

From: Andrew Fleck BSc, MA
Principal



SEDBERGH
SCHOOL

FOUNDED 1525

8 September 2020

Dear Parents

It has been wonderful to see pupils return to the Schools and the corridors filled with noise and movement. Despite multi-coloured face masks, one-way systems and plentiful handwashing facilities there is a strong sense of normality. Pupils have adapted swiftly to the new routines; classes are getting underway and we look forward to all that lies ahead in the coming Term. Thank you for all your support in adapting to the new start of Term arrangements.

Throughout the Summer, staff worked to prepare the School sites, developed new processes to accommodate Government requirements, and prepared for new styles of teaching. I have no doubt that our work will pay off in the weeks ahead and in A Level and GCSE exam results in due course. An important turning point came in mid-August when we convened the first of several webinars with parents. Suddenly we were able to talk directly to people we know well, receive your suggestions and respond to your questions. It gave us a welcome boost and we hope that you and your children found that opportunity useful.

Alongside preparing for the new Term we have worked with a number of families whose finances have been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic to the point where their children's return to Sedbergh was uncertain. Each approach has been individually and carefully considered and in almost every case the School has arranged support. None of those families who approached us has withdrawn their child for financial reasons relating to Covid-19.

Many of you were extremely generous in response to the Hardship Fund Appeal. The Appeal raised £87,150 (including Gift Aid). Alongside supporting families of pupils, we were committed to providing support to the local community and donated £5,000 to the Sedbergh United Charities. We have allocated £63,982 to 28 families representing 34 children across both Schools. Your generous donations made this possible and today there are children in Sedbergh who might not be here without your generosity. This letter comes as a heartfelt "thank you" on their behalf.

We are deeply aware that the economic consequences of the pandemic are yet to become entirely clear and will hold the remaining funds available for families who may need support during this Term. We have awarded a further 22 School Bursaries since the beginning of March and remain committed to supporting pupils whose education may be disrupted in the months ahead.

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Despite some gloomy predictions in the press, the School Rolls are largely unchanged with 533 pupils in Sedbergh School and 169 in Sedbergh Prep School, compared to 543 and 173 respectively in March. Recruitment of pupils from the UK has remained consistent with previous years and the reductions arise from nervousness amongst international pupils, some of whom have deferred their place and expect to join us in January. Already the level of interest for entry in 2021 is high and we will hold our first Open Week between 21-26 September to accommodate the level of interest whilst maintaining social distancing procedures. We know that the best form of recruitment is parent and pupil advocacy; this letter represents an opportunity to thank you for your support in this respect.

The strength of pupil numbers enables us to plan ahead with confidence and proceed with projects as intended. In the Senior School, you may remember plans to create Sixth Form satellite accommodation for girls in all three Houses. The work to convert the old Sixth Form Centre was completed on time and this will be used in the event that we need to isolate pupils as a result of symptoms of Covid-19. The building will be named Nightingale during this period of its use, but we look forward to renaming it when it returns to its intended purpose next year. The Chapel has new lighting and has been completely rewired; this project was funded through the generosity of Old Sedberghians, some parents and friends. Chapel Services will take place online whilst the School status is Red and we look forward to the resumption of Sunday Services in due course. We have also contracted to complete the transformation of Queen's Hall into a new Sixth Form Centre which is an exciting initiative that includes a variety of creative ideas to support senior pupils' study and development. This work will take place in stages in order to avoid disruption to pupils who are currently studying there. The Prep School has two new and impressive Technology Suites which maintain our commitment to the development of technology-led learning.

Clearly, the new School year is in its infancy. Our immediate priorities are to enable new pupils to settle in and to establish normal routines. At the same time, I am working with the Headmasters of both Schools to agree the detail of Long Weekends, Half Term and the holidays, and for the move from Red to Amber status in the Senior School. We will also revisit the School's Strategic Plan in order that it reflects the new circumstances in which we are operating. Once approved by the Governors, I will share those updates with you.

I always conclude my letters by inviting parents who wish to discuss matters to make contact and have enjoyed many informal conversations on touchlines. We hope these opportunities will soon return but in the event that you wish to speak with me before then, please don't hesitate to contact my PA, Amanda Dearden (principal@sedberghschool.org).

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Fleck', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew Fleck