

The Best of **BEST**

2025/26 Academic Year





Welcome to the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)

Delivering excellence to more young people

During 2024-25, BEST continued its excellent record of all schools and nurseries within our Trust achieving Outstanding or Good Ofsted inspection grades. Indeed, Robert Bloomfield Academy was graded Outstanding for the fourth time in succession!

Such exceptional standards have led to schools being oversubscribed across BEST, with pupil numbers growing from 3683 in 2016 to 8511 in 2025. Our Trust believes in community-based education and offers a wide-range of school structures, including lower, primary, middle, upper and secondary to meet ever-rising demand.

In 2026, BEST will celebrate its 10 Year Anniversary. As part of this anniversary, BEST has embarked on a Big Community Listen (details to follow). This began with senior leaders expressing their views on what it is like to lead BEST schools. Below is an AI summary of their views:

'BEST is where schools keep their own identity, but never stand alone. Support is genuine, trust is earned, and values guide every choice. Children come first, people are seen, and collaboration lifts whole communities'.

BEST Senior Leaders, Summer 2025

We are determined to improve continually, treat each other with kindness and keep your views at the heart of all we do. Please get involved



THE BIG LISTEN

'This academic year sees BEST celebrate its 10-year anniversary. This is a fantastic opportunity to reflect on what has been a strong period of performance and growth. Over the last 10 years new schools have joined the trust, pupil numbers have grown significantly, staff numbers have increased to the point where BEST is a major local employer and parents have demonstrated trust in BEST by sending their children to BEST schools.

The anniversary also offers an opportunity to reflect on the past 10 years and is a chance to look to the future. A central part of this will be the 'Big Community Listen' where over the whole year BEST will be seeking views and actively listening to the views of the community and all those with an interest in BEST and its schools.

This is a great opportunity to feedback views and help shape the future developments. Understanding the views of the community and key stakeholders will be essential in helping to shape the future so this activity is vitally important as BEST moves forward.

The results of the Big Community Listen will feed into forward thinking and the next 10 years at BEST so please make sure you have your say and help shape the future of education in the area.'

Royal Recognition for **Educational Leadership**

Chair Ilona Bond had the great privilege of attending a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, held in recognition of outstanding service to education.

The invitation to this prestigious event is a mark of high esteem and national appreciation, extended only to individuals who have made significant contributions to public life and community service. Ilona's dedication and longstanding commitment to education earned a place among other distinguished guests invited to celebrate the occasion.

Hosted in the splendour of the Palace gardens, the event brought together a diverse group of individuals, all of whom have given exceptional service in their respective fields. The Garden Party, attended by members of the Royal Family, offered a rare opportunity to engage in conversation and reflection with fellow guests who share a passion for public service and positive impact.

Speaking after the event, Ilona said, *"I was very humbled to have been invited to this garden party and had the most enjoyable afternoon in the beautiful gardens of Buckingham Palace, with the highlight being that I got to meet the King and briefly speak with him. He was very well informed about the world of education and spoke passionately about the importance of education for our young people."*



Whilst I was the one to be invited I felt that I was representing the many people I work with both in BEST and the other educational organisations I am involved with who on a daily basis serve the young people in our care."

This recognition shines a spotlight on the vital role education plays in shaping society and highlights the importance of dedicated leadership within the sector. It also serves as an inspiration to others who continue to work tirelessly to improve educational outcomes and opportunities for all.

Ilona's invitation to Buckingham Palace is not only a personal milestone, but a proud moment for the entire organisation and the wider educational community.



To grow the **BEST** in everyone.

Our mission statement may only be six small words long, but it carries a big meaning.

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



We are proud of our approach.
It shapes who we are and what we do.



CAMPTON ACADEMY



Campton Academy Celebrates 150 Years!

2025 marked a truly special milestone for Campton Academy, as we celebrated our 150th anniversary. To honour this historic occasion, a variety of events and activities were organised throughout the year, bringing together pupils, staff, families, and the wider community.

The celebrations culminated in a very special Open Morning on Saturday 8th March — exactly 150 years since the establishment of the original school board in the parish in 1875. We were delighted to welcome so many former pupils, families, ex-staff members, and local residents, who shared fond memories and stories from their own school days, spanning many decades.

