DRAGON SCHOOL OXFORD

ARDUUS AD SOLEM

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.

The 2025/26 academic year was all about anniversaries. We celebrated 30 years of the Pre-Prep as well as 30 years of our Japanese exchange programme. We have also been immersed in our history as we prepare to celebrate, in 2027, the 150th anniversary of our founding.

We are excited to be opening a living archive within the library which will showcase our rich history and enable our current Dragons to be inspired by those who have gone before. It is important that our today's Dragons understand the evolution of this wonderful institution and we will be spending this year giving them every opportunity to satisfy their curiosity.

We will be hosting a number of events in 2027 with our wider Dragon community with the onus being on giving back. We hope to raise funds for our Transformational Bursary Fund and also focus on our social impact initiatives.

We cannot stand still and we will celebrate the birth of our new nursery provision Hatchlings at 14 Bardwell Road in January 2027. We are also exploring the possibility of spreading our wings overseas to develop those global citizens of the future. The Dragon must continue to evolve to meet the needs of our community and to prepare our young Dragons for the world at large.

Please take a moment to read the targets we have set ourselves for the academic year 2026/7 as we build upon the remarkable achievements of this year including academic success with 72 scholarships and over 20 Dragons achieving straight As and A* in their Common Entrance examinations.

With best wishes,

Emma

Chair's Introduction

It has been a great privilege to have been Chair of Governors over the past year. In the face of very challenging conditions in the Independent sector, the governors have worked closely with the Senior Leadership Team to maintain the financial health of the School, interrogating every cost, maximising commercial revenue and looking for other business streams such as the new nursery, Hatchlings, which will open in January. The nursery will offer our youngest Dragons an exciting start in a newly designed setting at 14 Bardwell Road.

Governors are acutely aware of the impact of fee increases and we know that many parents make significant sacrifices to send their children to the Dragon. Over the past year, many schools have sadly faltered and closed. In this environment, a school cannot stand still and we plan to stand proudly as the premium independent prep school – not part of a for-profit group where the bottom line is a figure and not the best outcome for each pupil. A truly independent prep school has the freedom to focus entirely on the needs of its pupils, with a clear long term vision, strong connections with parents and offering a broader range of senior school destinations which could be constrained if a school belongs to a particular group.
As has been seen recently in the press, being part of a group does not protect a school from sudden closure.

As I wrote last year, our priority as governors will always be to support the Head and leadership team in developing the best possible outcome for each and every Dragon.
We now look forward to celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Dragon and through all the events, there will be the celebration of the longevity that a successful and inspired community can achieve.

On behalf of all the governors, may I thank you for your continued support and engagement and I look forward to meeting many of you during the year to come.

Best wishes,

Penny

COO's Introduction

On the operational side of School business, a focus over the last year, as it will be for next year, has been ensuring our budgets are managed carefully to meet the many headwinds that we routinely face. Managing our costs while ensuing no dilution to the experience of our pupils has been our priority. Alongside this, investment in our estate has continued unabated. As well as routine maintenance and upkeep of our grounds, academic spaces, and plant, this has included concluding our programme of refurbishing all our boarding houses, a crucial initiative in continuing to provide our thriving boarding community with a truly home-from-home experience. The Dragon Health Centre will also undergo a refurbishment over the summer ready for the new academic year.

To further support our financial resilience, we will see continued growth in our commercial offerings over the course of the next year. As well as expanding our holiday camp provision and entering into new partnerships in other areas, we will also pursue a number of exciting new opportunities to generate revenue from Skipper's, our music and performing arts centre.

The introduction of Hatchlings to the School's portfolio at 14 Bardwell Rd in January is a truly joint project in terms of its planning, bringing together every pillar of the School's operations to ensure we are ready for our youngest Dragons to arrive. Most exciting of all will be seeing the new outdoor play area come to life ready for the nursery's opening.

Finally, we continue to explore innovative ways of supporting our Dragon community. The introduction of the Dragon Benefit Scheme has been an extremely well-received initiative bringing many local businesses to the attention of our community by offering exclusive discounts. We hope to see engagement in this initiative increase further over the course of the year.

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.

- Design an oracy framework across the themes of culture, curiosity, and challenge to further develop pupils' learning habits and study skills.
- Implement weekly P.E lessons in Middle School, weekly swimming lessons in Reception and extend specialist provision in Pre-Prep to further develop pupils' athletic development and physical education.
- Continue to expand STEM provision, including the initial development of a bespoke Design, Technology & Engineering curriculum, focused on developing pupils' real-world application.
- Enhance pupils' digital fluency and health through the implementation of digital skills across Computer Science, the wider curriculum and, the Ignite programme.
- Develop opportunities for Dragons to learn about the history of the School through the new archive space.

