

BEDFORD SCHOOL

The Bedford School & Bedford School Foundation Trust

Philanthropy Impact Report 2025



I am delighted to share with you our second Philanthropy Impact Report.

In a year marked by significant economic uncertainty, both in the UK and globally, it has been truly heartening to see so many parents, past-parents and Old Bedfordians (OBs) continue to support us with such generosity. The projects highlighted in this report have made, and will continue to make, a real and lasting difference to our boys. More than that, they have brought our community together around a shared ambition: to help Bedford thrive.

The past year has not been without its challenges. The introduction of VAT on school fees from January has placed added pressure on both existing families and our admissions efforts. Yet, even in the face of these headwinds, we remain steadfast in our commitment to innovation and excellence, a commitment made possible, in no small part, thanks to philanthropic support.

We are proud of what we have achieved together, and remain deeply grateful to everyone who has chosen to play a part in our progress.

James Hodgson
Head Master

From the Director of Philanthropy



We hope the stories in this report capture your imagination as they have ours. The collective impact of our philanthropic community is nothing short of remarkable. We are grateful to everyone who chooses to shape the Bedford School experience through their generosity.

At the heart of our fundraising efforts this year is the **Flourish Appeal**, which will fund **20 transformational bursaries**. We believe that a diverse and inclusive school community benefits every pupil. Through this initiative, boys who otherwise could not join our school, will be given the opportunity to flourish at Bedford.

Our donors help unlock life-changing opportunities. In return, they receive regular updates and are celebrated widely in our digital and printed communications.

We are introducing a more accessible way to give to this appeal. Donors can now pledge £4,000, paid gradually at a manageable rate. In doing so, they will join the **Flourish Giving Circle**, a new community of supporters whose collective generosity will fund bursaries. Members will be invited to exclusive events and their generosity will be recognised on a donor board, in school communications and on social media.

With the delay to the Burnaby Road project, we will also be turning our attention to other estate projects that need philanthropic support. More details will be available soon, but as we head towards our 475th anniversary in 2027, rest assured that these projects will be innovative and exciting, propelling the school towards our Quincentenary and beyond.

Our ambition is to weave a culture of philanthropy into the fabric of Bedford life, so that every boy benefits from an education powered by generosity, aspiration, and a shared belief in excellence.

To all our supporters, thank you. Bedford School would not be what it is today without you.

Vincent Gaten
Director of Philanthropy

Driving Sporting *Excellence*

The generosity of OBs has been instrumental in the exceptional sporting experience Bedford is able to offer.

School shooting is enjoying a real comeback, with OB **Ian Gordon (58-68)** generously funding a full refurbishment of the Rifle Range, which will make it one of the best in the country.

Fives has been part of School life since the 1870s, and the current courts date back to 1892. A passionate group of OBs has come together to fund a much-needed refresh of the courts, including new glass backs to make the game more visible and engaging for today's pupils.

The school has also become one of the top golf schools in the country. A professional coach and two indoor simulators, funded by the Bedford School Foundation Trust (BSFT), allow pupils from the Prep and Upper schools to hone their skills and has completely transformed the sport.

Technology and data are playing a bigger role than ever, helping us make small improvements that add up to a big difference. The Boat Club has seen major philanthropic investment, helping the Club get back to the top – demonstrated by the 1st VIII recently reaching the A Final at the National Schools' Regatta.

With the help of our generous donors, the future of sport at Bedford is looking bright – and we hope everyone connected to the school will be proud our continued success.





Rowing Towards Success

The Concept2 ergometer has become synonymous with testing rowers, thanks to its ability to deliver consistent, standardised measurements of performance. It is widely regarded as an essential tool in crew selection, with a time of 6 minutes and 30 seconds over 2,000 metres often considered the benchmark for schoolboy rowing.

In recognition of this, OB **Boris Batin (98-00)**, a former member of the 1st VIII, generously offered a cash prize to any Boat Club member who breaks this barrier. In the first year of the initiative, two boys achieved the feat; this year, four succeeded, highlighting the Boat Club's continued progress and development.

