



Dame Alice Harpur School

Further Information about the Charity & School

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1. Background of the Bedford Charity

The Bedford Charity, also known as the Harpur Trust, has been in existence since 1566 when it was founded by Sir William Harpur and his wife, Dame Alice. They executed a deed of gift creating an endowment to sustain Bedford School, a School Sir William had already established in Bedford. The endowment also made provision for the residue to be distributed to the poor of the town.

These ideals evolved over the years into the three charitable objects of the Bedford Charity today, to benefit the town of Bedford and the surrounding area:

- The promotion of education
- The relief of those who are sick or in need, hardship or distress
- The provision of recreational facilities with a social welfare purpose

The Charity administers four main independent Schools which all take pupils aged 7 to 18:

- Dame Alice Harpur School is a day School for girls
- Bedford High School is a boarding and day School for girls
- Bedford School is a boarding and day School for boys
- Bedford Modern School was a boys' day School which became co-educational from September 2003

Pilgrims Pre-Preparatory School was set up by the Charity in January 1998 to offer education to children from three months to seven years. This School operates as a separate charitable company.

The Bedford Charity is a major contributor to valuable community activities within the Borough. As well as owning and managing 40 almshouse dwellings, we award grants that normally total approximately £1m each year to support its three charitable objectives in projects as diverse as:

- Sponsorship to enable a maintained sector Upper School to apply for specialist School status
- The building of a fishing platform for disabled anglers
- Funding collaborative working between voluntary agencies to provide one to one support to young vulnerable homeless people.

The Charity also employs over 1,400 people in the town of Bedford.



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2. Academy Sponsorship and Trusts

The Charity is currently working with Bedford College, John Bunyan Upper School and central and local government to explore the possibility of sponsoring John Bunyan Upper School to become an Academy. The School serves a deprived area of Bedford that suffers from many challenges including high unemployment. The Charity has been involved with the School for many years and has provided funding for several specialist projects and the School's bid for specialist college status.

Over the next six to nine months, the Charity will work with its Academy partners in the feasibility stage of the proposal which includes looking at the detail of the educational and building plans. At the end of this stage, if all parties agree, the funding agreement is signed and the parties are formally committed to the project. The aim is to have the new Academy building ready for occupation by September 2012. The Academy will open in existing building as soon as possible after the funding agreement is signed.

The Charity has also recently decided to support the formation of local, maintained sector School trusts by accepting invitations to join trust Boards and establish educational links between its schools and those in the trusts.

3. Dame Alice Harpur School's position within The Bedford Charity

Dame Alice Harpur School, in common with the other main schools, is part of the Bedford Charity, which is the sole legal entity. The Charity has 26 Trustees who form its Governing Body and who are ultimately responsible for all that happens within it.

The Trustees delegate the day to day running of the School to the School Committee. The Committee acts as the Governing Body of the School for most matters but must seek approval from the Governing Body of the Charity for certain decisions such as fee increases, major building projects and matters that might affect other Schools.

Some services including fee billing and payroll, are provided centrally by the Harpur Trust Office but the Head, through the work of the Bursar, remains responsible for drawing up the budget and monitoring expenditure.



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4. The Bedford Charity's Strategic Plan

The School Committee is responsible for ensuring the School's strategy and activities support the Strategic Plan of the Charity. The key elements of this strategy include:

- The transfer of the funding of bursaries from the Charity to the School
- Developing the Charity's grant making
- Allocating costs to activities
- Rationalising the use of resources
- Enhancing the ethos of public service within the Charity's Schools
- Pursuing "Excellence in Education"
- Developing the investment policy of the Charity
- Developing the communications policy of the Charity.

The strategy is further detailed on the Charity's website www.bedfordcharity.org.uk. Some elements of the strategy have greater bearing on the Schools than others and the Heads and /or Bursars play key roles in these areas.

As part of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, the configuration of the Charity's educational provision is under review in order to ensure its Schools are best shaped to meet the challenges ahead. The Heads of all the Charity's Schools are active members of the Educational Policy Working Group which has a central role in taking this work forward.



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DAME ALICE HARPUR SCHOOL

5. School Leadership

The Head is effectively the School's Chief Executive Officer. He / she is required to consult closely with the Chairman of the School Committee, the Chairman of the Bedford Charity and the Chief Executive of the Charity.

The Head directs the management of the School through the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which comprises the following:

- Head
- Bursar
- Deputy Headmistress
- Assistant Headmistress - Pastoral
- Assistant headmistress - Academic
- Head of the Junior School

The SLT meets on a regular basis and at other times as required to address the main educational and administrative issues of the day.

