
BEDFORD
SCHOOL
The *same* school.
A *wider* door.



"Bedford School has *continually evolved* in its 475 year history, but *always stayed true* to its values. It has long been known for the *quality* of its academic education, co-curricular prowess and pastoral care, giving young people the *strongest* start in life."

John Holland-Kaye
Chair of the School Governing Body



WELCOMING GIRLS FROM 2027

Bedford School is embarking on an exciting new chapter.

From September 2027, we will welcome girls throughout the Prep and Upper Schools for the first time.

I am delighted to be joining Bedford School at such a special moment. This change comes from a position of confidence and with a firm understanding of what makes Bedford distinctive. The school will evolve in the years ahead, but the qualities and values that lie at the heart of the school will remain unchanged.

The pages that follow set out our plans for this next chapter. I hope they provide a clear and exciting picture of both what is *changing* and, just as importantly, what is staying the *same*.



Michael Sloan
Head Master

OUR HERITAGE

Over time, Bedford has held to a simple belief: that education is defined not only by *what* a pupil achieves, but by *who* they become.

For nearly 475 years, this belief has shaped the school. It has guided decisions with care and judgement, sustaining an approach to education that values character, responsibility and intellectual development alongside academic achievement.


BEDFORD



OUR FUTURE

From September 2027, Bedford School will *welcome girls* for the very first time.

This is an exciting development, one that has been approached with care and a clear sense of purpose. It reflects a belief that a Bedford education should be available to more young people and their families, while remaining true to the values, character and traditions that have defined the school for nearly five centuries.

A BROADER COMMUNITY

Bedford has always drawn together pupils of *different* strengths, interests and temperaments, recognising in each something of value.

That remains unchanged. What evolves is the composition of the community. By welcoming girls, we are extending and enriching an existing experience - one that combines opportunity with attention, expectation with support, and individuality within one shared Bedfordian life.

This development deepens the culture of our school, creating a community that more fully reflects the world beyond it.



The introduction of *girls* to Bedford.

From September 2027, Bedford will welcome girls throughout both the Prep and Upper Schools, as day pupils, flexi boarders, weekly boarders and full boarders. They will join a community that has long combined academic ambition with outstanding pastoral care, rich co-curricular opportunities and a strong sense of belonging.

The foundations of school life will remain unchanged. Upper School pupils will continue to belong to single-sex day and boarding houses, providing spaces where they can relax, socialise and feel at home.

At the same time, throughout Prep and Upper Schools, girls will participate fully in the academic, sporting, creative and leadership opportunities that characterise a Bedford education.

At the heart of these plans is Burnaby House, which will be transformed to provide a dedicated home for girls. Initially serving both day and boarding pupils, it will bring together a strong pastoral team, creating a welcoming community and a clear sense of identity from the very start.



Every aspect of school life is being considered as part of the transition. The school is reviewing and refining curriculum, pastoral and co-curricular provision, building on the experience of staff who already have substantial knowledge of teaching and supporting girls. Alongside this work, opportunities are being created for pupils and parents (both current and new) to contribute their perspectives as preparations continue.

This marks the beginning of an important new chapter. The school will remain recognisably Bedford, while welcoming a broader community brings new opportunities for learning, friendship and shared experience.



A *brand new* Sixth Form Centre.



The changes taking place at Bedford are matched by significant investment in the pupil experience. Central to our plans is a new Sixth Form Centre, a dedicated environment for older pupils as they prepare for life beyond Bedford School.

The Sixth Form has always played a distinctive role at Bedford, combining ambition with increasing independence and responsibility. Pupils will have the library for quiet study, and their day and boarding houses as single-sex spaces in which to relax.

