

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **'State education is in crisis...inaction is not an option'. Guy Claxton, 2008**

Lee Ryman and Sharon Julian are experienced former state school teachers who care passionately about primary education and are determined to change the way our education system works. They have seen at first-hand the damage an out-dated, test-driven model can have on children of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. The approach is not working: the UK is significantly outperformed academically by other countries and has some of the unhappiest children in the industrialised world.

In addition, Lee and Sharon became aware that factors such as inadequate parenting, unstimulating use of technology and unhealthy diets have contributed towards an alarming number of children with a range of mental health problems, physical issues and special needs. Unhappy children do not thrive, emotionally or intellectually, find it difficult to contribute to a society they believe has given them nothing and risk spiralling towards self-destructive or anti-social behaviour. Deeply concerned, impatient for change and having lost confidence in the Government's ability to address these matters, Lee and Sharon resigned from their senior posts to set up a pioneering alternative primary school which as it develops, they hope may influence practice elsewhere.

Committed to providing high quality education but anxious not to charge fees, Lee and Sharon have formed a registered charity, The Treehouse Trust, to enable them to establish a small school in Cholsey, Oxfordshire. The Treehouse School is to be a small research-based primary school, independent of Local Authority or Government control, for children aged four to eleven. Initially catering for fifteen children, they hope eventually to expand in order to offer up to sixty children, a setting in which they can thrive and achieve outcomes that far exceed those found in the mainstream, offering an alternative route to acquiring the skills, knowledge and qualities needed for a successful future. Drawing upon their extensive experience, best practice and the latest research, and in an area with an expanding population with parents looking for educational alternatives, Lee and Sharon are confident that The Treehouse School will be successful.

The Treehouse School is unique: its origins, priorities, educational approach, benefits for children, and freedom from the restrictions that other schools face mean that there is no other like it in the United Kingdom. However this comes at a cost: the school does not attract public funding, is determined to being non fee paying, and so will be totally dependent on fundraising, grants and donations. The School's initial running costs for fifteen children will be £50,000 annually with additional capital costs to fund premises and resources; running costs for the ultimate goal of sixty children is anticipated to be in the region of £250,000. Whilst this represents excellent value for money, in the current financial climate Lee and Sharon realise that financing the school is going to be their biggest challenge.

Undeterred, with assistance they have produced this business plan in order to demonstrate that The Treehouse School is a viable option and to make readers sufficiently confident so that they might, either personally or through the organisation they represent, offer financial support to the school.