

5 Years of **BEST**

2016-21: A Celebration



BEST

BEDFORDSHIRE
SCHOOLS TRUST

INTRODUCTION



2016-21 OUR JOURNEY



6 schools to 10
+ 2 nurseries to 5

GOOD

All schools/nurseries
rated **Good** or
better by Ofsted



Performance
up in all
key stages

44%

increase
in pupil numbers

3,683 in 2016 ➔ 5,294 in 2021



A **growing** workforce



Strong
financial
health

Improved budgetary position
despite reduced funding

Welcome to 5 Years of BEST.

We are thrilled by how our mission 'to grow the BEST in everyone' has been brought to life through the extraordinary range of opportunities on offer and countless achievements of our students, staff and schools.

As you will see, excellence has been delivered, BEST has expanded and secure financial foundations for success have been created.

We are incredibly proud to have nurtured a welcoming learning community in which all are supported, inspired and thrive.

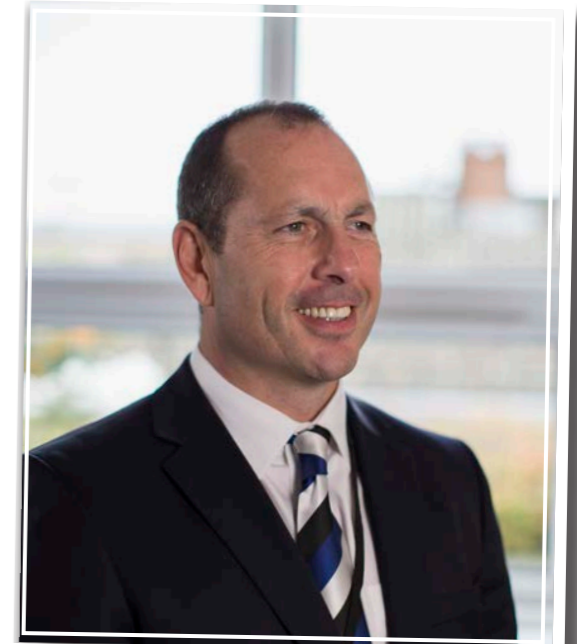
The future is exciting. A primary-secondary model of education is being established, more schools are looking to join us and performance improves, year-on-year.

We are extremely grateful to all members of the BEST community for their wonderful support. With this, BEST will continue to flourish and excel.

Kind wishes.

Dr Alan Lee
Chief Executive Officer and
National Leader of Education

Ilona Bond
Chair of Trustees



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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- New Chief Executive Officer Dr Alan Lee is appointed and, on 26 August 2016, BEST officially forms, taking over from BEMAT.
- Etonbury Academy becomes an extended secondary school and welcomes its first Year 9 cohort, growing to an overall future capacity of 1,260.
- Langford Village Academy and Gothic Mede Academy both achieve Good reports from Ofsted.
- BEST achieves 34 out of 40 of its 50th percentile targets.
- The BEST Teaching School delivers 200+ courses/events to nearly 16,000 users in its first year.
- Tom Clarke and Nick Martin become Principals of Gothic Mede and Samuel Whitbread Academies respectively at Easter.

2016/17 REVIEW



Performance focus

Results across all BEST academies dramatically improve in all key stages.

KS1: Reading, Writing and Maths are exceptionally strong, with over half the set targets in the top 20% nationally.

KS2: Robert Bloomfield (74%) and Etonbury (69%) achieve well above the national combined figure of 61%.

KS4/KS5: Samuel Whitbread achieves its highest ever results. At GCSE, 72% receive grades 9-4 in English and Maths – a 19% increase over the previous two years.

Olympic champion Victoria Pendleton returns to Etonbury Academy, her former school, to open a £2.5m sports complex named in her honour.

Victoria, who won cycling gold at Beijing in 2008 and at London in 2012, is also made the school's honorary patron.

She says: "The facilities here are truly first class and will enable students across all ages and of all abilities to play sport every single day, as part of an active lifestyle. Coming back here to Etonbury really has left me excited to see our next generation of sport stars."

The £2.5m multi-sport hub – which is also open to the community to use – is part of the first phase of redevelopment work at the school.

2017/18 REVIEW



Two new Principals are appointed to lead BEST schools.

Debbie Randall, *pictured*, takes over the joint headship of Gravenhurst and Langford Village Academies in September 2017.

Cheryl Johnson becomes Principal of Lawnside Lower School in Biggleswade in January 2018 ahead of its transition to BEST.

Robert Bloomfield Academy is one of the first schools in the country to receive the School Games Platinum Award, for consistently high standards in school sport provision. Gothic Mede Academy also gains the mark later in the year.