The school's programme is now recognised as one of the strongest in the country, as we work to re-establish Bedford among the elite in the sport, a position it rightly deserves given its long and illustrious 164-year history of competitive schoolbay rowing.

We are very grateful to Boris, who also funded the telemetry software now used to great effect in the 1st VIII boat, enabling coaches to analyse performance data more effectively.



Julian Lainck and Brian Cawley (60-69)

The Cawley Scholarship Update

Recognising the increasing competitiveness of schoolboy rowing, Bedford School introduced the Brian Cawley Rowing Scholarship to attract and support exceptional rowing talent. Named in honour of OB **Brian Cawley (60–69)**, whose generosity made this possible, the scholarship ensures that the school continues to nurture rowers of the highest calibre.

The first recipient of the award was Julian Lainck, who joined the Lower Sixth from the Ruhr area of Germany for the 2023/24 academic year. Julian is already well known in German rowing circles as a major talent and a likely future Olympic competitor. At Bedford, his ergo times were incredibly impressive, placing him in the top 10 nationally for 5km. We look forward to welcoming our next Cawley Scholar soon.

Through the Brian Cawley Rowing Scholarship, Bedford School reaffirms its ambition to be a home for outstanding young people like Julian; individuals who embody talent, drive, and character, both on and off the water.

The *Flourish* Appeal

Together, we thrive

Bedford School has long held the belief that potential should never be constrained by circumstance. For generations, we have offered life-changing bursaries to boys whose families may not have the means to fund a Bedford education, but who have the ambition, ability, and character to contribute fully to school life. These pupils, in turn, enhance our community in meaningful ways, bringing diverse experiences, fresh perspectives, and a determination to make the most of every opportunity.

As educators, we have a moral responsibility to open the doors of a Bedford education as widely as possible. In these financially challenging times, that responsibility is one we cannot meet alone and we are asking our communities to join together in support of our newest fundraising initiative, *The Flourish Appeal*.

What is the Flourish Appeal?

The Flourish Appeal, so named because we know the recipients will flourish at Bedford, will create 20 new philanthropically-funded transformational bursary places for pupils whose families have been independently assessed as requiring significant financial assistance. These new places will build on the school's existing bursary programme, increasing our current provision by more than 50%.

Fully-Funded Bursary Gifts

Donors have the opportunity to make a truly life-enhancing gesture by funding two full years of study here at Bedford. This incredible contribution can change the trajectory of a pupil's life through their generosity. In recognition, benefactors will receive regular updates on the pupils they support and their contributions will be promoted and celebrated throughout school life.

The Flourish Giving Circle

For those donors who believe strongly in the power of a Bedford education but cannot commit to full years of study, we have launched the Flourish Giving Circle which offers an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to a collective effort. Donors are asked to pledge £4,000, paid through smaller instalments over time. With Gift Aid, this contribution becomes £5,000, a significant contribution towards a bursary award. Members of the Flourish Giving Circle will:

- be invited to a launch event and an annual celebration of the initiative's impact.
- receive updates on the pupils supported through the appeal.
- be welcomed as VIP guests at flagship school events and other occasions including the Henley Royal Regatta.



"The impact Bedford School has had on my life is enormous. Now, at 30 years old, I am financially secure, work in a job that I love and have a great set of friends. *Life could have been very different.*"

Josh Jackson (06-13), bursary recipient

"As a former music scholar and bursary recipient, I can confidently say that, without your generosity, *I wouldn't be where I am today.*"

Alexander Papp (12-17), bursary recipient

"Bursaries can also have a *positive impact on wider society.* In addition to being able to financially look after my family and relieve some financial stress, I too have contributed to the Bursary fund at Bedford School."

Leroy Knowles (92-97), bursary recipient

All Gifts Help Pupils to Flourish

Every gift genuinely helps, and we are grateful for contributions of all sizes. Bursary pupils require more than just support with school fees. They also need access to co-curricular opportunities such as music lessons, sports kit, coaching, and trips. Smaller one-off or regular gifts can make a real difference to this wider provision. We are lucky enough to work with a range of donors and will always try to ensure that any gift, no matter the amount, supports a specific, tangible element of a pupil's experience.

