



## THE CENTENARY CAMPAIGN – FAQs



### **PROJECT SCOPE**

#### **WHAT WORK WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN ECHYNGHAM?**

Echyngham has benefitted from a modernised House Study which was completed in the summer of 2023 as well as refurbished bathrooms. The next phase of work will see dorms and other communal areas modernised and upgraded for the girls. The layout of some dorm rooms will be reconfigured to make better use of the space. New furniture and fittings will be put in place and colour and character injected. In addition, heating and electrics will be updated where required.

A new day room will be put in place for day pupils, including fresh redecoration, fittings and furniture.

We have outline designs in place and, following the successful input of students on the House Studies, we intend to hold workshops to review room layouts and furniture to ensure the new rooms meet the needs of modern boarders and day pupils.

#### **WHAT WORK WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN GULDEFORD?**

Guldeford has benefitted from a modernised House Study which was completed in the summer of 2023. The next phase of work will see washrooms in Guldeford reorganised and upgraded.

Following on from the bathrooms the dorms and other communal areas will also be modernised and upgraded for the pupils. Dorm rooms in many cases will be reconfigured to make better use of the space.

We have outline designs in place and, following the successful input of students on the House Studies, we intend to hold workshops to review room layouts and furniture to ensure the new rooms meet the needs of pupils.

#### **WHAT WORK WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN HEMSTED?**

The first priority for Hemsted is to replace the roof. This is now very old and has had many patch repairs over the years. It's now reached the stage where it needs to be comprehensively replaced to be fit for purpose for the next 50 years. Whilst addressing the roof, which will involve extensive scaffolding, we will also take the opportunity to undertake restoration work to stone and brick work at high level. From an environmental perspective we will also add insulation wherever possible to the roof to help reduce energy costs and improve the thermal efficiency of the building.

The next phase will involve the refurbishment of the lower floors. This will include works to the infrastructure; electrics, data, storage and water pressure will all be upgraded to ensure an improved living environment. Dorms and the remaining old bathrooms in Hemsted will be updated to ensure they are bright and modern. New furniture and furnishings will be included to bring rooms more up to date.

#### **WHAT ABOUT TOP TOP?**

Top Top remains an integral part of our refurbishment plans and we have undertaken the preliminary work to understand what its refurbishment will look like. Whilst these changes will have a significant impact, we want to first prioritise the refurbishment of areas currently in daily use by our pupils so that they get the maximum benefit from our enhancements.

## **WHAT WORK WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN SPLASH?**

We will prioritise upstairs in SPLASH, where we want to review and reorganise the space to carve out a new studio and provide flexibility for dance and exercise classes. Combining other spaces upstairs provides an opportunity to expand our fitness suite and incorporate storage for equipment. There will also be an increase to the amount of equipment available, and we want to introduce new types of equipment.

Architecturally we would like to brighten up the space using lighter, natural finishes with an injection of colour to create interest and energy.

Downstairs, the SPLASH pool area is of its time with dark wood and functional but dated changing facilities. The changing rooms will be reorganised and refurbished so that they are fresh and contemporary, with good showers that will make swimming much more appealing in the future.

The space will be flooded with natural light, offering views out to the treetops and sky while pupils swim. The intention is to introduce rooflights and increase the window openings along the perimeter.

Applying a lighter stain to the timber roof will help to brighten up the space. While new treatments to walls could integrate more benching and importantly incorporate honours boards and trophies in celebration of Benenden sporting success.

Introducing a linear garden and planting will improve privacy and shield the pool from the car park beyond.

## **WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME AND WHAT WILL CHANGE IN THE BOARDING HOUSES?**

Whilst we want to keep the feel of the Boarding Houses, it is important for us to update them to suit the needs of modern pupils with fresher furnishings and furniture, updated electrics, and heating. There is the opportunity to reinforce House identity further with the use of House colours which will brighten spaces.

Most dorms will occupy the same rooms and spaces, but furniture arrangements will be reconfigured in some cases to make better use of the space for pupils. We are also continuing to integrate our day pupils throughout our House structure and refurbishments will ensure that there are suitable spaces for all pupils.

## **WHY ARE WE NOT COMMITTING MORE FUNDS TO AN AMBITIOUS NEW SPORTS FACILITY AT THIS TIME?**

Our current sports facilities are well used and fit for purpose. We made a significant investment in our sports facilities with the All-Weather Pitch and Sports Pavilion which opened in 2016 as part of our Centenary Vision. The investment we are proposing now will increase the capacity of the gym, allow for the introduction of more modern equipment, and make the overall space much more welcoming. Although a more significant investment is in our longer-term plans, our Governing Council and Estates Committee have prioritised other areas, principally, the girls' accommodation, as high priority schemes.

## **WHILE SPENDING SO MUCH ON THE HOUSES ARE YOU USING THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THE PROPERTIES MORE SUSTAINABLE?**

We are looking at key infrastructure such as electrics and heating across all buildings. In Hemsted in particular, we will be looking to improve the fabric's thermal performance so that the space will be cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, reducing reliance on the heating system.

