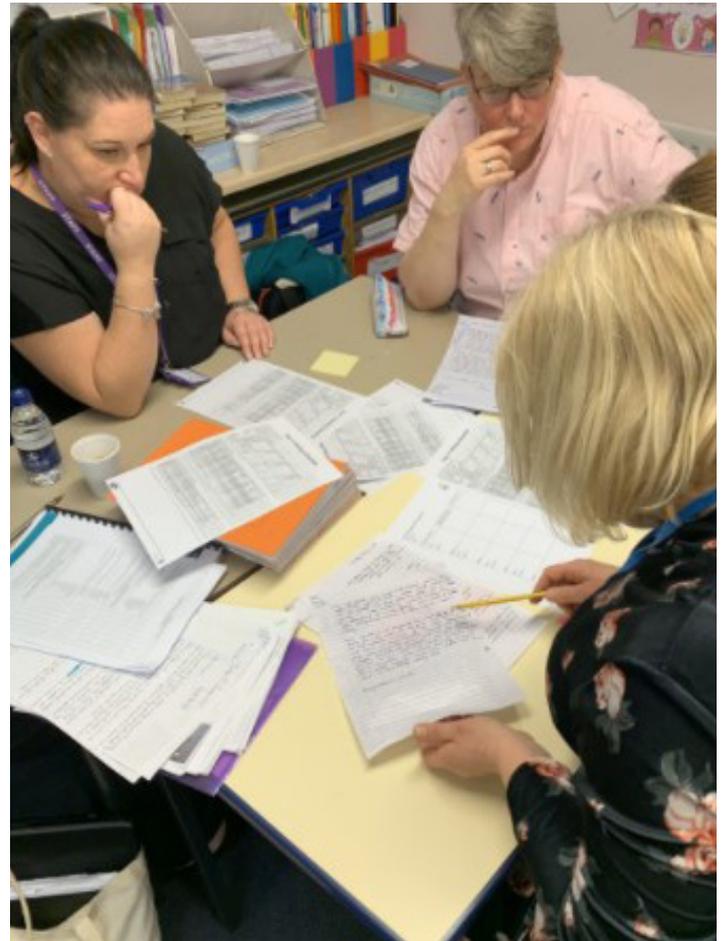


A **BEST** Success Story

#4 – Education Services and School Improvement team



Improving educational standards that enable young people to go on and succeed in life has always been a core priority for the Bedfordshire Schools Trust.

That ambition is borne out by our data. All BEST schools are rated Good or better by Ofsted, and performance is up in all key stages in the first five years the trust has been in existence.

With this track record firmly established, the 2021/22 academic year saw the start of a new chapter for the team at the heart of driving up these standards.

Our BEST Education Services and School Improvement team (BESSI) took on a new name, as part of national changes which saw the introduction of regional teaching school hubs around the country.

What did not change, though, was the commitment to support BEST's academies and Principals to keep on improving standards across the board.

The team leads on school improvement, professional development and quality assurance strategies across BEST, and helps schools beyond our trust as well – with nearly 150 schools in the wider geographical area supported.

This is the story of BEST's Education Services and School Improvement team.

'BESSI' AT A GLANCE

- A core team of seven, led by BEST Director of Education Alison Wilshaw
- A further 40+ Lead Teachers and SLEs drawn from across the trust
- Based at Pix Brook Academy

‘ **BESSI builds on and supports the exceptional provision in our schools.** Working together, the provision across our trust has realised significant year-on-year improvement

– Dr Alan Lee, BEST CEO

Offering help and expertise to all

The continued growth of BEST has been a key factor for the Education Services and School Improvement team to offer a high level of expertise.

The core team is led by Director of Education Alison Wilshaw, supported by Directors of English, Maths and Training and Development.

They are boosted by a trust-wide group of Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) and – new this year – Lead Teachers across a range of curriculum areas.

And the trust's expansion from six to 10 schools has enabled the team to keep driving standards up.

Ms Wilshaw said: "BEST is an exciting trust as its growth trajectory has been successfully maintained.

"This has afforded many opportunities for our staff to join the SI team on different levels of engagement, and also for the core staff to offer help, expertise and leadership capacity to all our academies – whether new to the trust or well established."

Firstly, BESSI has focused on ensuring that leadership is the best it can be by becoming a local delivery hub for NPQs.

Supporting our Principals is a priority – all have completed the NPQH, and some are now undertaking the NPQEL.

The full range of NPQML courses and the NPQSL are on offer to staff as part of BESSI's Leadership Ladder – with all programmes run out of the school improvement training rooms, based at Pix Brook Academy. BESSI also supports further study.

BESSI's SI and Central teams also support all of the trust's academies at all levels.

