

BEST

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BEST
BEDFORDSHIRE
SCHOOLS TRUST

Growing the
BEST
in everyone

WELCOME

It is our great pleasure and privilege to warmly welcome you to the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST). This brochure celebrates a selection of the exciting learning opportunities that enable all within our community of schools to enjoy and achieve.

Currently, we comprise three nurseries and seven schools, delivering a first choice education to approximately 4500 children and young people, from nursery age to advanced level study. Due to our many successes and growing popularity, BEST is experiencing unprecedented expansion. In 2017, St Christophers Academy joined us and in 2019 we open a brand-new school for the Arlesey and Stotfold community, the Pix Brook Academy.

As you will see, we are committed to inspiring, supporting and challenging each other to be the best we can be. Our commitment to the profession is evident through the work of the Bedfordshire SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) that delivers exceptional training to the teachers of the future. Our commitment to both those qualified and other schools is through the work of the BEST Teaching School. This offers a wealth of inspirational CPD opportunities and a comprehensive portfolio of transformational school improvement services for all.

The uniqueness of each of our schools is prized. Each have their own ethos, uniform and character. Each have their own Principal. Each share a core belief in the importance of high expectations, hard work and the development of our BEST community. Enjoy.



Dr Alan Lee
CEO and National Leader of Education



Ilona Bond
Chair of Trustees



VISION, VALUES AND BELIEFS

BEST VISION

To grow the BEST in everyone

We believe in the importance of high expectations, hard work and the development of a community of schools where each of us strive to 'be the best that we can be'.

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.

BEST BELIEFS

We will:

Deliver BEST outcomes

Outcomes will be in the top 20% nationally.

Provide BEST opportunities

An extensive range of opportunities beyond the classroom will be provided to develop the whole person.

Nurture talent

Our responsibility is to invest in our people and bring out the BEST in everyone.

Operate a high autonomy, high accountability culture

Professionals will lead our system and take responsibility to continually raise standards.

Lead through service

Leaders and followers will work together with mutual respect and shared responsibility.



STANDARDS AND AUTONOMY

The top 20% nationally is our aim: whatever the measure, whatever the activity. We are ambitious for our students and proud of our staff. We have a 'can-do' attitude, work hard and challenge each other to be the best we can be.

Our Principals have full autonomy to lead their schools. All key educational decisions – curriculum; teaching and learning; assessment – are made by those responsible for delivery. Local governing bodies are empowered to determine the best structure and practice for their unique context. We believe in our people, not burdensome processes. 'How will this benefit our students?' is our starting point.

Pupil progress is accelerated through support from the BEST School Improvement Team; CPD is extensive through full access to the huge range of BEST Teaching School courses; and, provision is enhanced through our central team of experts. National Leaders of Education; National Leaders of Governance; Ofsted Inspectors; curriculum, data and safeguarding experts; finance, HR, construction and IT specialists form our team. Together, we are stronger and together our potential is limitless.



OUR SUCCESSES

We have been investing heavily to improve the facilities, resources and the quality of teaching and learning within all our schools. This has had a dramatic effect on student outcomes and we are continuing to improve in all areas.

Improved outcomes

The 2017 SATs results for the Robert Bloomfield and Etonbury Academies were significantly above the national average and Etonbury's results were the best in the school's history.

Samuel Whitbread achieved its best ever A Level results in the 2017 examinations with over half (56%) of all grades at A*-B and almost a third (32%) of the grades at A*/A. The Academy also achieved its best ever GCSE results with some 72% of students gaining a grade 4 or higher in English and mathematics.

BEST lower schools have also seen significant improvements with the Langford Village Academy, which had previously undergone challenging times, being judged as Good in all areas by Ofsted in May 2017. The Gothic Mede Academy was also inspected in June 2017 and judged to be Good in all areas.

