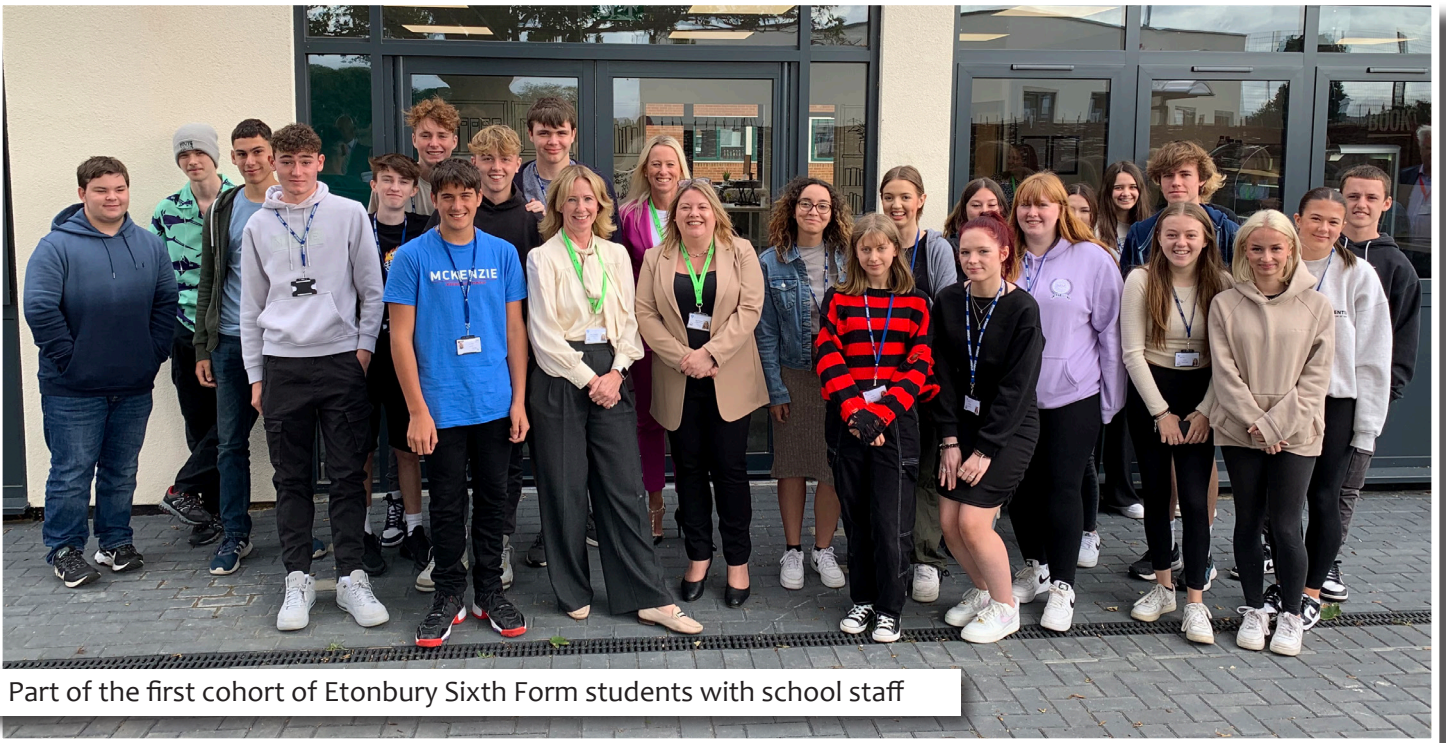


# A **BEST** Success Story

## #7 – Etonbury Academy's Sixth Form: The First Year



Part of the first cohort of Etonbury Sixth Form students with school staff

September 2023 saw the start of a historic new chapter in the life of Etonbury Academy and the Bedfordshire Schools Trust.

A new Sixth Form opened at the school, honouring a commitment we made to offer post-16 provision to the communities of Arlesey and Stotfold.

Redeveloping the old junior block came at a cost of

over one million pounds, which was jointly paid for by the school and BEST, with no external funding.

The building project had been a true joint enterprise, with key partners – and the school's own students – ensuring the Sixth Form opened as planned.

But this was only the start of the success story, as students have flourished throughout their first year as sixth formers in their fantastic new surroundings.

This first cohort continues to aim high, becoming an essential part of the whole school community.

The school is continuing to look ahead, too, with an enhanced experience and offering for the next cohort of students.

This is the story of Etonbury Academy's Sixth Form: The First Year.



### ETA SIXTH FORM AT A GLANCE

- Over 20 A Level/vocational subjects
- Comprehensive range of enrichment activities to support students' future plans
- Exclusive facilities include classrooms, study area and a common room with cafe

I am thrilled Etonbury Academy and BEST have made this happen. We are already seeing the Sixth Form go from strength to strength

– Dr Alan Lee, BEST CEO

Students Joseph Cobain and Lilly Williams



Chloe Dowden and Linda Schumann



## Big part of community

While the Sixth Form students have their own tailor-made dedicated facilities on site, they are still very much part of the whole school community.

