



BSF NEWS

Building Schools for the Future Newsletter

Issue 1

Autumn Term 2007

BSF is a programme to rebuild or refurbish every secondary school in England.
The progress so far – read all about it here...

GREEN LIGHT FOR THE NEXT STAGE OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S FENLAND BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE PROJECT

There were smiles all round on 18 November at the news that Part 2 of our Strategy for Change had been approved by government. This important document is one of several that demonstrate how our ambitions for Cambridgeshire's schools and young people will be realised through the BSF project. These ambitions are included in our 'Vision for Education' a copy of which can be downloaded from our Building Schools for the Future website

weblink: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/fenlandbsf

This newsletter provides parents, staff, governors, members of the community and others working with young people in Fenland with news about this exciting project. Whilst we are all excited about this wonderful opportunity to improve secondary and special school buildings in Fenland, BSF is about much more than simply designing new buildings. In this newsletter you will see from the many interesting ways that the staff and young people in Fenland schools

are developing their ideas about how new buildings can encourage new ways of working.

This edition features articles about how BSF is affecting the six Fenland schools that will benefit from over £95 million of investment over the next few years.



- **Cromwell Community College**
- **Meadowgate School**
- **Neale-Wade Community College**
- **Sir Harry Smith Community College**
- **The Fenland Junction Pupil Referral Unit**
- **Thomas Clarkson Community College**

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE – KEY DATES

- Approval of Outline Business Case – **spring/early summer 2008**
- Preferred Bidder selected – **autumn 2009**
- Contract signed with preferred bidder to work alongside the County Council to build our new schools – called a Local Education Partnership (or LEP) - **late 2009/early 2010**
- Building starts – **at first schools in 2010**
- Building complete at all schools - **2013**

EXCITING TIMES AT MEADOWGATE

At Meadowgate School, the buzz of BSF continues to excite staff, students, governors and other stakeholders alike. Neil Sears, Headteacher describes Meadowgate's key issues.

Key issues identified early on involved the importance of:



- Environmental and sustainable factors, ensuring that all outside areas include aspects and designs of a sensory nature for students with severe, profound and multiple

learning difficulties. Pupils themselves have documented the necessity to be eco-friendly.

- Community use, including a new hydrotherapy pool and soft play and performing arts areas.
- Accessibility, including a much-improved bus and taxi circulation route and general parking facility.
- Operational efficiency, including the flexibility of buildings for multi-purpose use, especially with regards to the various agencies combining to share rooms, and the need for a radical transformation of the 'public face' including substantial improvements to the administrative offices and entrance area.

The curriculum strengths of the school drive developments to continue to improve an environment where Personalised Learning is consistently nurtured and grown, including an increased commitment to specialist provision such as TEACCH, PECS and Intensive Interaction, as well as providing an opportunity for students to gain meaningful accreditation and work related learning experiences. There also exists a large desire to create a community flavour to the school where parents/carers and members of the local community feel welcomed and appreciated.

Somewhat predictably, the thoughts and dreams of some of the pupils themselves have proven to be the most interesting and indeed radical. In answering the question 'What other buildings and facilities would you like to see for the new school?' the responses included:

- A Lego room
- Wider corridors
- Swings made for wheelchairs and special seats for those who use walking frames
- A Go-Kart track
- A room of rabbits to look after
- Inside play area for wet days
- A pink school with a yellow roof!

BSF VISION TREE AT NEALE-WADE

Following the first meeting held with staff at Neale-Wade by **Janet Morrison**, the BSF consultant appointed to help the college draw up its strategy for change, a vision tree was "planted" in the staff room. This virtual tree gives the opportunity for staff to contribute to the college vision for BSF. To date there have been a large number of suggestions mounted on the tree and staff continue to make their contributions to the ongoing discussions which are re-invigorated whenever new conceptual plans are presented by the consultant architects.



NEALE-WADE

BSF VISION MEETINGS

There have been a number of vision meetings held at school since June in which staff, students, parents and governors have been involved in working with consultants to help inform the conceptual plans that have been developed.

After a degree of soul searching an outline plan of what the new school buildings might look like has been developed. There is still a lot of development to be undertaken on these plans but they have given a good starting point for the school to think about how it might develop in the future.



“providing a good starting point for BSF in the future.”



