

Minutes of the BGS AGM 1st December 2020

Present

Wayne Shirt, Sarah Bowmer, Vivienne Cogan, Kevin Huby, Simon Hinchliffe, Richard Ribeiro, Samm Thompson, Poonam Verma, Jill Swift, Katie Stitson, Beth Street, Jean Pine, Gul Akbar, Monika Witowska, Hardip Powar, Suzi Crookes, Tony Pickles, Edel Christie, Baljit Kaur, Leanne Carter, David Carter, Kat Hemming, Saliha Sahraoui

Apologies

Tracey Deacon, Preet Sandhu

Welcome

Welcome to the first ever Virtual BGSPA AGM made possible with help from Andy Birch Head of IT - thank you. Welcome to all parents joining us for the first time – introduce Simon, Wayne, Sarah, Kevin and myself.

2019/2020 has been an unprecedented and unpredictable year for us all, both in the school environment but also personally. We started the year welcoming a new Chair – Wayne Shirt, who joined us full of enthusiasm and new ideas. Unfortunately, Wayne's role in the NHS has required all of his attention during the pandemic and as a result he is hoping to be able to devote more time to the PA at some point in the new year. I hope you all agree we need to express our thanks to Dr Hinchliffe and everyone at BGS for their continued focus on the education and welfare of all the students and families in such a passionate and positive way, regardless of the uncertainty and challenges that face them on a daily basis this year and I imagine next year.

2019 AGM Minutes

Proposed – Sarah Bowmer

Seconded – Samm Thompson

Chairs Report 2019/2020

At this stage we would normally talk about the events that the PA were involved with during the 2019/2020 academic year. Unfortunately, our main fundraising event - The Spring Fair, had to be cancelled and the selling of Second-hand Uniform, run by the PA, came to a very abrupt stop as we all went into Lockdown. We did however manage to support the Saturday Open Day, a Y7 social for the parents that coincided with the Y7 disco Mrs Tomlinson organised and several SHU sales. Unfortunately, we weren't able to help with the Induction Day for new prospective students and their families in the summer. I would like to thank all parents from Clock House and the Senior School who volunteered their help for these events. We now have a superb group of parents who have taken over the running of the SHU, an essential service we offer and are ready to go, once the Government/school say they can. We will hear from them later.

In previous years we have held coffee mornings in the Brownlee Pavilion with guest speakers on topics pertinent to our children – Duke of Edinburgh, careers guidance, mental health but these have not been possible. Our Deputy Head – Mr Boardman, did have a few speakers lined up. Let's hope we will be able to hear from them next year.

At the start of the year Wayne and I started attending the Friends of Clock House meetings that are held in the Junior School. This is a group consisting of parents with children in the Junior School. We agreed there was a need to bring the parents of both the Junior and Senior School together as many felt FoCH and the PA were two very different groups. They now have a representative who comes to PA meetings – thank you Katie who was their representative last year. We agreed that the Junior school should have their own events fund so the FoCH could organise age appropriate activities. We look forward to hearing what they have got up to. Finally, we committed to supplying the Year Six leavers hoodies from now on.

During the last school year we had a number of requests for funding from staff. Bird Boxes with webcams and Spin bikes from the Senior school and a 3D printer and trophies from Clock House, all of which we agreed to support. Added to that the contributions we make to the Y7 trip, the Y13 leavers book, the Y6 leavers hoodies, senior school prizes and a further contribution to the music department for a new piano were achieved.

Remember every parent is a member of the Parents Association and the PA is your association, for the benefit of all our youngsters. We require volunteers on the days of sales, open days, introduction days. Can you help, can you volunteer, do you have ideas that would financially or socially benefit our children? Your knowledge, skills and ideas could pave the way for new social events or activities all for the benefit of the whole school. Keep in touch by joining the PA what's app group by email – parentsassociation@bradfordgrammar.com with your name and number and follow us on twitter: Bradford G S PA @BGS_PA

Thank you very much for attending tonight and we look forward to the PA events resuming in the near future.

Treasurers Report

Kevin Huby, Treasurer of the PA, issued the report for 2019/2020.

A deficit of £6048 was generated for the year. This was mainly due to the lack of income from the cancelled Spring Fair and fewer SH uniform sales due to the pandemic.

We also made grants totalling £16,566.

The Accounts Summary is separately attached for information.

Friends of Clock House Report

2019/2020 has been a year of change for the Friends of Clock House (FoCH), not least with a change of leadership at the start of the year, and we'd like to thank the outgoing Sue and Emma for all their hard work over the last few years.

Myself (Samm Thompson) and Nikki Anderson took over the reins in September and were delighted at the number of parents who turned up for our 1st coffee morning to welcome new and existing parents to FoCH.

