



We are Dragons

Reaching for the Sun



Our Aim

To inspire, encourage
and develop free-
thinking, confident
young people who
reach for the sun.





Head's Introduction

This publication is our annual opportunity to inform you as current and prospective parents how we intend to stay true to Skipper Lynam's founding vision whilst ensuring we continue to evolve. Our aim is to inspire, encourage and develop free-thinking, confident young people who reach for the sun.

This academic year began with an explosion of creativity with the opening of our music and performing arts building aptly named 'Skipper's'. In his opening speech Tom Hiddleston OD reminded us about the importance of play, and this certainly chimes with Skipper Lynam's words; a child will never learn to use their time properly unless they are allowed to waste it and will never learn self-control unless they have had the opportunity of getting into mischief.

community, curriculum and the campus; more of this to follow.

Now more than ever it is important to define an education which focuses on developing critical thinking skills that enable a child to ask questions of everything they hear, see or read. It is important for them to explore what it is to be human in an era of artificial intelligence.

In September 2025 you will see a refurbished School House the last of our boarding houses to be refurbished, a refresh of Reception and E Block and some new signage. So, please take a moment to read our targets for the next academic year which sees us continually aspiring to improve what we do.

With best wishes,

Emma

In September 2025 we will be launching our Strategy for 2027 and Beyond. In 2027 we will celebrate 150 years since our foundation, and it seems the right time to share our vision for the Dragon of the future. We will be focusing on our



Chair's Introduction



I am delighted to be taking over the reins as Chair of Governors, succeeding Andrew after his outstanding tenure of 6 years as Chair. Returning to the Dragon as a Governor and now Chair, I am incredibly proud that the essence of what made the Dragon special when my children attended is still very much present. The Dragon has always pushed the boundaries; indeed our aim is to develop confident free-thinking individuals. I am therefore thrilled to see that spirit thrive and the Dragon magic be as strong as ever.

Strategically, the current challenges facing the independent school sector means that we, as the Governing Body, must continue to adopt the same creativity in our thinking. We are alive to the pressures that our parents are experiencing and also the expectation that our parents have for a Dragon education. To balance these imperatives, we are doubling down on our intent to reduce costs across the school while also exploring the feasibility of additional revenue streams. For example, we have recently appointed a Commercial Manager to drive forward renewed efforts to enhance the School's commercial revenues. Many of the School's areas are available for rental, including Skipper's, with full details available via our website at this link ([Commercial Lettings - Dragon School Oxford.](#)).

Our priority will always be to support the Head and Leadership team in delivering the very best possible outcomes for our young Dragons. To that end, and despite what may seem like unsettled times, the Dragon is able to look forward to its 150th anniversary with strength and ambition.

On behalf of the Governing Body, I am enormously grateful for your continued support and I look forward to meeting many of you in the times to come.

Best wishes,

Penny



COO's Introduction

Huge strides have continued to be made across the Estate this year. We have now concluded the first phase of our Net Zero activity with LED lighting and PV/solar panels installed across the Prep and Pre-Prep; this is anticipated to deliver over 60% in savings on lighting energy consumption alone.. The next stage will see us look to replace our plant of gas boilers and water heaters with more sustainable alternatives.

As well as the huge boost that Skipper's has given us, we have continued with our refurbishment programme for boarding houses and classrooms, with only School House remaining to be refurbished in Summer 2025. The introduction of new pupil changing facilities ready for the new year has been very well received by our Dragons, staff and parents.

Traffic, travel and parking continue to feature heavily in our thinking. The School's Home to School bus service continues to thrive and, with the introduction of improved bike shelters at the Prep and

Pre-Prep, we are also seeing an increased number of colleagues and pupils cycling to School. The informal one-way kiss and drop, which is in operation every morning, continues to be a success for parents who still need to drive to School, providing a less stressful and much safer way of dropping pupils off at the School gate.

Finally the Dragon, along with all independent schools, had to prepare for the earlier than anticipated introduction of VAT on fees. In doing so, we are very mindful of the impact that this introduction has had across our parent community. We are therefore more determined than ever to apply downward pressure on all our cost lines, while ensuring that there is no dilution to the pupil experience.

Best wishes,

Martin



Academic

To raise a generation of Dragons who are academically rigorous, creative, independent and ambitious free thinkers. To be a market leader in prep school education through curriculum design, professional development of teaching staff and partnerships.

- To develop the Humanities curriculum, including assessment, opportunities for cross-curricular links, project-based learning and links between Prep & Pre-Prep.
- To progress the digital teaching & learning timeline, including digital literacy & curriculum IT and greater opportunities for blended learning.
- To implement a robust and effective system for colleagues to facilitate professional development and review.
- To review routines and implementation of 'prep' and how independent learning is fostered.
- To review suitability and purpose of learning environments on both sites.



Pastoral care and safeguarding

To put pastoral care at the heart of all we do, by advocating every Dragon pupil to 'Reach for the Sun' and approach everyday life with Kindness, Courage and Respect. To equip all pupils with the necessary skills to tackle life with confidence, empathy and determination. To respond progressively to the modern world and ensure we lead with a proactive and restorative approach.

