

# THE RICHMOND SCHOOL TRUST

## Annual Review 1st September 2021 - 31st August 2022

**Trustees:** Elaine Walton (Chair), Annette Clark (Deputy Chair), William Gedye (Treasurer, Finance Chair), Jacqui Walker (Trustee Co-ordinator), Judy Hooton (Chair Richmond School Governors), Nicola Wilson (Parent representative), Stuart Parsons (District Councillor), Paul Harrison, Lorraine Hodgson, Philip Wicks (Town councillors) Peter Clarke, Clive World, Trevor Cook (co-opted trustees)

### **Introduction:**

There were many challenges facing the school during the year. Although the students had returned to the classroom the consequence of COVID lockdowns, school closures, cancelled exams and loss of the usual social contact and development had affected many students. Overseas trips were cancelled and there were fewer requests to attend activities as these were often limited or unavailable.

There continued to be outbreaks of COVID which again disrupted the students and their education. Mental health concerns were still of paramount concern.

The Trust worked very closely with the school with the aim of aligning their goals to best provide funds that met the needs of the students during these difficult times.

Following the establishment of a Finance committee and an experienced treasurer, William Gedye identified that we were able to access more of the Funds available to the Trust. This gave us the opportunity to be more proactive and innovative in the way we used the funds.

### **Strategy - Directing Support to those in need:**

A small subgroup was set up to explore how we could work with the school to identify students in need and to target funding more effectively - this would remove the need for parental applications, something that we recognise could be difficult for hard to reach families.

- 1) To develop a strategy to ensure that more funding reached more of the disadvantaged students each year in line with the new Scheme.
- 2) Identify criteria to measure this set of students.
- 3) Develop ways to collect data and evaluate whether the funds reached this category of student

### **Chrome Books:**

The first project which we agreed with the school was to allocate £50,000 of funding for Chrome Books for the years 7 - 11, this would potentially reach 176 disadvantaged students across the school, so that they would be able to complete their homework and participate in projects at home. These were ordered and arrived ready to be used in the September 2022 term. Evaluation of the uptake and usefulness will be assessed in this coming year.

### **Mental health:**

Last year we had recognised the urgent need for mental health support and funding was awarded to provide counselling through 'Just Be' to YR 12 and 13. Throughout the year we allocated £14,000 for this service and have committed to even more funding for next year, expanding to other year groups. Jenna has reported that the service has been

invaluable and especially benefited high achieving females in the year 12/13. The school was selected to join an NHS project 'Wellbeing in Mind' with the provision of two counsellors, which in time should replace the Trust funding - although it is reported that this NHS service is proving more difficult to access than originally anticipated.

**Cultural Capital: After School clubs/activities:**

We have been introduced to the concept of 'Cultural Capital' - exposure to a wide variety of enriching experiences that provide confidence and learning for students who are then more likely to be more successful in life.

For example, we have provided funding for school activities such as equipment for sport and music, performances with drama and dance in school and in larger productions. We have supported Duke of Edinburgh funding as well as students who compete at national or international level and who require further financial support to maintain and develop their expertise.

**Measurement:**

Identifying the children who would benefit from our funding support has proved a complex area and provoked much discussion with Jenna and her senior team. For this first year we have agreed that we will start with those easy to measure - i.e., already identified within the system, such as students on free school meals (FSM), in receipt of the Pupil Premium, Forces Families and Special Educational Needs (SEND). This list is not exhaustive and recognise that there are many struggling students who do not fit into this already established government criteria. Mental health issues, problematic behaviour, parents who are just scraping by, these are all issues that hinder the students' ability to learn or access extracurricular activities. We still have the flexibility to consider any application from a parent or teacher who cites any such difficulties and if appropriate, will do our best to assist with funding for their education or further development.

