



Dragon School Social Impact Report





Together, we can change the world

One of the highlights of the last School year was a Spectrum talk given by Dragon parent Peter Drobac. Peter has been Director of the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and is currently Chief Executive Officer for Crucible, a social enterprise aimed at offering a world-class education to talented teenagers across Africa. Peter's talk was exactly as inspirational as you might imagine but, for me, the best part was seeing every young Dragon's hand shoot up in response to the question, "Who wants to change the world?"

Skipper Lynam famously said, "[W]e have failed ... unless we have made [our pupils' hearts] beat with the heart of mankind ...". That philanthropic spirit continues to guide everything we do. But what does it mean to be a philanthropist and to change the world? Donations play a big part in it, and the money raised through our School fundraisers and the Dragon Christmas Charity Sale allows dozens of charities to undertake vital work supporting children and families. But more than this, we want to educate generations of young people who will speak out against injustices and advocate for change.

The aim of our Social Impact Programme, therefore, is simple: to develop curious and empathetic pupils who understand our society's challenges, and for our whole School to undertake positive action that brings about social change. The following pages offer a selection of highlights from the 2024-25 School year, including our ongoing partnership with Windale Primary School and some of the exciting initiatives our young Dragons have undertaken.

From colour runs and cake sales to music workshops and entrepreneurship, the Social Impact Programme reaches every pupil at the Dragon. As we look towards our 150th anniversary in 2027, we want to expand our reach even further and create opportunities for every member of our community to get involved. You can find more information on our plans and how to get involved on p14.

Once again, my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported Social Impact at the Dragon in any way, from the generosity of all those who gave their time, talents and financial support, to the enthusiasm of our young Dragons. We couldn't do it without you.

Emma Goldsmith, Head



Transformational Bursaries

Bursaries have always been at the heart of the Dragon School. It is said that Skipper Lynam calculated School fees based on his understanding of family finances; later, successive Dragon Heads made efforts to diversify the pupil body so that it was no longer solely a School for the children of Oxford dons. 2002 saw the first official bursary scheme, known as the Transformational Bursary Programme, and since then nearly 125 children have received some level of fee remission. We know that the richest communities are founded on diversity, and it is our firm belief that every single Dragon benefits from the Transformational Bursary Programme.

Our approach prioritises confidentiality and ensures that no child misses out on any opportunities during their time at the Dragon; bursary holders receive a discount on music lessons and essential trips that is equivalent to their bursary fee remission. And when the time comes for them to leave the Dragon, they receive dedicated future schools advice from Dragon Dean Ed Phelps, to guide them through what could otherwise be a complicated and unfamiliar process.

We asked Ed for his thoughts on the bursary scheme:

“The Dragon has a fine tradition of being an egalitarian prep school and has historically accepted pupils from a wide range of backgrounds with the common desire to Reach for the Sun. However, with the steady rise of fees, there is a danger that this broad mix could be adversely affected. Thanks to the planning and strong support of previous and present Heads and Governors, the Transformational Bursary Programme has provided some redress and enabled children from more modest financial backgrounds to access a Dragon Education.”

“Unknown to the other Dragon children, the Bursary pupils contribute hugely to the atmosphere of the School, whether in the classroom or the boarding house, on the games fields or the stage, in the Art department or music practice rooms. It is a tradition which we all hope will endure for many generations to come.”

Ed Phelps (Dragon Dean, OD 1978)



School & Community Partnerships

We're proud to have partnered with 16 local primary and secondary schools this year, providing opportunities for hundreds of children from the Dragon and beyond to learn from and with each other, discovering new passions and interests along the way.

Alongside Gamelan Days, an orchestral workshop and a STEM roadshow, one particular highlight was our third annual Musical Theatre Day. Under the expert guidance of Dragon staff and pupils, children from Windale Primary learned songs and dances from 'Beauty and the Beast' in just a few hours.

Later in the year, with Common Entrance behind them, several A Block pupils spent mornings at Windale helping in nursery and reception classes. These A Block children followed in the footsteps of the Dragon Parent Volunteer Partnership, or Parents of Dragons (PoDs) as they are affectionately known. From a starting point of four volunteers in 2017, there are now around 20 volunteers giving up their time once a week to help with reading, speech and language, and maths. This programme has wide-ranging benefits for children and PoDs alike, and former Dragon parent Nicky Laird, an early volunteer and now coordinator of the programme, recently became Windale's Chair of Governors.

Back at the Dragon our youngest Changemakers made a real impact through their support of the Dragon Larder, running regular House competitions to fill it to the brim. Collected by the Oxford Food Hub every Friday, along with hot meals donated by our wonderful catering team, the Larder remains a valuable resource for our local community. Unsold toys and books from the Dragon Christmas Charity Sale were distributed to local schools and community organisations. Additionally, children who participated in the Marlborough Schools Triathlon elected to send a proportion of the funds they raised to the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service following the tragic loss of two firefighters in the line of duty.