NEALE-WADE

TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

B SF is not just about new buildings, but it is also about the **process of learning** that goes on in school. We hope that teaching and learning will be transformed at Neale-Wade over the next few years and that the new buildings that we get will help this transformation to flourish once they are opened. Staff are already beginning to think about the different ways that we can learn and teach and there are a number of projects that are already underway in this area. Gifted and Talented students in years 7 and 8 have taken part in a self-managed learning project in which they undertake deeper learning in an area of their choice. As an ICT college we are constantly looking for innovative ways in which ICT can support teaching and learning and we have, amongst other things, developed online forums and ballots, created podcasts and webcasts and set up “wikis” on particular areas of the curriculum.

KEY CONTACTS

weblink: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/fenlandbsf



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You can also email all the project team at
[**bsf@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**](mailto:bsf@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

STUDENT VOICE SPEAKS OUT ABOUT BSF!

As part of the Fenland BSF project, pupil client groups from **Neale Wade Community College** in March and **Thomas Clarkson Community College** in Wisbech were invited to spend 2 days in London with the Sorrell Foundation. In Somerset House and around the South Bank, pupils were asked to share their views about design ideas for the school of THEIR future. Amongst the top 3 on their wish lists were new style food outlets, social spaces and sustainability. Back at the school, a wider survey was carried out to check the rest of the pupils agreed. The pupil client teams also spent time photographing their school sites – the good, bad & ugly - and their local area to consider how their new buildings will fit into the community. Pupils were genuinely impressed and excited at the very real impact of this student voice consultation. “Brilliant!” was the verdict!

Janice Holdich, lead teacher, Neale Wade Community College



BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE AT SIR HARRY SMITH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Where are we now?

Sir Harry Smith is a comprehensive, specialist Maths, ICT and Science Community College of just over 1000 students, and we are expecting numbers in both the Sixth Form and the main school to grow over the next few years. The College now has an excellent reputation as a result of the impressive year on year improvements in examination results.

We aim to help our students to become responsible and articulate young adults who develop high aspirations and go on to achieve them. We support them in seeking to benefit from further studies and university level education, to prepare them for a successful entry to the world of work.

A key part of our vision is to use Building Schools for the Future to help us to transform learning for the whole community of Whittlesey and the surrounding district. The College will become a focus of exciting opportunities for all as we provide practical, vocational and academic courses to enable all students to achieve their full potential.

“a strong focus on further developing academic excellence.”

Building Schools for the Future

We expect to have a very significant sum of money to spend on buildings at the College so we need to get it right! At present we are in the early stage of developing ideas and will be consulting widely before those ideas get too firmly set in stone (or brick or concrete, depending on our architects!) – we do not expect building to actually start on site until 2010. We already know, however, that we must make provision for changes to the curriculum that will be taking place over the next few years. In particular this will include vocational facilities for new 14-19 Diploma courses that will complement the progress in academic provision for post-16 students.

One possible development centres on the Performing Arts, to include music, multimedia, dance and drama, and this could improve the facilities available to the community. Our status as a Specialist College gives a strong focus for further developing academic excellence.

This means priority must be given to providing high quality science and ICT facilities. More flexible teaching spaces will support our commitment to the delivery of teaching closely

matched to the needs of each individual, with vocational and academic pathways available for students to choose from. We would also like to create a centre for independent post-16 learning where students can spend social and study time as they complete KS5 exams and follow courses that include private study and research. This centre could be based on a University ethos, with work tables and ICT provision plus a small bistro facility and social spaces.

Social environment

The social aspects of school are important for developing the sense of community and responsibility. The school will require attractive ‘inside/out’ areas that promote good student circulation and are easy to manage for staff.

A purpose-built dining facility with a restaurant feel will be an essential part of this vision, along with high quality toilet facilities that promote the students’ well-being and safety. The school has struggled over recent years as the hall has doubled up as a dining facility and exams area.

A new dining facility will enable the hall to be used much more effectively for learning activities, particularly in the performing arts.

Extending the provision to the wider community

There is a desire to build on the ‘extended school’ aspect of Sir Harry Smith Community College, as Whittlesey would benefit from a centre of learning that offers sports facilities, cybercafé and learning opportunities to adults within and beyond school hours. Indeed, increased use of the site by the local community will be a key measure of the success of this project for the people of Whittlesey. In this way the school could become the learning ‘hub’ of Whittlesey and further development of the multi-agency services on site would be an additional benefit for all students and families.

