



# Cultivating a community of learners

Bedales 2023–33

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# Introduction

We are excited to present our 10-year strategy for Bedales. This work is the result of in-depth collaboration across the Bedales community and we are very grateful to all the students, staff, parents, governors and Old Bedalians who contributed via our surveys, workshops, working parties, meetings, discussions and direct feedback. Our thinking has also been informed by many other educationalists in the UK and abroad whose work we have seen, researched and which has inspired us.

John Badley, one of the founding leaders of the school, wrote in his *'Memories and Reflections'* (1955): *'education has a twofold purpose: it can be thought of as directed to the personal development of the individual, or to their contribution to the community of which they are a member.'* Badley's ideals are as important to us today as they were when the school was set up in 1893, reminding us that Bedales is a school built on profoundly communitarian principles. In keeping with the school motto, the individual work of students or staff must be taken in the context of their impact on 'all', whether that be fellow students, the local community, the environment or the world. We aim to be true to the school's traditions while ensuring they remain pertinent for the next decade.

Bedales is a school with a pioneering educational tradition. This strategy aims to ensure that we continue to lead the way for other schools nationally and internationally. At the heart of our approach is the principal that an education must be holistic and creative: that we should ensure young people learn to develop their 'head', their 'hand' and their 'heart'. We believe that the development of self is as important as skills and knowledge. The freedoms we enjoy as an independent



school, our charity's mission and the urgent and ongoing need for educational reform drive us to challenge norms and strive to provide an exceptional experience for all the young people in our care. We are aware of our privilege and believe in using that responsibly for the wider community, to contribute actively to educational reform and improvement.

Honouring the boldness of our founders, we welcome this opportunity to renew our core purpose and philosophies, reaffirm our commitment to excellence in teaching and build upon our distinctiveness. This will ensure Bedales' relevance for our students and leadership within the educational community for the next generation.

Stephen Nokes  
Chair of Governors

Will Goldsmith  
Head, Bedales School

Colin Baty  
Head, Bedales Prep

Fiona Read  
Head, Bedales Pre-prep





# Origins

**Bedales was founded by John Badley and Oswald Powell in 1893 to be a humane alternative to the authoritarian regimes typical of late-Victorian public schools which our founders felt 'simply would not do'.**

Although the founders' ideas were highly radical for England at that time, in retrospect they can be seen as part of a wider European reform movement (as contemporaries of Montessori and Steiner) and with influences including the Arts and Crafts movement and early feminism.

The school became fully coeducational in 1898 against the prevailing trend; students were given a formal voice by 1916, when the School Council was formed. Today, if there is no good reason to constrain students in their choices, then we don't. In fact, we involve them in forging the framework within which the community lives, learns and grows. Staff and students address each other by first names, and students choose what to wear to school, just two features of a culture that values the individual, with mutual respect its cornerstone.

In line with Bedales' tradition of inclusivity, all faiths and denominations have been welcomed at the school. Our full bursary programme launched in 2011, the John Badley Foundation (JBF), enables young people who would never have considered an independent school education to come to Bedales Prep and Senior. The JBF is generously funded by donations from parents, Old Bedalians, staff and others.



The school is named after the house in which it began, in Haywards Heath. Bedales moved to its rural Hampshire site in Steep, near Petersfield, in 1900. Bedales Prep (8–13 years) was founded in 1902, and the Pre-prep (3–8 years) opened in 1953.

The school is located in 120 acres of farmland, woods, orchards and playing fields in the South Downs National Park. The strong practical element of Outdoor Work ranges from hedge-laying to tending the school's flock of Jacob, Herdwick, and South Downs sheep.

Nearly 20 years ago, the school came to the realisation that the standard choice of 10 GCSEs was becoming narrow, dull and unfit for purpose. Instead, we introduced our own ambitious programme of Bedales Assessed Courses in 2006 to complement a set of core GCSEs. Designed by Bedales teachers, externally moderated and recognised by universities, BACs give students a say over what books they study, mainly involve coursework as opposed to exams and provide a more seamless progression to A Levels.

Our approach encourages intellectual ambition, creative thinking and independent learning – vital requirements for further education and beyond. We start developing these skills early with our youngest children as they progress through Bedales Pre-prep and Prep Schools.