"I enjoyed going onstage and now I want to be an actor when I grow up."
Windale participant in the Musical Theatre Day

"PoDs (Parents of Dragons) who commit to spending time at Windale know that they are making a tangible difference to the children's progress, and the volunteers also offer valuable support to the teachers who have so much going on each day.

PoDs love seeing pupils thrive as they head towards Year 6, and it's lovely that the older ones remember those who gave them that extra bit of help, encouragement and focused attention. It's wonderful that the Dragon hosts Windale pupils for annual music workshops and it's such fun to hear all about their experiences at the School!"

Nicky Laird

Coordinator of Dragon Parent Volunteer Partnership and Windale Primary School Chair of Governors



Highlights of the Year



12 A BLOCK DRAGONS ATTENDED THE CHILDREN'S PREMIERE OF DAVID ATTENBOROUGH'S BREATHTAKING DOCUMENTARY, OCEANS, LEARNING ABOUT THE VITAL ROLE OF THE EARTH'S OCEANS AND THE THREATS THEY FACE.



110

DRAGON PUPILS TOOK PART IN THE ANNUAL MARLBOROUGH SCHOOLS TRIATHLON, EACH RAISING A MINIMUM OF £60 TO SUPPORT TWO CHARITIES.



5

NEW BURSARY HOLDERS JOINED THE SCHOOL IN E, D AND B BLOCKS.



3

ASSEMBLIES/ SPECTRUM EVENTS TO DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMME.



£27,000

RAISED FOR OUR SCHOOL CHARITIES OF THE YEAR AND NATIONAL FUNDRAISERS.



74

CHARITIES RECEIVED DONATIONS FROM THE DRAGON CHRISTMAS CHARITY SALE, AS NOMINATED AND VOTED FOR BY DRAGON STAFF AND CHILDREN ALONGSIDE THE SALE TRUSTEES.



220

CHILDREN FROM ACROSS THE CITY WERE INVOLVED IN OUR PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES.



160km

COLLECTIVELY RUN BY B BLOCKERS, REPRESENTING THE LENGTH OF THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY.



16

LOCAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS PARTICIPATED IN DRAGON SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP EVENTS.



School Charities of the Year 2024/25

When it comes to charitable fundraising, our young Dragons play an active role and are involved in all stages of the process. The annual Dragon Christmas Charity Sale is a prime example – not only do the children operate the stalls on the day, but they also suggest and pitch for the charities that will benefit. The 2024 Sale raised over £120,000 for national and international charities supporting children and families, and Dragon pupils saw their chosen charities each receive donations of around £1,000 thanks to their own advocacy.

Children also play a direct role in choosing our three School Charities of the Year. Our A Block Social Impact Ambassadors create an initial shortlist from all the charities who have applied, which is then shared with the rest of the School, who vote for the organisations they would most like to support. Every young Dragon, from Reception to A Block, then participates in year-group fundraisers. This not only helps them to engage with the issues at the heart of each charitable cause but also teaches the power of collective philanthropy.

Our three School Charities of the Year for the 2024/25 academic year were:

Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground

Our Pre-Prep charity for 2024/25 provides a safe space for after-school clubs and holiday playschemes for children aged 8–13. Our support for BLAP was made all the more powerful thanks to the Dragon's long-standing relationship with primary schools in Blackbird Leys, whose children benefit greatly from this much-needed playground. Representatives from BLAP visited the Pre-Prep for an assembly, bringing to life why this charity plays such an important role in the community.

Firefly International

Firefly International is dedicated to supporting children affected by war, providing them with critical opportunities to heal, learn and build a peaceful future. Partnering with local organisations, they provide education, mental health support and peace-building initiatives. For our Middle School Dragons, this partnership offered a powerful insight into the lives of children who have been through so much in their young lives.

South Downs National Park Trust

We are fortunate at the Dragon to be surrounded by nature. Our Upper School charity, the South Downs National Park Trust, helps children who are less fortunate to visit and enjoy the countryside, ensuring that our green spaces remain a place for communities to flourish. Our A and B Block Dragons raised valuable funds in support of wildflower meadows, volunteer rangers and hands-on education activities.

Pupils vote on their School Charities of the Year

SEPT

D Block Colour Run

OCT

E Block Waste-Less Bake Sale

Children in Need Non-Uniform Day

NOV

Dragon Christmas Charity Sale

DEC

C Block Governors' Challenge

JAN

B Block Water Run

FEB

Comic Relief Non-Uniform Day

MAR

APR

Pre-Prep Accumulator Challenge

Year 3 Art Exhibition

Boarders Fayre

MAY

Pre-Prep Plant Sale

Reception Jog-Along

A Block Revue

JUN



Pupil Engagement

In addition to the year-group fundraisers and active participation in our School partnership events, there are many opportunities for our young Dragons to support and enhance our Social Impact Programme.