Further consultation

This article represents some of the ideas developed by staff, students and governors in partnership with County Council officers. However, we are still at an early stage in the process and will value comments from parents and other members of the community about the direction that Building Schools for the Future should take at Sir Harry Smith.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE AT SIR HARRY SMITH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Jacob Church and Rosie Curtis – Head Boy and Head Girl at Sir Harry Smith Community College give their views

Currently at **Sir Harry Smith Community College**, we find that we have no real place to eat at dinner. Instead, we all pull out chairs and sit around the hall – the same hall used for assemblies, performance evenings and presentations. The fact is, it doesn't even seem like a canteen, it feels more like an exam for 35 minutes of every day. We think that this needs changing and given its own area so students can take a break from lessons.

An idea put forward by Building Schools for the Future was to have small areas for students to socialize in at break and dinner. Last year, during the exam period when the hall was in use, a few rooms were set aside and utilized at lunchtime, so small groups could sit together. This worked really well and the rooms used had a really nice, friendly atmosphere. If possible we would like to have something like this to be a permanent feature of the school for students in all years.

Once again on the social side of the school, we feel that the crush hall needs attention. On a wet, cold, miserable day students are crammed into this space and it ends up being very loud and, by the end of break, quite messy. Managing it is not only a nightmare for teachers, but also for any prefects on duty that day. However, we do believe that it is important for students to have spaces like this – where people can mingle in large groups. It also provides the centre of the school – there's a corridor leading to just about every department off the crush hall, which makes it easy to get around. We feel that the way forward is a similar kind of space, but somehow make it large enough to fit vast quantities of students while being easier to keep under control.

One of the things that we feel needs attention is the stage. The stage doubles as a storage



room, which causes a great deal of hassle, often prevents practical learning and getting people used to talking in front of an audience.

In general people work better in an environment where they feel comfortable. Because of this, we think it's vital for the school to look bright and cheerful all around: a simple splash of paint could help to raise those grades from Ds to Bs. That said, one of the things that our school does well is display boards. There are a number of these dotted around the school that really add colour, as well as give information to students.

Perhaps one of the things that most students would really like to change is the toilets. The issue is that these are frequently closed for cleaning or repairs, and, when open, are often lacking in basic essentials such as soap dispensers, locks and toilet roll. Because the conditions of the toilets throughout the school have been poor it means that many students simply don't want to use them. This isn't good! We also think that better toilets would reduce the likelihood of vandalism that can sometimes make the conditions worse for everyone.

Over the last few years, since we started at this school, there have been a number of improvements made that have been very successful. An example of this is the interactive white board. There is now one of these installed in just about every classroom, and they really do work. They allow a teacher to summon up the internet at any point for research or clarification, a number of subjects can use prepared interactive worksheets or presentations, and if the class happens to watch an educational video they can stay in their seats rather than having to shift a bit closer to a tiny TV at the front of the room.

We have also had some new science rooms built, as well as two additional department blocks – one for English and the Learning Resource Centre, and another for Design and Technology (DT). These new spaces are a great improvement; they are brighter, more comfortable places and, particularly in DT, much more suited for their purpose. The library, for example, is now much larger, allowing it to accommodate three classes at once, as well as a large number of new computers and all the books necessary.



THE CROMWELL APPROACH...

Assistant Principal, Charlie Robinson, reflects on Cromwell Community College's approach to Building Schools for the Future.

Since I joined Cromwell as Head of PE in 1983, when 11-16 education in Fenland was reorganised, the school has grown in numbers significantly; to at least double its population. We are an improving and successful school, in spite of our accommodation, not because of it.

The building of new rooms to accommodate the increasing population since that time has taken up a great deal of the 'free' space and has reduced the 'play' and 'social' space available to the pupils.

Classrooms have been built on both sides of corridors only designed to hold pupils from 4 classes now have to cope with pupils from 8 classes.

Over the period of this growth, the foot print of the site has not increased and hence has become more and more congested.

