



Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing, in the face of unprecedented times, to give an update on our plans as we move into the Easter holidays. The Trustees, the Heads and I continue to work through the implications of the Coronavirus on our schools, our staff and the people of Bedford, and I thought it was timely to share our evolving thoughts with you.

Firstly, I would like to thank our community for pulling together at this time of great uncertainty. Across the four schools the staff, pupils and parents have worked tirelessly to put new programmes of learning into place. I am immensely impressed by what has been achieved in such a short space of time. I recognise that for many of you this is a huge juggling act, and I appreciate the efforts of the whole community in supporting our children.

It appears increasingly unlikely that we will be allowed to operate an in-person education for all our children on our schools' sites for at least the first half of the Summer Term, and potentially for significantly longer. As a result, each of our schools will continue to run and refine their remote schooling models for the start of the Summer Term (Tuesday 21st April).

The schools will continue to offer an extensive provision which will constitute as full an educational, co-curricular and pastoral experience as we are able to deliver, and this is also being developed to support our younger children. The three senior schools are working hard to develop new programmes of study to support the Year 11 and Year 13 students who have been hardest hit by the cancellation of public examinations, and whose exam gradings and university entrance applications both look likely to require significant school involvement.

I hope that you will continue to support all of our staff across the Harpur Trust schools as they strive to preserve the integrity of your son's and daughter's education until they can pick up the baton in person once normal service resumes in our country.

However, we also appreciate that many families in our school communities will be facing considerable uncertainty as the pandemic continues to unfold, and that some parents may be facing an immediate change in their financial circumstances. We are therefore working hard to develop a package of measures that will help our parents navigate these uncertain times.

### **Immediate payment holiday**

We have taken the immediate decision to delay the Summer Term fee payment deadlines by one month, to help relieve the immediate pressure on some families.

If you usually pay the full termly fee on the first day of term, you will not be asked to pay until 21st May 2020. If you would prefer to change your payment to three monthly direct debits to spread the cost, please contact our fees team on [fees@harpurtrust.org.uk](mailto:fees@harpurtrust.org.uk).

If you usually pay by direct debit, the first of the three monthly collections will take place on 1st June. The second and third payments will then be on the 1<sup>st</sup> July and 3rd August.

### **Support for parents in urgent financial difficulties because of coronavirus**

As we said in our last letter, we are working hard to increase our range of options to help parents facing acute financial difficulties. We recognise that the financial circumstances of some of our parents may have changed in recent weeks, we hope temporarily, and that this may be a particular issue for those parents who receive part bursaries.

We are determined to do our best to help as many children as possible to benefit from a Harpur Trust education, while also maintaining the current and future quality of the education that we can offer.

For those who are facing urgent financial difficulties, please get in touch with the fees team so they can assess how best to help you. Please bear with us as we assist our families under quite challenging circumstances.

### **Further savings in fees for the Summer Term**

We are looking very hard at our cost base, the remote education provision and other mechanisms. Savings which we can generate as a result of running a remote rather than a physical school during this period will be returned to parents.

Bearing in mind the different situations that our schools find themselves in, it may be possible that we can do more. To facilitate this, a series of urgent meetings are being held to determine if we can do more without harming the quality of the education we can provide now and into the future. We will follow up with more information by Thursday 9th April at the latest, well before the start of the next term.

We can already confirm that boarders at Bedford School will be charged the same fee as day pupils until the school site reopens.

### **No fee increase in the Autumn Term**

In line with all independent schools in normal times, each of our schools had been working to understand the increased costs that they faced so we could assess how that might increase 2020/21 school fees. Clearly, these are not normal times, and we have taken the immediate decision to not increase 2020/21 fees until January 2021 at the earliest. We hope that this will help all of you to plan this year with greater certainty.

Rest assured that a great deal of thought and hard work is going into ensuring that your children find next term a fruitful and enjoyable experience. I wish you and your family all the very best in these uncertain and difficult times.

Yours sincerely



David Steadman

Chief Executive