We hold a Chairs' Forum for our LGBs each term, have an annual governance conference with keynote speakers such as Michael Pain [founder, Forum Strategy] and Leora Cruddas [CEO, Confederation of School Trusts], and are proud to have been the first trust to gain the Governor Mark.

Ms Wilshaw added: "The work we all do is varied and wide, reaching across Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Northants and Milton Keynes, and our expertise is often called upon to help guide other schools beyond the trust."

All part of the service – the BESSI team's 'varied and wide' role



CPD courses

BESSI runs various CPD activities, for example working with Enigma Maths Hub to provide courses centrally funded by NCETM (National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics) and free to participating schools.

In particular, the subject knowledge enhancement course for primary has helped teachers and teaching assistants from BEST and non-BEST schools.



School visits

BESSI funds external visitors in our schools, which helps to engage pupils and improve their understanding of a subject.

In the past year, a theatre company performed *Romeo and Juliet* to Year 11 students at Etonbury Academy, while Year 5 pupils at Pix Brook, Langford and Campton were all treated to a visit from children's author Lou Treleven, who read sections of her books and gave top tips on how to become a writer.



Oxbridge links

BESSI has established links with the University of Oxford, through Wadham College's Access to Excellence project.

The programme encourages young people from all types of socio-economic backgrounds to be aspirational in their plans for higher education.

Students at Robert Bloomfield, Etonbury and Samuel Whitbread Academies (plust two non-BEST schools) benefit from the project.

Staff shadowing

BESSI runs a shadowing scheme which allows all BEST teaching and support staff the chance to shadow a colleague from across the trust to find out more about career opportunities.

The team invests time in helping staff to trial new roles, or experience the next level up from theirs, so that career choices are well informed.



Revision sessions

Helping students prepare for exams is an important part of the academic year.

Director of English Amy Morris ran English Language revision sessions for Year 11 students at Samuel Whitbread Academy, while Etonbury Academy pupils attended 'Super Learning Days' at BEST House to give them additional support ahead of their GCSEs.



SLE training

BESSI is one of the few nationally-recognised SLE Training Centres – approved by the Teaching Schools Council – with prospective SLEs from as far away as London, Birmingham and Norfolk attending courses.

Two-tier changes

Working to get ahead of the game, BESSI has been preparing for the switch to a two-tier curriculum that is planned to take place across much of Central Bedfordshire over the coming years.

Year 5 and 6 curriculums are being established, ready for our lower schools to convert to primaries.

BESSI organised a host of development sessions, inviting in national expert curriculum leads and capitalising on in-house knowledge, too.



‘ Collaboration between our schools is a huge benefit... plans and ideas are shared

– Alan Stupple,
BEST Director of Maths

Being able to collaborate with colleagues across BEST is one of the major benefits of having a central school improvement team – according to one teacher who has been on both sides.

Alan Stupple, *pictured*, became Director of Maths in September 2021, having first joined BEST as a maths teacher at Samuel Whitbread Academy in 2017.

He said: "Collaboration between our schools is a huge benefit. Even if the schools themselves can not meet, ideas are shared.

"There are opportunities to talk through plans and hear ideas. Collaboration within department reviews from maths leads across the trust has started and I am wanting to develop these further this year.

"Courses set up through the trust and organisations like NCETM are starting to be taken full advantage of – the benefits of BESSI include not only finding and advising on these, but also covering the time needed to participate, where possible."

Each term, Principals are supported with a refreshed school improvement offer tailored to their individual academies. Support from the SI core team, Lead Teachers or SLEs can be requested depending on the need at the time, or, the team facilitates local and national links for the schools.

BEST CEO Dr Alan Lee said: "Delivering outcomes in the top 20% nationally for all is a core principle for BEST, and great strides have been made towards this in recent years.

"BESSI builds on and supports the exceptional provision in our schools. Working together, the provision across BEST has realised significant year-on-year improvement."

He added: "Members of the BESSI team have a proven track record of delivering Outstanding outcomes. They lead from the front and are highly respected."

As well as income from training courses and activities, funding for BESSI's work comes from a variety of external sources, such as...

£79k

Successful TCAF (Trust Capacity Fund) bid in 2020/21 academic year

FREE

Places on NPQSL (National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership) for our academies after successful bid

£76k

Money spent over last two years following application to MDIF (MAT Development and Improvement Fund)

Matched funding for phonics resources from the Knowledge Schools Trust Literacy Hub

WHY THIS IS A SUCCESS STORY...

- Team is well placed to support outstanding educational experiences for pupils across BEST
- Opportunities created for staff across different phases/settings within the trust to develop
- BESSI can respond to specific needs at school, department or individual level
- Adds capacity and brings in new ideas from outside the trust due to extended DfE SI work across region