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.

- Develop reflective, values-driven pupils: Support pupils to reflect critically on the influences shaping their beliefs and behaviours. Empower Dragons to think independently and act with integrity and resilience when facing social, cultural, and digital pressures.
- Foster respectful relationships, identity and ethical behaviour: promote and sustain healthy, respectful relationships – both online and offline – through an understanding of consent, ethical decision-making, and positive inclusivity.
- Prioritise wellbeing: embed a whole-school culture of inclusive wellbeing through a dedicated Wellbeing Hub, fostering belonging and ensuring every pupil feels safe, valued, supported, and ready to learn.
- Champion human-centred skills: encourage all pupils to value and develop uniquely human skills such as kindness, creativity, and critical thinking, enabling them to thrive with confidence in a rapidly changing, AI-influenced world.

Co-curricular

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

- Broaden participation and inclusivity: increase access to and engagement in co-curricular activities across all year groups by ensuring a diverse, inclusive programme that caters to a wide range of interests, abilities, and backgrounds – encouraging every pupil to discover and develop their passions beyond the classroom.
- Strengthen links between co-curricular and character education: embed life skills such as resilience, curiosity, leadership, and kindness into all co-curricular activities, creating intentional opportunities for personal growth, teamwork, and leadership development within sport, the arts, clubs, and outdoor learning.
- Enhance quality, variety, and pupil voice: ensure consistently high standards across all co-curricular offerings by regularly reviewing the programme's breadth and quality, incorporating pupil feedback, and introducing innovative, high-impact activities that enrich the school experience and reflect evolving pupil interests and contemporary skills.

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 well-being and is ambitious for the progress of every child.

- Extend the School's influence in driving innovation and best practice in prep boarding, through engagement with wider professionals and organisations, hosting high-quality boarding conferences and forums.
- Strengthen continuity of care, pupil support, and global connectedness through a structured international link family network.
- Create meaningful opportunities for families to further engage with boarding life to enable greater understanding of pupils' experiences within boarding.
- Continually evaluate the ongoing development of boarding provision, ensuring facilities and experiences promote pupils' wellbeing, support their personal and academic development, and foster a strong sense of belonging.
- Use boarders' views to develop, shape, and refine boarding activities, ensuring their perspectives are embedded in continuous improvement.

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.

- Broaden co-curricular participation and Inclusivity by increasing access to and engagement across all year groups by ensuring a diverse, inclusive programme that caters to a wide range of interests, abilities, and backgrounds.
- Enhance co-curricular quality, variety, and pupil voice to ensure consistently high standards across all co-curricular offerings by regularly reviewing the programme's breadth and quality, incorporating pupil feedback
- Reintroducing tripless weeks to aim to limit the number of children regularly being pulled away from academic lessons and monitoring those most impacted.

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.

- Enhance the partnerships between families and Future Schools Advisors through clear and consistent communication, ensuring parents are guided and supported throughout the senior school admissions process.
- Strengthen and extend excellent partnerships with senior schools and provide families with access to a broad and varied range of schools through events, visits, and engagement opportunities. Supporting Dragon families to make well-informed choices about their child's future educational pathway.
- Develop collaboration between the academic and pastoral teams as part of the future schools process to enhance provision and ensure the best possible preparation for all pupils.
- Extend the Dragon's position as an independent prep school, successfully preparing pupils for a wide range of leading senior schools and supporting each child to a school that matches their strengths, interests, and aspirations.

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.

- Deepen our engagement with our partner schools, working closely with colleagues in the independent sector and other local organisations to present a coherent and well-rounded offering.
- Help children to develop as changemakers and young philanthropists, encouraging them to use their voice to shape and develop the Social Impact programme.
- Celebrate the School's founding ethos by launching a Year of Service, giving all members of the Dragon community the opportunity to give back.
- Continue to evaluate our activities to inform and enhance the programme in years to come.

Development and Alumni Relations

To create strong, life-long relationships and two-way engagement with our community of ODs, current parents and former parents through a broad range events and communications, so as to encourage philanthropy and underpin the wider aims and ambitions of the School.

- Present our community with a range of options to support the School throughout its anniversary year, ensuring that our School's ethos of inclusion and excellence is preserved for years to come.
- Launch our 150th anniversary celebrations: in doing so, highlight the rich tapestry of voices and experiences across our community and preservice the spirit of the Dragon for generations to come.
- Help our ODs and parents (past and present) to forge a strong connection with the School through a vibrant programme of events and communications.
- Maintain an up-to-date and accurate database that supports and enhances the ways in which we interact with our community.