Our Gratitude

We are profoundly thankful to those who have already supported the Flourish Appeal. Our donors' belief in the value of a Bedford education, and their willingness to invest in the future of others, speaks to the very best of our school community. If you are considering a gift to the Flourish Appeal, we thank you. We would be pleased to speak with you about how your support can enable a promising applicant to access all that Bedford has to offer.

Philanthropy

Supporting our Strategic Vision

To achieve our objective of teaching boys to "think intelligently, act wisely, and be fully engaged in a challenging and changing world", Bedford School focuses on several key strategic areas.

Over the past year, generous donations of time and money have supported each of these areas, stimulating boys intellectually, challenging them outside the classroom, and empowering them to step into life after school with confidence.

Digital Innovation

Thanks to the support of our donors, the BSFT was able to fund access to enhanced robotics equipment, enabling a team from Bedford School to take part in the prestigious VEX Robotics competition. This investment in cutting-edge technology has opened new avenues for hands-on STEM learning, allowing pupils to design, build and program robots to solve complex engineering challenges.

Participation in the VEX Robotics competition has not only sharpened the boys' technical and coding skills but also fostered teamwork, creativity and resilience under pressure. Competing against schools from across the country, our boys demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and collaboration, skills that are essential in today's digital world.

In addition to robotics, we are also working on equipping boys with an understanding of artificial intelligence, an essential part of preparing them for a future where critical thinking, ethical awareness and technological fluency will shape every aspect of life and work. With this in mind, donations to the BSFT have supported the development of Bedford School's own AI cluster-based Large Language Model, enabling greater user capacity and improved system reliability.

Boys from all age groups will be able to interact with the model in different ways, helping them explore key AI concepts.

Entrepreneurship

At Bedford School, we view entrepreneurial thinking not just as a vital life skill, but as a mindset that embraces curiosity, creativity, and resilience. We believe this approach will empower our boys to adapt, lead, and make meaningful contributions, whatever path they choose after school.

Our entrepreneurship programme thrives thanks to the generous support of our wider school community. We are especially grateful to the OBs and parents who have served as guest judges at our competitions, spoken at Entrepreneurship Society meetings, and welcomed year groups into their businesses to explore and pitch entrepreneurial ideas.

OB Robert Fitzjohn (03-09) is currently supporting a mentoring scheme for students interested in real estate and entrepreneurship. He runs regular interactive sessions, offering invaluable advice and insights drawn from real-world experience.





The Gift of Time

Every year, members of the school's various communities generously give their time and energy by sharing their professional expertise and advice with our pupils.

This year, 230 young people from 13 schools participated in our annual OB Careers Fair, joining virtual seminars led by experts from a wide range of professions, including law, media, engineering, financial services and architecture.

Bedford School boys interested in design enjoyed an inspiring visit from OB **Bill Amberg (75-79)**, who shared highlights of his celebrated work and spoke about the creative process, the value of collaboration, and the importance of thinking outside the box.

In February, the annual Detweiler Competition showcased the very best of the creative arts at Bedford - art, drama, music, and English. We were honoured to welcome back arts patron and OB **Matthew Orr (75-81)** as the guest judge for the art entries. It was a particularly special occasion, marking Matthew's first return to the school since 1981. He was joined by his brother, fellow Old Bedfordian **Roddy Orr (71-75)**, who supported him in the judging process.



OB Matthew Orr (75–81)

The time, knowledge and experience shared by OBs, parents and past parents highlights the enduring impact of our school network in enriching life at Bedford for current pupils.

Support from *the Guilds*





Along with organising fantastic events for our parent community, the Prep Guild and the Parents' Guild fund many initiatives within the school to support both parents and boys.