Developing first-class learning environments

We have made improvements at all our schools through significant investment in the school estate via a well-developed plan. This focuses on their current and future needs to ensure that students and staff benefit from an exceptional teaching and learning environment for many years to come.

One of the most significant areas of development has taken place at the Etonbury Academy where we have, in collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Council, supported its transition from a middle school to an extended secondary school to meet the increased demand for school places in the local area. As well as making improvements to the existing site we have added a new teaching block including three science labs, six classrooms, two rooftop art studios and design technology workshops, as well as a new library, staffroom and impressive new sports facilities which include a 3G AstroTurf pitch and sports centre.

Our other schools have also benefitted from significant development including additional build programmes and extensive refurbishments and improvements to the indoor and outdoor environments. Investment in site security and IT has also been a priority and has led to many additional improvements.

All schools have the opportunity to shape the capital programme and work with BEST to create the best possible learning environments for our learners.



OUR SCHOOLS

Gravenhurst Academy

Gravenhurst, Bedfordshire

Stage of education: Lower School (Reception to Year 4)

Number on role: 59

Ofsted rating: Outstanding (2011)

Overview

Gravenhurst Academy is a small village school where pupils of all abilities thrive. Standards are high because the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Pupils are treated as individuals and are extremely well catered for. Achievement is outstanding, especially given pupils' below average starting points.

Exemplary pastoral care and the support and guidance given to all pupils are the foundation on which pupils' extremely positive attitudes to learning are developed. Pupils know how to be healthy, reflecting the school's Healthy School status and keep themselves safe.

The school is outward looking and has sustained and built on the strengths found at the last inspection. There is an excellent commitment from all staff to provide each pupil with the very best possible education. There is also a continual drive for improvement with very effective systems for evaluating the strengths and areas for development and these are playing their part in sustaining high standards over time.

"Progress is excellent because the expertly planned curriculum focuses particularly well on developing pupils' interpersonal skills as well as their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for their next school."

Ofsted 2011



Langford Village Academy

Langford, Bedfordshire

Stage of education: Lower School (Reception to Year 4)

Number on role: 153

Ofsted rating: Good (2017)

Overview

Langford Village Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school and converted to an academy in June 2014.

The well-designed curriculum enriches pupils' lives through a good range of engaging activities. Pupils learn important values such as tolerance, respect and thoughtfulness. This contributes strongly to effectively developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth.

The school is a friendly village school with a strong partnership between pupils, staff, parents, governors and the local community. It provides a nurturing and caring environment where pupils enjoy their learning and make excellent progress. The pupils are always at the heart of everything they do and as a Values based school the dedicated staff ensure pupils have engaging learning experiences, feel safe, and treat each other with tolerance and respect.

With the support of BEST, the school is currently undergoing a period of refurbishment and this will continue over the next few years with an immediate focus on Early Years.

"Pupils like school and attend regularly. They are confident and happy. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and are well cared for."

Ofsted 2017

"Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because the challenges they face are quickly identified, appropriate support is provided, and checks on their achievement are thorough and accurate."

Ofsted 2017



St Christophers Academy

Dunstable, Bedfordshire



Stage of education: Primary School (Nursery to Year 6)

Number on role: 280

Ofsted rating: Good (2016)

Overview

St Christophers Academy is a multi-faith, two form entry primary school situated on the border between Dunstable and Luton, and serves a diverse community from both areas.

The school has been described as 'a village school within a town' as they have a strong community presence with generations of the same family having passed through their doors.

Pupils benefit from a challenging and enriching curriculum and very much enjoy coming to school. This was acknowledged in their most recent Ofsted report and the school is oversubscribed in most year groups due to its excellent reputation within the community.

St Christophers is also a Values based school with a strong philosophy of caring and an ethos that places children at the heart of everything they do. Their family worker provides a wide range of support for the children and their families, and the school's work around nurture has been recognised through the Young Carers Gold Award.