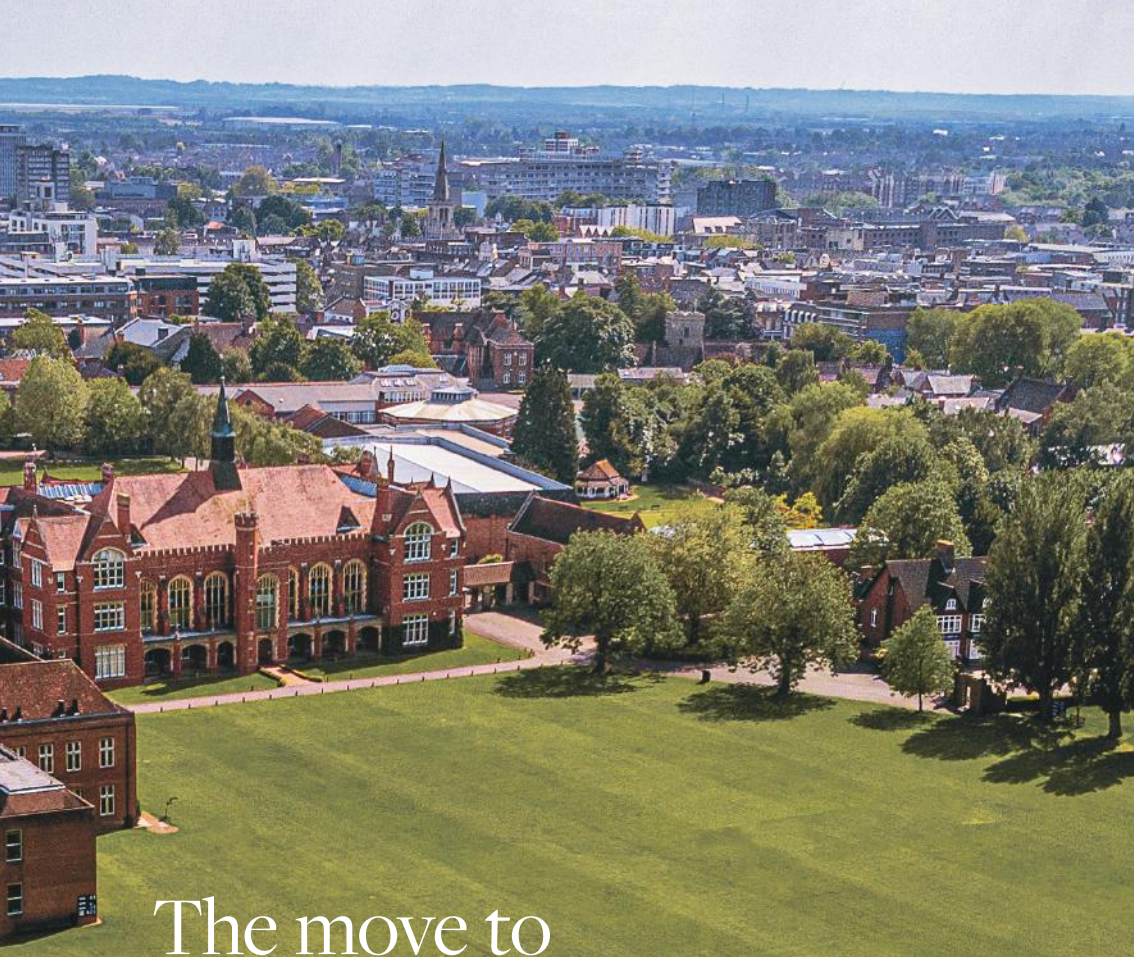
The new centre adds something different: a vibrant shared space for studying, collaborating and socialising, that matches their growing maturity and ambition. It will be a space where boys and girls can work alongside one another as members of a single Sixth Form community.











The move to co-education changes who can access a Bedford education. It does not change the *values* and *strengths* that have defined Bedford for generations.

WHAT WON'T CHANGE

Academic Ambition

A culture of high expectations, intellectual curiosity and outstanding outcomes.

Pastoral Care

Knowing every pupil as an individual, and supporting them to thrive.

The House System

The sense of belonging, identity and community that sits at the heart of school life.

Sporting Tradition

The commitment to participation, performance and competition that has long defined Bedford.

Boarding Community

A distinctive boarding tradition that shapes the character and rhythm of the school.

Co-curricular Opportunity

A breadth of opportunities few schools can match, with a new optional Saturday morning programme extending this even further through an exciting range of activities and experiences.

Your questions on co-education *answered.*

Following the announcement that Bedford School will become fully co-educational from September 2027, we understand that families may have questions about what this will mean and what the future Bedford experience will look like.

The decision.

So, why are you doing this?

Because we believe a co-educational environment offers an even richer educational experience for young people, and because we want more pupils to benefit from everything Bedford School provides. Extensive research, parent engagement and careful consideration of how the needs and expectations of families are evolving have helped to shape this decision as part of the Harpur Trust's ongoing review of its schools and the education market.

Bringing girls into Bedford is the natural next step in the school's evolution, creating a community that more closely reflects the world pupils will enter beyond school.

This is not a break with who we are. It is an extension of what we have always sought to provide: an education that prepares young people to think intelligently, act wisely and engage fully with a changing world.

Why now, after all these years as a boys' school?

Bedford School has always evolved when change was judged to be in the long-term interests of our pupils and our future. This has happened many times across our long history and after careful consideration of the changing educational landscape and needs of families, we believe now is the right time to take this step. We are making the move deliberately and thoughtfully, from a position of strength and confidence, and with the time and resources needed to prepare properly for every aspect of the transition.

Let's be blunt. Is there something wrong with the school?

Not at all. Bedford School has thrived for centuries, and its strength has never come from being a boys' school. It has come from the quality of the teaching, the breadth of what we offer beyond the classroom, and a pastoral care system that knows every child as an individual. None of that is changing. We are simply opening Bedford to a wider community of young people.