A key highlight was the creation of a beautiful school tapestry, made

collaboratively by pupils across the school. This stunning piece of artwork now hangs proudly in our school hall, serving as a lasting reminder of our shared creativity and heritage.

Classroom activities focused on the rich history of the school, with children engaging in art and history projects that connected the past with the present. A whole-school photograph was also taken — a snapshot in time to be treasured by future generations.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this anniversary so memorable. It was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our school's proud past — and to look forward to an exciting future.

Campton | Reception - Year 4
Ofsted – Outstanding (2010)
www.camptonacademy.org.uk





CASTLE NEWNHAM

Family Reading Mornings Bring Community Together

At Castle Newnham Primary, our new Family Reading Mornings have been a wonderful success. Every Friday morning, parents, grandparents and carers joined their children with a book and a smile. Transforming Reception and Year 1 classrooms into a bustling hub of shared stories and literary adventure. The atmosphere was magical, with soft chatter and rustling pages replacing the usual morning rush.

The initiative has strengthened home and school connections and inspired a love of reading across our community. We ended the term with our first Reading Café, where families enjoyed books, biscuits and great conversation.

Thanks to the fantastic response, Family Reading Mornings will now be a regular event for Reception to Year 4 - continuing to make our school a place where stories truly come to life.

Castle Newnham Celebrates Diversity and Culture

On Tuesday 25th June, Castle Newnham Secondary proudly celebrated our inaugural Culture Day – a vibrant celebration of diversity and cultural pride designed and led by our Junior Leadership Team.

Pupils across both our junior and senior phases embraced the opportunity to express their heritage through traditional clothing and cultural activities. In the



secondary phase, students participated in African Kente weaving, samba music workshops, and explorations of Ancient Greek theatre, immersing themselves in both historical and contemporary cultural experiences. It allowed students to connect, share, and celebrate each other's backgrounds, reinforcing the inclusive and welcoming environment that lies at the heart of our school ethos.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are committed to building on this strong foundation by continuing to empower our pupils. This begins with the student-led selection of our Head Boys and Head Girls – a step that reflects our belief in pupil voice and leadership.

- ★ Bedford | Reception - Year 11
- ★ Ofsted – Secondary Good (2024)
- ★ Primary Outstanding (2013)
- ★ castlenewnham.school



ETONBURY ACADEMY

Ofsted Praises School

Etonbury Academy is **“a welcoming and nurturing place to learn”**, concluded Ofsted inspectors following their visit in April, during which they offered high praise for the school. Inspectors were impressed with all aspects of provision, highlighting how much pupils enjoy attending, as well as the high expectations set by staff, which pupils rise to meet.

The report celebrates pupils' strong sense of belonging to the school community, how they feel safe, cared for, and known as individuals, and the consistently strong outcomes they achieve.

Etonbury's curriculum was commended for its ambition and breadth, along with the school's extensive and well-planned character development programme.

Behaviour was judged to be excellent, attendance is high, and pupils consistently demonstrate kindness and respect towards one another.

First Cohort Achieves Outstanding Results and University Success

August 2025 marked an historic milestone for Etonbury Academy as we celebrated the achievements of our first-ever cohort of A Level and BTEC Level 3 students. An impressive **96% of students** secured places at their first-choice universities.

There were some outstanding individual performances, with several students achieving A and A grades across the



board*. Heads of department were also celebrating strong subject outcomes, including:

- **Art** – 100% A*–B
- **Maths** – 64% A*–B
- **Sociology** – 50% A*–B
- **History** – 50% A*–B
- **Health & Social Care** – 57% Distinction*–Distinction
- **Sport** – 50% Distinction
- **Travel & Tourism** – 45% Distinction*–Distinction

Our students have gone on to study a diverse range of subjects at universities across the UK, including English, Geology, Law, Criminology, Forensic Science, Mathematics, 3D Animation, Accounting, and Psychology.

- ★ Arlesey
- ★ Year 5 - 13
- ★ Ofsted – Good (2020)
- ★ etonbury.org.uk





GOTHIC MEDE ACADEMY



County Champions: Dance Squad Triumphs

At Gothic Mede Academy, we are dedicated to providing a rich and varied educational experience where every student can discover and nurture their unique talents. A shining example of this commitment is the spectacular success of our Dance Squad, who were recently crowned County Champions.

