

THE BEDALES DIFFERENCE: BEDALES SCHOOLS' DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Introduction

Bedales started in 1893 with a determination to be different: what follows emerges from three years of consultation with staff, students and parents on what the Bedales difference is now and how it must affect the way the schools develops. Everything here refers to the 3-18 Bedales Schools.

The vision outlined in this paper is shaped partly by Badley's ideals¹ but it also recognises the strong Badley view that schools like ours must evolve and re-define themselves. We must respond to the external environment in two distinct ways – the first is common to all schools, the second much less so: we must provide a suitable preparation for life after school and for the world of work; but also, if we are to keep faith with our tradition, we must also try to counterbalance influences and tendencies prevalent in society that damage children's development and welfare. This is in keeping with Badley's desire to ensure that, from its founding, Bedales was a counter to the regimented and philistine schools that he saw predominating in late Victorian England.

Maybe for this reason Bedales has balked at seeing itself as an inflexible organisation and has instead prided itself on being a community which is moulded by the individual child's aspirations and needs – these we continue to put at the centre of everything. Much of what follows relates to the interdependence of the individual and the community whose humanity, diversity and warmth supports and nourishes each person.

The Bedales difference as outlined below is therefore a mixture of ways in which we have always been different (and will continue to be so) and ways in which we are responding to external pressures. Whether you are reading this as a parent, a member of staff or as a student, we hope that it chimes both with what you thought the school stood for – and for what you think it should stand for in future.

Our aims

The five aims outlined below capture what we consider most important. The ways in which we seek to achieve these aims are described beneath each one. The first section describes activities common to all three schools; then there are activities specific to Bedales, Dunhurst and Dunannie that are listed under each school.

Aim 1

To develop inquisitive thinkers with a love of learning who cherish independent thought

We aim to create an environment where questioning, divergent thinking and the freedom to learn from mistakes are all encouraged. Academic excellence, and first-rate teaching and learning thrive in such an environment. These qualities, which create lifelong learners and develop both critical and creative thinking, should permeate every area of our lives – whether that be in assemblies, conversations or classrooms. In a national educational environment, where schools are more constrained by exams than ever before, this need is especially important. We are committed to imbuing in all our children these qualities: responsibility for their own learning, good work habits and a sense that learning can thrill and invigorate.

¹ J H Badley (1865 – 1967), Founder and Headmaster of Bedales School 1893 – 1935 believed in a perfect school community providing an all-round education for life involving 'head, heart and hand'.

THREE SCHOOLS

We are:

- extending the provision for gifted and talented students, appropriate to age, in particular through the academically ambitious programme
- re-organising ICT and increasing staff training in ICT to ensure that the right digital resources are readily available to stimulate teaching and learning

We will:

- improve the continuity in curriculum, in progression of skills and in development of learning between each of the three schools
- continue to review our curricula to ensure that they suit our aims and our children's needs

BEDALES

We are:

- improving the preparation of all our students for higher education – in particular, better equipping those seeking offers to the most competitive courses, at Oxbridge and elsewhere
- enhancing the quality of guidance given to students through improving one-to-one tutoring
- through curricular reform, providing teachers and students with the time to think, talk and learn outside exam restraints; in particular, developing the Bedales Assessed Courses which sit alongside a smaller compulsory exam requirement at GCSE (following their introduction in September 2006)
- promoting a broader and more stimulating range of activities and societies related to academic subjects, especially for 6th form students

We will:

- provide parallel learning resources to the Library, probably in the Lupton Hall, to improve the facilities for private study and interactive learning and thereby raise students' expectations of their approach to their studies

DUNHURST

We are:

- maintaining as much freedom as is practicable from the pressures of testing, exam results and Common Entrance preparation
- continuing to develop a discursive approach to all subject areas and encourage philosophical discussions and thinking in classes, tutor groups and whole school debates
- investigating academic extension through the activity system
- operating an inclusive Academically Ambitious programme
- strengthening and formalising our tutor mentoring system in order to support new staff and maximise the benefits of the current tutorial system

DUNANNIE

We are:

- reviewing and updating the science and humanities curriculum (depth & breadth), with a commitment to the use of investigative work, open-ended questions and the environment
- continuing to enhance the children's love of learning through a wide range of experiences both inside and outside the classroom
- using Brain Gym² in each class during the day and giving regular access to drinking water
- extending historical role play and workshops e.g. Roman feast and Viking Day
- improving access to library resources through new a computerised library system

We will:

- develop a Philosophy for Children Programme and embed Thinking Skills across the curriculum

Aim 2

To enable students' talents to develop through doing and making

Great value has always been attached to first hand experience at our schools. This aim, linking closely as it does with Aim 3, means that excellent resources and ample time are provided for creative and practical activities. When the school moved to its present site the students were involved in making the main school building. For our students, the ability to be involved in practical spheres – “hand work” as opposed to “head work” in Badley's terms - pushed the arts and outdoor work to the fore. Sport has also played an increasing role in the school's life. We believe that within the curriculum hands-on experience should infuse our students' learning. We will continue to seek new opportunities for practical experience, whether those be through the range of opportunities provided by the Public Arts' Programme, school drama and music performances, curricular Art, Design and Technology or Outdoor Work.