In consultation with our staff, governing body and student council members, this is what we hope Building Schools for the Future will give us -

- A rationalised site
- A site that is easy to move around
- A site where people feel safe
- A site where there are adequate social spaces
- A site that is in keeping with the style of Cromwell
- Large teaching spaces with plenty of light that allow teachers to teach and pupils to learn in a variety of ways
- A site that will allow for Post-16 studies in appropriate learning spaces
- Adequate dining areas for the pupils and staff to eat
- Areas for staff to meet others and to socialise with colleagues
- Modern specialist teaching areas to inspire our pupils and staff
- Re-establish the College as a place for the community
- In conjunction with Chatteris Town Council, improve the sporting facilities

We are hoping that this investment will allow us to meet as many of the above targets as Building Bulletin 98 (a document used in determining shape, size and design of schools) will allow. Without a doubt Cromwell is moving forward with its Post-16 and vocational provision, BSF can only help and support us in this.



“the numbers have increased, to at least double its population.”

BUILDING A WEBSITE FOR THE FUTURE



weblink: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/fenlandbsf

Launched in September, our **new look website** aims to be a one stop shop of information for school staff, students, parents, potential bidders for the project and the wider community. It provides up to date information on Building Schools for the Future; the exciting redesign and development of Fenland's secondary and special schools, and the Pupil Referral Unit.

We welcome your views and suggestions on the website. Please email bsf@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

SCHOOL COMMUNITIES HAVE THEIR SAY

During October and November, each of the schools involved in Building Schools for the Future held a **special event** inviting the school community to view and comment on proposed plans. We were grateful for the ideas that came from these meetings and feedback will be used to ensure final plans reflect the needs and aspirations of the schools and their communities.



Updates from these events are available on the BSF website, under the 'News and Events' heading.

All of the documents submitted to the government are available on our website, under 'Vision'.

MEET THE PROGRAMME BOARD

Overseeing the Building Schools for the Future project, the **BSF Programme Board** includes key individuals who collectively make strategic decisions to deliver the project on budget and on time.

They also approve:

- the Strategy for Change and Outline Business Cases before they are submitted to the Government
- the short-list of bidders
- all contractual documentation
- the Preferred Bidder
- the Final Business Case



If you have any queries regarding the work of the programme board, please contact Liz Waring on 01223 699265 or email liz.waring@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

The Programme Board includes the following individuals:

PROGRAMME BOARD MEMBERS

Gordon Jeyes (Chair)	Deputy Chief Executive, Office of Children and Young People's Services (OCYPS), CCC
Cllr Martin Ballard	Labour Opposition Spokesperson for Children and Young People's Services
Hazel Belchamber	Head of Infrastructure, OCYPS, CCC
Mike Davey	Area Director, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland, OCYPS, CCC
Nick Dawe	Director of Finance and Performance, Office of Corporate Services, CCC
Jim Doherty	Chair of Governors at Neale-Wade Community College
Jon Duveen	Chair of Teachers Consultative Committee and NUT County Secretary
Jill Francis	Vice Principal, College of West Anglia
Peter Gaskin	Assistant Branch Secretary, Unison
Tim Farr	Head of Legal Services, CCC
Cllr David Harty	BSF Design Champion and Lead Member for Service Infrastructure
Tim Hitch	Principal, Neale Wade Community College
Steve Johnson	Fenland Business Forum
Cllr Anne Kent	Lib Dem Opposition Spokesperson for Children and Young People's Services
Adrian Loades	Director of Planning and Development, OCYPS, CCC
John Peberdy	Cambridgeshire PCT
Tim Pilsbury	Chief Executive, Fenland District Council
Cllr Jill Tuck	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services
Helen Whiter	Director of Learning, OCYPS
Brian Williams	Partnership for Schools Adviser

THE PROGRAMME BOARD IS SUPPORTED BY

Kevin Manley	Project Director
Alan Kippax	Programme Manager
Sam McLaughlin	Education Officer
Liz Waring	Project Support Officer

THOMAS CLARKSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE – NEW AND IMPROVED!

Thomas Clarkson Community College began life in existing old school buildings on 1st September 2007. We are all very excited that hot on the heels of this will come new buildings completed in just 4 years time.

“we also want a real wow factor.”