Alongside the beautiful landscape, the school benefits from inspirational creative learning spaces. The Grade I listed Arts and Crafts Memorial Library (1921) and adjoining Lupton Hall (the original assembly hall, built in 1911) are situated at the heart of the school overlooking the orchard. The Olivier Theatre (1998), Orchard Building (2005) and Art & Design Building (2016) have won awards for the quality and originality of their architecture, including several Royal Institute of British Architects prizes.



*Bedales students go on to some of the most prestigious academic and artistic institutions in the UK and internationally, joining a host of alumni who are distinctively Bedalian for life. While the school takes a kinder, more ‘child-centred’ approach, Bedales students are ambitious and go on to contribute to society in remarkable ways.*

# Bedales purpose and vision

## Purpose

*Bedales is inspiring a new generation of critical-thinkers, creators and leaders by cultivating a community of life-long learners through its innovative, intellectually challenging curriculum. The school's founding principle 'work of each for weal of all', centred on authentic working relationships, develops excellence in the individual whilst appreciating their central role in shaping society on every level.*

## Vision

**We want to be a fully realised community of learners, where:**



students and staff are excited about the unique and precious experience of living and learning together, cultivating a lifelong love of intellectual endeavour, self-development and achievement.



the young people in our care take advantage of developments in technology, neuroscience and psychology to develop positive physical and mental health skills that will stay with them for life.



we understand the importance of identity and collective responsibility, and learn to contribute positively to our world in a variety of ways.



we learn, often through lived experience, of our place in the natural world and the importance of human accountability for the environment in all aspects of how we live and learn.







# Strategy overview



**The 21st century is a time that questions educational norms more than ever: climate change is arguably one of the biggest challenges that will impact us all, especially the generations to come; technological innovation democratises knowledge and learning like never before; and Artificial Intelligence opens up opportunities within learning and future pathways, undermining so many assumptions about the world of work.**

Technology allows for much greater communication between people (and machines) but likewise creates greater chances for misinformation, division and mental health problems, particularly in the young. We also have a much greater understanding of the need for us to strive for more diverse, representative and balanced communities. We believe education can prepare a new generation to flourish within these uncertainties.

We want to be a community of learners, who are ambitious and excited by the act of inculcating an intrinsic approach to learning. We want to be a place where the coeducational and communitarian heritage of the school is being regularly reimagined for the realities of the 21st century. We want to be a collaboration between globally-minded people who are well-informed about their place in the world and their responsibilities to their communities, a collective of environmentally-inclined people with a profound awareness of their impact on the planet, and a commitment to tackle the negative impacts of climate change.

Under the four strands of 'Learning', 'Living', 'Community' and 'Environment' the goals in this document set out a 10-year programme in response to these challenges. The following pages outline how we are going to get there, with specific areas of focus across the four strands, which build on learnings from the pandemic, and previous plans and curriculum enhancements such as the Senior School new Art & Design Building, the Prep refurbished mixed boarding house, and the development of our own GCSE-alternative Bedales Assessed Courses in the Arts and Humanities.

Strand	Goal	Initiative
Learning	Innovating the curriculum	Reinforce the 3–18 whole school learning journey
		More Bedales Assessed Courses and review of Sixth Form curriculum
		A more progressive approach to digital learning
		A new sustainability curriculum
	Developing a Bedales 'Pedagogy'	Develop a clear definition and practice of a Bedales 'method' of teaching and learning
	Introducing more creative and experiential learning spaces	Build a new 560+ capacity auditorium and redevelop the Quad
		Introduce new creative indoor and outdoor learning spaces
Develop the role of the school's libraries		
Living	Integrating living spaces and pastoral structures	Further improve the quality of boarding provision and integration of students
		Introduce new tutoring and pastoral structures at the Senior School
	Improving student wellbeing	A new wellbeing curriculum and hub in each school
		Develop provision for sport and outdoor activities to encourage student engagement
	Refining and living the Bedales values	All students to participate weekly in 'Bedales Service' to the school community
		Embed 'Character Education' across the whole school
Community	Fostering a diverse and integrated community within and beyond Bedales	Double the number of full bursaries
		Improve diversity in curriculum, staff recruitment and admissions
		Build collaboration and collegiality across our whole school and local communities
	Influencing education thinking and practice	Develop educational partnerships and a Bedales Centre for Progressive Education
Environment	Journey to net zero by 2045	Develop sustainable buildings and use of utilities
		Achieve zero-emissions sustainable transport and equipment
	Living sustainably	Develop the sustainability co-curriculum, and focus on growing more of our own food
		Reduce overall consumption and increase sustainable procurement