This talented group of students took to the stage at the prestigious Street Dance competition, delivering a phenomenal performance that captivated the judges. Their powerful routine, creatively inspired by the theme of 'Diversity', was a testament to their exceptional teamwork, discipline, and passion.

This remarkable achievement is the result of months of dedication in their after-school club, delivered in partnership with the professional coach from BX Dance.

More than just a trophy, this victory represents the spirit of ambition and pride that defines Gothic Mede Academy. We are committed to offering high-quality enrichment opportunities that empower our students to build confidence, express themselves, and strive for excellence on any stage.

We are immensely proud of our County Champions, whose dedication and creativity serve as an inspiration to students across our entire trust community. Their success highlights the outstanding opportunities available to all children within Gothic Mede Academy.

- ★ Arlesey
- ★ Preschool - Year 4
- ★ Ofsted – Good (2023)
- ★ gothicmede.org.uk



GRAVENHURST ACADEMY



A Record-Breaking Year of Growth and Celebration at Gravenhurst Academy

This past year, Gravenhurst Academy reached an exciting milestone, setting a new school record by achieving full capacity for the very first time in our history. Since opening our doors in September 1898 with just a handful of village children, our school has grown steadily and now proudly welcomes 75 pupils on roll, including children from neighbouring villages. This growth reflects not only the strength of our Academy but also the enduring appeal of our warm, close-knit school community.

In celebration of our small rural setting, Gravenhurst Academy invited a town farm to visit us. Ark Farm set up their travelling farmyard within our school

grounds, and we hosted a wonderful morning with ducks, chickens, goats, a rabbit, pig, donkey, and a friendly farm dog. Pupils took turns to hold, groom, and play with the animals, showing some of our core school values: kindness, nurturing and caring for others.

Sunny Skies for Our Summer Show

We also held our annual summer production of Roald Dahl's Little Red Riding Hood, from his Revolting Rhymes collection, in our outdoor theatre. Everyone enjoyed singing the songs and performing for friends and family—while the sun kindly shone for us all.

- ★ Upper Gravenhurst
- ★ Reception - Year 4
- ★ Ofsted – Outstanding (2024)
- ★ gravenhurstacademy.org.uk





LANGFORD VILLAGE ACADEMY



A Year of Outstanding Progress

Last year marked a hugely successful chapter in the life of our school. We saw meaningful progress, growing stronger both academically and as a community. We were especially proud of the significant improvements in attendance and positive behaviour, with feedback from pupil surveys reflecting the strong culture we continue to nurture. Most importantly, our pupils made outstanding academic progress. Our KS2 SATs results were particularly impressive, achieving a National Average of 62% combined in Reading, Writing and Maths.

A Year of Creativity, Learning and Inspiring Experiences

Our Year 6 pupils took to the stage with confidence and creativity in their end-of-year production of Alice in Wonderland,

followed by a heartfelt and memorable leavers' assembly. While our Upper Key Stage 2 Parents' Evening strengthened school-family partnership.

Our enriched curriculum came alive with events like Maths Immersion Days, World Book Day and a deep dive into Victorian history, giving pupils hands-on, engaging learning experiences. A year highlight was a visit from former High Sheriff Bav Shah, who inspired pupils with insights into his role and the importance of community involvement. Pupils were captivated by the presentation, describing it as both informative and motivating.

- ★ Langford
- ★ Reception - Year 6
- ★ Ofsted – Good (2024)
- ★ langfordvillageacademy.org.uk



LAWNSIDE ACADEMY

Welcoming New Pupils and Enriching Learning Experiences

At Lawnside Academy, we have been busy welcoming 60 new children who will be joining us in September 2025. As we transition from a lower school to a full primary setting, we have been working closely with our families and the wider community to ensure a smooth and supportive changeover.

Lawnside Academy offers an exciting and enriching range of educational visits for all year groups. These experiences are a vital part of our curriculum, particularly for primary-aged children. School trips bring learning to life, foster hands-on exploration, build confidence and independence, and create lasting positive memories. By stepping outside the classroom, pupils deepen their academic understanding, develop curiosity, and apply learning to real-world contexts.

Highlights from Last Year's School Visits

RECEPTION

Children visited Paxton Pits Nature Reserve, where they had the opportunity to observe local wildlife — including a rare sighting of an elusive otter. They also attended a performance of The Smartest Giant in Town at the Gordon Craig Theatre — a musical, puppet-filled adaptation of the much-loved book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, bringing the heart-warming tale of friendship and generosity to life.