St Christopher's Academy in Dunstable joins BEST.

The primary school, under the headship of Pam Jones, becomes our seventh academy at the start of the academic year.

Samuel Whitbread Academy and BEST Nursery (Arlesey) both receive Good Ofsted reports:



"The principal, governors and the trust all share the same vision and high aspirations for the school. They have led by example to secure better teaching, raise achievement and generate further capacity to improve."

– Samuel Whitbread Academy Ofsted Report, 31 October-1 November 2017

"Managers have a clear overview of children's achievements. Strategies to support children who need extra help are effectively implemented."

– BEST Nursery (Arlesey) Ofsted Report, 27 June 2018

- BEST becomes a regional NLG governance hub in September, followed by the first BEST annual governors conference in October.
- Etonbury Academy's new build is completed.
- BEST achieves 46 out of 49 50th percentile targets.
- The trust's first Chief Operating Officer/Deputy CEO, Craig Smith, is appointed to oversee Central Services.



Samuel Whitbread Academy is crowned National Equestrian Schools Association champions.

Performance focus

The attainment of BEST pupils is significantly above national averages at all key stages.

KS1: Well over half of the set targets achieved in Reading, Writing and Maths are in the top 20% nationally.

KS2: All BEST schools (Etonbury, Robert Bloomfield and St Christopher's) are well above national averages in all areas.

KS4/KS5: Samuel Whitbread achieves another excellent set of results. At A Level, 76% of grades are A*-C.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- Bedfordshire East Schools Trust fully integrates into BEST.
- BEST appoints Alison Wilshaw as Director of Education.
- Lawnside Academy officially joins BEST on 1 January 2019.
- Sam Farmer and Ian Evason become Principals of Robert Bloomfield and Etonbury Academies respectively.
- BEST becomes the first trust to be awarded the prestigious Governor Mark.
- BEST sets up the Beds/Bucks School Business Practitioners Network with a DfE grant.
- Over 50% of central funds are allocated for improvement work for the first time.
- The BEST Teaching School is redesignated and gains Appropriate Body status.
- BEST achieves all of its 50th percentile targets.

2018/19 REVIEW



Performance focus

Results across all key stages are strong, with the attainment of BEST pupils mostly above national averages.

Early Years: At Gravenhurst, the good level of development score is 100%.

KS2: 82% of pupils at St Christophers meet the expected level in all subjects combined, significantly above the national average of 65%.

KS4: 43% of Etonbury's first cohort of GCSE students achieve grades 9-5 in English and Maths – equalling the national average benchmark.

Samuel Whitbread Academy makes history as it becomes the first school ever to achieve a national rugby double.

The school triumphs in not one but two National Schools Vase finals, at U15 and U18 level.

On a memorable March day at Twickenham,

the younger boys are first up and see off the challenge of Dartford Grammar School 22-7.

There is double delight later as the U18s beat Dauntsey's School 43-25 in a thrilling clash which swings back and forth.

The incredible achievement is later capped when Samuel Whitbread is named Rugby School of the Year at the National Rugby Awards.

2019/20 REVIEW

Etonbury Academy and St Christophers Academy both receive Good Ofsted reports.

For Etonbury, the judgement is a huge accomplishment, and marks a milestone in the journey from its previous 'Requires Improvement'.

"Leaders of the school and the trust have taken effective action to address the areas of improvement outlined in the previous inspection report," Ofsted inspectors declare.

TOP 100 Performing and Improving School

The transformation also sees Etonbury recognised as one of the country's Top 100 Performing and Improving Schools by independent report Government Initiatives IQ.



★ St Christophers receives a Section 8 visit to endorse its long-standing Good judgement.

The inspection report states: "Pupils achieve well

at St Christophers and are understandably very proud of their school. They develop into confident and ambitious young people who are well prepared for life in secondary school."



BEST schools adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic – staying open throughout for vulnerable and key worker children (including on bank holidays) while others finish the year learning at home.

As the world faces challenges on an unprecedented scale, staff and pupils pull together in numerous ways to help our communities.

Our schools make plastic visors and donate science goggles to frontline NHS staff, package up surplus food from canteens to care homes and also design 100th birthday cards for national hero and Bedfordshire resident Captain Sir Tom Moore.

- BEST gives conditional support to plans by Central Bedfordshire Council to convert schools to the two-tier model of education.
- BEST achieves all of its 50th percentile targets.
- BEST Teaching School organises a Specialist Leader of Education Conference for SLEs across Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire.

Performance focus

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, national curriculum assessments are cancelled. At KS4 and KS5, Centre Assessed Grades are allocated instead. **KS4:** Etonbury's second GCSE cohort records excellent results. The Attainment 8 score rises to 52 (six above national average) and the Progress 8 score is the second best in the local authority and also above the national average, at 0.24. Samuel Whitbread's Attainment 8 also increases, to 50, the third consecutive year this benchmark has risen.

