**BEST ‘broadly supportive’ of Council plans to reorganise schools**

**++ Trust calls on Central Beds to commit publicly to five pledges ++**

**++ Plans would see creation of new all-through school ++**

The Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) has today announced that it is broadly supportive of Central Bedfordshire Council’s (CBC) plans to reorganise schools into primary and secondary phases.

The plans which CBC have begun a consultation on, will see a major overhaul of how schools are organised locally, introducing a primary and secondary school system.

In addition, the consultation will also see a brand new ‘all-through’ school created, catering for 3 – 18-year olds, bringing together Robert Bloomfield Academy and Samuel Whitbread Academy.

Whilst the overall consultation is being run by CBC, BEST is required to consult with parents affected across its nine schools. The trust is therefore launching its own consultation today, which will close on 30 June.

In their letter to parents, BEST makes clear that the trust is “broadly supportive” of CBC’s plans, but that this support is conditional on five pledges from CBC. These pledges have been discussed over the past months with officers and members, and BEST is now calling on the council to publicly confirm their agreement. The five pledges are:

1. **The new all-through school will have five primary classes, meaning there is space for 150 children.**
2. **Children in traditional feeder schools to Robert Bloomfield Academy will be able to get a place in the secondary school part of the new all-through school.**
3. **Campton Lower school - as a new member of BEST – will become a new build 2 form entry Primary school**
4. **There will be additional 6th Form Provision on the Samuel Whitbread and Etonbury/Pix Brook sites**
5. **CBC and BEST will develop a joint solution to all PFI-related issues on the Samuel Whitbread site.**

Parents from across the BEST family are being invited to respond to the consultation and to give their views.

**Dr Alan Lee, Chief Executive of BEST said:**

“Since BEST was established in 2016, we have been focused on providing the very best education we can for children and families in Shefford, Stotfold and the surrounding area. The first four years have been all about establishing a high bar educationally, and ensuring that the organisation is financially stable. All of our academies are now rated Good or better by Ofsted (or awaiting an Ofsted inspection) and the trust is in financial good health.

“We are now responsible for the education of over 60% of children and young people in Shefford, Stotfold and the surrounding area, and the next four years will be about cementing our successes to date and accelerating improvements in standards.

“We believe that a two-tier system will help us provide the very best education we can to the 6,000 pupils in the BEST family, and so overall we support CBC’s proposals. However, our support is conditional on CBC publicly confirming their support of the five pledges. We have had positive discussions with officials over the last few months and now look forward to them putting their support on record.

“We are excited about the prospect of a new all-through school to serve the community – this is an opportunity to bring together the best of both Robert Bloomfield and Samuel Whitbread academies in a seamless, all-though 0-18 school, securing consistently high standards and continuity of curriculum from reception through to advanced level study, in a caring happy community where everyone is prized.

“We are encouraging all parents and the wider community to get involved in the consultation and have their views heard.”

**ENDS**