1 September 2026. Subject to the approval of this application BEST intend to remove the Year 7 point of entry, allowing internal pupils to flow through the school, without the need for further application. Whilst allowing a minimum of 30 additional pupils in year 7 totalling a PAN of 150. This has been consulted upon during the statutory admissions consultation window.

Request: If approved by DfE by the end February 2026, trustees to determine the abovementioned arrangements. However, if approval from the DfE is not received by the determination deadline, trustees to adopt the current arrangements for one further year (subject to a variation being submitted).

Decision: Trustees (and NB via email prior to the meeting) unanimously approved both scenarios.

AOB

AL advised trustees that BEST's overall pupil numbers for September 2026 are down on previous years, this is largely attributed to SWA and the split 2/3Tier cluster. However, excluding SWA, first choice preferences are up across BEST. AL feels CNS pupil applications will increase in future years under the new Principal's leadership.

SWA are not competing on an even playing field (only Upper school in the cluster) – a SWA/RBA paper/proposal will be presented to Trustees very soon i.e. once the CBC update promised for February 2026 has been shared.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: BEST Senior Leaders Appraisal – AW, KR, ML and YH left the meeting for this agenda item.

Pre-read: BEST Senior Leaders Appraisal Summary Document shared with trustees prior to the meeting.

J. Bond

Next meeting: 10:30am on 24 March 2026 at BEST House.

Minutes approved and electronically signed 24/3/26