

Bootham School Report to Quakers in Yorkshire  
October 17<sup>th</sup> 2020  
Cathy Woodbine, Acting Clerk

Friends

I am delighted to offer this report on behalf of the current Governors of Bootham School.

As has already been noted, this has been an incredibly challenging time for those in education. The Bootham Governors are extremely appreciative and at times been in awe of the way Chris Jeffery and Helen Todd have led, and continue to lead, their teams through this very unusual period. They have ensured that the education and support the students have received, has been of the same high standard our parents expect. You have already heard the Pandemic has meant new ways of working, an incredible amount of preparation and hard work, demonstrating great resilience and flexibility by all staff.

If we look back 12 months, as Chris has already reported, the academic year started with the sudden death of Richard Burton, a long serving and well-loved teacher and a key member of the Bootham Community and wider circles.

Chris has already spoken about our new venture 'Saturday school' for parents. This has been an extremely well received six-week parenting programme offered in 2 groupings. News reports about the programme reached the national press, as an example of supporting the mental health of young people.

I am delighted to report that Mike Shaw, our Science and Astronomy teacher, has been shortlisted for the national i25 award for Excellence in education this year. This award recognises the influencers and innovators who have made a real impact in the independent education sector.

At the start of 2020, Stephen Sayers, our Clerk to Governors needed to step down and our Treasurer also left the committee for an overseas position. We were immediately faced with the challenges of an emerging pandemic and the subsequent Lockdown. Many changes had to be put in place very rapidly by both the school and the Governors, to respond to the situation, and you have already heard from Chris and Helen.

To support the school, the Governors established a small Emergency Subcommittee, to meet as needed, to review, endorse and support the necessary changes to navigate this period in the school's history. The Acting Clerk and Acting Treasurer were drawn from this Emergency Subcommittee.

I am pleased to report that the feedback from parents regarding the school's response during lockdown, has been excellent. The Governors are delighted that the school is in such safe hands, and the teaching and support given to the students has been so well received and appreciated.

Bootham continued to deliver the full curriculum, set exams and also created and provided additional teaching to the GCSE and A level cohorts, to prepare them for the next stage in

their journeys. Parents enjoyed a Virtual Parents Day at the end of the school year and the students a Virtual Sports Day.

Staff well-being was supported and social connections substituted with Virtual quizzes and virtual coffee mornings.

As you might expect, the onset of the pandemic created significant financial pressures. Because we could not provide all the normal services to students and in particular, our boarders, we offered parents discounted fees for the summer term. We have had to carefully control expenditure throughout this period to offset the lost school fee revenue. We were very aware that the pandemic may pose a significant risk to retain our student numbers, due to concerns from the overseas markets and due to the financial hardships, many of our families were experiencing because of the pandemic.

With diligent financial planning, I am pleased to report that Bootham has begun this academic year in a resilient and robust financial position, with student numbers in line with previous years. However, we are acutely aware that the business risks arising from the pandemic are far from over and we continue to mitigate the risks the school will face in the coming year.

Bootham's response to the pandemic continued with our community building activities. The Thursday lunch time recital programme became a virtual program. This meant we have welcomed far more people to these events than we could normally welcome on site. We have now had over 10,000 individuals attend either the live recital session or access it later. The school hosted a community lock down choir for students, parents, old scholars and friends of Bootham.

As part of Refugee Action Week, the school hosted a virtual lecture entitled 'Refugees in the time of Covid-19' presented by Professor Alexander Betts.

The school also continued to offer virtual Reflect Meeting, our Saturday morning Meeting for parents, old scholars and Quakers with attendees joining from all over the world.

I like to think these activities have helped many people within our wider community during such an unusual time.

I trust this report indicates the school is doing well, in very difficult times.

Thank you

Cathy Woodbine  
Acting Clerk