



The James Hodgson Fund

Beyond the Gates



The James Hodgson Fund - Beyond the Gates

After more than a decade as Head Master, James Hodgson will leave Bedford at the end of this academic year to take up an exciting new role in Rome. To recognise his time here, we intend to establish the philanthropically sustained James Hodgson Fund in support of the Bedford School Community Outreach Programme.

James firmly believes that a school like ours should look outwards into the town whose name we share. Under his leadership, we have become more deeply woven into the life of the local area, with boys expected not just to achieve in the classroom, but to play their part in the wider community. It feels right that any fund bearing his name should reflect his instinct to look beyond our gates.

The Community Outreach Programme puts boys in local schools, care homes, and charities where they see both the richness and the challenges of the communities around them, and to ask what part they might play in supporting others. Through these experiences, they learn to be empathetic and caring young men, conscious of the opportunities they have been given and of their responsibility to share them for the benefit of others.

The James Hodgson Fund is our way of securing this work for the long term, ensuring future generations of pupils have the chance to be part of this outward-looking side of Bedford life. Those that choose to support this appeal will help build a practical legacy that will continue to shape the character of Bedfordians, and the community they serve, for many years to come.

Vincent Gaten
Director of Philanthropy



“I have seen boys take guitars into schools with no music and teach children who had never held an instrument.”

“We sent a single pianist to support a choir and the experience of fifty children was transformed.”

“One little boy recognised our Head of Community Partnerships in Tesco, gave him a hug, and said he couldn’t wait to come back to Bedford School.”

James Hodgson



“With additional funding, we could turn the school into a place of discovery for local pupils, delivering innovative projects such as LEGO engineering competitions, hosting lively debates and performances that fill the Quarry Theatre with young audiences, and welcoming children into our facilities to learn, play and thrive together.

Just as importantly, we could remove the practical barriers that so often stand in the way, by providing transport and ensuring every visiting pupil is properly looked after, including sharing lunch with us.”

**Chris Prior,
Head of Community Partnerships**





Supporting Local Schools

Each year, Bedford boys go into local primary and secondary schools to offer support across a range of subjects, activities, and sports. On a conservative estimate, around **150 children** benefit from these sessions annually, gaining extra help with literacy, numeracy and other subjects.

The outreach programme also plays a particularly important role for children with special educational needs and those unable to attend mainstream settings. Groups of Bedford School pupils visit schools every week, including The Grange Academy, Rivertree Free School and Greys Education Centre, to help staff run activities with students facing a wide range of challenges, from autism and severe learning difficulties to physical disabilities and behavioural issues. Over **100 pupils** in these settings benefit from positive role models, one to one attention and opportunities to enjoy learning through play and exploration.

Alongside this, boys volunteer in local primary schools to run lunchtime and after school sports clubs in football, basketball, netball, tennis and rowing for around **180 pupils**. This gives local children the chance to learn new skills and build confidence, while our boys develop their own coaching and leadership abilities. Native Mandarin and Russian speakers from Bedford School teach languages to around 30 primary pupils who would not otherwise have access to this provision, learning how to plan and deliver lessons while widening younger children's horizons. Music also plays a part, with Bedford boys accompanying choirs at schools such as Cauldwell and Edith Cavell, freeing teachers to focus on teaching and inspiring over **130 young singers** through rehearsals and performances.

Larger collaborative events, such as the Ready2Lead leadership conference, Ignite Bedfordshire and enrichment days for local schools, bring together pupils from across Bedford Borough to develop leadership, social enterprise and a shared sense of community



Community Outreach

The programme is equally active in the wider community. Through the Friends for Life charity, Year 12 students visit local care homes to play games, perform music and, most importantly, spend unhurried time with residents, many of whom are experiencing loneliness or dementia.

Feedback from residents has been consistently positive, and the experience is particularly meaningful for pupils considering careers in medicine or health care.

Conservation and maintenance work in local nature reserves, in partnership with Bedford Council, improves public green spaces for the whole town, while Riding for the Disabled and work with the NHS stroke rehabilitation centre give boys the chance to make a very personal contribution to the lives of disabled riders and stroke survivors.

The school also opens up its specialist facilities to the public and to other schools on a regular basis. Astronomy visits to the observatory allow local clubs, societies and schools to explore the night sky, with up to **70 attendees** at individual sessions.

Music recitals, drama performances, art lectures and exhibitions at the Quarry Theatre and across the site attract thousands of visitors each year, while hosting the Bedfordshire Music Hub gives hundreds of children from across the borough the chance to try new instruments and discover a love of music.

“This is a school I genuinely believe is a force for good in society.”