*“It’s a school that focuses on your love for a subject and not just the grades... I really like to learn and discover things... When you are open to this kind of experience, you can really learn a lot.”*





# Learning



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## Learning

**In our school environment where divergent and creative ways of thinking are encouraged, students develop a confident understanding of their own abilities, self, interests and potential.**

By mapping out the curriculum and ensuring a cohesive and seamless whole school learning journey, we aim to develop a dynamic and thriving learning pathway through Bedales Pre-prep, Prep and Senior where students are inspired through exceptional opportunities, intellectual challenge, and where a commitment to excellence in teaching is prioritised.

With further innovation planned for Bedales Assessed Courses in particular, Bedales will be at the forefront of the education reform movement in offering a broader curriculum and multi-modal assessment methods that encourage a more adaptable and creative response from students. Bedales is therefore enacting what a growing number of educationalists are calling for in terms of GCSE reform which takes inspiration from high-performing school systems globally, such as Singapore where the most able students bypass exams at 16 to just take A Levels at 18, freeing space to gain the benefits of a broader, more enriching education.

A specific focus on technological innovations and environmental considerations will ensure students are well prepared for the world they will go into post education. Over the next decade, we will also focus on enhancing performance spaces across the whole school, and further ensuring learning is informed by the 'real world' and outdoors to make the most of our inspiring estate.

## GOAL

# Innovating the curriculum

We will reinforce the 3–18 whole school learning journey by re-mapping the curriculum to ensure greater alignment, student progression and staff understanding of the full student experience. A comprehensive overview of the curriculum across every year group and subject will be produced, outlining the sequence of learning objectives, topics and assessments covered. This will link with a digital student portfolio where all students record their work from Pre-prep to 6.2 (Year 13).

We will review our Bedales Assessed Course (BAC) subject offer, assessment and grading with a view to introducing new BACs in Sciences and Modern Languages. Building on the long-established success of our existing BAC programme in enabling student access to prestigious university courses, we want to extend the benefit to our students from meaningful, balanced and rigorous alternatives to exam-only assessment. We will therefore be introducing a two-GCSE model of Maths and English for students, with the remainder our own qualifications. With BACs already recognised by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), this curriculum enhancement will enable students to further evidence to universities and employers the kinds of dispositions and capabilities that will help them succeed academically and in life beyond school.



Alongside the growth of BACs, we will review the Sixth Form curriculum, and explore the introduction of new A Level subjects. We will also examine our current offering of languages to ensure we prepare our students properly to be global citizens in the 21st century.'

Adopting a more progressive approach to digital learning, we will consolidate our Virtual Learning Platforms and develop, pilot and roll out student digital portfolios. To support this, we will introduce universal school-managed devices for all Blocks (Year 7+) students. Staff devices and classrooms will be upgraded to allow for wireless pairing of teacher devices with digital displays. A whole school digital curriculum will create an integrated approach for application and adaptation to Artificial Intelligence across the curriculum and through 21st century approaches to

learning. There will also be a fully aligned strategy to support students, parents and staff in the appropriate use of devices and software, to support their mental health and wellbeing.

A new sustainability curriculum will see all academic departments across the school complete an environmental audit of current provision, and to demonstrate engagement with nature or the environment at least once per term for each year group. We will scope a new BAC course linked to the environment and sustainability, with a follow-on Sixth Form course. We will also increase student voice, with student environment champions to lead on events and initiatives.

## GOAL

# Developing a Bedales 'Pedagogy'

Developing a clear whole school definition and practice of the Bedales 'method' of teaching and learning will draw on a variety of approaches: enquiry-based learning; creative and facilitative approaches; Socratic questioning; coaching; and the Harkness technique. We will train all our teachers and students, and disseminate our approach with fellow progressive educators and the education sector more broadly.

## GOAL

# Introducing more creative and experiential learning spaces

A new 560+ capacity auditorium is planned to open in 2024 paving the way for the redevelopment of the Quad, returning it to a social and exhibition space.

We will map opportunities for 'real world' learning on and off campus which include plans for students to build sustainable structures. Students will learn about the resources needed to live in our homes and how design can minimise those demands. A shared outdoor kitchen and eating space will allow students of all ages to prepare and share food together in a different environment. Bedales Pre-prep will also benefit from improvements to its Orchard, with a focus on outdoor learning.