KEY STAGE 1 (Years 1-2)

Pupils enjoyed a seaside adventure to Southend-on-Sea, including a visit to Sealife Adventure. Children also paddled in the sea and experienced a ride on the Southend Pier Railway — the longest pleasure pier in the world.

LOWER KEY STAGE 2 (Years 3-4)

Children had fun at Whipsnade Zoo, where they explored the habitats and behaviours of animals from across the globe.

UPPER KEY STAGE 2 (Years 5-6)

Pupils travelled to the National Space Centre in Leicester. They explored interactive galleries, the Rocket Tower, an immersive planetarium show, and participated in the thrilling Tetrastar Spaceport experience.

Bringing Learning to Life In School

Children also enjoyed in-school experiences, including a magical puppet show of Snow White, Rose Red, Bear Brown by the Theatre of Widdershins for Reception and Key Stage 1.

- ★ Biggleswade
- ★ Reception - Year 6
- ★ Ofsted – Good (2023)
- ★ lawnsideacademy.org.uk





PIX BROOK ACADEMY



Celebrating Milestones and a Bright Future Ahead

As BEST celebrates its tenth anniversary, we reflect with immense pride on the remarkable growth of Pix Brook Academy. Just seven years ago, our academy was a small acorn, planted with a clear purpose: to educate socially responsible citizens of the future. The roots laid down were crucial and pathed the way for a commitment to nurturing every student.

I am honoured as the new Principal to work tirelessly on developing Pix Brook so we can stand proud, like the Oak tree within our academy logo. Like BEST, we too are celebrating a significant, historic moment: having a cohort in all year groups, from 5 to 11, for the very first time. My focus is on sustaining our growth and ensuring the successful delivery of our first set of GCSE examinations in the Summer of 2026.

The future for Pix Brook Academy is incredibly exciting. We are no longer a young school, but a maturing academy ready to demonstrate the full extent of our students' talents. Our values have been woven into the fabric of the school and our new tagline: "Owning our Actions, shaping our Future" supports students to reflect on their choices. The new School Parliament and elected Heads of School marks an important moment for student leadership as we collectively strive to ensure our school is somewhere every young person can flourish.

- ★ Stotfold
- ★ Year 5 - 11
- ★ Ofsted – Good (2024)
- ★ pixbrookacademy.org.uk



ROBERT BLOOMFIELD ACADEMY



Outstanding Ofsted Rating Achieved for Fourth Time

Robert Bloomfield continues to go from strength to strength, and that was never more apparent than in the last academic year, when we were once again rated Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted. Remarkably, this was the fourth successive time since 2008 that Ofsted inspectors have awarded us the top judgement.

The report, which followed a two-day inspection in February, described how high aspirations underpin the school's values and its determination for all pupils to become the best they can be. Inspectors noted how positive relationships support the success of students, who thrive in the "welcoming and exceptionally inclusive middle school environment."

The report also highlighted:

- how the Robert Bloomfield school spirit shines through in students' kindness and respect towards others;

- that the carefully designed curriculum extends beyond national expectations; and

- the excellent provision for children's personal development.

While we are so much more than an Ofsted judgement, it was gratifying that the hard work of our exceptionally dedicated staff was recognised. Their care for the students, combined with our lived VOICE values – Vitality, Opportunity, Independence, Community and Excellence – has created a wonderful environment in which all students flourish.

As we celebrate this continued success, we look confidently to the future and what the next 20 years hold.

- ★ Shefford
- ★ Year 5 - 8
- ★ Ofsted – Outstanding (2014)
- ★ robertbloomfield.beds.sch.uk





SAMUEL WHITBREAD ACADEMY

A Year of Outstanding Achievements: Academics, Sport, and Creativity Shine

We're proud to celebrate an exceptional year of achievement across academics, sport, and the arts.

Our students achieved some of the best results in the Local Authority, performing significantly above national averages. Our GCSE outcomes were once again outstanding, with 72% of students securing a Grade 4 or above in both English and Maths - confirming Samuel Whitbread Academy as one of the top-performing schools in the area.

Students achieved record A Level results in our history, topping Local Authority tables. Securing places at their first-choice destinations, including colleges, apprenticeships, and top universities, such as Oxford, Cambridge, and other Russell Group institutions.

