Celebrating Success

Bedford Borough Council became a unitary authority in April 2009, as part of a series of local government reorganisations across the country. It is as a unitary authority, we are responsible for all local government functions within our geographical boundaries – which includes education.

To achieve the step-change that was desired we needed to address three problems.

First, we needed better space. This was because of years of under-investment by the Council which meant that many schools were working with wholly inadequate accommodation, including a plethora of temporary and mobile classrooms.

Second, we needed to provide more space. This was because the population of Bedford was (and is) growing. This growth in population numbers was putting significant pressure on class sizes and the overall capacities of schools.

Third, we had to do more with less. Bedford Borough Council were due to receive £326m through ‘Building Schools for the Future’ but unfortunately this funding stream was withdrawn in 2010. Therefore, we needed better space, more of it and for less money than was ‘normal’. It was clear that the council had to do something drastically different.

This report celebrates the success that Bedford Borough Council has had in solving our education property problems. We have achieved this by watching the pennies and setting difficult challenges that we have worked through with a team of experts. I am sure you will agree, we are now in much better place to help our young people succeed too.

In challenging financial times, we are committed to support pupils to achieve the best education possible.
Increasing demands to deliver more with less

“The remarkable progress achieved by Bedford Borough’s schools in recent years has been confirmed in emphatic fashion by the most recent Ofsted inspection figures. With which we are delighted that Bedford Borough now one of the top 10 best places in the country for Lower and Primary schools.

The ranking is based on the proportion of children attending good or outstanding Lower/Primary schools, with a massive 94.7% of children reported as being in such schools in Bedford Borough in May 2015.

To have so many schools judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted is a real achievement.”

Bedford Borough Council is fully committed to retaining our position as the best education authority in the country. In order to maintain, and indeed improve the way we educate our young people, we have to work with the best people. This report shows how we have made a £35m budget pressure into a success story that delivers the 35% cost savings demanded by central government of any public body procuring construction works. It also shows how we are delivering on the promise to provide permanent buildings rather than temporary mobile classrooms to educate our young people.

Rising pupil numbers, reflecting a population growth of 0.7% for every year between 2001 and 2013 has placed significant strain on our schools. Equally, the legacy of temporary mobile classrooms and a high maintenance backlog meant that many teaching spaces were wholly unsuitable for the modern age and curriculum. Finally, the inordinate cost to put matters right was £85m but the budget was just £51m. The schemes were delivered on time and on budget.

In challenging financial times, we are committed to supporting pupils in Bedford Borough to achieve the best possible education outcomes, guided by the principles of strengthening partnerships. The council will always work hard to make the best use of the resources available for building and improving schools.

Strong partnerships, outstanding results

The council’s vision is that every child should be educated in outstanding quality teaching and learning space. Equally, every school staff member should be able to work in buildings that do not get in the way of the overall aim of raising standards of teaching and learning.

Clearly, this was a significant challenge given that demand for funds far exceeded the available supply. At this point, the council decided to change the way it sought bidders for construction schemes and turned to Scape Group.

Scape is a public sector-owned built environment specialist offering a full suite of national frameworks and innovative design solutions. All Scape contracts are already fully compliant with OJEU regulations.

Bedford Borough Council now procures all of its school construction schemes in partnership with Scape. Initially, the scheme was based on Scape’s system build technology and used in delivering 420 new place schools plus a 30 place nursery at both Great Denham and Shortsbrook Primary schools.

Further schemes benefited from Scape’s innovative pre-designed solutions such as ConnectEd and Sunesis, through to the new off-site manufactured ConnectUp.

This report looks at a number of the schemes in detail, from single classrooms through to complete new schools.

Other schools within the borough will soon benefit from similar solutions, as we continue our programme of replacing temporary and inappropriate school buildings. We are confident that these schools will enjoy the same successes that have been achieved so far and are able to teach in modern, flexible and exciting buildings.

We would like to thank Scape Group for its support in helping to deliver the outstanding results that have been achieved so far, and thank teachers and pupils for bringing our vision to life, improving the education that our young people receive in Bedford Borough.