Has Bedford changed its view on single-sex education?

No. We remain proud of our history as a boys' school and recognise that single-sex education has advantages which we have spoken openly about. Equally, co-educational schools bring strengths of their own.

This decision is not based on a belief that one model is inherently better than the other. Rather, it reflects our belief that the qualities which have long defined Bedford can flourish in a co-educational environment, where every pupil is encouraged to pursue their interests and strengths with confidence. We remain every bit as ambitious about the education we provide; we are simply opening it to a wider community of young people.

Is the school, or The Harpur Trust, in financial difficulty?

No. This decision is made from confidence about Bedford School's future, and from a wish to offer what we do to more young people. It helps, too, that the school is part of The Harpur Trust, a large and long-established foundation, which is both financially strong and stable, and gives its schools a security and permanence that few can match.

Will Bedford School lose what makes it special?

This is the question we care about most, and the answer is no. Our commitment to academic excellence, our understanding of how individual pupils learn and succeed, and the outstanding destinations achieved by our pupils will remain at the heart of the school.

Alongside this sit the things that have always made Bedford distinctive: a culture of academic ambition and achievement, a strong house system, exceptional pastoral care, boarding at the heart of school life, sport as a defining part of our identity, and a co-curricular programme whose breadth is difficult to match. Co-education adds to Bedford. It takes nothing away. If anything, this is the moment we double down on the qualities that have made the school successful for generations.

What does this mean for my child if they join Bedford?

Children joining Bedford will experience the same academic ambition, the same breadth of opportunities beyond the classroom, and the same strong pastoral support that have defined the school for nearly 475 years.

At the same time, pupils will benefit from belonging to a co-educational community that more closely reflects the world beyond school, helping them develop the confidence and interpersonal skills that will serve them throughout their lives. As the school grows, we expect opportunities across academic, co-curricular and social life to grow with it. Importantly, each Upper School pupil's house will remain a single-sex space, day and boarding, providing a dedicated environment in which pupils can relax, socialise and get changed.

Do you actually have any experience of teaching girls?

Yes, a great deal. 85% of our teaching staff have previously taught in co-educational schools. Our staff body is evenly balanced between men and women, and 40% of our Heads of Department are women.

We are also fortunate to have women in a number of senior leadership positions, including the Vice Master, Deputy Head Pastoral, Prep School Director of Studies and Prep School Assistant Head Pastoral, providing visible and experienced role models across the school.

We are building on considerable expertise already within Bedford School and, alongside this existing experience, staff will continue to engage in professional development and preparation as we move towards September 2027.

What changes, and what doesn't.

Will co-education change Bedford's pastoral approach?

No. The principles that underpin pastoral care at Bedford School will remain exactly the same. Every pupil should be known, supported and challenged as an individual, and that commitment will continue to sit at the heart of school life. Pastoral care has always been one of Bedford's defining strengths. As a boarding school, we have a long tradition of providing the highest levels of support, guidance and care for young people, and that expertise benefits every pupil, whether they are a boarder or a day pupil.

As we prepare for co-education, we are building on the expertise already within our staff and reviewing our pastoral provision to ensure that girls are supported, guided and cared for to the same high standard. The structures that families value most will remain unchanged. Pupils will continue to belong to houses, supported by experienced pastoral teams who know them well and work closely with families. Day and boarding houses will remain single-sex spaces in the Upper School, providing pupils with a dedicated environment in which to relax, socialise and seek support when they need it.

We are committed to ensuring that the pastoral care for which Bedford is known remains one of the school's defining strengths.

What about sport? It's a huge part of why we're considering Bedford.

Sport remains exactly what it has always been at Bedford, a cornerstone of school life, and we have no intention of reducing our offer. Pupils will spend the same number of hours on Games each week. Thursday afternoons continue unchanged, with the whole Upper School playing sport together for two full hours. The sport that used to fall on Tuesday afternoons will now be timetabled elsewhere in the week, still in one long session, although not necessarily on a Tuesday.

Moving it around the timetable means this session can be led by professional coaches and specialist sports staff, making better use of our facilities and giving more pupils access to an even greater level of coaching.

Matches continue as normal, with pupils competing for their school as they always have, including on Saturday afternoons and Wednesday afternoons in the Prep. Alongside this, we are continuing to develop our provision for girls' sport through specialist appointments, dedicated leadership and ongoing investment in the facilities and expertise needed to support the programme as it grows and matches the breadth and ambition of our existing provision.

Will academic standards change?

No. Our academic expectations and ambitions remain unchanged. Our focus will continue to be on helping every pupil achieve their potential through excellent teaching, intellectual challenge and individual support. Academic achievement, intellectual curiosity and a culture of high expectations will remain at the heart of the school.