Refurbished indoor spaces will include a Harkness classroom, refurbished Science laboratories, improved cooking facilities in the teaching and boarding spaces, and new class and pastoral spaces at the Prep School.

The development of the school libraries will include an agreed whole school Information Skills framework for cross-curricular delivery. All students will develop the skills needed to remain safe and to become discerning, critical, engaged citizens within the contemporary information landscape.













# Living



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## Living

**We will improve the quality of boarding provision, transitioning from single-sex to mixed boarding houses. All members of the community will learn to coexist with empathy, understanding their place as individuals and in groups.**

A focus on values will help students develop authenticity, self-confidence and self-awareness, whilst maintaining meaningful contributions to our school and wider communities. 'Bedales Service' will become a weekly feature of Bedalian life for all students.

We will encourage healthy choices, grounded in physical and outdoor activities, within an environment where students live confidently and happily in the digital age.

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*“It’s very welcoming. We all try and support each other...  
It just feels so much more like a home than a school.”*

## GOAL

# Integrating living spaces and pastoral structures

We will further improve the quality of boarding provision and integration of students by moving to fully coeducational boarding at Bedales Senior following the adoption of this approach by Bedales Prep in 2023 and the current 6.2 (Year 13) boarding house since 1994. We will further integrate day students and boarders at the Senior School, and 6.2 (Year 13) will eventually be re-integrated into houses with other years.

The introduction of new tutoring and pastoral structures at the Senior School will evolve the Head of Year and Houseparent roles, and provide clarity to the roles of the support team surrounding the student, with the tutor managing both academic and pastoral matters.



## GOAL

# Improving student wellbeing

A new Wellbeing curriculum will be supported by Wellbeing hubs in each school. Students will develop the skills to help manage their own mental health, supported by the introduction of a wellbeing tracking tool.

Developing provision for sport and outdoor activities will encourage student engagement. This will be supported by further investment and upgrades in sports facilities including the sports hall, gym and swimming pool.



## GOAL

# Refining and living the Bedales values

Building on the 'work of each for weal of all' founding ethos and the ongoing contributions from many of the younger members of our community, all students will participate weekly in 'Bedales Service' to help support the running of the school. To nurture and recognise this positive behaviour from the very youngest, we will develop our own junior version of the Duke of Edinburgh Award for our Pre-prep and Prep.

'Character Education' focuses on developing virtues that are positive and beneficial for the individual and society. In the context of Bedales and in keeping with our core principles, there are a number of approaches already in place across the Pre-prep, Prep and Senior for developing Bedalians' character. We will adopt a more consistent approach that directly supports our ethos and helps all members of our community to understand the qualities and traits we are keen to encourage. Developing strength of character will be taught and nurtured across the whole school and become part of the language and expectation, supported by a 'growth mindset' approach.













# Community



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## Community

**Our school environment aims to encourage and foster diversity at every level, valuing difference as a strength, and supporting all students. A doubling of our provision for full bursaries will strengthen our social mission and contribution to the wider community.**

We will build on our links with like-minded educators around the world to drive educational improvements through our advocacy and engagement at national and international levels.

By mobilising the Bedales community in the widest sense, we will support our young people, helping them navigate their post-Bedales pathways. We will celebrate the many Bedalian contributions to society, harnessing the power of the diverse and inspirational role models in our community.

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*“As a student, the fact that we can work so closely together with staff and feel like we can voice our opinions is something that I don’t think you get in many schools. And it is something very special that I have really appreciated.”*

## GOAL

# Fostering a diverse and integrated community within and beyond Bedales

Inspired by the generosity of parents and Old Bedalians, we will double the number of fully funded bursaries offered; this will increase access to a transformational education for more young people not available elsewhere in the state or independent sectors. In tandem, we will provide additional bespoke support for beneficiaries to help them and their families navigate a successful course through our school.

The newly formed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee will lead EDI improvements with particular attention to the curriculum, staff recruitment and admissions.

We will focus on more collaborations across the whole school to support student mentoring, particularly around transitions into Group 1 (Year 4) and Block 3 (Year 9), and to increase collaborative staff training for Pre-prep, Prep and Senior teachers to optimise the 3–18 learning journey and progressions through our schools.



