



BENENDEN
A COMPLETE
EDUCATION

THE CENTENARY CAMPAIGN – FAQs



BENENDEN
SOCIETY

PROJECT SCOPE

WHAT WORK WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN HEMSTED?

The priority for Hemsted and indeed the School is to replace the roof. This is now very old and has had many patch repairs over the years. It has 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 modernisation of aspects of the lower floors. The timing of this will be subject to funding and co-ordination with other works. This will include works to the infrastructure; electrics, data, storage and water pressure will all be upgraded to ensure an improved living-environment.

WHAT ABOUT TOP TOP?

Top Top remains an integral part of our medium-term modernisation plans and we have undertaken the preliminary work to understand what its refurbishment will look like. Whilst these changes will have a significant impact, they are not in scope for this project. 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 ABOUT ECHYNGHAM AND GULDEFORD?

Echyngham and Guldeford have benefitted from recent modernisations to their House Studies. Guldeford also has new washrooms. Whilst plans to modernise more aspects of these Boarding Houses were in the scope of the original Campaign plans, we have taken the work outside of the Centenary Campaign. Through establishing an in-house team, we have been able to create a more cost-effective and flexible approach to our plan of works. Initially, rooms will get new flooring and be repainted with colour and character injected. This will be followed by new fittings and furniture. The layout of some dorm rooms will be reconfigured to make better use of the space. In addition, heating and electrics will be upgraded where required.

WHAT ABOUT IMPROVEMENTS TO NORRIS?

We have already invested in improving aspects of Norris, including new dorms, a new washroom, new Matron's office, and a new study room. Further improvements are imminent, focussing on washrooms and the House Study. The upstairs of Norris will also undergo improvements in 2024-5 to turn it into a contemporary space, designed specifically for the requirements of Sixth Form boarders.

WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME, 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. 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 arrangement 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 ideal spaces for all pupils.

WHAT WORK WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN SPLASH?

We will prioritise upstairs in SPLASH. Combining other spaces upstairs provides an opportunity to expand our fitness suite and incorporate storage. The amount of equipment available will be increased, and we want to introduce new state-of-the-art equipment. In order to ensure there is also space for our talented dancers, we have additional plans for a sprung floor dance studio in the Theatre building.

Architecturally we would like to brighten up SPLASH using lighter, natural finishes where possible and increase natural light, with an injection of colour to create interest and energy.

Downstairs, the 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. Changes to the 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.

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

Our current sports resources are well used and fit for purpose. We made a significant investment with the All-Weather Pitch and Sports Pavilion which opened in 2016 during an earlier phase 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 thinking, our Governing Council and Estates Committee have prioritised other areas, initially, 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 currently rolling out a programme of changing all lighting in both academic and boarding spaces to LEDs. We will also be looking at insulation and solar / renewable energy in due course. 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 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 do intend to create more of this vital resource in the future. Now, as a School, we have prioritised modernising the girls' living spaces, SPLASH and addressing the needs of our Grade II listed main building Hemsted House within this Campaign.

IMPACT

WHAT ABOUT CONTINUING TO SUPPORT BURSARIES AT BENENDEN?

As of September 2024, we have reached our target of having 24 fully funded bursary recipients at Benenden. However, we need to continue to raise support in this area to ensure we can maintain this number of bursary pupils at the school at any one time.

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. Improvements to SPLASH will impact members of our local community who are able to use its facilities.

PROJECT DELIVERY

WHAT WORK HAS BEEN COMPLETED ALREADY?

Following the modernisation of Medway and Marshall, we progressed to modernising the Echyngam washrooms and the Norris work mentioned above. In Guldeford, seating has been integrated into the corridors, creating more incidental spaces for the girls. In Summer 2023, the modernisation and 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.

Our in-house team has now completed work in several dorms in Echyngam and Guldeford which now have new floors, furnishings and fresh paintwork.

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

Going forward we are looking to develop a rolling programme of 8 to 10 years supported by a redecoration programme every 3 to 5 years depending on intensity of use. 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 would like to start the Hemsted roof replacement in Summer 2025, although this is dependent on securing the necessary funding and the time required to navigate through the required historic building permissions.

We have already made a number of improvements to the changing rooms in SPLASH, to make them more appealing and to improve everyone's experience. Once the Hemsted project is underway, we will turn our attention to more transformative improvements to SPLASH. Again, the exact timing will be dependent on us securing the necessary funding.