From this many exciting ideas came forward about how parents would like FoCH to move forward in the forthcoming year; more coffee mornings, guest speakers, more events for the children, our own fundraising capabilities aside from the main PA.

The main event of the year, Secret Santa, was again a huge success, and we were delighted to welcome our special guest - Santa himself, to meet with the children! A HUGE thank you to all the parent elf volunteers for everything they did to make this fun event another success and highlight for the children. It really is a massive undertaking - Thank you!

Coffee mornings were planned in for at least once every half term and were well attended. For the later part of the year meetings with Miss Jones (to talk about sport in Clock House) and Mrs Allen (to talk about computer safety) were booked, and a tea party was planned for the end of the summer term, but unfortunately could not go ahead due to the school closure in March.

We did manage to squeeze in a Disco at the beginning of March. We booked the fabulous Mr Shuffles and held it in 2 sessions (yrs 2, 3 & 4 and 5 & 6). It was well attended by all year groups and lots of fun was had by all the children (and staff & parent helpers!).

We were delighted to build bridges with the main PA and to have representatives from the PA attend our coffee mornings. Many thanks to Wayne and Vivienne for coming along. Clock House (CH) also had a representative to go along the PA meetings - thank you to Katie Stitson for stepping in to represent CH at these. We feel that this has helped to bridge the gap between FoCH and the PA and give a better understanding for each other and opened up communication between the two groups.

From this the PA have agreed with FofCH to transfer £1,000 from funds raised through PA membership at the start of each year for the sole use of FoCH for activities for the children.

The PA have also agreed to fund the purchase of leavers hoodies for Yr6, as they do for Yr11.

This year saw bids go in to the PA from CH for a 3D Printer, which was approved and has been purchased, and also for the purchase of trophies and plaques, which was also approved and procurement of these is still ongoing.

March saw the stepping down of Nikki as co-chair due to her work commitments. We were sorry to lose her but know that she continues to support FoCH in other ways. We welcomed Cassandra as the new co-chair.

We sadly saw the departure of Mrs Disley over the spring break. We wish her well in all that she does, and very much welcome Mr Ribeiro to CH and look forward to working with him in the future.

It is with some sadness that I will be standing down as co-chair at the end of this academic year (2021). I have very much enjoyed helping to steer the FofCH in its new direction and look forward to continuing to support it as a volunteer, but owing to commitments closer to home I am unable to give it everything it needs. Thank you to Hardip Powar who has offered to step into this role.

And lastly, we would very much like to thank ALL the parent volunteers in CH. Without whom the events we plan wouldn't be possible. THANK YOU!

Second Hand Uniform Report

2019/2020 has been quite a transitional year for the Second Hand Uniform (SHU).

We would like to thank the outgoing Tracy Lord for all the exceptional work she did while it was in her care and for the help and support she has given to the new team as we have taken over the reins.

The team of volunteers that came together in September 2019 have been full of new ideas of where to take the SHU in the future and have worked incredibly hard to get it in to the shape it's now in. We thank them for all the hours and hard work they have put in.

Between September and the New Year, time was spent going through every item of stock to check its suitability for sale and bringing in a more streamlined pricing system for both the uniform fully donated and for the donations sold at 50/50.

We were able to hold a sale at the Xmas Fair in November 2019, where we took £1588.00; of which £1262.50 goes to the PA (£325.50 to parents/other nominated sports PA's).

A full and thorough stock take then took place to ensure that the stock and the computer system was fully up to date.

It was decided that to fully support the parents and the need for SHU all year round that we would try to hold at least one sale every half term.

We relaunched with our first sale in January 2020, holding a sale both in the morning and in the afternoon in the Sports Pavillion. We took £950.00; of which £778.00 goes to the PA (£172 to parents/other nominated sports PA's).

Our second sale was held in March, just prior to the school closing due to the first Covid19 lockdown. Takings were £1851.00; of which £1232.00 goes to the PA (£619 to parents/other nominated sports PA's).

Due to the closure of the school from mid-March until the end of the summer term, no more sales were able to take place, nor were we able to take receipt of any further donations.

We thank parents and staff for their support of the SHU whilst we were transitioning and look forward to when we can once again sell second hand uniform.

Samm & Poonam

Headmasters Report – Senior School

I hope everyone is well and coping with the ongoing challenges of a much-altered world. Thank you, Vivienne, for those very kind and generous words earlier. I am delighted to be able to join you tonight and grateful to the PA committee of asking Mr Richard Ribeiro and me to share a few words. I'm only sorry we can't gather in person – in that respect COVID-19 continues to frustrate us all.

A lot has happened since Mr Boardman joined you for the last AGM. And I'm not entirely sure where to begin to bring you up to date.