- Launch a behaviour strategy that considers the whole school's culture and ethos.
- Explore ways to better utilise spaces, to encourage clear outlets to play, learn, find quiet and connect.
- Continue to develop collaborative opportunities with external agencies and select local partner schools, to share good practice and expand perspectives.
- Assess which routines and resources across Pre-Prep and Prep can provide continuity and natural change, especially during transition points.



Co-curricular

To provide an outstanding co-curricular and enrichment curriculum to develop and create confident, free thinking young people. To ensure participation and inclusivity are at the heart of our provision.

- Explore how activity time can be improved with opportunities for pupils to have further choice in selecting what they learn.
- Assess the timings of clubs across the school day (Mornings/lunch times/evenings).
- Competition v inclusion – develop enough opportunities across all areas of co-curricular to support each child.
- Review all school trips and what opportunities pupils get whilst on their journey at the Dragon.



Boarding

To provide an outstanding boarding provision, in a home from home environment, led by exceptional boarding practitioners. To be at the forefront of the national strategy for boarding education which is child-centred, safeguards children's wellbeing and is ambitious for the progress of every child.

- Expand the calendar of events to widen the opportunities for Dragons to be involved with boarding.
- Develop infrastructure to best deliver flexibility in boarding, streamlining processes and communication across boarding.
- Within the framework of the new school day, evolve the boarding provision to ensure it best supports the needs of the pupils.
- Promote opportunities for professional development within the boarding team, across the Dragon and wider sector.



Communication and parental engagement

To provide timely, accurate and relevant information to the Dragon community. To embrace Dragon families in creating a positive and supportive community through workshops and social initiatives.

- Refine Dragon News to deliver operational information to parents in the most succinct and accessible way.
- Support international families to be able to engage fully in school life and events.
- Review and improve the Parent Noticeboard for better integration with external communications.
- Develop collaboration with admissions and boarding to standardise key external communication to parents.



Preparation for future schools

To provide Dragon families with personalised advice and support in choosing their child's future school.
To provide appropriate support and preparation for admission assessments.

- Host calendar of Future School Forums.
- Host Future Schools Fair January 2025.
- Review preparation pathways for assessment processes.



Social Impact

To be pioneers in the area of Social Impact, as a School that develops pupils who understand the local and global challenges facing society today. As a whole organisation, undertake positive action to address and alleviate these challenges.

- Continue to work with our partner schools to address lack of music and arts provision across the county, making use of the new Music and Performing Arts Building to refresh our offering.
- Produce the inaugural Social Impact Report for publication at the beginning of the Autumn term.
- Create a bank of social impact case studies, featuring beneficiaries, participants, and donors, and including metrics measuring the effectiveness of our programmes, to use throughout the year in order to raise awareness of our partnership activities.
- Encourage the whole school community, particularly pupils, to engage with the social impact programme through classroom-based teaching, hands-on opportunities, shared learning experiences with children in local schools, and the Charities of the Year.
- Continue to manage the Community Larder and introduce focal points during the school year in tandem with the Wardrobe.



Development

To create strong, life-long relationships and two-way engagement with our community of ODs, Current Parents and Former Parents.

- Seek and respond to feedback from the Dragon community to enhance our programme of communications and events and attract broad participation.
- Ensure that all members of our community are fully aware of the impact of philanthropic support on everything the Dragon does, through regular and targeted communications.
- Continue to integrate the social impact programme into our fundraising and communications activity.
- Invite all members of our community to support our school ambitions however they are able, whether through lifetime giving or as a member of our Skipper legacy society.



Equality, diversity, inclusion

To be a community where every Dragon and their family feels included, diversity in every respect is celebrated and equality is championed.

- Integrate EDI principles across school structures, policies and procedures.
- Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to have a voice regarding EDI objectives across all aspects of school life.



The Estate & Net Zero

To ensure that the School estate enables Dragons to achieve the best possible outcomes academically, personally and physically.

- To oversee a sustainable replacement programme for the School's heating plant, to align with our Net Zero ambitions.
- To complete the refurbishment programme of the School's boarding houses.
- To consider the use of spaces in Pre-Prep.



Governance

To ensure the governing body is configured appropriately and is fully engaged in the School to enable the Dragon to achieve its strategic aims.

- To ensure Governors receive inspection training early in the Autumn Term.
- To continue with governor recruitment for the Board.



An aerial photograph of the Dragon School Oxford campus. The school buildings, constructed of red brick, are situated in the middle ground. A large, vibrant green lawn occupies the foreground and middle ground, with several people scattered across it. To the left, there is a fenced-in tennis court. The background shows a dense residential area with many houses and a church spire, all set against a backdrop of rolling green hills under a cloudy sky.

We will achieve our aim
within an inclusive community
where we celebrate diversity
and strive for equality. The
positive outcomes for each
individual Dragon are central
to every decision we take.



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Dragon School Trust Ltd, Bardwell Road, Oxford, OX2 6SS Tel. +44 (0)1865 315 400

Company no. (England & Wales) 524331 Charity no. 309676