Sporting Excellence

On the pitch and court, our Academy shone on the national stage with talent, teamwork and resilience.

- Our football team reached their fourth National Cup final, showcasing consistency at the highest level.
- A huge congratulations to our U14 netball squad, who triumphed in the Sisters in Sport competition, winning the prestigious National Plate!
- In rugby, a series of stunning performances included a major victory over Rugby School in the national cup.

Leadership, Creativity & Global Citizenship

Our commitment to developing well-rounded global citizens and nurturing creative talent has never been stronger. Our Student Society hosted a fantastic UN Conference, welcoming students from 11 schools across the country for an engaging and vital debate on climate change.

Alumni Success

This year marked a milestone in our alumni community. Former student Hayder was awarded the Academy's first-ever BAFTA for his short film Rock, Paper, Scissors - a truly outstanding achievement. He is now deservedly in the running for an Oscar. Hayder returned to the Academy, BAFTA in hand, to deliver an inspirational keynote speech at the Year 13 Awards Evening, leaving a lasting impression on students and staff alike.



- ★ Clifton
- ★ Year 9 - 13
- ★ Ofsted – Good (2023)
- ★ samuelwhitbread.org.uk



ST CHRISTOPHERS ACADEMY



Celebrating Music and Performance

At St Christopher Academy, we believe that music and performance are essential for building confidence and fostering a strong sense of community. Singing lies at the heart of school life, providing students with a powerful platform for self-expression and collaboration — a reflection of the vibrant ethos that defines our school.

Our students regularly share their talents beyond the school gates, forging meaningful connections within the local community. The Year 6 choir brings joy to residents in local care homes and spreads festive cheer by singing carols at Luton and Dunstable Hospital during the Christmas season. Their voices are also heard at important community events, such as Dunstable's multi-faith Torchlight Procession, showcasing their role as engaged and compassionate young citizens.

Performance opportunities at St Christophers Academy are varied and inclusive — from traditional Harvest Festivals and class assemblies to high-energy Rock Steady concerts, where students embrace their inner rock stars. These experiences ensure that every child has the opportunity to perform, grow in confidence, and develop a lifelong love of music.

Through singing and performance, students at St Christophers Academy not only explore harmony and melody, but also learn about empathy, teamwork, and the value of sharing their voices with the wider world.

- ★ Dunstable
- ★ Nursery - Year 6
- ★ Nursery - Year 6
- ★ stchristophersacademy.org





Arlesey Nursery



Langford Nursery



Sheffield Nursery

- ★ Arlesey, Langford and Sheffield
 - ★ Year 5 - 13
 - ★ Ofsted – all rated Good
 - ★ bestnurseries.co.uk
- * School-based provision at Gothic Mede and St Christophers brings our total number of nurseries to 5.*



BEST Nurseries Thrive in 2025

2025 has been a remarkable year for our Nurseries, with all our settings reporting increased numbers and thriving as vibrant centres of early years education. Demand for high-quality, nurturing childcare has grown, and our teams have risen admirably to the challenge.

Since opening our first nursery at Samuel Whitbread Academy in 1989, BEST Nurseries has grown into a thriving, community-focused network. All surpluses are reinvested to enhance care, learning environments, and staff development, ensuring children benefit from excellent facilities and highly qualified teams. Families continue to seek nurseries that combine care with outstanding early years education, and our staff have responded with flexible, family-friendly provision that supports every child's development and learning.

Across Arlesey, Langford and Sheffield, enrolments have risen, reflecting parents' confidence in our provision. Each nursery provides a welcoming and stimulating environment for children aged 4 months to 5 years. Our school-based nurseries at Gothic Mede and St Christopher's Academies continue to flourish, offering wrap-around care and holiday clubs that meet the needs of families across Bedfordshire.

The success of 2025 demonstrates the vital role nurseries play in laying the foundations for lifelong learning and wellbeing. BEST Nurseries will continue to grow, adapt and provide exceptional early years education to even more families in the years ahead.

Celebrating a Career Defined by Purpose and the **BEST** Values

After more than 25 years in education, Deputy CEO Craig Smith leaves BEST having championed its values and shaped its success. We celebrate a career dedicated to people, purpose, and growth.

Q1. What originally inspired you to pursue this career and choose BEST?