The school also has its own nursery which prepares children well for the next stage in their educational journey, and very high quality wraparound care that caters for working parents before and after school, and during the school holidays.

St Christophers received the Investors in Pupils award in 2016 with no areas for improvement being identified. They received this award because of their robust 'whole school approach' to participation, their empowerment of pupils by involving them in everyday decision making, the strong relationships between pupils and staff, and how they help pupils to improve their confidence, achievement, attendance and behaviour.

St Christophers joined BEST in 2017 as part of their drive to work more collaboratively with other schools and to bring greater benefits to their children and families.

"There is a sense of community and purpose throughout the school."

Ofsted 2016

"St Christophers Academy is a very positive place for pupils to develop and learn."

Ofsted 2016



"Pupils love coming to school because teachers endeavour to make learning both challenging and exciting."

Ofsted 2016



Gothic Mede Academy

Arlesey, Bedfordshire

Stage of education: Lower School (Nursery to Year 4)

Number on role: 333

Ofsted rating: Good (2017)

Overview

Gothic Mede is a welcoming, ambitious and Values based school that is highly engaged with the local community. Working together they strive to improve what they do and achieve increasingly high outcomes for all pupils. Strong relationships, ambition and values are key features of the school and they have recently achieved the Artsmark, Primary Science Quality Mark and School Games award. They have also been praised by Ofsted for having a 'broad and exciting' curriculum.

The school has a nursery class on site which offers 15 hours of nursery education at the start or end of the week and they work in partnership with BEST Nurseries to enable children to access full-time and extended school care. The school is also undergoing redevelopment on site and, in addition to new nursery provision, they have plans to improve their ancillary spaces including the addition of a community room where the Family Support Worker can support the needs of the children and their parents or carers.

"Leaders are uncompromising in their efforts to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential."

Ofsted 2017

"... there is a culture of high expectations where pupils are enabled to flourish both socially and academically."

Ofsted 2017



Robert Bloomfield Academy

Shefford, Bedfordshire

Stage of education: Middle School (Years 5 to 8)

Number on role: 946

Ofsted rating: Outstanding (2014)

Overview

Robert Bloomfield is a thriving, happy and successful school which became one of the first Teaching Schools in the country in 2012.

The excellent standards achieved by pupils over their four year journey at the school are the result of their hard work, the support of parents and the expertise of a dedicated body of staff. The school also has an exceptional learning environment, enhanced by specialist facilities, which enable them to offer a full range of opportunities within and beyond the classroom.

Robert Bloomfield is a caring community that values each child and provides them with the opportunity to fulfil their potential and enjoy learning. They believe in building a child's confidence, adaptability and resilience for the future, within an ordered and structured environment, where high expectations are the norm. Pupils respond well to this and are very proud of their school. This is reflected in the high commitment and standards they bring to so many aspects of school life.

The school was awarded the title of 'NSPCC School of the Year' in 2016 in recognition of its exceptional record of sustained charitable work. The sporting record of the school is also outstanding, with many regional and national successes, confirmed by the highest award of Sports Mark Platinum in 2017. Performing Arts are equally strong and cover all aspects of music, drama and dance.

"Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding, enabling most students to achieve exceptionally well and exceed expected progress."

Ofsted 2014



Etonbury Academy
Arlesey, Bedfordshire



Stage of education: Extended Secondary School (Years 5 to 11)

Number on role: 960

Ofsted rating: Requires Improvement (2017)

Overview

Etonbury is a Values school that has been growing and developing rapidly over the past three years. A recent extension to Key Stage 4 has provided local students with the opportunity to remain in their community for their education through to GCSEs and Level 2 vocational courses.

As a fully inclusive school, Etonbury provides a rich curriculum with a lively and vibrant range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that are accessible to every student. Behaviour is excellent, and there is a strong pastoral ethos based around care and teamwork. Staff and students are very proud of the school and what they consider to be 'Team Etonbury'.