The ninth school in the BEST family – Pix Brook Academy – opens.

Under the leadership of appointed Principal Steve Adams, the free school spends this first academic year in a standalone building at Etonbury Academy.

Staff and pupils are regularly updated on the construction of the school's permanent home in Stotfold – including site visits like this one, *left*.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- **Campton Lower School becomes BEST's 10th academy on 1 November 2020. Sarah Fraher is appointed Interim Principal.**
- An innovative trust-wide governor induction programme runs from November through to February.
- **BEST Nursery (Langford) opens at the start of the summer term.**
- Etonbury Academy is named runner-up in the VotesforSchools Student Voice Awards 2021.
- **BEST is appointed to deliver the new Early Career Framework training and NPQs in the area.**
- Gothic Mede is awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark with Centre of Excellence status.
- **Construction work begins converting Langford Village Academy into a primary as part of first phase of two-tier transition.**

2020/21 REVIEW



Performance focus

The ongoing impact of Covid-19 means national curriculum assessments are cancelled for the second successive year. At KS4 and KS5, students are awarded Teacher Assessed Grades.

KS4: At 9-5 levels both Etonbury and Samuel Whitbread achieve 48% in English and Maths combined – above the 2019 national average.

KS5: Samuel Whitbread sees academic and applied average point scores of 40 and 36 – a rise of two and five points respectively on last year.

Pix Brook Academy's new build opens its doors, with the school's Year 5 and 6 pupils attending from September.

Having opened in September 2019, the free school had spent its first year in a temporary home – a purpose-built, standalone facility in the grounds of nearby Etonbury Academy.

Meanwhile, farming land off Arlesey Road is transformed in just 12 months – with the project completed on time and on budget, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

BEST Chief Executive Officer Dr Alan Lee says: "Many free schools do not open on time, so the sense of meeting a promise given to the community that we would open the school on time is tremendously pleasing."



Mindfulness is an important part of the fabric at BEST.

Our aim is to embed it in all we do as a trust – from our policies and practices to our day-to-day working.

In the last year, over 100 staff – from senior leaders to teachers and support workers – engaged in mindfulness-based courses.

We have pledged to provide mindfulness development training to any member of staff who wishes to take up the offer.

★ *Pictured above are staff from Langford Village and Gravenhurst Academies, who were presented with certificates to mark the completion of their mindfulness courses.*

While we celebrate our fantastic journey so far, our thoughts also turn to what the next five years – and beyond – have in store.

The ambition of all within the BEST community is to further embed and develop the successes of the last five years. An even greater focus on improving our schools and outcomes for learners will be at the core of everything we do.

The proposed new two-tier education system across the area will, we believe, be a significant factor in helping us to achieve this ambition.

As we move towards this primary/secondary conversion – as part of Central Bedfordshire Council's Schools for the Future programme – there will inevitably be challenges.

But these will be overcome.

Our clear target in the coming years will be ensuring we manage the transition to two-tier effectively and in the interests of learners.

Schools for the Future also brings us great opportunities to develop further, including expanding both sixth form and nursery provision.

LOOKING AHEAD

We expect the new sixth form provision at Etonbury Academy to meet a much-needed demand for post-16 education in the area, while the move to a primary model will enable us to align and expand our nursery offering.

Another important goal for BEST is to deliver on our ambition to be a mindful and compassionate community, as we emerge as a national leader in this developing field.

We are also becoming an employer of choice where careers are developed and our staff are supported to achieve their best.

Alongside this, we will continue to progress and strengthen our responsibility as a key partner in the local communities we serve.

BEST House in the grounds of Samuel Whitbread Academy, for example, will become a leadership centre and community asset.

As we grow and develop we will remain rooted in our core values and stay true to our vision to 'grow the BEST in everyone'.

We enter the next five years proud of the distance travelled in our first five years and full of excitement for the journey ahead.

It's been wonderful to see how BEST has grown in its first five years and I look forward to seeing many more successes in the years to come.

– Leora Cruddas, CEO, Confederation of School Trusts

BEST Values

We will:

Always put children first

Our reference point question is 'how will this improve outcomes for children and enable them to go on and succeed in life?'

Collaborate to support and compete to challenge

Our schools work together to add value and compete to continually improve.

Provide community-based provision

Our schools form a coherent learning community at the heart of the Bedfordshire community.

Have the courage to be compassionate

Our community treats all with trust, kindness and honesty.



BEST

BEDFORDSHIRE
SCHOOLS TRUST

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