## **WHY AREN'T YOU IMPROVING NORRIS?**

We have already invested in improving aspects of Norris, and do intend to invest further once Echyngam, Guldeford and Hemsted have progressed. It is anticipated that this will happen as part of the next major infrastructure project following the Centenary Campaign initiative.

## **WHY AREN'T YOU IMPROVING FOUNDERS HOUSES?**

We recognise the need to invest in Founders, and it is anticipated that this will happen as part of the next major infrastructure project following the Centenary Campaign initiative.

## **WHY ARE THESE PROJECTS MORE IMPORTANT THAN STAFF HOUSING?**

The staff housing we opened in 2016 has proven its worth and enabled us to attract and retain excellent teaching staff. We intend to create more of this vital resource though in the future. As a School, we have prioritised modernising the girls' living spaces and addressing the structural needs of our Grade-II listed main building Hemsted House within this Campaign.

## **IMPACT**

### **ARE WE STILL ON TRACK TO SUPPORT 24 BURSARY GIRLS BY 2024?**

Yes, we are making good progress having secured £2.5million towards our £5million target by the start of the 2023-24 academic year. As of September 2023, we have 18 fully funded bursary recipients at Benenden. We need the remaining £2.5million pledged by December 2024 to achieve the 24 target and continue to fund those pupils during their time at Benenden.

### **HOW WILL THESE CENTENARY CAMPAIGN INVESTMENTS BENEFIT OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY / WIDER SOCIETY?**

The Be the Change initiative, which covers our bursary provision and partnerships work, has a significant impact upon both individual recipients and participants, our local community and wider society.

## **PROJECT DELIVERY**

### **WHAT WORK HAS BEEN COMPLETED ALREADY?**

Following the modernisation of Medway and Marshall, we progressed to refurbishing the Echyngam bathrooms and converted classrooms to dorms in Norris which also included the addition of a new bathroom. In Guldeford, seating has been integrated into the corridors, creating more incidental spaces for the girls. In summer 2023, the refurbishment programme focused on the House Studies in Echyngam and Guldeford. Following workshops with staff and students, the Guldeford Study was designed in the style of a café bar; booths, a bar and sofas define different areas of the space. Echyngam House Study has a cosy lounge feel, with groupings of comfortable furniture and soft furnishings, creating relaxed and cosy spaces.

### **HOW LONG DO YOU ANTICIPATE THE WORK LASTING BEFORE YOU WILL NEED TO RENOVATE AGAIN?**

We are committed to establishing a rolling refurbishment programme for not just our Boarding Houses but for our entire School estate. We understand that certain areas which are subject to higher intensity use will require refurbishment more frequently than other areas. Our priority is to ensure that all our Boarding Houses are brought up and maintained to a consistent standard.

### **WHAT ARE THE TIMESCALES FOR EACH PROJECT?**

We anticipate commencing the Guldeford bathroom work in the summer of 2024. We would also like to start the Hemsted roof replacement in 2024 although this is dependent on us successfully navigating through the required historic building permissions.

## **WHAT DISRUPTION WILL THE VARIOUS PROJECTS CAUSE?**

The modernisation of Guldeford and Echyngam will mostly take place during School holidays to minimise any disruption that would impact the girls. The work we need to complete on Hemsted is more complex and will take more time. While we will always endeavour to ensure that the most disruptive work takes place during the School holidays, it is practically and financially important that the work happens continuously, which will require some work taking place during term time. As with past development projects, we will ensure that the timings of this are carefully managed with minimum disruption, while ensuring that exams and other student priorities are not impacted. Our fantastic Centenary Buildings are testament to the fact that significant building work can be undertaken in the heart of Benenden with minimal disruption if carefully planned.

## **HOW HAVE YOU DECIDED UPON THE FIRMS UNDERTAKING THE WORK?**

As with our previous projects we will undertake a robust tendering process to appoint the consultancy and contractor team for each project. We also take up numerous references and understand the financial position of each business before confirming any appointment.

## **STRATEGY**

### **WHY ARE YOU PROCEEDING WITH A SIGNIFICANT FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN PRIOR TO HAVING CONCRETE PLANS AND ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS?**

Although we do not currently have detailed architectural plans for all aspects of the Campaign, we are working quickly towards having these. We have a detailed scope of work for Echyngam and Guldeford which we are currently refining. For Hemsted, we are currently undertaking an in-depth scoping exercise that will enable us to make important decisions that will inform those plans. In the meantime, we are acutely conscious that no work can happen without funding, so in order to not delay the project, thereby disadvantaging the girls, we have launched the Centenary Campaign and will share the plans as they coalesce in the coming months.

### **WHY HAVE YOU COMMENCED A NEW FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN BEFORE YOU HAVE CONCLUDED BE THE CHANGE?**

Be the Change remains a key strategic priority. At the same time, we are conscious of the need to invest in Hemsted House, the girls' accommodation and SPLASH. We have therefore combined these priorities into our new Campaign.