“We are not just educating excellent thinkers, sportsmen and musicians, but responsible local and global citizens.”

James Hodgson

A message from one of our partners....

Dear Chris,

I am very happy to provide a comment on the support the Bedford School Community Partnership Programme provides to Edith Cavell. We have been involved since the programme's inception and its impact over the years has been significant and wide ranging.

Bedford School students regularly visit Edith Cavell to listen to children read. While this may seem a small act, the effect is profound, particularly given that many of our pupils face multiple vulnerabilities, including eligibility for free school meals, English as an additional language and SEN. These regular reading sessions greatly increase opportunities for children to practise fluency, comprehension and vocabulary, improving confidence, attainment and ultimately life chances.

Alongside this, Bedford School students have delivered a wide range of lunchtime clubs, from chess and languages to music, sport and Lego building, sharing their own interests and skills in ways that genuinely inspire our pupils. The addition of Enrichment Days has further strengthened the programme, giving our children the chance to visit Bedford School, take part in expertly led workshops and experience facilities and activities we would otherwise be unable to offer.

The Partnership benefits both schools. Bedford School pupils gain valuable experience as role models, developing leadership and communication skills, while our children build aspirations, confidence and new interests through positive relationships with older students. We value the Community Partnership Programme enormously and are delighted to be part of it. We very much hope it continues to grow and develop in the years ahead.

Yours sincerely

*H.L.Cook
Headteacher, Edith Cavell Primary School*



The Future of the Programme

The Community Partnerships programme has grown organically through the commitment of staff and pupils, but its future potential is far greater. With dedicated funding, the programme could move from a series of valuable but resource limited activities to a more structured, sustainable and far reaching model of engagement.

At its heart, the ambition is simple: to deepen the quality of each partnership, broaden the opportunities available to local pupils and community groups, and better equip Bedford boys with the skills and confidence to serve others well.

Enhancing weekly partnerships

Targeted funding would allow the programme to invest in dedicated resources used exclusively within partner schools and community settings. Shared equipment for sport, chess, music and STEM activity would enable more consistent, high quality sessions, while giving boys the tools they need to lead with confidence and creativity.

Developing pupils as leaders and educators

With additional support, boys could receive formal training in areas such as sports coaching, facilitation and collaborative problem solving. This would strengthen the impact of their work in schools and care settings, while helping pupils develop transferable leadership skills that will stay with them long after they leave Bedford.

Opening the school to the wider community

The programme could host more large scale enrichment events on site, welcoming children from across Bedford and beyond. These might include engineering and design challenges, debating events, performances and access to specialist facilities such as the Quarry Theatre or the Welly Centre. For many pupils, this would be their first experience of a school like Bedford, helping to raise aspirations and widen horizons.

Removing practical barriers to participation

Funding would also allow the programme to cover transport and catering costs for visiting pupils, ensuring that no child is excluded due to logistics or affordability. Providing lunch and travel may seem simple, but it is often the difference between a good idea and a genuinely inclusive opportunity.

Building long term sustainability

Finally, dedicated funding could support a part time or full time administrator or coordinator to work alongside teaching staff. This role would ensure partnerships are well organised, relationships are nurtured over time, and the programme continues to grow without relying solely on goodwill and limited ad hoc resources.

Together, these developments would allow the Community Partnerships programme to reach more people, operate more effectively, and leave a deeper, longer lasting impact on both Bedford boys and the communities they serve.



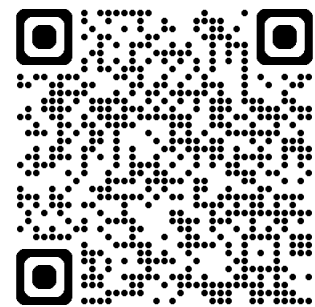
Your Support

A gift to the James Hodgson Fund is an opportunity to secure something that has defined James's leadership at Bedford: a school that looks outward, engages meaningfully with its community, and expects its boys to do the same.

If you choose to offer a contribution to this fund, your support will ensure that this work is not only sustained but strengthened for the long term. It will allow partnerships with local schools, charities and care settings to deepen and grow, enabling more children facing disadvantage to benefit from consistent, high quality support, and ensuring that Bedford boys continue to learn, first hand, what it means to serve others with empathy, responsibility, and purpose.

If you would like to be part of this legacy, and to mark James's contribution to Bedford in a way that reflects what he values most, we would be delighted to talk with you. Vincent Gaten, Director of Philanthropy, would be very happy to hear from you at vgaten@bedfordschool.org.uk or on 07956 704864.

Alternatively, you can make a gift directly by scanning the QR code below.



Please scan above to make a donation to the James Hodgson Fund