Equality, diversity, inclusion

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

Estate and Infrastructure, including IT

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

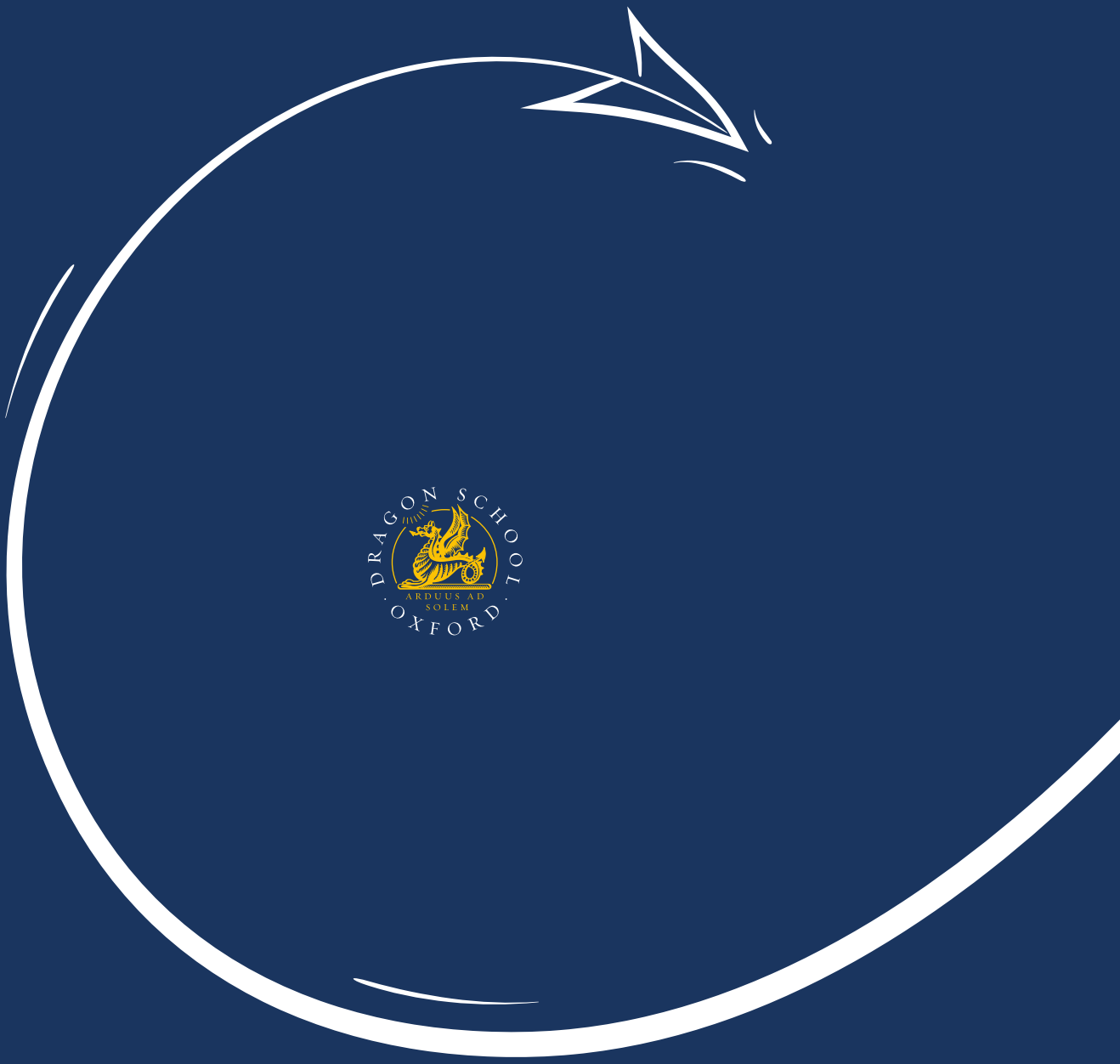
- Prudent budget and cost management while ensuring no dilution to the pupils' experience.
- Introducing AI to some operational processes, such as finance, to enhance efficiency.
- To continue to support staff and parents with sustainable travel options to School.
- To continue the programme to upgrade the School's heating plant with the introduction of more sustainable solutions.
- To enable the successful launch of Hatchlings, the Dragon's nursery at Bardwell Road.

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 update the School's governing documents and governance processes to better reflect current requirements.
- To continue with governor recruitment, prioritising the need for specific expertise alongside broadening diversity across the Board.

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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