### **WHY ARE YOU EMBARKING ON A SIGNIFICANT PROJECT WITH A CHANGE OF HEADTEACHER IMMINENT?**

The School's Estates Plan is set by Governing Council in conjunction with Head and Leadership Team and looks ahead for many years. Mrs Price's departure does not impact or delay the needs of the students, and we have therefore proceeded with the Centenary Campaign as that encompasses what is in the best interest of the girls.

## **FINANCES**

### **HOW HAVE YOU ARRIVED AT THE £10M FIGURE?**

This figure is based on the costings we have for various elements of the project, and the significant value of investment needed to realise the four components of the Campaign.

## **IS THE SCHOOL INTENDING TO TAKE ON ANY BORROWING?**

The Benenden School Governing Council – which includes a number of banking and finance professionals who have held senior positions at leading financial institutions – is clear that Benenden will not borrow more than we will be able to service. They are similarly adamant that future loan repayment commitments will not compromise the ongoing operations and development of the School. The School has one significant loan at present which was undertaken in support of the Centenary Buildings. We have determined that the only way to complete our vision is through a fundraising campaign.

## **HOW WAS THE COMPLETED BOARDING HOUSEWORK FUNDED?**

The completed refurbishment work has been funded from the accumulated reserves of the School. We have not previously fundraised to support the Boarding House refurbishment programme and our bank loan is related to the Centenary Buildings.

## **WHY SHOULD I DONATE WHEN I AM ALREADY PAYING SIGNIFICANT FEES?**

School fees pay for the costs of delivering education and the maintenance of some infrastructure (buildings etc). Like all independent schools we aim to generate a modest surplus each year. That surplus is used to fund capital projects but is insufficient to cover the full cost of the investments needed to maintain our position at the forefront of girls' independent education. In common with other independent schools without substantial endowment funds, we need philanthropic support to help us achieve our aims for the School. Benenden has been fortunate enough to benefit greatly from such generosity over the years. Without the help of many generations before us, we would not boast the facilities we currently enjoy. We are now reliant on our current school community to help us improve those further for the benefit of current and future generations of Benenden girls.

## **WHAT ABOUT VAT?**

We are planning for a wide number of eventualities. We recognise that VAT on school fees is understandably a significant concern for parents, but we will likely be able to reclaim the majority of VAT on our refurbishment costs. As such it could be advantageous to delay major expenditure on refurbishment until we have more certainty and VAT is introduced. However, we need to balance that with the need to make continuous improvements to our estate and address those areas most in need, including the Guldeford bathrooms and the roof of Hemsted House.

## **GIVING**

### **HOW CAN I DONATE TOWARDS THE CAMPAIGN?**

Gifts at all levels are vital to the success of the Campaign. Donors may wish to give a one-off gift, or set up a direct debit. Details of how to give can be found online at [benenden.school/the-centenary-campaign](https://benenden.school/the-centenary-campaign)

For those interested in becoming a Lead Campaign Donor, please contact [Kyle Johnson](#).

### **WILL THERE BE NAMING OPPORTUNITIES AND AT WHICH LEVELS?**

There are opportunities to sponsor dorm rooms, washrooms, and communal spaces in Echyngam, Guldeford, Hemsted and SPLASH with pledges from £15,000 to +£100,000.

For more information on sponsorship opportunities and information on available spaces, please contact [development@benenden.school](mailto:development@benenden.school)

## CAN I DONATE IN A TAX EFFICIENT WAY?

If you pay tax in the UK then the answer is very likely to be yes.\* Here are three examples of what donations might equate to in 'real terms' after Gift Aid has been claimed:

Figure A: Indicative Donations and Gift Aid*	£10,000	£30,000	£50,000
Donor contribution	<b>£10,000</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Total contribution with Gift Aid	£12,500	£37,500	£62,500
Top rate taxpayer reclaims	£3,125	£9,375	£15,625
Net cost to donor	<b>£6,875</b>	<b>£20,630</b>	<b>£34,375</b>
Monthly instalments over 1 year	£833	£2,500	£4,167
Monthly instalments over 2 years	£417	£1,250	£2,083
Monthly instalments over 3 years	£278	£833	£1,388

## GIFT AID – HOW DOES IT WORK?

If you are a UK tax payer and make a charitable donation using Gift Aid the School can reclaim basic rate tax on your donation. Higher rate taxpayers can also reclaim the difference between basic and higher rate tax via their tax return (either for themselves or the School). For those paying tax at 45% this could mean that every £1 received by the charity only costs the donor in question 55 pence.\*

## HOW WILL DONATIONS BE RECOGNISED?

Apart from room sponsorship opportunities, anyone who donates £5,000 or more (whether as a one-off gift or made over several years) will be recognised within the fabric of the buildings. Anyone who donates over £1,000 will be named on our published roll of patrons.

## HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

You can read our Centenary Campaign brochure and watch our Centenary Campaign video at [Benenden.school/the-centenary-campaign](http://Benenden.school/the-centenary-campaign)

Contact the Development Office at [development@benenden.school](mailto:development@benenden.school).

\* Benenden School does not provide tax, legal or accounting advice. This material has been prepared for informational purposes only, and is not intended to provide, and should not be relied on for tax, legal or accounting advice. You should consult your own tax, legal and accounting advisors before making a donation.