A review of curriculum and structures is underway to make sure our academic provision is right for a co-educational school, and we will share more as that work completes.

And co-curricular activities, the things beyond lessons?

Our co-curricular programme is one of the things that sets Bedford apart, and it will remain central to school life. Girls joining the school will have full access to every part of the programme, from STEM projects and academic societies to music, drama, leadership and service. We expect the breadth of what we offer to grow as the school develops.

The programme already encompasses a remarkable range of opportunities, and that spirit of exploration and participation will remain unchanged. CCF will continue in partnership with Bedford Girls' School, and the wider co-curricular provision will evolve over time as girls bring new interests, ideas and initiatives to the community.

Will girls and boys be taught together in every year group?

Yes. Girls and boys will be taught together, in the same classrooms, across the school. That is what co-education means to us, and it is what we are building towards.

As in any school, the detail of how classes and sets are arranged will reflect year group, subject and cohort size, and we will confirm those arrangements well in advance of pupils joining.

Will there be changes to boarding?

Boarding will continue to sit at the heart of Bedford School. Girls will be able to join as flexi, weekly or full boarders, and Burnaby will become the girls' boarding house, redeveloped to give them a wonderful home from September 2027. For the time being Burnaby will also serve as the girls' day house, giving them a space to interact, socialise and get changed without the presence of boys, exactly as the boys have in their own day and boarding houses.

When does this all happen, and which year groups?

From September 2027, we will welcome girls into all year groups, subject to availability of places and the usual admissions criteria. Girls will also be able to join as flexi, weekly or full boarders in both parts of the school from Year 7 upwards.

Will there be enough girls for this to feel like a genuine co-educational community?

Yes. Burnaby is being redeveloped as the girls' house, ready before the first girls arrive, and we are planning changes within day and boarding provision, staff appointments and facilities across the school so that girls are part of every aspect of life at Bedford from the first day: in classrooms, in houses, on teams, on stage and in positions of responsibility.

Our focus is on creating a thriving co-educational community, not simply admitting a particular number of pupils.

What new facilities are you developing?

We are investing in the school as part of our ongoing development plan. At its heart is a new Sixth Form Centre: a collaborative social and working space for our sixth form, with a café, generous working areas and meeting rooms, looking out over the library garden. Alongside it there will be wider improvements across the school. These developments support both the move to co-education and the experience of every pupil.

Is the school week changing?

From the 2027–2028 academic year, core curricular academic lessons will no longer take place on Saturday mornings. This reflects our intention to provide greater flexibility for pupils and their families, while preserving the aspects of Saturday life that are such an important part of the Bedford experience.

Sport will remain central to school life. Fixtures will continue to take place on Saturdays, and pupils selected to represent the school will continue to be expected to do so. Rehearsals, performances, concert practices and activities for boarders will also continue as part of a vibrant Saturday programme.

Alongside these commitments, Saturday mornings will offer a range of optional opportunities, such as revision clinics, additional academic support, enrichment activities and new initiatives developed over time. The aim is to create greater flexibility, while ensuring that pupils continue to benefit from the breadth of opportunity, sense of community and spirit of participation that have always characterised Bedford.

How can I find out more?

We will continue to share information as plans develop, and there will be plenty of opportunities to visit Bedford School at our open events over the coming months.

You can also contact our Admissions Team at any stage or arrange a private visit to the school. They will be happy to discuss your circumstances, answer any questions and help you understand what life at Bedford School will look like from September 2027 and beyond.

Admissions and Entry

Will girls have the same admissions criteria as boys?

Yes. Girls and boys will be assessed using the same admissions process and entry criteria. Our focus remains on identifying young people who will thrive academically, socially and personally at Bedford School.

Will there be a limit on the number of girls joining in the early years?

We are focused on creating a thriving and genuinely co-educational community from the outset. Admissions will be managed carefully so that girls are fully integrated into all aspects of school life and the school develops in a balanced and sustainable way.

Are scholarships and bursaries available for girls?

Yes. Girls will have access to Bedford School's scholarship and bursary programme, with awards available across areas such as academic achievement, sport, STEM, music, drama and art, subject to the published criteria and assessment processes.

Why should I choose Bedford over an established co-educational school?

Because Bedford offers something distinctive: an exceptional combination of academic excellence, outstanding pastoral care, a strong house system, boarding at the heart of school life, an unrivalled co-curricular programme and a distinctive environment and culture.

As we move to co-education, families will be able to access all of these strengths within a fully co-educational environment. We believe that combination will be compelling for many families seeking the very best education for their child.

Interested in learning more?

We recognise that families may have questions about these changes. Further information, including details of our upcoming open events, is available on our website bedfordschool.org.uk.

Bedford School website

Contact admissions on +44 (0)1234 362216
or email admissions@bedfordschool.org.uk




BEDFORD
SCHOOL
bedfordschool.org.uk