I'm going to wind the clock back to the autumn of 2019, the start of what we thought might be fairly typical BGS year:

- Strong exam results, particularly at GCSE level
- wonderful oration and music at, for example, our Founder's Day service in a packed (remember those days?) Bradford Cathedral and at our various autumn and end of term and recitals and concerts
- some wonderful autumn academic trips and sports tours to, for example, the Great War Battlefields of Northern Europe and hockey stadiums of South Africa
- celebrations / anniversaries of 35 years of girls in the Sixth Form and 20 years of full co-education with events such as our Leading Ladies evening
- recognition as a winning school at the TES (Times Educational Supplement) Awards for our pastoral work to foster wellbeing and mental health (admittedly there are lots of

awards for schools these days with largely subjective criteria but nice to get a share of the cake)

- and there was more recognition for BGS as we climbed to 29th spot nationally (from way outside the top 100 previously) in a ranking for independent school sport. And that without a single sports scholarship at our school (unlike others in the league table; and there was only one North of England independent school above us in the ranking, which was Sedburgh, so we are on the up) and then at the start of 2020 we put on our musical, Little Shop of Horrors in the Hockney Theatre
- meanwhile in the background the hours our students dedicated to volunteering and community action continued to grow.

BGS was in high gear! And these examples serve as reminders of school life before COVID.

At a HMC divisional meeting in January 2020, myself and other Heads exchanged glances as our colleague, Andrew from the aforementioned Sedburgh, talked about pandemic and an impending national effort. Andrew had received a letter from Her Majesties Government about potential requisitioning of Sebergh School as a field hospital and crisis centre. Boris was proposing to dig up his fields for a medical centre and helicopter landing pads, amongst other things. We all like Andrew, we smiled gently and quietly offered him a calming cup of tea to steady his nerves.

But his words were prophecy.

By the time I was in Italy in February on a BGS ski trip I was paying close attention to developments... on our return, UK schools stayed open long enough for us to travel with our U15 girls to National Hockey Finals in Reading... soon after, everything changed.

Lockdown. With very little notice.

BGS remains in a strong position. But the pandemic hit at a time when the vast majority of independent schools, BGS too, were already facing challenges.

Economic headwinds and affordability issues, rising costs associated with energy and food for example, a dramatic and unexpected hike in teachers' pension contributions, and upward salary expectations, not to mention political and ideological threats, including open talk of abolition. This was the landscape when COVID arrived on the map.

Independent schools are necessarily efficient businesses these days, particularly in the regions I would like to suggest, and so COVID can present some very real pressures.

We mustn't fool ourselves. Independent schools with long, distinguished histories are closing in the UK. The public accounts of many show substantial borrowing to meet the present requirements. Many are, by necessity, reducing their programmes, including fee assistance (bursary schemes) to remain viable.

BGS is in a relatively secure position, the school – educationally and commercially – is, I would like to think, well managed, necessarily efficient but nimble too, and imbued with much HocAge spirit.

As lockdown loomed, and we didn't have long:

- we planned for remote education – France, Italy, Far East we ahead of the UK – so we contacted and learned from the experience of others – readying our resources, workforce, communications strategy, adapting our governance structures – the list goes on

- educationally we knew that a balance of structure and flexibility would be essential to support home learning - and that educational programmes would need to have academic, pastoral and co-curricular elements and, be tailored to different age groups
- but we were determined to provide continuity of education and service, to support families and colleagues, to not let our young people down – we also knew that there would be some wildly different expectations and perceptions about what represented effective practice, good value for money, even though we were channelling and adapting best practice from an international peer group of schools
- business plans had to be rewritten without delay, costs controlled – difficult decisions taken
- all the while colleagues were falling ill, families and friends were distancing; we lost friends, loved ones, me included. But our pupils were always at the centre of our collective focus. It wasn't easy. I'm sure we can all relate to that. But we are all doing our best.

We went into lockdown with a plan – a plan that we know would evolve - and we are grateful for the support that was forthcoming from BGS families. As for our pupils, your children, their collective effort has been simply amazing.

And beyond the educational programme, we supported local food banks, PPE manufacture for medical practices and care homes, key worker children were accommodated on site to allow their parents, working in frontline services and professions like the NHS or police, to go to work, and all the while there was a huge communications effort ongoing to keep the BGS community connected – including OBs near and far.

Messages were communicated in a predetermined sequence, according to a communications strategy and the vast majority of folk understood this.

We make no claims of being perfect and we can always improve; this is our aspiration. And yes, we attracted some criticism, an inevitability - expected - and we planned for it. But reflecting the vast majority of feedback we received, we did well, I think, as a school community; and that overwhelmingly positive feedback has kept colleagues going. And we are still going; in many fundamental ways stronger than before.