Changemakers and Social Impact Ambassadors

Social Impact inspires young Dragons from Reception through to A Block. Our Pre-Prep Changemakers get involved in a variety of initiatives, from creating bug and bee hotels and leading recycling drives to filling our Dragon Larder. A particular highlight of the year at the Pre-Prep comes during the Autumn Term, where a group of children visit a local care home to sing carols and deliver home-made Christmas cards. This offers a point of connection between our children and their local community.

At the other end of the spectrum, A Block Dragons can apply to act as Social Impact Ambassadors. One important task is to help choose our three Charities of the Year, researching applicants and creating a shortlist, which is then voted on by the rest of the School at the beginning of the academic year. They took full advantage of opportunities to give back in numerous ways, including litter picking, supporting the Dragon Larder, and helping to run pop-up events in the lead up to the Dragon Sale. We know that these individuals will put into practice what they gained as Social Impact Ambassadors as they move into their future schools and beyond.

Pupil Projects

Every child takes great pride and joy in their possessions. Inspired by this, A Block pupil Violet S donated 30 backpacks to children at Windale School, one of Dragon School's long-standing primary school partners. Each bag contained a pencil case, stationery, notebook and PE bag, and was adorned with a bag chain, all funded by her own savings. Violet visited Windale at the beginning of the 2025/26 academic year to deliver the backpacks to pupils.

Our French Young Entrepreneurs after-School club saw a group of B Block children research, prototype, create and sell an eco-friendly reusable bookmark made from recycled materials. In addition to selling the bookmarks at a fair in Lille, France, alongside many other school groups from across Europe, the French Young Entrepreneurs also took a stall at the North Parade Market, Oxford. The group decided to donate any profits made to one of the School Charities of the Year. This entrepreneurial spirit mirrors the Pre-Prep Make Your Money Grow initiative as well as the Governors' Challenge, in which every C Block child receives £5 from the Governors to turn into profit for charity.



Spirit of the Dragon 2027 Year of Service

Dragon School will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2027. To honour our heritage and the ethos of our foundational Head, Skipper Lynam, we are launching a Year of Service – and we want all Dragons, past, present and future, to get involved.

What is the Year of Service?

We know that many of our Dragons continue to live out the School's ethos long after their days on Bardwell Road, whether through volunteering in charitable activities, backing social enterprises, engaging in activism, or donating to a range of causes. Many others are eager to do more but don't know how to get started or are unsure how to get involved. Our Dragon School Year of Service will provide a framework to facilitate charitable endeavours offering a range of opportunities such as volunteering, pro bono work, and amplifying and promoting fundraising appeals.

At School, we'll be encouraging young Dragons and colleagues to roll up their sleeves and get involved, too. We will identify family-friendly and age-appropriate projects and activities for our young Dragons to directly support our local community. Dragon colleagues will also come together to raise money for various causes, including our Transformational Bursary Programme.

Who can be part of the Year of Service?

We warmly invite all Dragons – past and present, pupil, family member or friend – to be part of the Year of Service. There will be ways for all levels of interest and capacity to get involved.

How can I get involved?

At this stage, we are looking for individual and institutional expressions of interest. If you are involved in a charity or community interest company and would like to explore areas of partnership, then we'd love to hear from you. Please email social.impact@dragonschool.org. Please use the same email address to register your interest as a volunteer or donor.

A Governor's View

The Dragon strives to develop curious, empathetic pupils who are motivated and empowered to tackle present and future societal challenges. We hope to show Dragons that there are many ways to change the world, and that advocacy and innovation are just as important as financial donations. Advocacy and innovation require the Dragon value of Courage, whilst Kindness and Respect are also woven throughout our Social Impact activities.

The spirit of the School's Social Impact Programme has always been at the heart of the Dragon, even though the terminology has changed since our founding. For this reason, and many more, the Board of Governors fully supports our Social Impact Programme. I was delighted to relaunch the Governors' Challenge in May this year, in which every C Block child was given £5 with the instruction to grow this seed investment for the benefit of the Middle School Charity of the Year. Not only did this support curricular outcomes linked to financial literacy, but it also demonstrated that there are many different, entrepreneurial ways to support charities and tackle challenges.

Ian Van Every (Dragon parent, Governor and member of the Social Impact Committee)





Bardwell Road
Oxford
OX2 6SS



Dragon School respects the environment. This report has been printed on carbon-offset paper.

© 2026 Dragon School Trust Ltd
Bardwell Road, Oxford OX2 6SS | +44 (0)1865 315 400
Company no. (England & Wales) 524331 | Charity no. 309676

Designed by www.dougdawson.co.uk