THREE SCHOOLS

We are:

- increasing the centrality of Outdoor Work to our way of life, involving students in the shaping of our grounds
- implementing an agreed Landscape Plan which emphasises the rural qualities of our estate
- managing the grounds under the mantle of the Outdoor Work department
- providing the opportunities for students, staff and parents of all three schools to work together, through holding our annual Badley weekend in the early autumn incorporating a three schools' whole school effort and other activities which celebrate the schools' values and the benefit of doing and making
- promoting healthy living, especially the importance of good diet and the right level of physical activity

² Brain Gym is used in classes to exercise imaginative and lateral cognitive processes.

We will:

- increase the students' awareness of sustainability and our relationship with the land, through such activities as growing more of our own food and exploring permaculture activities

BEDALES

We are:

- investing in high profile student-led building projects, such as the new Barn and Drama Studio
- developing the range of sporting opportunities, through extending the range of sport and exercise offered, implementing the recommendations of the Physical Activity Group (September 2005)
- realigning our medical services to promote a philosophy of wellness and a healthy lifestyle

DUNHURST

We are:

- ensuring that doing and making are involved in all kinds of learning, both in the creative arts, practical work and in intellectual pursuits
- acknowledging the value of the creative subjects in our allocation of lessons to them within the weekly timetable
- initiating all-in weekends for whole school efforts involving parents in the whole school efforts

We will:

- put Outdoor Work into the curriculum for Block II, seeking to involve parents in Outdoor Work
- introduce a seasonal timetable which acknowledges the seasonality of Outdoor Work
- continue to develop the range of sporting opportunities, by extending the range of sport and exercise offered, increasing students' awareness of sport's role in a healthy lifestyle

DUNANNIE

We are:

- using specialised teaching in After School Clubs
- using class gardens and involving parents
- reviewing the environmental aspects of science and extending the use of the school grounds as a significant learning resource
- involving children, parents and staff in the development of the school grounds
- sharing the expertise of PE staff between the three schools and Year 3 have their games lesson with Group 1 at Dunhurst

We will:

- investigate the possibility of working more closely with Dunhurst and Bedales Outdoor Work Departments
- develop the Forest schools initiative

Aim 3

To foster individuality and encourage initiative, creativity and the appreciation of the beautiful

The ability to foster individuality and to nurture individuals' creativity will continue - enabling, in the words of the 2002 Bedales inspection report, "an environment in which the unconventional is valued, individuality is truly recognised and a diversity of interests encouraged." In addition to the life-enhancing gifts these qualities bring, they are seen as increasingly valued in a world of work where a premium is put on intellectual capital and creativity. The need for students to have their potential as leaders developed is also recognised.

Individuality must flourish, but within a clear moral structure: there must be a good balance between the rights of the individual and the individual's responsibility to the community. Whilst the boarding experience at Bedales and Dunhurst especially helps boarders learn this balance, the shared sense of purpose between boarders and day students allows this experience to be common to all.

We seek all opportunities to develop the connection between the moral, spiritual and aesthetic capacities of our students through contributing to the community via such events as music, drama, Outdoor Work and student-led enterprises.

As well as enabling appreciation of the beauty of our surroundings, we must promote the value of sustainable living through word and action.

THREE SCHOOLS

We are:

- encouraging an awareness of environmental issues
- running an Arts programme including professional touring theatre, dance, jazz, folk and blues, and national touring exhibitions
- bringing practising artists into our schools to work alongside students and staff on particular projects
- working with the local community in arts' initiatives such as the Bedales Youth Dance Platform, Petersfield Youth Dance, the Petersfield Youth Festival and the Petersfield Music Festival

We will:

- prepare a Green Plan (which will chart the Schools' path towards Carbon neutrality) by March 2009
- promote greater awareness of the breadth of religious and spiritual belief through the Jaws and through Religious Studies in the Curriculum
- ensure that the Schools' next big building project (the Music School) is Carbon-neutral when it opens in September 2009

