



**Press Notice, Tuesday 19 January 2010**

## **Final green light for Bedford Academy**

The creation of the new academy in Bedford has taken several important leaps forward recently with formal approval from the government, new senior staff appointments and the ball has started rolling on the construction of the new buildings.

The sponsors, The Bedford Charity (The Harpur Trust) and Bedford College have jointly signed an agreement to fund the Academy with the Minister of State for Schools and Learners. The signing of the 'funding agreement' is a key milestone in the process of creating the Academy in September 2010.

Speaking for the Bedford Charity, its Chief Executive David Russell said *"Confirmation of the way forward is wonderful news for the pupils, parents and staff at the Academy. It will provide a fantastic environment within which learning and high quality teaching can flourish and a wide variety of choices, both academic and vocational, will be offered. The new buildings will also be an asset for the community and an inspiring example of what can be achieved."*

Ian Pryce, Chief Executive and Principal of Bedford College, commented *"It has been worth the wait to make sure the Academy will be a brand new 11 to 18 institution allowing us to give the community the high quality education parents and pupils deserve. We will continue to work hard to help the Academy get off to a flying start."*

The Bedford Academy will replace John Bunyan Upper School, which will close in August 2010 and be replaced immediately by the Academy. Pupils and staff currently at John Bunyan Upper School will automatically transfer to the Academy.

The Academy has already appointed its first Principal. Claire Smith took up post in November 2009 having been involved in transforming her two previous schools, which required special measures.

Bedford Academy has also started the New Year by appointing a senior member of staff to get the school ready for opening on time in September 2010.

Vice Principal, Robert Jaina, is looking forward to preparing the Academy for its transformation. Robert joined from a school in Essex where he was Deputy Head.

He said: *"I am inspired by the challenge of developing an outstanding curriculum which will enable Bedford Academy students to receive an innovative and exciting education."*



Academy Principal, Claire Smith said: *"I am delighted to have Robert as part of the Academy team. He brings an outstanding track record to his new role."*

The Academy is planned to have the same admissions policy and catchment area as John Bunyan Upper School and to cover the southern part of Bedford and the surrounding villages. The main feeder schools are Abbey and Harrowden Middle Schools. It is planned to open the Academy on 1 September 2010 with an admission number of 240 students each year. The Academy would open in the existing buildings and it is expected that new buildings will be constructed and ready for occupation within the 2012/2013 academic year. The new buildings would be constructed to a modern design and high standard with state of the art facilities.

The construction phase of the new Academy is progressing well with the recent completion of an options appraisal and feasibility study. Initial contact has also been made with potential building contractors and significant interest has already been shown.

[www.bedfordacademy.co.uk](http://www.bedfordacademy.co.uk)

**END**

***For press information, please contact:***

Suzanne Sharp, Communication Manager, The Bedford Charity

Tel: 01234 369535

Fax: 01234 369505

e-mail: [ssharp@harpur-trust.org.uk](mailto:ssharp@harpur-trust.org.uk)

or

Rama Venchard, Overall Project Manager, Tribal Group

Tel: 07891 749884

Fax: 020 7323 7111

e-mail: [rama.venchard@tribalgroup.co.uk](mailto:rama.venchard@tribalgroup.co.uk)

***Notes to Editors:***

1. Academies – A background: Academies are a radically new type of independent state school with a clear agenda to raise standards and to transform education in areas where current performance and opportunities are simply not good enough. They are sponsored and managed by independent sponsors and their annual revenue funding comes entirely and directly from the government. No fees are paid by parents. The government believes that 'this independent status is crucial in giving the Academy the freedom and flexibility to do whatever is necessary to provide effective teaching, 21st century learning environment, organisation,



staffing and governance.’

2. The Bedford Charity (The Harpur Trust) is one of the 200 largest charities in the UK with three charitable objectives: the promotion of education; the relief of those who are sick or in need, hardship or distress; the provision of recreational facilities with a social welfare purpose within the town of Bedford and the surrounding area. The Charity can only conduct activities in pursuit of its charitable objectives.
  - The Charity has provided grants to John Bunyan Upper School for several specialist projects over the past few years including: ICT Suite, School Counselling Partnership and Specialist School Status. Several schools and other community groups in John Bunyan’s catchment area have also received grants from the Charity for specific projects e.g. Elstow Lower School’s Early Intervention Project; Shackleton Lower School’s Creative Arts Project; equipment for Stephenson Lower School; Harrowden Middle School’s Mural Project and a visit from Children’s laureate, Michael Rosen.
  - Last year the Charity made grants of over £830,000 to local organisations, groups and individuals to support its charitable objectives.
  - The Charity administers the four main schools of the Trust; Bedford School, Bedford High School, Dame Alice Harpur School and Bedford Modern School.
  - Pilgrims Pre-Preparatory School, set up by the Charity in January 1998, is run by Harpur Pre-Preparatory Schools Ltd, a separate charitable company.
  - The Charity also provides over 40 places for frail or elderly people of the Borough in its almshouses and employs over 1400 people in the town of Bedford.
  
3. Bedford College is one of the most successful colleges of further and higher education in the country. **Bedford College recently achieved Beacon status from the Government and prior to that an outstanding Ofsted report – identifying it as one of the best further education colleges in the UK.** It is a large general further education college that enrolls over 14,000 students each year of whom 3,500 are aged 16-18 and a further 700 are aged 14-16. The college offers courses in all programme sectors except agriculture and at all levels from basic skills to university level. More students go on to university from the College than from any other educational institution in the county, nearly 500 each year. The College is a nationally accredited centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in five areas: Plumbing, Housebuilding, Sustainable Technologies, Health & Social Care and Supervisory Management.

The College has excellent leadership and management. In 2007 it was awarded 5 Star Recognition for Excellence by the British Quality Foundation and won the national award for Leadership. Its financial management is graded outstanding by the Learning & Skills Council and its advice and guidance services are fully accredited to the national Matrix standards. The College is also recognised as a



good employer, consistently awarding average pay rises above the national recommendations and showing the lowest sickness absence of any college in the Eastern region.

The College enjoys excellent and longstanding links with local employers. It is a member of the CBI and the Principal sits on the CBI Eastern Region Council. It has a number of employer advisory groups in areas such as Construction, Engineering & Aerospace, Hair & Beauty, Art & Design. The College also enjoys excellent links with the local educational community. It is represented on the local strategic 14-19 partnership and a number of school trusts.