The challenges, the pressure, the workload, the uncertainty, none of it has not gone away. Not has our determination to try to keep school life as normal as possible. Again, our children have been brilliant. My colleagues, support and teaching, have been first class. Families, you have been hugely supportive, and we are sincerely grateful.

What next? Who knows? But we will continue to rise to any challenge.

And all the while, whilst keeping the operational wheels turning, we have not lost sight of some large, long term strategic priorities.

Junior School – new Headmaster and emerging plans to develop the offering on that side of the school; and we are seeking to increase the connectivity between the JS and SS, and foster greater parity

Ongoing incremental improvement of the curriculum and how it is delivered, including through the use of technology.

Development and public benefit - I talked about other schools reducing their bursary programmes. It is through the visionary support of our benefactors that means tested fee assistance – Assisted Places at BGS – can be maintained – an activity that strikes to the core purpose and identity of BGS, our collective mission a former Direct Grant School. Alongside this we are keen to re-engage with our volunteering and outreach programme as soon as it is safe to do so.

Headmasters Comments – Clock House

Richard Ribeiro commenced as Head of Clock House in April 2020 when there was a handover from Mrs Disley

He thanked the PA for their grants to purchase new trophies, Yr 6 hoodies and a 3D printer for Clock House. These were all gratefully received.

Some pupils from CH attended Founders Day at Bradford Cathedral in September, the first time CH has been represented at this annual school event.

There was a visit from Dr Amir Khan which the children enjoyed immensely, asking many questions and engaging in fully, especially in respect of surgical procedures that Dr Khan had carried out! The children got to find out about medical equipment on another day where they were also taught about healthy living and looking after themselves.

The junior school council were also questioned about which new Covid procedures were working well and which could be looked at further. The children thought that having the playground to themselves in small bubbles was preferable to whole school play time and they liked the fact that teachers wore masks in circulation areas because it made the children feel safe. They didn't like the reduction in number of school lunch days available to them due to Covid, a matter which has been addressed by school by increasing their availability.

Mr Ribeiro also thanked all staff who have worked so hard to keep school time as 'normal' as possible for the benefit of all the pupils.

Election of Officers

Due to the fact that Sarah Bowmer and Kevin Huby are entering their last year as parents at BGS, nominations were requested to take over the roles of Secretary and Treasurer of PA.

Jean Pine kindly volunteered to take over the Secretary role. Sarah Bowmer will arrange to hand over this role and documents, either virtually, or in person, rules permitting.

Edel Christie kindly volunteered to take on the role of Treasurer. Kevin Huby will hand over the reins over the next few months.

Thank you to Jean and Edel for their offers of help.

Wayne and Vivienne confirmed that they will stay on for this year in the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair.

AOB

We received the following email from Mrs Kingsley (Head of French) bidding for funds for Yr 8 students:

I'm writing to ask if the BGS Parents' Association would consider a request to fund a **Year 8 French 'Escape Room'** event.

It's organised by the lovely Château de la Baudonnière, where I normally take a group of Y7 & 8 pupils on a biennial trip at Easter. Sadly the trip had to be cancelled this year. However, the Château are organising an exciting activity, live on-line, in which pupils have to follow a series of clues, instructions and challenges – all in French - to escape from their virtual 'set' in France. I think it would be a brilliant way to end the Christmas term, and an affordable chance for the whole year group to participate in a live French experience at a time when foreign trips are sadly not possible.

The cost is £10 per pupil. Therefore, if the whole year group takes part (which is my aim) then the total cost would be £1240. I've chosen Year 8 because this year group missed out on a number of fun events during Year 7 (including a trip to the Château for many of them). I think they deserve it!

Each session lasts for one hour and I would organise for each form to experience the live Escape Room during school time, mostly in a French lesson with minimal disruption to the rest of their day. I'm hoping to run it in the final weeks of this term (starting 30th Nov), so I will need to confirm my booking with the Château as soon as possible.

The event has the support of Jed Boardman (Assistant Head), Sam Haslam (Head of Languages) and Angie Hicks (Head of Year 8). If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me by email and I'll be happy to discuss it with you.

Huge thanks in advance for taking this proposal to the PA for their consideration.

Very best wishes,

Liz Kingsley

Head of French

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed that the PA would fund £10 per participant to take part in this event. Sarah Bowmer will email Mrs Kingsley after the meeting to confirm. Any money which had been paid or is to be paid by parents for this activity will be reimbursed by the school.

Other items discussed were the possibility of more zoom meetings for parents, especially Year 7 parents who missed out on the Introduction Day in July.

Vivienne will also reiterate via email the bid criteria to SH/RFR so that they can pass on to all school departments to encourage them to put forward ideas to benefit large sections of school which the PA could help fund.

Future Events

TBA

Date of Next AGM – October/November 2021 – Exact Date to be confirmed