Etonbury is also a very popular school, being first choice for almost every student in the catchment. Parental satisfaction ratings are consistently high and the school has rapidly improved outcomes at Key Stage 2, placing it in the very top tier of performance across the region.

The school has also achieved Artsmark Gold, is a LAMDA accredited school (London Academy for Music and Dramatic Art), is a Young Carers Hub School and has been awarded the Music Mark. Etonbury also has exceptionally strong sports teams as District Champions in netball, football and athletics.

"The vast majority of parents and pupils were positive about the improvements in the school, in particular the management of the extensive building programme and the quality of the school's facilities."

Ofsted 2017

"The imaginative curriculum has been well planned across all Key Stages. Pupil's needs and aspirations come first when deciding on their provision."

Ofsted 2017



Samuel Whitbread Academy

Shefford, Bedfordshire

Stage of education: Upper School (Years 9 to 13)

Number on role: 1651

Ofsted rating: Good (2017)



Overview

Samuel Whitbread provides an exceptional academic and extracurricular experience in an outstanding learning environment where students are expected to work hard and achieve their best. In their last Ofsted inspection they were judged as Good with many outstanding features, and over the next three years they have set themselves the target of being Outstanding.

The school offers a well-balanced curriculum with plenty of choice to prepare students for the next stage in their lives. Most students continue on to the Sixth Form, which is one of the largest and highest performing in the area and provides a huge range of courses that are designed to match the expectations of universities and employers.

Pastoral care at Samuel Whitbread is exceptional and there are dedicated pastoral support teams for each year group. The academy is also broken down into five houses, named after people who have made a distinctive contribution to their community. These provide the framework for the multitude of different competitions, celebrations and charity events that bring the school community together during the year.

"Attainment is consistently above average. A much larger than average proportion of pupils achieve national expectations in GCSE English and mathematics."

Ofsted 2017

Extracurricular opportunity is a vital part of their ethos and they expect all students to get involved in at least one club or activity. These include opportunities ranging from highly competitive sports teams, such as the rugby programme, which is partnered with the Northampton Saints, the Jack Collinson Football Academy and spectacular drama and musical performances.

The sporting successes at Samuel Whitbread are particularly impressive as they are County Champions in rugby, hockey, netball, handball and football, and came second in the 'Premier League Under 16 Schools Cup'.

They are also the Stonewall School Champion for 2017/18, winner of the Sir Gavyn Arthur family mock court competition in 2016, winner of the Bank of England most creative film in 2017 and recipient of the National Citizen Service Gold award for 2016/17. They are also a Duke of Edinburgh licensed centre and work in partnership with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.

"The school is improving rapidly because all staff are fully focused on ensuring that pupils make good progress."

Ofsted 2017



BEST NURSERIES



BEST Nurseries provides first-class, family orientated sessional and day care which is accessible to all. They currently deliver high quality wraparound and Early Years care and education to over 300 children across 3 sites in Shefford (Outstanding), Langford (Outstanding) and Arlesey (awaiting inspection).

Their highly skilled staff place great importance on the aspiration to help all children reach their full potential and learning opportunities are designed, implemented and reviewed regularly so that the experiences offered provide them with a chance to learn and consolidate new skills.

Key to this is the assessment and evaluation of every child's learning needs so that they can be supported and encouraged appropriately. They also strive to ensure that all parents and carers are part of this process and work together to support every child, believing that children learn best when they are happy, relaxed and playing.

Delivering the curriculum while the children are engaged in play helps foster a genuine curiosity and love of learning. All play is conducted in a safe, child-centred environment under the guidance of qualified practitioners who are sympathetic to the care and educational needs of the children.

The development of a highly qualified and motivated workforce reflects the quality of education and care that they provide and staff are fully supported to undertake additional training and qualifications up to postgraduate level.

BEST TEACHING SCHOOL



BEST Teaching School is led by Robert Bloomfield Academy and was designated on 1st April, 2012. Since then, in collaboration with many partners it has successfully delivered educational services to 132 schools and continues to grow and thrive as an organisation.

