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Bedfordshire Schools Trust Limited, BEST House,
Shefford Road, Clifton, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5QS



Thursday, 4 November, 2021

An open letter on the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Schools for the Future programme

Dear CBC Executive member,

Cc: Marcel Coiffait, CBC Chief Executive; Sarah Ferguson, CBC Deputy Director of Children's Services

We are writing to you to express our concern over the lack of progress of CBC's Schools for the Future programme in the Shefford and Stotfold cluster.

As you know, on 4 August, 2020, the CBC Executive gave its public commitment to five pledges upon which the Bedfordshire Schools Trust's (BEST's) support for the cluster plans was conditional.

These pledges were:

- Five-form primary provision as part of the new 0-18 all-through school that would bring together Robert Bloomfield and Samuel Whitbread Academies.
- Provision for pupils from Robert Bloomfield Academy's traditional feeder schools to gain entry to the secondary part of the all-through school.
- Campton Academy becoming a new build two form entry primary school.
- Additional sixth form provision on the Samuel Whitbread and Etonbury/Pix Brook sites.
- Developing a joint solution to all PFI-related issues on the Samuel Whitbread site.

These pledges were the result of years of negotiation and discussion between BEST and CBC officers and members, and already represent significant compromises made on our part. As we represent around 65% of the students in the entire cluster and having consulted our parents and carers last summer, we also have the mandate of the communities we serve to see these pledges carried out.

Despite working with CBC trying to develop the cluster plans, progress since last summer has been slow. Then, out of the blue, an email sent by the Chief Executive of CBC on 5 August, 2021, informed headteachers that plans for the second phase of the cluster were being paused and "recalibrated against growth".

Dr Alan Lee
CEO & National Leader of Education.



BEST Schools: BEST Nurseries, Campton Academy, Etonbury Academy, Gothic Mede Academy, Gravenhurst Academy, Langford Academy, Lawnside Academy, Pix Brook Academy, Robert Bloomfield Academy, Samuel Whitbread Academy and St Christophers Academy.

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With school leaders under the impression that an update would be provided by the October half-term, the only communication was a further email from the Chief Executive on 11 October, 2021. This gave no more detail other than stating “a significant amount of work” was still required on the plans, and indicating CBC might be in a position to give more details by the end of the calendar year. This delay is in sharp contrast to the extraordinary speed and generosity granted to other academies in our cluster already converted under two-tier.

We, the Board of Trustees of BEST, wish to raise public awareness and share our concerns of these unforeseen delays. As a matter of urgency, we call upon CBC to:

1. Agree and finalise plans for Shefford and Stotfold, for the good of **all** students in the cluster.
2. Reconfirm your commitment to the five pledges you originally agreed in August 2020.
3. Commit to the two-tier transition taking place in September 2023 – or an alternative timeline agreed with the whole cluster.

We request CBC responds to this letter by Friday, 12 November, 2021, after which we will review BEST’s position and decide on our next steps.

As an open letter, we are also sharing this with our school communities in order to raise awareness.

Yours sincerely,

Ilona Bond

Paul Walker

Dr Alan Lee

Anthony Sanderson

Claire Mycock

David Morgan

Jerry Tonge

Bedfordshire Schools Trust Board of Trustees

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