Remarkable progress achieved by Bedford Borough’s schools in recent years

“The pupils take a real pride in their new buildings, and this is reflected in their positive approaches to lessons.”

Mrs Headland, Headteacher Cotton End Lower School
Celebrating Success

TIMELINE

ACHIEVEMENTS 2011-2015

On track to deliver
1,380
places by 2017

On track to deliver
420
places by 2016

2011-2015

23 Projects

23 Projects On Site

23 Projects Complete

KEY
Celebrating Success

This equals 100 pupil visits to each school

1,142
PUPILS WENT ON SITE VISITS

231
APPRENTICE WEEKS
Helping young adults to take the next step into the construction industry

122
WORK EXPERIENCE WEEKS
Allowing 9-14 year olds the chance to explore options for their future

3,000
TOTAL PUPIL PLACES PROVIDED SO FAR

“Plenty of display space, lots of storage and great access to the outdoors. No need for ramps, so access for persons with disabilities or mobility difficulties is no problem whatsoever.”

Mrs Headland, Headteacher
Cotton End Lower School

KPIs

PUPIL PLACES

APPRENTICES

WORK EXPERIENCE
£1 local spend equates to £3 retained in the local economy

“Parents are queuing up to volunteer to help at these great schools”

“The overall design allows different teaching styles, as there is ample space to arrange furniture in differing ways, or use carpet time for story telling or briefing children at the start of each session.”

Mrs Corinne Royden, Headteacher
Harrold Lower School
The acoustics are excellent, and children have responded to this by showing increased levels of concentration and attention to their lessons.

Mrs Angela Stanbridge, Headteacher
Kempston Rural School
See the successes and evidence from our school visits

The new accommodation has many benefits:

- The headteacher describes it as perfect in every way, being an entirely self-sufficient teaching space. This view was enthusiastically endorsed by the class teacher and support assistant.
- There is plenty of display space available, meaning that the classroom is very colourful and exciting.
- Excellent acoustics... teaching staff do not have to raise or strain their voices, and children are able to fully participate in lessons.
- Feedback from the school team:
  - The headteacher reported that the children are much calmer in their new classbase, and more able to concentrate on their lessons. Equally, the space is great for teachers and support staff compared with what went before.

Mrs Marianne Allen, Headteacher

"The children are much calmer in their new classbase, and more able to concentrate on their lessons."

Mrs Marianne Allen, Headteacher, Springfield Lower School

CASE STUDY
Springfield Lower School

REQUIREMENT
The previous space was far too cramped, leading to unsatisfactory teaching conditions for both the Year 1/2 and Reception classes. The school is facing significant pressures from rising pupil numbers so the extra classbase has provided welcome relief from pressure on space.

SOLUTION
The school now has a single Connect classroom that is used to provide additional accommodation for Year 1/2 pupils. Previously, these children were taught in a sectioned-off area of the Reception classroom.

HANDOVER
The new classroom was handed over to the school in October 2014, and has been in full use since that date.

Mrs Marianne Allen, Headteacher

“The children are much calmer in their new classbase, and more able to concentrate on their lessons.”
The new accommodation has many benefits:

- It is bright, airy and welcoming, leading to a perfect teaching environment. – Mrs Karen Headland, Headteacher.

The school has been provided with four temporary accommodation.

- It provides very well, as the walls are strongly enough to carry touchscreen displays. This was not the case in the mobile classrooms, meaning that teachers struggling to utilise the latest technology.
- There is plenty of display space, lots of storage and great access to the outdoors. There is no need for ramps, so access for people with disabilities or mobility difficulties is no problem whatsoever.
- The pupils take a real pride in their new buildings, and this is reflected in their positive approaches to lessons.
- The floor to ceiling windows are particularly positive approaches to lessons.
- The pupils enjoy the new buildings, and this is reflected in their positive approaches to lessons.
- The pupils need their individual space could be easily accessed.
- The classroom and learning environment.
- IT provision is greatly improved, as are the floor to ceiling windows. This was not the case in traditional mobile classrooms and this is reflected in their positive approaches to lessons.
- There is plenty of display space, lots of storage and great access to the outdoors.
- The underfloor heating system is great, leading to a perfect teaching environment.
The new accommodation has many benefits:

• The overall design allows different teaching styles as there is ample space to arrange furniture in differing ways, or use carpet time for story telling or briefing children at the start of each session.