I worked in education for around 25 to 30 years and was looking for a change after my time with the local authority. I wanted a role that was empowering, and joining BEST has certainly proven to be just that. After meeting with the Chief Executive, it became clear that he was looking for someone to take on the non-teaching and learning aspects of the role — something I knew I could do well. I'm also part of the local community, and my children attended BEST schools, so it felt like the right fit.

Q2. How has BEST changed over the years, and what changes stood out the most to you?

The most distinct and significant change has been the size — in terms of schools, staff, and pupils. What stood out to me most is that, despite this growth, the ethos and approach have remained the same. This is where the values come in; from the start, the values were extremely important, and it's clear that after years of growth, BEST still lives by its values every day.

Q3. What are some of your proudest moments or accomplishments during your career at BEST?



The obvious answer would be the major projects, such as the Pixbrook opening, onboarding of Castle Newnham, Lawnside and Campton and the new sixth form at Etonbury — all of which I'm extremely proud of. However, this links back to the previous question: living the BEST values and seeing my team grow has been a personal highlight for me.

Q4. What will you miss the most about BEST?

It's the people. You can't work somewhere for a long period of time and truly feel satisfied without acknowledging the people around you. I'll really miss the day-to-day interactions and the sense of BEST being at the heart of the community — I was proud to play a key role in that. Education is about serving communities, giving children opportunities, and helping them to shape their futures. That's what builds and supports strong communities, and it's something I already miss.

Q5. If you could go back and do one thing differently in your career, what would it be – and why?

I don't think I would change much. It may sound like a stereotype, but I was the

Inclusion and Opportunity at the Heart of Every Child's Journey

Thomas Rowell champions inclusive, high-quality education, supporting leaders to help every child and staff member thrive.

Q: What does “being the best we can be” mean to you?

To me, being the best we can be means being the best we can be for everyone in our community. I'm driven by a desire to ensure that every individual has opportunities for excellence, and that no one is left out. Inclusion isn't an add-on — it's fundamental.

Q: What inspired you to apply for your current role?

I was genuinely excited by the opportunity to make a difference for so many people. The chance to help more children access the amazing education available in our schools and nurseries was incredibly motivating. I'm passionate about supporting our talented team of colleagues across all our schools to improve in every area — and for every child. For me, it's about helping leaders develop and thrive within their own school communities.

Q: What are some of the key challenges facing education today?

A conversation with anyone working in education — or even a glance at the news — shows that levels of need are increasing nationwide. In particular, the demand for support in Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Safeguarding continues to grow year on year. These are areas that require significant time, skill, and care.



Q: How do you support schools with these growing needs?

I enjoy working alongside school leaders, especially SEN Coordinators and Safeguarding Leads, offering guidance through complex situations. At the heart of it all are the children and families we serve, and it's rewarding to see professionals grow, foster inclusion, and remove barriers to learning.

Q: What are some of the biggest obstacles schools are facing?

We are working against a backdrop of tight school funding and limited resources, which makes it even harder to meet rising levels of need in mainstream education. However, our belief remains firm: children must be at the centre of everything we do. To continue delivering high-quality provision, we have to be creative, innovative, and deeply compassionate in our approach.

Q: What are you looking forward to in the coming years?

I'm excited to see our schools continue to be beacons of inclusion — places where parents choose to send their children because they know they'll receive the best possible education. I hope to see a system where parents no longer feel they have to fight for support, but instead feel confident that their child is truly at the centre. I'm also excited about developments in the local area, and the role that BEST schools can play in being part of the local solution.

Our **Central Services** team offers an expert level of specialist support to our schools and nurseries.

We work closely with school/nursery leaders to understand their needs, which helps us to provide high-quality assistance.

We also deliver value for money due to the economies of scale and purchasing power we have as a multi-academy trust.

We support the day-to-day running of our schools and nurseries over a range of key operational areas, including:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| ★ Finance | ★ Policies and Compliance |
| ★ HR | ★ Communications |
| ★ Capital and Estates | ★ Governance |
| ★ Health and Safety | ★ ICT |
| ★ Equality and Diversity | ★ GDPR and Data Protection |

Chief Operating Officer Craig Smith and Chief Financial Officer Kim Rowe lead on these areas and oversee teams that, while small, are switched on and effective. Don't just take our word for it – the feedback we receive in our Central Services Annual Survey speaks for itself, year after year.