**Funding Support:**

We continue to use the priority categories, based on need, that we agreed 3 years ago. Over the year, having agreed to use some of the accrued capital on larger projects directed at the higher category student, we funded the following:

<b>Category 1</b> - Headteacher's Special Purposes Fund (for immediate use on e.g., bus fares, uniforms, school meals)	<b>£7,600</b>
<b>Category 2</b> - Current students with known financial need to assist with school activities. (Includes Chromebooks £50,000))	<b>£53,500</b>
<b>Category 3</b> - Current students to assist with school activities.	<b>£750</b>
<b>Category 4</b> - Brackenbury awards. To assist students moving on to university, colleges of HE/FE, or apprenticeships with a one-off payment of up to £1000.	<b>£12,000</b>
<b>Category 5</b> - Current students to assist with external activities not related to school.	<b>£9,950</b>
<b>Category 6</b> - Ex-students to assist with external activities.	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Category 7</b> - Other.	<b>Nil</b>

**Category 8 - Staff led activities.** **£64,000**

**Total Awards Made** **£148,000**

The total funding for children in Category 1 and 2 i.e., those in most need of assistance was 72.6% of our awards up to Category 7.

This figure excludes Category 8 as these are whole school activity awards and apart from the Counselling Support, we are uncertain how many children with financial, physical or mental health needs will have benefited in this year. Annette Clark (Deputy Chair) is working with the school to change the staff application information to include the potential number of disadvantaged children who may benefit from the project/activity.

#### **School led activities:**

For the school led activities we awarded £64,000 - 43.25% of the total funding for the year.

Over the year we supported a range of activities:

#### **November:**

A performance at the Georgian Theatre, the setting up of a school Chess Club and Gymnastics equipment for the school club

#### **March:**

A Shakespeare theatre trip, Athletics equipment, Cricket bowling machine, School production and Yoga and mindfulness sessions.

#### **June:**

Just B counselling services, Yr12 University Open days, 3D Printer, First Aid Workshops, Cheer Leading Uniforms, Music Concert and workshop, Dance Performance and Mental Health workshop.

#### **Brackebury Awards**

Annette continues as our Brackebury lead. She maintains good networks within the school that allows any problems to be easily discussed. Annette also, when issues arise, follows up with individual students to ensure that the information is accurate and the funding is timely and appropriate. This year she worked on identifying with the school staff those who would most benefit from a Brackebury award. This led to some early applications that identified issues that could be supported immediately as current students, rather than when they left. This year we feel that the work undertaken has ensured that our awards have been directed to the students who are in most in need of financial support.

We have been able to support 12 former students, two of whom have moved on to postgraduate training at master's level, eight have gained places at university covering both educational and vocational areas. The student requests vary from help with travel, course fees, materials, computers with associated software. Some request were for cost of living support particularly as COVID had reduced potential savings from part time work. Some courses also make demands which limit a student's availability for such work.

#### **Finance:**

William continued in his second year as Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee. His influence and knowledge is highly valued. The establishment of the Finance Committee has ensured financial considerations and questions can be discussed in detail prior to the full meeting. This enables more fully informed answers to any questions raised at the Trust board meeting and allows a more streamlined full Trust meeting to be run with financial confidence.

### **Investment company**

Our funding is derived from the income invested over many years following historical bequests and the bulk from the sale of Richmond Lower School. We invest with CCLA - an investment company that work with many charities - they have high ethical standard and avoid investments in such things as tobacco or arms/weapons. They provide information, training, meetings and flexibility with our invested funds.

### **Budget:**

Over the years we have accrued money on these original investments and have gradually grown this 'pot' to over a £1 million. We have traditionally only awarded funding on the interest accrued usually about £35,000/year. These awards crept up pre-COVID to £45,000/year and there was uncertainty if this was sustainable as we were unsure of the baseline amount needed to carry over each year to ensure that we maintained the interest payments.

William identified the baseline amount we should carry forward for this year. The Total Return is £570,000. With this information we agreed that £100,000-150,000 could be awarded this year and that this was potentially sustainable for up to five years. This has enabled larger projects to be considered and has led to our current objective of making sure that these funds reach the students most in need of our support.