Prep Guild

The Prep School recently opened the newly developed Atrium – a vibrant and inspiring space that now forms the heart of our 'school within a school' for our Year 3 and Year 4 boys. Bursting with colour and designed for versatility, the Atrium has already become a favourite venue for assemblies, lessons and a wide range of activities. Its thoughtful design makes it a fun and functional space and a showcase for the boys' creativity and achievements. This incredible transformation would not have been possible without the generous funding and support of our Prep Guild, whose vision and dedication brought the Atrium to life. Their hands-on involvement in designing the space and its stunning murals has left a lasting legacy for generations of boys to come.

The Parents' Guild

Navigating your son through the Upper School and the changes this brings, both physical and emotional, can sometimes be difficult and often daunting. Thanks to the support of the Parents' Guild, funds raised from events and sales through the Nearly New Shop have funded the School's Parent Partnership programme again this year. The programme, which has been running since 2021, stages events, talks and workshops from notable professionals on subjects such as Gambling and Gaming addiction, Mental Health, Supporting Neurodiversity and Teenagers Translated. The programme also includes an annual Parent Partnership Conference. Parents have found these talks to be invaluable in building strong relationships with their sons and supporting them through the challenging teenage years.

We are incredibly grateful to both Guilds for all they do in support of the school.







Parent Donors

Bedford School has long benefited from the generosity of its parent community. In this article, the Gandesha and Hamel-Henn families share their reasons for supporting the school philanthropically.

A Shared Commitment to Opportunity

Parag and Sophie Gandesha were drawn to Bedford because of its broad and balanced offer. "We were looking for a school for our three boys that had a diverse offering," they said. "It was important to us that there was as much focus on the music department as there was on sport and other activities. Most of all, we wanted a single-sex school which understood boys and their potential, by providing as much optionality as possible."

Having seen their sons thrive, they chose to support the bursary programme. "It is an important value in our family to give back in as many ways as possible, whether that is simply giving time to causes we believe in or financially providing for others. There are many people who do not have the access to unlock the talent within, and hopefully this gift will play a small part in developing that potential."

For them, the decision to fund a bursary felt like the right fit.

> *"We supported the bursary programme as, for us, it was important to provide opportunity to those people that may not otherwise have the ability to experience everything a school like Bedford has to offer. Having seen our three, very different, children thrive in a variety of disciplines at Bedford School, we felt it an appropriate place to provide a bursary."*

Although they did not make their gift for personal accolade, they have seen the impact first-hand. "We have seen the true benefit the bursary programme brings to the lives of the boys who are selected."

Their message to others considering a gift is simple: "Support the school in any way possible, now more than ever, given the current headwinds the school faces. Gifts can come in many shapes and forms, each of which makes an incremental difference in the lives of the entire school."



A Longstanding Connection to Bedford

For **Leslie Hamel and Harald Henn**, Bedford School has been part of family life for the best part of a decade. With one son in the Upper Sixth and another who left in 2022, they have experienced the full scope of the school's academic, pastoral and co-curricular strengths.

"Bedford struck us from the outset as a place with benchmark standards," they reflect. "The quality of teaching, the leadership, the strength of the IB pathway, and the way the school celebrates achievement across academics, sport, music and other areas; it all stood out."

That confidence in the school's mission, combined with a strong sense of community, led them to support Bedford philanthropically. Over the past few years, they have contributed regularly, typically allocating half of their gifts to the music department and half to general priorities.

> *"We felt strongly that we should give something back. There is no better investment than in education. Supporting Bedford helps ensure the school can keep offering opportunities to boys from a range of backgrounds and maintain the quality we have so appreciated."*

Living nearby, they have immersed themselves in school life. From concerts and chapel services to careers days and Foundation events, they have felt part of the Bedford community, not just as parents, but as active participants.



Scientific Discovery

One of the most innovative and exciting initiatives at Bedford School this year was the launch of a new Upper School Virology Research group, led by Dr Shetal Arjan, a former virologist at King's College London, and current teacher of Biology and Head of Academic Extension and Enrichment. With a deep passion for the study of viruses, Dr Arjan has created an ambitious and hands-on research programme designed to immerse pupils in the world of biotechnology and scientific inquiry.