BEDALES

We are:

- involving students in shaping the Arts' programme
- using quiet spaces, for example, the meditation centre and Cecily's Garden, for reflection
- providing a good range of opportunities for voluntary community service
- enabling a stimulating range of musical opportunities, through informal concerts, jazz bands, the annual Rock Concert and JFPs (Jazz, Folk and Poetry concerts)
- maintaining the strong position and influence of the student-elected Council
- empowering students and staff to take safe risks such as Kids' Camp
- improving the guidance offered by tutors to encourage students' diversity of choice
- ensuring ICT is viewed as being a tool for creativity
- reviewing and making more distinctive the Bedales Assessed Courses in Blocks 4 and 5 in order to foster individual interests beyond the constraints of the curriculum
- increasing the opportunities for musical composition through a music studio dedicated to rock and folk music

We will:

- extend the range of leadership opportunities and training available to our students
- increase the range of opportunities for students' involvement in spiritual and moral matters, through aligning Jaw and other community occasions more closely with student interests and concerns
- build a new Music School – to open for September 2009

DUNHURST

We are:

- encouraging the child's 'voice' through whole school meetings to discuss options to develop the students' lives in school
- running a committee system manned by students in Block II and a whole school council which represents the interests of the students and meets every half term
- offering numerous opportunities for pupils to organise themselves so that they learn good time management skills of both academic and free time
- equally valuing creative arts with other subjects and ensuring timetable allocation reflects this
- drawing in external practical expertise, whenever possible, to enhance the curriculum, e.g. the artist-in-residence scheme and entrepreneurial and financial advisors for the Fair Trade Committee
- having whole day 'artistic' projects for the school community and offer opportunity to forge cross-curricular links and more fully creative activities across the school, for example, in science

We will:

- build a quiet space either as a separate building within the school complex, or within the grounds, for use by both staff and students
- create a 'live' earth structure in the grounds to encourage an understanding of art in its wider forms and their involvement with it
- continue to increase the opportunities for staff to see best practice in other schools as well as within our own schools

- develop the Cobb's creative buildings involving the whole school and community

DUNANNIE

We are:

- continuing to value children's work through display, performance and assemblies and celebrating children's success and achievements
- using different Festivals to develop the children's awareness of different cultures and beliefs
- using visits as well as the school grounds to extend appreciation of both the natural and man-made environment
- involving all Year 2 and Year 3 children in an orchestra either playing percussion or other instruments
- using a more structured approach for RE throughout the school, also giving time for reflection and exploration of ideas

We will:

- increase opportunities for staff to develop a greater variety of creative teaching styles
- look at opportunities to develop Art in the outdoor environment

Aim 4

We will enable students and staff to take pride in the community's distinctiveness – to feel valued and nourished by the community

Central to our schools' success is the sense that each person is a member of the community whose voice is entitled to be heard and be treated with respect. Staff and students expect of each other the best kind of relationships - co-operative, trustful and tolerant ones. In this respect the school community and environment should enable all members of the community to feel that they are learning and developing.

THREE SCHOOLS

We are:

- ensuring that in all three schools the student voice is heard in an age-appropriate way – such as through whole school meetings, committees and school council
- enabling more effective staff professional development through operating a yearly staff review system
- offering teaching staff access to regular sabbatical leave and the training they need for their professional development
- celebrating through holding a Badley weekend each year, the life, work and influence of the schools' founder, John Badley
- ensuring we are up to date with the latest developments in social and emotional learning
- developing the school further as an environment which fosters emotional well being and a strong sense of community and using this as a foundation for developing further behaviour strategies

We will:

- seek ways to further develop the social and emotional well being of staff

BEDALES

We are:

- fostering and promoting the importance of mixed age friendships, through distinctive elements of our social fabric such as the mixed age dorm
- enabling the full involvement of day students
- increasing the attention devoted to the individual student's needs through improved tutoring
- enabling individual voices to be heard and the community's distinctiveness to be celebrated through the breadth of the school publications, student-led committees and weekly school council meetings
- improving the dining experience at Bedales - so enabling staff and students to dine together in a convivial and civilised ambiance

We will:

- explore best practice in enabling the student voice to be heard more effectively – partly through a housestaff-led initiative and partly through a student symposium (to be held in Autumn 2008)

DUNHURST

We are:

- enabling all students to be involved in regular whole school meetings
- providing a range of ways for students to have their say - via the tutorial system, peer listening, the committees and the activities programme
- acknowledging and celebrating highlights of school life in special celebration assemblies twice a year
- working on promoting a healthy lifestyle through revolutionising the dining experience
- enabling older pupils, as peer listeners, to take an active role in the community by listening to the concerns of others
- committed to regular whole school productions
- providing a greater understanding of the school's history, ethos and perspective by, for example, increasing accessibility of archives as a whole school resource and creating an annual Dunhurst lecture that reflects the community's distinctiveness
- developing the Green Team environmental committee of staff and pupils

DUNANNIE

We are:

- providing a nurturing environment in which children can flourish, whatever their social and academic needs

- using Circle Time throughout the school to develop a sense of empathy and mutual respect
- providing opportunities for the children to feel valued i.e. Celebration Assembly
- holding a number of Assemblies/concerts/productions for parents / grandparents during the year, e.g. Spring Festival for grandparents
- developing the children's awareness of responsibility for themselves and others, e.g. Y3 Playground squad
- involving parents in many aspects of Dunannie life from the Parents' Committee to bulb-planting, trips, clubs and joining us for school lunch
- working on promoting a healthy lifestyle through revolutionising the dining experience
- using school anniversaries, such as our 50th, to involve past pupils and staff as well as the current school community

We will:

- develop further opportunities for children to participate in decision making e.g. School Council
- develop annual family days to share in the development of the outside environment e.g. Badley Weekend

Aim 5

To foster interest beyond the school – engaging with the local community and developing an international awareness

We will seek a yet fuller range of opportunities for students and staff to engage with other communities in partnership. Aware that we should foster links locally and globally and that we must equip our students to work with a broad range of people, we will find new ways of ensuring this exposure, building on such excellent platforms as the public Arts' programme.

THREE SCHOOLS

We are:

- seeking opportunities for our students to perform in local and national arts and sports events
- fostering our links with Steep village – Steep School and the local parish
- enabling our students to encounter a range of careers, lifestyles, viewpoints and cultures through the diversity of visiting speakers and artists
- ensuring that all our students have a good progression of educational visits (for example Dunannie's Year 3 visit to Dorset, the Dunhurst camps and the Block 3 outdoor adventure week at Ullswater)
- committed to promoting students' awareness of global ethical issues such as fair trade and civil liberties through such initiatives as designing our own fair-trade T shirts and Amnesty International
- raising the children's awareness of other's needs through fundraising for both the local community and international charities mainly through annual events (such as the Bedales Amnesty Ball, Dunhurst HOPIT fair and the Dunannie Fun Run)
- operating a travel plan to minimise the amount of traffic generated by the schools

We will:

- seek all further opportunities to open up our schools and our resources to the local community

BEDALES

We are:

- increasing Careers advice at Bedales through creating a separate Careers Department
- offering a week after AS levels when 6.I have broadening educational visits
- celebrating and continuing the Kids' Camp which brings disadvantaged children into the school from children's homes
- running a voluntary service programme which commits our students to work in the local community
- re-building Mbalenhle Primary School in Swaziland in partnership with Waterford-Khambala School (visits in February 2007 and 2008)
- establishing links with Chuansha High School near Shanghai in China

We will:

- develop a marketing strategy to increase the proportion of overseas nationality students
- explore ways of combining with the other Petersfield Secondary Schools (Ditcham, Churcher's and The Petersfield School) on environmental issues.

DUNHURST

We are:

- enabling Block II to workshadow using placements which expose pupils to the world of adult careers and work
- running the HOPIT (Helping Other People In Trouble) annual fair every December with full pupil participation raising up to £8,000 for some 5 local and national charities
- running a weekly community service programme which engages pupils in helping and entertaining the elderly (Heath Mount, Rake), handicapped and special needs children (Rachel Maddox School) and young children at Steep's Jubilee Nursery, the Bedales Creche and Dunannie
- marking local and national festivals

We will:

- develop a programme of staff exchanges via the English Speaking Union and the British Council
- develop closer links with Rachel Maddox special school
- seek to attract more opportunities for engagement beyond the school through a fuller use of the internet and raising our profile in the local and national educational media

DUNANNIE

We are:

- linked with a local sheltered housing for the elderly
- enabling staff to visit other pre prep schools through IAPS Cluster Groups
- joining local schools through Foundation Stage Cluster Groups
- developing links with schools in other countries
- holding multicultural festivals and inviting speakers and artists from different cultures
- increasing the teaching of French throughout the school

We will:

- have more events/theatrical productions to which we will invite other schools and staff both to Dunannie and the theatre
- have regular visitors to assemblies both from Dunhurst and Bedales as well as outside the school
- look at furthering international links to develop the children's global awareness