6. Finances

The School's turnover is approximately £8 million. The Head is responsible for the School's finances and works closely with the Bursar, ensures that the School's financial strategy is met. The School's Financial Strategy includes:

- Focussing financial resources on strategic priorities
- Delivering better value for money support services through the enhanced use of technology
- Developing additional revenue streams in order to bring in net resources for the school
- Delivering an annual budget that provides funding for strategic investment and provides bursary access for less affluent households whilst maintaining fee increases at reasonable levels.
- Establishment of the Dame Alice Harpur School Foundation / Legacy Programme (New Initiative)

7. The School Campus

The School estate of over 14 acres is situated on Cardington Road and enjoys a spacious riverside location along the banks of the Great River Ouse providing a pleasant working environment for pupils and staff alike which combines the advantages of peace and quiet with proximity to the heart of Bedford. The links between the town and the School are strong in the fields of community work, the arts and sport.

Bedford is a busy, expanding town with a population of around 100,000 within easy reach of London (50 miles), Oxford (50 miles) and Cambridge (25 miles).



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8. Governance

The School is governed under the auspices of the Bedford Charity (The Harpur Trust). Trustees constitute the Governing Body. Governance of the School for most matters is delegated to the School Committee which is made up of Trustees and Co-opted Governors. Members of this committee are in effect the School Governors.

The School Committee has three sub committees: Finance and Premises Sub-Committee, Curriculum Sub-Committee and the Marketing & Communications Sub-Committee. Each is chaired by a School Governor. Co-opted Associate Governors are nominated to join these sub committees bringing particular expertise to each area.

All committees meet termly. The Head is in ex-officio attendance at all meetings. As a senior officer of the Bedford Charity he / she also attends the Policy Committee and Governing Body meetings of the Bedford Charity and participates in working groups as required.

In addition, various other committees and groups are attended by the Head including:

- DAHSA Committee
- PTA Committee
- Health & Safety Committee
- School Council
- Strategy Committee



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9. School History

The school opened its doors on May 1st 1882, to welcome 58 girls who were amongst the earliest in the country to enjoy an education previously reserved for boys. Today, about 850 girls attend the school and benefit from an education made possible by the generous endowment of Sir William Harpur, a Bedford merchant, who became Lord Mayor of London in 1566. It is after Sir William's wife, Dame Alice, that our school is named.

In 1892 BGMS moved to its own premises in Cowper building in St Paul's Square, Bedford, the building recently vacated by the grammar school. The school eventually outgrew the building, and plans were drawn up for a new school for 350 girls near the site of Dame Alice House in Cardington Road, which had been purchased to house the Junior School. The move to the new site was completed in September 1938. A year later England was at war with Germany, and the spacious new school became overcrowded when the staff and pupils of Woodford County High School were evacuated to Bedford for their safety and the two schools shared the buildings.

To avoid confusion with the modern schools set up by the Butler Education Act, the name of the school was changed to Dame Alice Harpur School in 1946. Dame Alice was the second wife of Sir William Harpur, founder of the Harpur Trust. Sir William was a successful Bedford merchant who became Lord Mayor of London in 1566. Originally the foundation was to provide education for boys and dowries 'for marrying poor maidens'.

A special Act of Parliament was passed in 1882 to allow the endowment to be used to provide education for girls. In 1969 the Governors purchased Howard House to be used as a school boarding house for 49 girls. Boarding was phased out, coming to an end in July 1981, and the Junior School girls moved into Howard House.

The school opted for full independent status in 1975, following the withdrawal of the Direct Grant. Numbers increased over the years and today about 850 girls attend the school. Each year the school community gathers on or near 1st May to celebrate the school birthday and to remind themselves of the legacy of Sir William Harpur and Dame Alice.



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10. Junior School

The Junior School is the perfect starting point for girls' careers at Dame Alice Harpur School. Its special atmosphere and stimulating, yet secure, environment occupying a beautiful Victorian building, Howard House, in extensive grounds providing all girls with an excellent foundation upon which to build in future years.



Girls enter the Junior School from a wide selection of feeder schools, both maintained and independent, at a range of entry points, sitting entrance assessments in the January prior to the year of entry at 7+, 8+, 9+ or 10+. Girls from Year 6 transfer seamlessly to Year 7 in the Senior School, having developed during their time in the Junior School the confidence to take on even greater challenges in the Senior School. Parents and friends of the school always comment on the relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in the Junior School which retains a very special place in the hearts of former pupils for many years.

Girls are taught in small groups of usually no more than 20 pupils by their Form Tutor. However, regular contact with the Senior School and a level of subject specialisation is introduced from Year 3, for example in the teaching of Music, Drama and Physical Education. All girls in the Junior School study French from Year 3, and they also have the opportunity to sample lessons in German and Spanish during their time with us. The girls benefit greatly from being able to use the impressive facilities on both sides of the campus. Further specialisation is introduced in Year 6 where the teaching of Science, Design Technology, Food Technology and Textiles is split between the Junior School and Senior School sites, preparing girls for transition and ensuring continuity in the curriculum.