The group's central focus is the cucumber mosaic virus (CMV), a plant pathogen that infects more than 1,200 species and presents a serious challenge to food production worldwide. While harmless to humans, CMV is devastating to crops, making it an ideal subject for classroom investigation. Using simulated patient samples, pupils will work in newly equipped biotechnology labs to explore how CMV is transmitted and how it interacts with various host plants.

In particular, the group will investigate how common weed species act as viral reservoirs, a study that may contribute meaningful data to the broader scientific understanding of CMV's spread and impact.

The research group offers more than just a chance to experiment, it creates real-world opportunities for critical thinking, problem-solving and ownership of learning. Pupils will develop research and digital literacy skills that will be essential for their future academic and professional lives. The ultimate aim is to publish their findings in *The Young Scientist Journal*, showcasing their work to a wider audience.

The benefits of the project extend beyond the lab. Insights from the group's research will be used to enhance the science curriculum throughout the Upper and Prep Schools, inspiring curiosity in younger pupils and offering advanced learning experiences to older ones.

This pioneering programme has been made possible thanks to a generous gift from the **Wolfson family**, current parents at the school. Their support has fully funded the creation of the skills lab and research programme and we are incredibly grateful for their commitment.

Beyond the immediate impact of the research itself, this project reflects something deeper about Bedford School's ambition to offer an education that goes beyond the curriculum, that fosters genuine curiosity and that equips boys to understand and address the complex challenges of the modern world.

Philanthropy at Bedford does not simply sustain what we already do, it elevates and expands us. This virology project is a perfect example of that principle in action and our heartfelt thanks go to the Wolfson family for bringing it to life.

The Great Outdoors

To support the wellbeing of our Prep School boys, we ensure they have regular opportunities to learn through meaningful connections with nature. These experiences help them develop an appreciation for the environment while enjoying active, hands-on learning in the great outdoors.

In line with this ethos, the BSFT recently funded the purchase of tents for use at the Ickwell nature reserve. This not only enables the boys to enjoy overnight camping in a beautiful natural setting, but also helps the school to offer affordable residential trips for all.





The Print Room

Over the summer, the Print Room in the Art School will undergo a significant transformation to create a brighter, more open-plan space. As part of the renovation, we are delighted to be introducing a refurbished Hunter Penrose Printing Press to the department. This addition will provide a second press, offering greater flexibility for both pupils and teaching staff.

We are fortunate to have Fiona Whiteman, a specialist printmaker, leading this area of the curriculum. With a degree and Master's in Printmaking, Mrs Whiteman brings a wealth of experience and a passion for this traditional art form. Under her expert guidance, all boys in the Upper School, including GCSE and A-Level Art students, explore a wide range of printmaking techniques, including linocut, intaglio, collagraph, woodcut and monoprint. These methods enable pupils to produce multiple versions of their work in varied styles, enriching their creative expression and technical skills. Many go on to pursue Fine Art, Graphic Design or Illustration at university, carrying these foundational skills with them.

This exciting development would not have been possible without the generous support of OB **Gilbert Lloyd (50–58)**, whose previous contributions have already enhanced the entrance to the Art School and allowed us to create a new Sculpture Studio. We are deeply grateful for his continued commitment to the arts at Bedford School.





A New Chapter for the *Chapel Organ*

Bedford School Chapel is a Grade II* listed building, recognised nationally for its architectural and historic significance. Built in 1908 by renowned church architect George Frederick Bodley, the chapel has retained many original features, including war memorial panels and fine woodwork.

The original organ was built by Norman & Beard and installed in memory of Head Master James Surtees Phillpotts. Over time, the instrument was altered significantly, most notably in the 1960s, when it was remodelled in a Neo-Classical style. These changes, while intended to reflect the tastes of the time, left the organ far removed from its Edwardian roots.

For more than two decades, the organ has been in decline. A 2009 report warned that it was close to mechanical failure, and a 2016 paper concluded that a new instrument would greatly enhance chapel music and help attract talented music scholars. In 2018, consultant William McVicker recommended starting afresh.