### **Accounts**

To comply with good governance and the Charity Commission expectations of an annual check of our accounts, Jane Greenwood, a certified accountant has checked our accounts for the past 3 years. Jane does not charge us for this service saving us several hundred pounds which we have previously paid annually. We are very grateful for her support.

### **The Trust Handbook**

William has worked tirelessly with the assistance of the Trust officers to pull together a Trust handbook. This provides an overarching framework that demonstrates we have an effective financial management system in place.

### **Trust Governance and Administration:**

After the sad death of Hilary Ibbottson our long serving and knowledgeable clerk, we were in need of administrative support. We shared the tasks among the Trust officers but despite repeated attempts, were unable to attract anyone to this role. Thank you to William Gedye, Annette Clark and Jacqui Walker for picking up many of these administrative tasks for the Trust. We have recently had discussions with the Stockton Governors service to explore whether they could assist us. Over the Summer we agreed to try this for a year and initially they will organise the distribution of the papers and take the minutes for the main Trust meetings from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022. We will review in July 2023.

### **Trust Scheme:**

After 3 years, poor legal advice, good legal advice and consultation of the local councillors (as required by the Charity Commission), we finally had the new Scheme approved in March 2022. We obtained pro bono legal advice from Colin Hewitt, of Ward Hadaway as a previous solicitor, from this firm, had not provided the correct advice we had paid for.

We also took the opportunity to the change the wording for the Brackenbury awards (post school education up to age 25yrs) to remove the out-of-date criteria for certain Parishes to have priority when making these awards. We had tried changing the name to The Richmond School Trust Award - but it caused too much confusion and during the

consultation there was a view that we should continue to recognise the original Brackenbury benefactor - which we agreed we should do and have subsequently reverted to the original.

#### **Trustees:**

Jacqui Walker (co-opted trustee) took on the role of the trustee coordinator - to ensure the induction paperwork, DBS checks and registration with the Charity Commission were completed. After assuring Jacqui that we had little turnover of Trustees we had many changes - it was a busy year. We said goodbye to our Town Council representatives, Barry Heap, Linda Curran and Jonathan Preece. We welcomed Paul Harrison, Lorraine Hodgson and Philip Wicks in their place and also welcomed Judy Hooton, the new Chair of Governors for Richmond School who replaced David Lawrenson and Nicola Wilson as the new parent representative, a role we have not had in place for a number of years.

#### **School Communication/objectives**

The COVID crisis has had a huge impact on the continuity of the student's education, their mental health particularly the older students having to cope with the uncertainty of GCSE and A level exams. Many students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds have had problems with lack of IT facilities all contributing to an extremely difficult time for the students, parents and teachers. Over these last two years we have worked even harder to communicate effectively with the school, identify their key issues and understand more fully what they are trying to achieve for their disadvantaged students and the fallout from the COVID restrictions. It has become clear that our ethos and support is closely connected to that of the school and we are both working hard to maximise the impact our support can provide. The Chrome book project and the mental health support are two specific projects that we have supported and directed at students in a very different way. Rather than wait for the application we have directed our support to services and facilities that were most needed at this time.

#### **Year ahead 2022-2023**

Despite the economic downturn we continue to be committed to using our funds for larger projects in this coming year:

- 1) We will continue to develop how we measure students with financial disadvantage, educational, behavioural, mental or physical health issues and whether they are able to access facilities or support from the grants we award.
- 2) To continue to explore ways of understanding how best we can make an impact with the funding
- 3) Continue to ensure that we have robust governance that complies with the Charity Commission regulations and the RST Scheme.
- 4) Relieve some of the administrative burden through commissioning the services of Clerk to the Trustees.

#### **Conclusion**

The School core values are described as in the acronym CREDIT Creativity, Respect, Excellence, Determination, Independence and Teamwork. As a Trust we endorse these values and we will continue to develop a close working relationship with the school to ensure that funds are targeted, effective and have a positive impact for students of Richmond School.