

## **BOOTHAM SCHOOL – CLERK TO THE GOVERNORS REPORT OCTOBER 16<sup>TH</sup> 2021**

Friends

On behalf of the Governors, I wish to commend our two Heads Chris, Helen and our Bursar Gavin, for their exceptional leadership during a tumultuous period.

The pandemic has challenged everyone, but it is important to recognise that those working in education have faced significant challenges over the last 20 months.

Chris and his staff have worked tirelessly to ensure the students receive the best possible education with great flexibility, dedication and creativity to find solutions to achieve this.

All staff have shown exceptional resilience and as Governors of the School, we are enormously appreciative. We feel particularly grateful that we have had Chris to lead the school, he has done an amazing job through the most testing time in Bootham's history.

One of the major challenges that Bootham has had to face over the course of the pandemic has been to ensure that the school's financial position remains as robust and secure as possible in the face of such unforeseeable circumstances.

We had to face a loss of fee income which needed to be managed. This was an inevitable consequence of discounts applied to fees (especially for boarders) in the two extended periods when the school was not able to be open for face-to-face teaching. In addition, we lost our summer lettings income in the past two summers.

Because of this loss of income, the school reported a deficit of £284,000 for the 2019-20 financial year. We are pleased to report and are deeply impressed that the school's management team has managed to turn that around. In fact, despite ongoing fee discounts and continued loss of lettings revenue, the past academic year saw the school make a modest surplus, which we are expecting to report at around £165,000 when the accounts are published. (For those who may wish to review the financial documents, our accounts are made publicly available through the Charities Commission and Companies House websites.)

Looking back over the past 20 months the governors are delighted that in many respects this has become a good news story. We have survived the pandemic and will continue to work hard to ensure Bootham continues to be resilient for the long term.

As Chris Jeffery has mentioned in his report, our experience tells us, that as children emerge from the pandemic, Bootham's ethos and a Quaker education seems more relevant than ever to families.

Most encouragingly, our overall student numbers continue to grow, with 611 on roll at the start of this academic year, the highest level since 2015 and we have seen particularly pleasing growth at the junior school.

Whilst we are in a strong position given our assets, increased pupil numbers and have had a very welcome uplift in cash flow this year, we recognise that the environment will remain challenging. The effects of the pandemic will also continue to be felt, particularly with the impact from reduced numbers of overseas students wishing to travel to UK schools to study, something all UK boarding schools outside the South East are experiencing.

We have modest reserves and will need to plan some significant investment in refurbishing our infrastructure in the coming years.

Therefore, being able to budget for a surplus going into 2021/22, we plan to invest this into teaching and learning and the fabric of the school, including the completion of our College studies project which has given our sixth form students their own impressive, dedicated study area within the school. We also plan to continue to refresh our boarding houses which has been greatly welcomed by the boarders.

I would also like to mention the ongoing public benefit work of the school which remains at the core of the school's strategic objectives. We continue to offer our facilities to local groups such as North Yorkshire Geographical Association, Aesthetica Short Film Festival, the Georgian Society amongst many others. At the end of the last academic year we helped Clifton Green Primary School, by letting them have free use of our entire junior school for their last week of term whilst their site had urgent repair work.

Many of our families fell into very real financial hardship during the height of the pandemic. We provided hardship grants to families who would not have been able to remain part of our community without aid. Most of this funding was provided by other parents wishing to waive their discount on fees, to assist Bootham families in need and most of these families have been able to remain at Bootham, as their family circumstances improve.

The school continues to provide bursary support, this year to 41 students, ranging from 10 to 100% bursaries.

With a solid base to grow from, we are looking forward to celebrating our bicentennial in the next academic year. In a post pandemic world, with an increasing awareness of the impact humans have on our environment, we believe that it is vital now more than ever, to offer an education with Quaker values at its core, which "liberates young people to lead adventurous lives that serve to create a better world".