WHAT DISRUPTION WILL THE VARIOUS PROJECTS CAUSE?

If we receive sufficient support, the complex Hemsted project will begin in the Summer holiday 2025 and run through 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 if planned correctly significant building work can be undertaken in the heart of Benenden with minimal disruption.

We anticipate being able to complete major works to SPLASH during School holidays.

HOW HAVE YOU DECIDED UPON THE FIRMS UNDERTAKING THE WORK?

To reduce costs and gain greater momentum we established an in-house construction team and are undertaking the work to Guldeford, Echyngam and Norris on a rolling programme through term and holiday periods. The works to Hemsted will be undertaken by an external main contractor employing specialist trades. For Hemsted we have held an invited tender process to appoint the consultant design team and a further invited tender process to appoint the main contractor.

STRATEGY

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

For Hemsted we have undertaken a detailed scoping exercise which has informed the initial strategy and scope of work. Now we have appointed our external contractors, those plans are now in development. In the meantime, we have been proceeding with our fundraising efforts in order to not delay the project.

WHY DID YOU COMMENCE A NEW FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN BEFORE YOU 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, and SPLASH. We have therefore combined these priorities into our new Campaign.

WHY DID YOU EMBARK ON A SIGNIFICANT PROJECT WITH A CHANGE OF HEADTEACHER IMMINENT?

The School's priorities are set by Governing Council in conjunction with the Head and Leadership Team. Mrs Price's departure did not affect the needs of the students, and we therefore proceeded with the Centenary Campaign as that encompasses what is in the best interest of the girls. Furthermore, Ms Bailey is completely supportive of these initiatives, which remain Benenden's most pressing development priorities.

FINANCES

HOW HAVE YOU ARRIVED AT YOUR COSTINGS?

Our figures are based on the costings we have for various elements of the project, and the significant value of investment needed to realise the components of the Campaign. As with prior phases of the Centenary Vision, the overall cost of the work undertaken will be much higher, with the School contributing a sizeable proportion of expenditure itself. Nevertheless, to complete the necessary work we will still require a significant contribution from our valued community.

IS THE SCHOOL INTENDING TO TAKE ON ANY BORROWING?

The Benenden School Governing Council does not think it is prudent to take on any additional borrowing at this time. 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 modernisation work has been funded from the accumulated reserves of the School. We have not previously fundraised to support the Boarding House modernisation 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 school community to help us improve those further for the benefit of current and future generations of Benenden girls.

WHAT ABOUT VAT?

We recognise that the introduction of VAT on school fees is a significant concern for parents. However, our priorities for the school remain. As above, we have reduced the costs of this campaign by employing an in-house team and taking various elements outside of the original campaign. This has allowed donations to be focussed elsewhere where need is greatest.

With the introduction of VAT, the School is likely to be able to reclaim the majority of the VAT element of our modernisation costs, something that has been factored into our budgeting and our fundraising target.

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

If you would like to support the initiative by making a donation, you can also contact the Development Office directly at development@benenden.school.

WILL THERE BE NAMING OPPORTUNITIES AND AT WHICH LEVELS?

There are opportunities to sponsor spaces in Hemsted and SPLASH– with pledges from £15,000 to +£100,000. As with previous phases of the Centenary Vision, there will be other significant sponsorship and naming opportunities for those contributing at or above the Lead Patron level of £200,000.

For more information on sponsorship opportunities and information on available spaces, please contact development@beneneden.school.

CAN I CAN DONATE IN A TAX EFFICIENT WAY?

If you pay tax in the U.K. 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	£10,000	£30,000	£50,000
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	<u>£6,875</u>	<u>£20,630</u>	<u>£34,375</u>
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 taxpayer 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.*

WHAT ABOUT GIVING FROM HONG KONG?

Donors in Hong Kong can make a donation via the Benenden School Hong Kong Trust, a charitable organisation registered in Hong Kong. We understand that for certain individuals a donation is exempted from tax under Section 88 of Inland Revenue Ordinance.*

For further information on this please contact the Development Office at development@benenden.school

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 £2,000 will be named on our published roll of patrons.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

You can read our Centenary Campaign brochure and find more information on our webpage benenden.school/the-centenary-campaign

You can also contact the Development Office at 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.