During 2016/17 the number of courses and programmes available to colleagues was in excess of 200. These embraced all phases and covered a diverse range of subject matter. Their fully developed 'Leadership Ladder' provides a full leadership development path for all levels of the profession and also provides opportunities for staff to be involved in the delivery.

Through this work they have designated over 20 Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs), many of whom are employed in BEST schools. The Teaching School and the SLEs have been involved in school-to-school support and programmes such as the 'Improving Teacher Programme' and 'Achievement for All'. These have had a substantial impact on Ofsted outcomes.

Their School Direct programme together with the Primary and Secondary SCITT continue to recruit and show favourable early employment rates and many BEST staff started their careers through this route.

BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS' TRAINING PARTNERSHIP



The Bedfordshire Schools' Training Partnership (BEDS SCITT) are a long established, thriving, school based, teacher training provider working on behalf of local schools and proud to be a part of the BEST family. They specialise in offering school centred initial teacher training for both Secondary and Primary trainee teachers working with the Schools Direct Lead Schools - Robert Bloomfield Academy, St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School and Ashcroft High School.

Their focus is to deliver highly trained teachers in response to the needs of our partnership schools where a high percentage of trainees go on to be employed.

As well as offering trainees access to all the practical experience required to obtain QTS they can also achieve academic recognition in the form of the PGCE Award currently validated by a local university.

A recent tweet (Jan 2018)...

"...if you applied to @BSTPSCITT I couldn't recommend it enough! Talking to other previous trainees the amount of support/CPD I got from them was second to none!"



BEST IN THE COMMUNITY

Community based provision is a key BEST value. Our schools form an integral part of the communities that we serve and it is very important to us that we are listening to and meeting the needs of those communities.

Although our main aim is to provide an outstanding educational experience and high quality outcomes for all of the children and young people in our care, we also recognise that there is so much more that we can offer to local children, families and others within Central Bedfordshire.

We are therefore committed to working in partnership with local town and parish councils, community groups, businesses, charities, local schools and others, so that we are making a positive contribution towards all aspects of community life.

This commitment is evident throughout BEST and is reflected in the many fundraising and community focused initiatives that are led by our staff and students throughout the year.

Whether it is fundraising for the local Rotary Club or Shefford Christmas Lights Appeal, putting on performances or hosting workshops for local parents, our staff and students take great pride in the contribution that they are making towards their community.

Local residents of all ages also benefit from their use of the many wonderful facilities that we have across BEST, including the newly built Pendleton Sports Centre at Etonbury where clubs, community groups and others take part in a wide range of sports and fitness related activities.

We are constantly developing and improving our estates and will soon be adding a magnificent range of new sports facilities at Samuel Whitbread for school and community use. These include a 3G 'power shock' pitch with floodlighting, a high quality competition athletics track, a throwing cage for safe coaching, training and competition, new floodlit tennis courts with netball markings, a dual use sports pavilion with gym facilities, an outdoor floodlit basketball court and two long jump pits.



BEST House

Built in 2010 with a successful bid to the Government's Co-location Fund, BEST House is a widely used Conference Facility on the Samuel Whitbread Academy site next to one of our nurseries.

The office space upstairs currently houses the BEST Central Teams and The Bedfordshire Schools' Training Partnership (Beds SCITT) as well as a local counselling and parent advice group, Outside-In.

Downstairs there is a fantastic conference space which can hold up to 60 people. This is a well-used and valuable local resource which is available for hire during term time and can be booked free of charge by BEST schools.



SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Great schools have great staff. At BEST we understand that staff are our most valuable resource and the key to our pupils' success. We invest heavily in our people, aiming to employ the outstanding and nurture the exceptional.