• The underfloor heating works very well, and children take off their shoes and sometimes their socks, as the floor is comfortably warm. This degree of comfort also aids carpet time.

• Access to the outside is greatly improved, as the floor to ceiling windows give great lines of sight and this makes supervision so much easier. These very young pupils are able to play outside, within a fenced area and move easily in and out of the building.

• Equally, the absence of any need for access ramps means that entry and exit is very easy.

• The headteacher commented on the wonderful light levels and the feeling of volume – very different to that experienced in the mobile classrooms.

• There is great display space, with many colourful examples of the children’s work.

• IT provision is much better, meaning that teachers can use it to play a full part in lessons.

Access to the outside is greatly improved, as the floor to ceiling windows give great lines of sight and this makes supervision so much easier.

Feedback from the school team and parents:

• The headteacher, class teachers and teaching assistants are absolutely delighted with the new accommodation which, to quote the headteacher has “totally transformed the way we do things.”

• The new accommodation has totally transformed the way we do things. Another teacher commented that it was like moving from the 1930s into the 21st century.

One particular benefit of having a dedicated base was that they could now concentrate on teaching and learning, rather than spend time at the end of each session packing away equipment so that the village hall could be used for other activities.

One particular benefit of having a dedicated base was that they could now concentrate on teaching and learning.

Case Study

Harrold Lower School

Mrs Corinne Royden, Headteacher

Requirement

The previous double mobile classroom displayed all the problems associated with such inappropriate accommodation. They were too cold in winter and too hot in summer. They were compacted, and had a lack of flexibility in teaching style or furniture layout. IT provision was limited as the walls were not strong enough to bear the weight of any significant touchscreens or boards.

Solution

The school has a new three class Connect solution. Two of the classes replace an old double mobile classroom, and an extension provides a pre-school facility that was previously using the nearby village hall.

Handover

Work was completed in September 2014, and the new accommodation has been in use since that date. The first-class block currently houses the youngest children within school, Reception and Year 1 children, with a pre-school facility in the single classroom.

The headteacher commented on behalf of the pre-school, noting that they were equally delighted with their new facility. One particular benefit of having a dedicated base was that they could now concentrate on teaching and learning, rather than spend time at the end of each session packing away equipment so that the village hall could be used for other activities.

The Connect design provides personal space adjacent to the main classrooms so no child needs to feel stigmatised or different just because they may need some dedicated teaching support.

IT provision is much better, meaning that teachers can use it to play a full part in lessons.

…”It was like moving from the 1930s into the 21st century.”

Teacher, Harrold Lower School

…”The new accommodation has totally transformed the way we do things.”

Mrs Corinne Royden, Headteacher, Harrold Lower School...

…”The new accommodation has totally transformed the way we do things.”

Teacher, Harrold Lower School...
CASE STUDY
Kempston Rural School

Mrs Angela Stanbridge, Headteacher

REQUIREMENT
This expansion replaces a much smaller school located about a mile away from the new site. The school was in need of expansion to serve both an existing community and families from a significant adjacent housing development.

SOLUTION
A two form-entry (FE) Sunesis Keynes school that can accommodate 420 pupils and has a nursery facility.

HANDOVER
This wonderful new building was handed over to the school in July 2014, and has been in use since that date. The school is gradually expanding to 2FE from the bottom up – in other words, the increased intake is largely only reflected in the youngest age groups.

Parental involvement and participation has improved, and this is a significant development as evidence elsewhere shows that parental and family involvement in a child’s education brings many positive benefits to the child.

Parental involvement and participation has improved, and this is a significant development as evidence elsewhere shows that parental and family involvement in a child’s education brings many positive benefits to the child.