The curriculum which all girls follow is based on the National Curriculum but is further enriched by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities which are built into the school day, either in the form of lunchtime or after school clubs, or as part of the 'Activities' slot. Access to this wider curriculum enriches the girls' performance in the classroom and supports their personal development and confidence. Girls choose from an increasingly wide selection of activities such as 'Groovy Greenfingers' Gardening Club, Adventure Pursuits and Maths Brain Teasers. In addition, girls may be invited to join sports teams after school and there are optional extras available to all girls such as Ballet, Speech and Drama and individual instrumental lessons in Music. Homework habits are established from Year 3 and parents are positively encouraged to support and take an active part in their daughters' learning.



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11. Lower School

The Lower School has a family atmosphere where the girls are nurtured in a happy, stimulating environment. We have a clear identity of our own and also fit comfortably into the wider school structure.



Our tutorial team is energetic and committed to respecting and developing the individuality of each girl in Years 7, 8 and 9. Tutors guide their form groups through a Personal and Social Education programme.

An effective induction programme is in place for those entering the Section from our Junior School as well as those coming from outside Dame Alice. We value the contribution of our Sixth Form girls here, as in other aspects of school life. Our system of providing 'buddies' for all new girls has proved to be worthwhile. The Head of Upper School and her Senior Tutor also work closely with us as the girls move from Year 9 to Year 10.

The girls involve themselves in the vast range of lunchtime clubs and after-school activities available to them, from dancing and singing in Cheerleading to planning strategic moves in Chess Club to making sherbet, gunge and bubbles in Chemistry Club.

The ingenuity shown by individual tutor groups in organising charity events and form assemblies never ceases to amaze us. The girls' strong sense of citizenship is evident and this is reinforced by our termly citizenship award.

Girls are encouraged to work hard across the whole range of academic subjects, homework being an integral part of the learning process.

Parents should feel able to contact us to discuss any issues relating to their daughters' academic and social development.

Our hope is that life in the Lower School is fulfilling and memorable for all our girls.



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12. Upper School

The Upper School is busy, purposeful and enjoyable. Girls are encouraged to maximise their potential and to develop a strong sense of self-awareness and self-belief in a supportive learning environment.



Our tutorial team is experienced and committed to helping the girls in Years 10 and 11 develop their independence, with emphasis on the girl as an individual and not just a 'cog in the system'. Tutors guide their form, encouraging creativity, adaptability and persistence for these important GCSE years. Each form also has an attached tutor who helps with pastoral matters. Pastoral care is important and tutors are able to react quickly to any concerns.

An effective timetabled Personal and Social Education programme is in place which enables the girls to question, analyse, understand and cope with the decisions that face them and the position of the individual in society. We value the input from our Sixth Form and health workers in this programme.

All girls have great fun taking part in Charity Fundraising Initiatives and activities have included Easter egg hunts, duck racing, talent shows, dressing up days and sponsored walks. During Charity Weeks large sums of money are raised for each form's chosen charity. New activities are available to the Upper School girls such as joining the Combined Cadet Force, beginning the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and taking up competitive rowing.

Mentors are provided in Year 11 for those girls who we think would benefit from regular friendly one-to-one contact with a teacher. All girls have individual careers interviews and the Head of Sixth Form and her Senior Tutors work closely with us as the girls move from Year 11 to Year 12.

We mark the end of Year 10 with a theatre trip. The Year 11 girls have a picnic on their last day at school before the GCSEs begin. Upper School life ends with a day out to a theme park and a Year 11 Dance to celebrate the end of the girls' examinations and their move to the Sixth Form.'



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13. Sixth Form

Sixth Form

The emphasis in this Sixth Form is clearly on academic excellence but we offer so much more than that. Girls have opportunities to mature in a supportive atmosphere that nurtures self-confidence, initiative and all the transferable skills so sought after by employers.



Our tutorial team have daily contact with girls and deliver all aspects of personal and academic support. Each girl has both a personal tutor, who writes her reference, and a Careers tutor who guides her through the Higher Education or employment application process. The considerable individual support provided by the Careers tutors allows for success in an enormous variety of fields.

Most girls select four AS subjects from the wide selection available.

AS Level subjects are taught in seven thirty-five minute periods. An eighth period is timetabled as a 'workshop' and can be used flexibly by staff and girls for individuals and small groups to seek help with a particular aspect of their study.

All girls also follow a Broader Curriculum programme which gives them access to experiences which will stretch them in new ways and enhance their applications. The Broader Curriculum covers curricular enrichment (for example an Introduction to Philosophy, or Communication Skills), a citizenship/community strand (such as helping at a local Special School, or involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme) and a leisure/relaxation option (including, among other subjects, Photography, Self-defence and Yoga).

Girls entering the Sixth Form at Dame Alice can look forward to academic results to be proud of, a huge range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities to demonstrate leadership potential.

We value each girl for her own talents and support her to achieve her own goals.

The new Sixth Form Centre has enjoyed a considerable amount of investment over the past year with a new Sixth Form Common Room complete with i-pod speaker technology, a new and exclusive café with private sixth form gardens together with a new ICT/Media suite, ICT teaching suite and redeveloped Careers area.