We have had many challenging but upbeat discussions as a school over the past few months as to how our school could be organised in the future and therefore how the new buildings can help. We are keeping firmly focused on our curriculum needs, our pastoral needs and our community needs so the new buildings properly reflect them. We hope gone will be the days when we have to work round our building limitations – we must make the new buildings work for us!

We are a very large 11-16 school and plan to become an 11-18 school within two years. With almost 1,400 students on roll forecast to rise to some 1,650, we are keen that BSF will give us the buildings to offer a “human size” education to all our students.

BSF is about the future and we have been thinking hard about how education could be delivered in 30 or 40 years time – and we don’t have the help of a crystal ball! Just thinking about where ICT was 30 years ago reminds us how far we may be going over the next 30 years.



Our hopes for the new buildings are many including...

- Our long narrow corridors replaced with softer, more friendly spaces
- Pupil movement between lessons being kept to a minimum
- ICT playing a more integrated role in learning and teaching than it currently does
- A greater variety of social spaces for students, staff and the community
- Staying warm and dry as we move around the buildings during the day
- Canteens amongst the nicest and most varied eating places in Wisbech
- Being the key focal point for many community learning and social activities before, after and during the normal school day
- State of the art security and improved parking facilities.

We have held presentations for the local community as it is vital local ideas and needs are incorporated into our new buildings. What about a purpose built performing arts centre for music, drama and lectures? What about engineering facilities for local training needs? These are just two of many ideas mentioned and we are still open for more. Do come and talk to us!

We also want a real “wow factor” for what the buildings will look like. Will we be the first school building in Cambridgeshire at which passers by will actually draw breath? We hope so very much.

‘we are keeping firmly focussed on our curriculum and pastoral needs.’

THOMAS CLARKSON STUDENTS GET INVOLVED IN BSF



Twelve students representing every year group in the school have got enthusiastically involved in BSF design. Two trips to the Sorrell Foundation in London with more work to come has helped the students decide on their top priorities for the new school. Jonathan Peryer, Director of Resources has been working with the students helping them organise their ideas, accompanying them to London and taking them on a local visit to look at examples of good and not so good building design in Wisbech.

Look out for details of a celebration event where students from Thomas Clarkson and Neale-Wade Community College will present their work. More details will be made available soon.

The students commented how important it is for the buildings to look good, so it feels good to look at them and they can be proud and privileged to be educated in them.

Nice bright colours in the classrooms with plenty of light – as well as being able to shut out the light are also important to the students. The students are still working on their ideas and will be celebrating their work at a local presentation in the not too distant future. We don't want to spoil their evening by giving too much away at this time – so watch this space for further updates! Every one of the twelve students involved is working hard and is a real credit to themselves, their families and the school. The whole school community can be proud of what they are doing.



FENLAND JUNCTION: A NEW BUILD FOR A NEW VISION

The Fenland Junction is a Key Stage four Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in March which provides an educational programme for students who are in danger of exclusion from mainstream schools within Fenland. We are currently housed within the old grammar school building in Station Road in March. This Victorian building is beautiful on the outside but less than perfect inside!! We were therefore thrilled to learn that as part of the Fenland BSF programme, plans are in place to build a new PRU.



A new site has not yet been identified; however several meetings with students, staff and other stakeholders have helped develop a vision of what we would like. Our students have been instrumental in this, canvassing the views of staff and presenting them to the meeting. Top of the list is a sports area (both indoors and outdoors) and workshops to allow us to extend our vocational education offer.

Working with our educational consultant Jackie Beere, staff have begun to think about the type of curriculum we would like to offer in 2011 +. We would like to make the Fenland Junction a centre of excellence in preparing students for adult life by encompassing some of the innovative thinking around the 'studio schools' model proposed by the Young Foundation. The model aims to allow students to learn and gain qualifications alongside working in and running real business activities within the school. This would mean that the students would take part in the business of the school such as the hiring out of facilities, print contracts, catering

facilities. The importance of a professional business feel to the design of the new 'centre for learning' would be a crucial part of this new vision for the Fenland Junction. Combining the environment of school and work will help students have an opportunity to make the crucial transition into the world of work.

BSF has provided us with a real opportunity to question what we do and why we do it and to develop a curriculum and building suited to the needs of our students.

Caroline Barnes, Headteacher

“we would like to make the Fenland Junction a centre of excellence in preparing students for adult life.”

BSF News is produced by

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