



ADVANTAGE
SCHOOLS

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5th April 2019

Dear Parents, Carers and Pupils,

As you will be aware, Bedford Free School and Elstow School make up the multi-academy trust (MAT), Advantage Schools. This is a charity run by a Board of Directors, who do so on a voluntary basis. The Board of Directors at Advantage Schools is world-class, and has a wealth of educational, business and public sector experience on it.

When I was appointed to lead Bedford Free School and Advantage Schools in September 2017, I was asked to do two things by the Directors of the trust. These were to ensure the smooth transition from the leadership of the founder, Mark Lehain, who had really stamped his mark on the school, and to develop the trust to be able to be a lead player in the school system in the coming years. I was therefore appointed to two roles: Executive Principal of Advantage Schools and Principal of Bedford Free School.

As we approach our second set of results since I joined the school, I hope you will agree that the good school I inherited has gone from strength to strength. We now have a national profile, excellent outcomes and a very good reputation locally – including nearly 400 applications for our 100 places.

More than half of the children in the national school system are now educated in Academies, run by charities such as Advantage Schools, rather than Local Authority-run schools. As the Academy system continues to grow over the next few years, we believe that a relatively small number of MATs will be more influential. It is very important to the Directors of Advantage Schools that the values and vision that we exemplify at Advantage Schools and BFS are a part of this system.

The Directors have therefore asked me to focus on the growth of the Trust and in order to do this effectively, I need to focus on the role of Executive Principal of Advantage Schools and step away from the day-to-day running of BFS.

We have thought carefully as to how to manage this change to ensure there is no impact on the education of young people at BFS. As a result will be rearranging the leadership at the school as follows:

Mr Blake will become permanent Principal of Bedford Free School.

T: 01234 332277 E: info@advantageschools.co.uk Advantage Schools, 12-16 Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AD

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Mrs Herron, who has been so instrumental in the role of Head of School over more than two years, has chosen to go back to the role of Deputy Principal.

Mrs Foley will continue in her role as Assistant Principal.

We will be appointing an additional member of the Leadership Team at BFS in the coming half term.

There will be no changes to the leadership at our other school in the MAT, Elstow School.

These changes will take place from May half term.

I am delighted with the changes. Mr Blake, alongside Mrs Herron, have been instrumental in the establishment and development of BFS since the start in 2012. I have absolute confidence that with the increased leadership capacity, BFS will go from genuine strength to further strength. There is a very strong leadership team in place, some of the best teachers I've ever had the pleasure of working with, and a pupil body and community really determined to make the biggest difference possible.

While it means that I will 'step-back' from a day-to-day role at BFS, I will still be here. You can still expect to see me at BFS regularly, at least in the short-term. I will still be heavily involved with the leadership of the school. Pupils will still see me in classrooms and taking 'morning address' occasionally – something I really love. But I will have the capacity to work with Governors and Directors of this school and others to really spread the phenomenal education we offer to BFS externally. However, the responsibility for BFS from May half-term will be the Senior Leadership Team's, led by Mr Blake.

I don't believe there will be any significant impact on pupils or families. BFS will continue to run as it did before, with firm standards of discipline, an academic curriculum, and great opportunities for all. If you do have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the school.

With very best wishes,

Stuart Lock
Executive Principal