Feedback from the school team and parents:
• Parental involvement and participation has improved, and this is a significant development as evidence elsewhere shows that parental and family involvement in a child’s education brings many positive benefits to the child. A recent session whereby parents came in to school to support the children in a maths lesson then developed into a session for parents where they were shown how modern maths is now taught. The headteacher commented, “This is absolutely brilliant!”

“The new accommodation has many benefits:
• The sheer scale of the building is almost breathtaking. High ceilings in the learning street, large windows and rooflights, and the bi-folding doors at each end give a feeling of volume and space with terrific light levels.
• The acoustic are excellent, and children have responded to this by showing increased levels of concentration and attention to their lessons.
• The learning street is a wonderful asset to the school. Pupils are encouraged to develop independent learning styles by moving between the classrooms and the learning street, all within a safe and secure environment. The learning street enables them to take responsibility for their own learning, while observing and learning from what is going on around them. In effect, it is a natural extension of their classroom, giving those that want it, or can cope with it, a degree of freedom.
• Furthermore, the dedicated cooking area has enabled staff to raise the profile of this topic and, in fact, part of the curriculum has changed out of all recognition with what happened previously. The school was limited to cooking lessons using a microwave oven. The pupils are now able to cook cakes, biscuits and such like. The cookery area has also proved a boost for the After School Club.
• The space within the learning street has enabled the school to hold events such as the Christmas Fair, which took up the whole of the street but without disturbing the classrooms. Equally, the internal access controls enable events such as a MacMillan coffee morning to be held in school time, again without disturbing the pupils or lessons.

The new accommodation has many benefits:
• The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodation has many benefits:
  • The new accommodat...
Previous issues:

• The mobile classrooms were poorly situated in a slight hollow, which filled with water during wet weather. Mud and other rubbish naturally accumulated in the area, giving a poor impression to users and visitors to the school.

• They were damp and cold in winter, with erratic heating and air-conditioning. Conversely, they were too hot in summer as they lacked adequate insulation and ventilation, coupled with flat roofs.

• Access for people with disabilities was poor, as access ramps were needed to the main entrance. Internally, space was tight meaning that mobility issues became a real problem.

• IT was particularly difficult to manage as the school use laptops on a trolley. Moving these from the main school into the mobile classrooms resulted in damage due to the uneven surfaces whilst travelling up and down the access ramps.

• The toilets were particularly difficult to clean and keep pleasant smelling.

• The cramped lobby that served as access, cloakroom, toilet area and breakout space was far too small. It was generally contaminated with the smell from the toilets.

• The floor was “soft and bouncy” leading to a suspicion that it lacked sufficient bracing and this resulted in a form of motion sickness for some children.

The new accommodation has many benefits:

• It has a light, airy and spacious feeling, with great windows that stretch from floor to ceiling and a good ceiling height.

• Underfloor heating throughout adds “carpet time”, as the floor is no longer cold and damp, and frees up wall space with the absence of radiators. This enables teachers to vary their teaching styles, and have different learning landscapes.

• IT provision is much better with the latest projection equipment and boards on the teaching wall and ample power and data sockets throughout.

• The spacious entrance lobby easily accommodates the cloakroom, toilet access and two breakout spaces for one-to-one support. Previously, one-to-one sessions took place outside the toilets, in the headteacher’s office or staff room.

• There is no need for access ramps, which eradicates problems for users with mobility problems or the transportation of IT and other resources.

The new facilities treat all users with respect.

• The spacious entrance lobby easily accommodates the cloakroom, toilet access and has발터 표준 크로스를 위한 공간을 마련한 것입니다. 이렇게 함으로써, 교사의 가족들이 교육을 받는 동안에도 편안한 환경을 제공할 수 있습니다.

• The external area is maximised by the thoughtful location of the block that has, in turn, released space for the creation of an outdoor seating and breakout space.

Overall, the school are delighted with their new accommodation and it has made a real difference to the teaching environment.

Feedback from the school team:

• Overall, the school are delighted with their new accommodation and it has made a real difference to the teaching environment.

Wootton Lower School

Mr Chris Taverner, Headteacher

The new accommodation was handed over on 2nd April 2014, and has been in full use since that date. Currently there are Year 4 classes in occupation.