Alongside their own studies, students have been working with younger pupils on a host of enrichment activities, such as organising fundraising events, running peer mentoring and subject champion sessions.

The school actively encourages the sixth formers to engage in responsible roles to help build a range of transferable skills which will aid their future careers. Being great role models for younger pupils increases aspiration across the school.

Head of Juniors Ben Sale said: "They have really got themselves involved in the wider community, especially our primary children. They've helped in lots of ways, including listening to children read and doing handwriting practice.

"Their involvement in extra support and guidance is huge. It's all the extra things – they've been able to provide us with an extension of our provision, in a way, and embrace young leadership roles."

Lilly Williams, who is studying vocational qualifications in Criminology, Travel and Tourism and Health and Social Care, said she really liked the community involvement.

She said: "The Sixth Form is very different to the rest of the school but there's still a feeling of community. I've enjoyed getting involved in the things we've helped organise.

"We had a Valentine's disco for the juniors, and also raised money for next year's America trip with Wednesday Winter Warmers, where we sold hot chocolate out of one of the Sixth Form windows."

Joseph Cobain, who is studying A Level History, Geography and Sociology, said the Etonbury Sixth Form experience in and out of the classroom was really helping students to prepare for their next steps.

He said: "It's been a good transition from GCSE level and the quality of teaching has remained high.

"I want to go to university and there's been lots of ways the school has encouraged all of us to look at uni options. We're getting really good support."

## Students thrive in Sixth Form environment

The opening of Etonbury's Sixth Form saw vision turn into reality for the school and BEST.

But the true success story has been how the first cohort of students have flourished this year.

Head of Sixth Form Chloe Dowden said: "'Develop the learner, develop the person' is our school vision, and it's definitely the mantra I've taken for the Sixth Form. It epitomises everything we do.

"At the start of the project our Year 11 students really bought into it and helped shaped everything. It's been rewarding to see them adapt to their new

environment and to support them as they mature and develop into young adults.

"We're delighted, too, with how next year's numbers are looking, with applications up around 60%."

Pastoral Support Administrator Linda Schumann said they were now looking ahead to welcoming the next cohort of students and building on the provision on offer.

She said: "We are going to be enhancing the Sixth Form experience and the enrichment opportunities available, including developing our subject champions so we have a bigger pool of students helping the younger year groups.

"In particular, we will be encouraging our Year 13s

to support our Year 12s with their EPQs and getting to grips with independent learning.

"Our focus on embedding students into independent learning helps them show passion for their subjects and deepen their understanding, which can lead to higher grades.

"It also helps students prepare for university, an apprenticeship or job applications."

She added: "By the time our students leave here they'll have exam results, but it will be much more than that.

"They'll have developed into more rounded people, with the soft skills, resilience and confidence that will serve them well in their futures."

**The student voice was a major influence in the development of the Sixth Form block.**

**Student focus groups gave useful input through the whole process – even helping to choose the vibrant colour scheme!**

**The facilities available are for the exclusive use of students in Years 12 and 13. They include three classrooms, a quiet study area, The Book & Latte cafe and common room, as well as the garden area pictured on the inside spread.**



# ‘The Etonbury Sixth Form is certainly one of our best achievements

– Elton Metalla, AM Builders



Collaboration is one of BEST's core values – and this was fully embraced by the teamwork required to see the project through to a successful conclusion.

Central support from the trust was crucial throughout, including joint funding for the seven figure development.

BEST Operations Manager Alison Austin was also a key influence in keeping the building project on track so the Etonbury Sixth Form could open as planned at the start of the 2023/24 academic year.

The project required close working relationships with a number of third parties, including property consultancy Barker Associates, contractors AM Builders and our trust ICT provider Partnership Education.

Barker Marketing Manager Noor Shameel said: "We were really pleased to be involved with the remodelling of the existing single storey block to create a new sixth form facility for Etonbury Academy.

"The interaction between Barker, the trust, the school and the main contractor (AM Builders) was always positive and directed towards creating the best facility achievable for the funds available.

"Barker has worked with BEST for a number of years assisting with improvement works across the trust portfolio and has always found the communication and interaction with staff to be positive and always directed towards improving facilities for the pupils."

AM Builders Director Elton Metalla said: "We take great pride in delivering high quality projects and the Etonbury Sixth Form is certainly one of our best achievements.

"The support and collaboration throughout the process were invaluable and we are grateful for the positive working relationship we established with BEST and Barker.

"Together, we were able to achieve outstanding results."



## WHY THIS IS A SUCCESS STORY...

- School and trust honouring commitment to provide post-16 education in local area
- Excellent support and involvement in school community raising student aspirations
- Increase in applications for next cohort showing community backing
- Strong partnership working through project for the benefit of all