Supporting our leaders

BEST develops the skills and behaviours needed to effectively deliver results, drive change and create meaning. Our unique Leadership Ladder provides support from Recently Qualified Teacher (RQT) status to Headship. Leaders at all levels are supported to be the very best they can possibly be.

Principals are given full autonomy to lead their schools, at the centre of their own local communities. Principals benefit hugely from our leadership partnership, the BEST Principals' Forum, and a team of experts in their respective fields, including: curriculum, assessment and inspection. Moreover, there is the opportunity to explore system leadership across multiple schools, whilst gaining National Leader of Education status.

Supporting our staff

Staff benefit from the vast array of CPD opportunities delivered through the BEST Teaching School. These include nationally accredited courses such as the Outstanding Teacher Programme and Specialist Leader of Education. BEST also offers a wide variety of career openings across different schools, in different settings. If they have the talent, limitless possibilities exist at BEST.

Central Services

BEST Central Services work hard to offer our members exceptional value for money (via economies of scale) and high quality responsive services that support the day-to-day running of their schools.

The Central Services team provides support, either directly or through high quality partner organisations, with finance, HR, IT and communications. The team also oversee capital build projects and our estates strategy to ensure that all schools benefit from well-equipped, safe and highly effective learning environments that are well maintained and appropriate for their needs both now and in the future.

Our Chief Operations Officer, Craig Smith, together with our Chief Finance Officer, Nafia Gul Baust, lead on these Central Services and work closely with Principals to ensure that the services provided meet their expectations and function at a high level across all areas.

The driving ethos behind Central Services is to support schools to improve rather than to remove their ability to be responsive. Our services are subject to a rigorous quality assurance system and continual improvements. There is also a clear risk management process for supporting schools by ensuring they are compliant especially around safeguarding, policies and website activity.

JOIN US

Benefits of joining

We have worked hard to create an ethos and culture where our Principals and school leaders have autonomy but also benefit from working in a structure that provides a high level of support and a framework for sharing the best learning across BEST.

Our approach to working with schools is one of 'high autonomy, high accountability' – supporting Headteachers and Principals to manage their schools as effectively as possible and to respond to the needs of their local community. The support from the centre – be that school improvement activity or wider school support work – enables schools to focus on teaching and learning as much as possible whilst also empowering leaders to devote as much effort and resource as possible to the main activity of learning.

We passionately believe we have a highly functioning model that empowers schools to achieve the best they can but intervenes to support schools when they need it most. Whether it is our high quality central services or the economies of scale that come with size and efficiency we believe we have the infrastructure to help without unnecessarily reducing autonomy.

Likewise we believe strong governance is critical to highly effective school performance so we empower our Trustees and local governing bodies to lead on their nominated areas – Governors are empowered via our Scheme of Delegation and our growing Trust is investing energy into creating a more coherent training and support programme.

Membership criteria

There are no set criteria for joining BEST. Any conversation would be focussed on whether both BEST and the school consider that joining would lead to improved outcomes for the learners at your school and a network of support and development for your staff. This specific focus on school improvement is a deliberate and conscious stance by BEST as we believe MATs should be about improving the learner experience and enabling learners to derive as much benefit as possible from their educational journey.

At BEST we do not have a specific number of schools we wish to grow to – we believe it is better to consider each interested school on its own merits and whether it is in the best interests of the school and BEST.

How to apply

We passionately believe we have a strong set of values and our ethos works for our schools. Our journey is an impressive one and we welcome expressions of interest from schools that would like to find out more about the benefits of joining the BEST community.

If your school is considering joining BEST we would be happy to have an initial conversation to help explore your options. As part of this we would invite you to contact any of our Principals for an informal conversation and to seek their views on what it is like to lead a school within BEST.

In the first instance please contact either Dr Alan Lee, the Chief Executive, on **01462 628003 / alee@bestacademies.org.uk** or Craig Smith, the Chief Operations Officer on **01462 413511 / csmith@bestacademies.org.uk** to have an exploratory discussion.

