



Press Notice, Thursday 25 June 2009

## Appointment of Academy's first Principal Designate

It's another step forward for the Bedford Academy, with the appointment of its first Principal. **Claire Smith will take up post in January 2010**, having been involved in transforming her two previous schools, which were in "special measures". Claire has a clear understanding of what makes a successful school, with personalised learning and high expectations key to raising standards. She was part of the team that led Hartshill School to an improving three year trend with their best ever GCSE results in all measures in 2008.

*"We are delighted with our choice of Claire Smith as Principal Designate for the Academy. She clearly has the determination, knowledge and track record to seize the opportunity and get the Academy off to a flying start"*. said David Russell, Chief Executive of the Bedford Charity.

Ian Pryce, Chief Executive and Principal of Bedford College, commented *"The College is delighted at Claire's appointment. We are looking forward to working closely with her and the Academy. Claire expressed a strong commitment to our vision for the Academy and to making it an outstanding institution and we will offer her whatever support she needs to achieve that goal."*

Bedford Academy will open to its **first intake of Year 9 students in September 2010**, and will start taking applications next autumn.

Claire Smith said, *"Having seen the plans for the Academy, I am delighted to be the one leading the school. We are already planning Open Evenings in the coming months, and I look forward to telling existing and prospective students, parents and carers more about the fantastic education we will be able to offer to local children."*

At the Bedford Borough Council's Executive Committee meeting of 24 June, formal **approval was given for John Bunyan Upper School to close** on 31 August 2010 and re-open as the Bedford Academy on 1 September 2010.

Final confirmation that the Academy can proceed will be obtained when the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Sponsors sign the Funding Agreement, which formally commits both parties to building the new Academy. It is hoped that this can be achieved in the autumn of this year.



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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 on the John Bunyan site, 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.

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

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***Notes to Editors:***

1. Claire Smith is available for interview to provide more information on the aims, ethics and aspirations of the new Academy. Please contact the Academy on the above numbers to make arrangements.
2. An Open Evening, giving local people the opportunity to find out more about the Academy will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009. Further news releases will be issued nearer the time.
3. 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



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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.’

4. 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.
  
5. Bedford College is one of the most successful colleges of further and higher education in the country. **Bedford College recently achieved 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.