

Report from the Governors Oct 2023

On behalf of my fellow Governors, I would like to offer you a very warm welcome to Bootham.

As you know, Chris Jeffrey, retired this summer after six successful years culminating in an Excellent I-S-I inspection and the highest student numbers in school for many years.

We are delighted to welcome and introduce Deneal Smith to you today, as our new head. The arrival of a new head at a school can be an adjustment and consequently, we were very pleased that Deneal was able to spend so much time with us last term, making several visits to meet staff, meet the students and meeting parents as well as the Governors. In addition, the Governors spent last Saturday with Deneal and his leadership team to start our work to consider how we can be more effective in the way we work together and to look ahead towards a new strategic plan for the school.

On behalf of the Governors and Gavin, our Bursar, I will focus on some of the figures we would like to share with you.

In preparing this short report, I thought it would be interesting to look back to our report to Quakers in Yorkshire of 5 years ago.

In 2018, we reported that we had the largest intake of students experienced within the last 25 years. Our student numbers have continued to grow since then and in January we were successfully inspected to be able to increase our stated maximum student numbers. I am delighted to tell you that Deneal has joined Bootham at a time when we now have the greatest number of students in Bootham's history, with 668 students in school and a very pleasing increase in the numbers at the Junior School. We now have waiting lists for places for several year groups within both the Junior and Senior schools.

In 2018, our Bursar Gavin, warned that challenging times were ahead with increasing pressures on boarding student numbers within the independent school sector and the possibility of VAT on school fees somewhere on the horizon.

Today, boarding numbers are still a challenge, but we are pleased to report that we have had a small increase in the number of boarders compared to last year and we hope to continue that trend going forward.

Gavin's warning about the possibility of VAT on school fees is becoming real and if elected, will be introduced by a Labour Government and this could take effect by April 2025. In addition, a Labour Government would also plan the removal of charitable business rate relief for independent schools. These two changes coming together, will be an enormous challenge for all but the very wealthiest of independent schools.

At Bootham, we are now actively planning to address these challenges, with a focus on how we can grow our student numbers further.

You might have expected that with such record student numbers, our operating surplus would be significant compared to 2018. Our last audited accounts in August 2022 showed an operating surplus of £195,000 and we are forecasting a modest surplus for the financial year which has just ended.

The financial environment continues to be very challenging for schools. No one could have predicted the war in the Ukraine and the effect this has had on energy costs and food inflation, of which everyone is painfully aware. We have responded to the recent large state increase in teachers' pay

with our own teachers' pay levels. With such significant increases in our operating costs, we have prepared a break-even budget at Bootham for the current financial year.

We continue to complete necessary work which is important for the working environment for our students, teachers and support staff. I am pleased to report that the work initiated in 2018 to redevelop our sixth form/ College facilities, is now completed. In addition, this year, we have refurbished the Modern Foreign Languages teaching space. As Governors we consider all projects very carefully, to ensure we use our funds as effectively as possible, and we have a Development Group which meets regularly to review projects with Deneal and his leadership team.

We continue to have the benefit of an excellent group of Governors who volunteer their time to support Bootham. To ensure that we have a mixture of new governors and longer serving governors at any one time we stagger our periods of Office. Governors are appointed for a term of 4 years and can continue for a second term. We ensure we have a breadth of skills and experience by conducting an annual skills audit and plan 2 years ahead to ensure new governors with key skills are recruited to replace those leaving. At the end of this year, four of our sixteen Governors will be leaving us.

Simon Hetherington an old scholar and parent of five Bootham old scholars, reaches the end of his term of office, Simon had previously served as a Governor in the 1980s and has opted not to continue for a second term of office, this time around.

David Stanton an old scholar and Quaker and our previous Clerk to Governors, reaches the end of his second term of Office.

Rosie Roberts well known to many of you here and a member of New Earswick Meeting, will be leaving us at the end of the year.

Sarah Coltman, Quaker and Old Scholar of the Mount, will also be leaving us at the end of the year.

We will greatly miss the wise counsel, expert knowledge and significant contributions that these four governors have given to Bootham over many years, and we wish them well in the future.

We are delighted to bring recommendations for four new Governors to Quakers in Yorkshire, as you will hear later, with all four able to take up their appointments in January 2024. Three of whom are old scholars.

You have heard from our Reeves just how much goes on in everyday life at Bootham and how much that impacts the way the students live their lives and has such a strong influence in their years beyond Bootham. I particularly wanted to mention the Social Action work, some of you may remember that 3 years ago, Chris Jeffreys talked to you about his plan to introduce this as a new full-time role at Bootham. The Governors are delighted to see this develop into such an important role at the school. We believe that the social action work, together with the many wonderful opportunities beyond classroom teaching, helps our students let their lives speak.

York is fortunate to have two excellent schools offering an education where quaker values can be learned and students from both schools can go forward to help make the world a better place.