



Dear Parents and Guardians,

The below is directed mainly to parents of day pupils, though I do hope that parents of current boarders will also enjoy its contents.

This last year has been a time of immense upheaval and change for all of us. Studies show that many of us are reconsidering how we work, where we live, how we interact with those we care about and many of our key priorities. Even for those of us who hope that many of our previous routines will 'return to normal', it is a time for significant reflection and an opportunity to learn and improve for the future.

As part of this process at school, we have examined in detail what it means to be a part of the Bedford School community and, in particular, what it means to board here. We have undertaken an extensive research study, via an independent researcher, to understand more of what boarding brings to Bedford, to boys and their families. We have spoken to boys (boarders and day boys, current and OB) and, of course, staff, parents (both boarding and day) and prospective parents. It has been a comprehensive examination from many angles, and we have learned an enormous amount. Not only have we been reminded of the myriad benefits of boarding, but the learnings have enabled us to sharpen our offer for boarders, maximise the experience for them and, importantly, reflect on what boarding can bring in the aftermath of the period of remote learning we have experienced and continue to navigate.

Acknowledging this period of reflection for many, we would like to share our findings with you. The researcher has summarised her observations and insights in a document which you can access [here](#). We hope it proves an interesting read for those who currently board, those considering it as an option in the future and those who have never thought about it but would like to know more about it. As well as dispelling a few myths, we would like to share with you what has been shared with us and open the doors to our boarding houses, at least figuratively for the moment!

What struck us most were the potential benefits of boarding in the coming months. Once we return to school, the upside of returning not just during the day but to an onsite community from Monday to Saturday seems even more pertinent after a period of distance. Boys living at school will be able to access not only additional academic support (supervised prep, in-house tutors, academic clinics every evening) but also further sporting opportunities (we have plans for a boarders' Summer Cup and additional coaching opportunities across the week) and extra-curricular activities available for boarders (evening clubs and societies, year-group based events, trips, etc). Learning from the research we have undertaken, we have worked to maximise the benefits that boarding offers and, of course, boarding in summertime brings with it many seasonal benefits too, not least the outside space which the boys regularly make use of together on the long (and hopefully warm!) summer evenings.

We have decided, therefore, to try to open boarding as widely as possible for the start of the summer term. We do, of course, have a limited number of beds available, but we feel it is the ideal opportunity to make the offer. So, in order to make this opportunity available to as many boys as possible, we have taken the decision to remove the element of long-term commitment, so that any day boy wishing to convert to full or weekly boarding for this summer term will not need to adhere to the usual notice period of one full term, should he wish to revert back to a day place in September.

To further 'lift the lid' on boarding, we are also planning to run an online event after half-term where we invite you to come and hear the researcher in conversation with the Head Master, sharing her findings and taking questions. There will also be the opportunity to talk in smaller groups to other members of the boarding community as well, where Prep boarding will also be in focus. What we do know is that very large numbers of day boys have shown an interest in boarding at some stage and that they would love it; but not all families know quite enough about it to 'make the leap'. This is a chance for us to provide some answers and for all of us to talk openly and informally about the opportunity. The event will take place on the evening of **Tuesday 23 February** so please do save the date, and we will be in touch very soon with more information about what to expect.

In the meantime, please do read the research findings which you can access [here](#) and feel free to reply to this email with any questions you may have at this point.

I really do feel excited about sharing this opportunity with you. As you know, I am a great advocate of boarding, having boarded myself and run a boarding house; I am father to four past and current boarders and, of course, I am Head Master of a boarding school – so perhaps you would expect me to be enthused! However, this point in time feels uniquely well suited, and I would encourage you to consider the option of boarding (even for the summer term) as a worthwhile investment in your son's life at school and beyond.

With kind regards indeed,

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

James Hodgson  
HEAD MASTER