We plan to further draw on the willingness of our parent and alumni bodies to support current students in exploring their options beyond Bedales. Parents and Old Bedalians provide rich experiences and useful perspectives to help students with their career and education choices and we will make these more readily accessible to our young people.

We will continue to develop local relationships that give back to the Petersfield community, finding more ways to share our facilities and expertise with local children and adults.



## GOAL

# Influencing education thinking and practice

We aim to open a new 'Bedales Centre for Progressive Education' to build on our strong heritage in innovating and driving educational reform. The Centre will make available materials and documentary evidence of our distinctive heritage and approaches to education. It will become a natural source of support and inspiration for any individual or institution interested in progressive education, locally, nationally and internationally.

Looking further afield, we will develop our global network of state and independent schools who share our values and approaches to progressive education, while continuing to seek mutually beneficial educational partnerships that provide students with different cultural experiences unavailable elsewhere.















# Environment



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## Environment

**We are constantly striving to make the world around us more beautiful in every way. We will model a system-wide approach to active environmental responsibility. All members of our community will be involved in how we live, how our food is produced and how we ensure the environment is protected.**

We will engage students in how we generate more of our own energy and how we manage the school estate in a sustainable way. A 'reduce, re-use, recycle' philosophy will be supported by more sustainable procurement. We will select suppliers and goods based on their sustainability credentials and carbon reporting, while using local suppliers wherever possible to reduce transport and support local businesses.

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*“I love how much space we have to roam around...  
Bedales has been built in accordance with the natural world.”*

## GOAL

# Living sustainably

Developing the sustainability co-curriculum with a focus on growing more of our own food will support the introduction of a seasonal menu that reflects local and UK produce. In parallel, we will lower the number of food deliveries to reduce food miles, noise and traffic.

Students will become fully involved with food waste reduction and composting which will help to support more plant and shrub production in Outdoor Work and the expansion of our market garden.

With more ownership of areas of the school, and using their 'Bedales Service' time, students will assist with upkeep – we will supplement this with the promotion of more information about our environment and its biodiversity.

Technology-free days and regular talks from people working in sustainability will provide increased opportunities for students to learn about and experience sustainable living.



We will streamline internal administrative processes, moving to more electronic systems where possible and appropriate, which will reduce the need to print and mail out documents.

For the benefit of the wider community, we will promote sustainability with workshops on the environment and sustainable living.



## GOAL

# Journey to net zero by 2045

Through improving the sustainability of our buildings and use of utilities, our programme of annual improvements will increase the efficiencies of our facilities, including moving to greener heating and LED lighting. We will expand the programme of solar panel installation and explore other generation and storage options including wind power. With water, we will both reduce consumption and leaks, and install a water bore hole and additional water capture systems. We will introduce a fully tracked waste management system to reduce food waste and produce compost.

Alongside these improvements and efficiencies, we will encourage staff and student ownership of buildings while adopting a smarter use of heating and lighting.

We are introducing a more sustainable policy for school trips with carbon budgeting, and a reduction in long-haul air travel.

A move to battery-powered vehicles and facilities equipment will include a rolling programme for the replacement of diesel-powered school vehicles with electric ones. We will also install car charging points, and all members of our community will be encouraged to explore more sustainable travel options including walking, cycling and rail.









# Process

**In 2022, the school started extensive consultation on the Bedales purpose and vision which was agreed across the school community. Further consultation followed with students, parents, staff and Old Bedalians which led to the creation of four working groups of staff from across the whole school to develop proposals to deliver the overall vision under the four strands of ‘Learning’, ‘Living’, ‘Community’ and ‘Environment’.**

The proposals then underwent further refinement and governor approval before being fully adopted. Work will extend over the 10 year period 2023–2033, and will be taken forward in existing and new school structures.

Goals and initiatives will be incorporated into one year plans with a major review and re-publishing of this plan after five years in 2028.

Reporting on progress will be built into termly governor meetings.



# Cultivating a community of learners



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## Acknowledgements

This strategy is the result of significant collaboration across our whole school community and we are extremely grateful to the many people – students, staff, parents, governors, Old Bedalians – who have contributed via our surveys, workshops, working parties, meetings, discussions, interviews and direct feedback, and who have provided creative input for this document.

We thank all staff and members of the whole Bedales community in advance for their unstinting commitment to turning these words into actions for the benefit of Bedales students over the next decade and beyond.



[bedales.org.uk](https://bedales.org.uk)

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