This invaluable centralised support enables our schools and nurseries to concentrate on what they do best – educating young people.

**100%
SATISFACTION**

School/nursery leaders who answered 'Highly Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with internal services in BEST Central Services Annual Survey 2023

“All BEST Central Services are easy to access. Any questions or actions are resolved quickly and efficiently.”

Mindfulness at the Heart of **BEST**

Mindfulness remains central to BEST's core value of compassion and forms a key part of our training entitlement for all — supporting the wellbeing, performance and effectiveness of our staff, students, and parent community. It has continued to grow across the Trust, and in the past year, 1,095 students received mindfulness teaching as part of the curriculum.

Taught by either mindfulness-trained school staff or the Trust's dedicated Mindfulness Coach, Will George, these classroom sessions help students improve focus, emotional regulation, and develop compassion for themselves and others. This impact was recognised in Langford Village Academy most recent Ofsted report, which noted: "Pupils have an astute understanding of their own feelings and those of others. Lessons in mindfulness provide different ways they practise managing their emotions. This contributes to a calm atmosphere that exists across the school."

Our newest BEST family members, Castle Newnham Primary and Secondary Schools, have already embraced the opportunity to introduce mindfulness into their communities. Sixteen staff members have completed the termly Foundations Course, with four progressing further to train in delivering mindfulness sessions to students. The enthusiasm among the team at Castle Newnham has been especially encouraging, and we look forward to supporting them on their journey.



"If I start with some mindfulness with myself first, it makes me stop and really listen, and gives me the energy to be open, calm and supportive."

We are incredibly proud of our growing community of mindfulness 'graduates', who have completed courses over the past five years. More than 150 school staff and leaders have explored mindfulness for themselves, with many describing it as profoundly beneficial to their wellbeing, performance, and relationships — both professionally and personally.

Last year, we extended the offer to include parents and carers. Over 50 parents took part in our programmes, with more opportunities planned for 2025/26. Feedback has been positive. One parent commented: The training supported individual wellbeing, and offered valuable tools for the challenging and rewarding role of parenting.

Looking ahead, we're excited to offer a new Mindful and Compassionate Leadership programme in Spring 2026, led by Maggie Farrar. This course will give school leaders across the Trust the opportunity to deepen their mindfulness practice. We firmly believe that leaders play a crucial role in shaping the culture and climate of our schools, and we are proud to support them in looking after themselves — so they, in turn, can support others.

Come and **be part of** the **BEST** family!

Are you a school exploring the possibility of joining a trust, or a potential recruit looking for a new challenge? We would love to hear from you!

For schools – This brochure outlines the many benefits of being part of BEST – from the high autonomy provided to Principals backed by our high-performing central team, to the economies of scale we can command, relieving ever-growing pressures on school budgets.

While there are no fixed criteria for joining, we carefully consider each partnership to ensure it serves the best interests of both the school and BEST, with the shared goal of delivering improved outcomes for young people.

If you'd like to explore becoming part of BEST, please get in touch. We'll be happy to arrange an introductory meeting with our senior executive team to discuss your options. You'll also have the opportunity to visit our schools and speak directly with our Principals to experience what it's like to be a leader within BEST.



For staff – At BEST, our vision – to grow the BEST in everyone – begins with our people. We know that exceptional education is built by exceptional staff, and we are dedicated to attracting, supporting, and developing talented professionals who share our passion for making a difference.

As a single employer, we offer a wealth of opportunities across our schools and nurseries – from outstanding professional development and wellbeing support to clear pathways for career progression. Here, your growth matters as much as our students'.

With an exciting future ahead, there has never been a better time to join us. Come and be part of our journey – and help us grow the BEST in everyone.

With almost 800 employees across Central Bedfordshire, BEST is one of the biggest employers in the area.

mynewterm

Scan the QR code to see our latest vacancies or visit www.mynewterm.com and search for the Bedfordshire Schools Trust to find our careers page.

Don't see any suitable roles? You can also join our Talent Pool to express an interest in future opportunities at BEST.





BEST

BEDFORDSHIRE
SCHOOLS TRUST

**BEST House,
Shefford Road,
Clifton,
Shefford,
Bedfordshire
SG17 5QS**

01462 811519

info@bestacademies.org.uk
www.bestacademies.org.uk