Replacing an organ in a listed chapel involves three main challenges: securing planning permission, identifying the right builder and raising the funds. In 2024, we received planning approval. After careful research, we appointed William Drake Ltd, a specialist organ maker with a national reputation for excellence and past projects at St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of OB **Robin Stainer (58–66),** the new organ will be fully funded. This gift will ensure future generations enjoy the sound of a hand-crafted instrument in our beautiful chapel.

Work has already begun. Oak has been purchased and pipework is underway. Dismantling of the current organ and installation of the new one will begin in early 2027, with completion expected before the autumn term.

This is a landmark project for the school and for the chapel, which remains at the heart of Bedford life.



Celebrating our Donors

For nearly 150 years, Bedford School has honoured its generous supporters. Last October, we gathered once again to give thanks at our annual Commemoration of Founders and Benefactors Service and Lunch, a celebration of both philanthropy and the lives it continues to transform.

The day began with a chapel service led by the Right Reverend Richard Atkinson OBE, Bishop of Bedford, who spoke powerfully about the long-standing impact of giving at Bedford.

Over lunch in the Great Hall, guests heard from OB **Leroy Knowles (92-97)**, a former bursary recipient, who shared how Bedford changed the course of his life. Now working in banking, he supports initiatives that promote social mobility.

Acting Head Master Sam Baldock also reflected on the value of bursaries and the richness a diverse student body brings to school life.

We were pleased to welcome back several OBs who benefitted from bursaries, including one who sent a moving letter of thanks to his benefactors.

Our sincere thanks to all who support the school. We look forward to welcoming many of you back on Sunday 5 October 2025.

Your Legacy Their Future

Bedford School exists today thanks to the enduring generosity of our founding benefactor, Sir William Harpur, and the many donors who have followed in his footsteps. Their legacy gifts have helped shape the exceptional school and facilities we enjoy today.

Leaving a legacy is a powerful act of trust, an enduring commitment to the future of Bedford School beyond one's lifetime. These gifts allow us to continually enhance the educational experience we offer, nurturing the talents and character of our boys and preparing them to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Recently, we were extremely grateful to receive a legacy from OB **Michael Appleton (43-51**). Michael requested that his gift be used to support our Bursaries Programme, helping as many families as possible access a Bedford School education. His gift will support boys already at the school and will help others to join in the future. We are deeply grateful to Michael and his family for this generous gift.

Legacy gifts are exempt from Inheritance Tax, which means they can reduce the tax burden on your estate while maximising the impact of your generosity. Even a gift of just one percent of your estate can make a lasting difference in the lives of future Bedfordians.

Importantly, a legacy gift is a pledge, not a binding commitment. If your circumstances change, you can amend your Will at any time.

To learn more about leaving a legacy to Bedford School, please contact us at foundation@bedfordschool.org.uk. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Make a Gift

If you would like to offer further support to the BSFT, you can make a donation to your particular area of interest, or give an unrestricted donation which we will allocate to the area in most need. Simply scan the QR code to make an online gift. If you have any questions, would like to find out more about our projects, or would like our support, please do contact Vincent Gaten, Director of Philanthropy on 01234 362256, or foundation@bedfordschool.org.uk.

From the Chairman

I am very pleased to report another strong year for the Bedford School Foundation Trust (BSFT). Our dedicated and hard-working group of Trustees has met regularly throughout the year to consider how best the BSFT can support the school. We welcome input from staff across the school community, including teachers and support colleagues, and we carefully consider their proposals for investment in specific areas of school life. The Trustees then assess each request against our charitable objectives, which are to support Bedford School, its pupils, and the wider OB community.

This year, we have once again funded a wide and exciting range of initiatives, many of which are highlighted within this report. From virology research and robotics equipment to AI systems, Forest School expeditions, sports gear, and professional development for OBs, the projects we support are as diverse as they are impactful.

We are proud to help enrich both the curriculum and co-curricular programme in ways that inspire curiosity, develop talent, and empower Bedfordians, past and present, to become thoughtful citizens, successful individuals, and agents of change.

We hope you enjoy reading about the work the BSFT has supported over the past 12 months and a sincere thank-you to everyone who has offered their support.



Roger Marks (71-82), Chairman of the Bedford School Foundation Trust



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