

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a school uniform consisting of a white collared shirt and a dark blue cardigan with pink and white stripes on the collar, is wearing a white and orange VR headset. She is looking upwards and to the right with a joyful expression. The background is a classroom wall decorated with colorful circular posters and educational materials.

GDST

GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

GDST Annual Review

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 2021

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Juliet Humphries

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

The 2020-2021 academic year was one that included great challenges and disruption for schools and those involved in education.

The commitment shown by every single member of staff who supported families and communities through incredibly difficult times is commendable and the strength of our community shone through.

Our teachers worked tirelessly to ensure our girls continued to receive an outstanding education. This effort also included every member of staff – from caretakers and cleaning staff who also went above and beyond to ensure safe spaces for our girls; to IT teams who helped transform education online; to all our admin and support staff who adapted endlessly to changing circumstances and did everything they could to keep schools running in challenging times.

The 2020-2021 academic year continued to be financially challenging for the GDST and these conditions have continued into 2021-2022. The impact of the pandemic in 2020-2021 resulted in lower revenues, offset by cost savings and, overall, operating results were stable compared to 2019-2020. I am proud of how we were able to support families who faced hardship through this period to ensure girls' education was not disrupted.

In 2019, the employer's contribution to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) increased by 43%, adding significantly to the financial challenges facing the GDST. The scale of this increase meant the GDST Trustees and Executive were forced to consider the viability of remaining in the TPS, within the wider context of the GDST's long term financial sustainability, whilst staying true to our charitable purpose of reaching as many girls as possible.

Our deep commitment to the future of girls' education means that we faced disruption with compassion, determination and resilience, with an eye on the future, educating the girls in our schools to take their place in the world and contribute to making it a better place for us all.



Cheryl Giovannoni

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

2020-2021 was a year like no other, marked by incredible twists, turns and challenges for everyone at the GDST and across the world of education.

Every single person at the GDST has risen to the occasion, going above and beyond the call of duty, to ensure that they did everything humanly possible to support the girls and their families through these difficult times.

At the GDST, we are relentlessly driven by our mission to help girls learn without limits. During 2020-2021, we proved more than ever that we are unstoppable in our mission. Schools were buffeted by an ever-changing landscape, welcoming students back to classrooms with new restrictions, and then being forced to return to Guided Home Learning at short notice for all but vulnerable children and those of key workers during national lockdowns.

I am especially proud of how the GDST family – girls, parents, staff, alumnae – did all they could to support each other and lift spirits, whether that was through virtual events for our parents, for alumnae or by providing new learning opportunities and support networks for girls in our schools. Our forward-thinking approach ensured that, throughout the pandemic, we were able to adapt swiftly to new circumstances. The GDST family remained connected and our students stayed on track academically, along with a much-needed emphasis on mental and social wellbeing, during the long months of isolation that everyone faced.

This year has also proven to be a very significant one for women and girls everywhere. Whether at home in the UK or around the world, we were constantly presented with shocking reminders of women's inequality,

where women are still not safe to walk alone on the street at night. For schools, the 'Everyone's Invited' campaign brought a groundswell of horrifying testimonies, with young girls speaking out about the harassment and abuse they experience on a regular basis. These events had a real impact on GDST girls. As ever, we encourage the girls in our schools to speak up and speak out against any form of discrimination or abuse, providing a platform for open and honest dialogue, and our staff work hard to support them. I remain inspired by the young people in our schools who are determined to take action, speak out and help make the world a better place. This is at the very heart of a GDST education.

As we approach our 150th anniversary, our mission to help girls learn without limits and the pioneering principles on which we were founded have never been stronger or more important. The pandemic certainly brought many challenges, but also an opportunity for us to focus on what really matters in educating the pupils in our schools as we prepare them for a future that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, but enormously exciting and full of opportunity.



Jane Prescott

HEADS' REPRESENTATIVE
HEADMISTRESS, PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

During this difficult year Heads across the GDST have collaborated on projects to enable as many girls as possible to access the very latest advice, teaching and information.

Being part of the GDST has enabled Heads to access help and information that is only available from being part of a large, forward-thinking organisation.

From being kept up-to-date with the latest information on public examinations, to changes to employment regulations to enable our staff and pupils to be well-supported, there has always been professional help and advice on hand whatever the challenge.

Our pupils were amazing and showed such resilience in difficult circumstances. They buckled down and worked for their tests and examinations to enable staff to see the very best of their ability. Pupils took their online lessons seriously and when back in school were mindful of restrictions and complied with changes to their routines.

Throughout all the changes and challenges, Heads met more regularly than ever before, albeit online. There was always someone who had already found the solution to a problem and we became a much stronger family as a result of our regular contact.

Jane Prescott



About us

Founded in 1872 by four pioneering and fearless women, the GDST is a family of 23 independent schools and two academies located across the UK.

Our schools represent the very highest standards in teaching and pastoral care. We foster academic excellence but also build character, helping girls to be confident, resilient and fearless. Ultimately, we strive to help girls learn without limits, so they can go on to lead lives without limits.

We are uniquely placed to ensure girls make the most of opportunities today and in the future, by providing a first-class education that combines an enriched curriculum with excellent pastoral care in outstanding learning environments where they can thrive.

The GDST is a charitable company which owns and operates our 23 independent schools and employs the staff at these schools and Trust Office (where our central services are located).

The Council of the Trust, comprising 12 Trustees, sets the strategic direction, and has overall responsibility for the GDST: ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils, safeguarding its financial viability and control, and fulfilling employers' duties for GDST staff. Council oversees educational policy, approves budgets and fees, and authorises building and capital development programmes.

The day-to-day management of the Trust is delegated to the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team. They are in regular contact with the schools and academies; the heads of our schools report to the Trustees via the Chief Executive.

The GDST Academy Trust is responsible for oversight of our two Academies, while GDST (Enterprises) Limited, a GDST subsidiary, oversees

the trading activities associated with our 23 independent schools. Our strategic aims and organisational values are:

- Delivering an irresistible education
- Building an innovative and inclusive culture
- Reaching as many girls as possible
- Connecting and empowering the GDST family

The organisational foundations that underpin these strategic areas include fit-for-purpose technology, the creation and maintenance of inspiring learning environments, robust financial management and effective governance.

Organisational values:
Girls First, Forward-thinking,
Fearless, Family

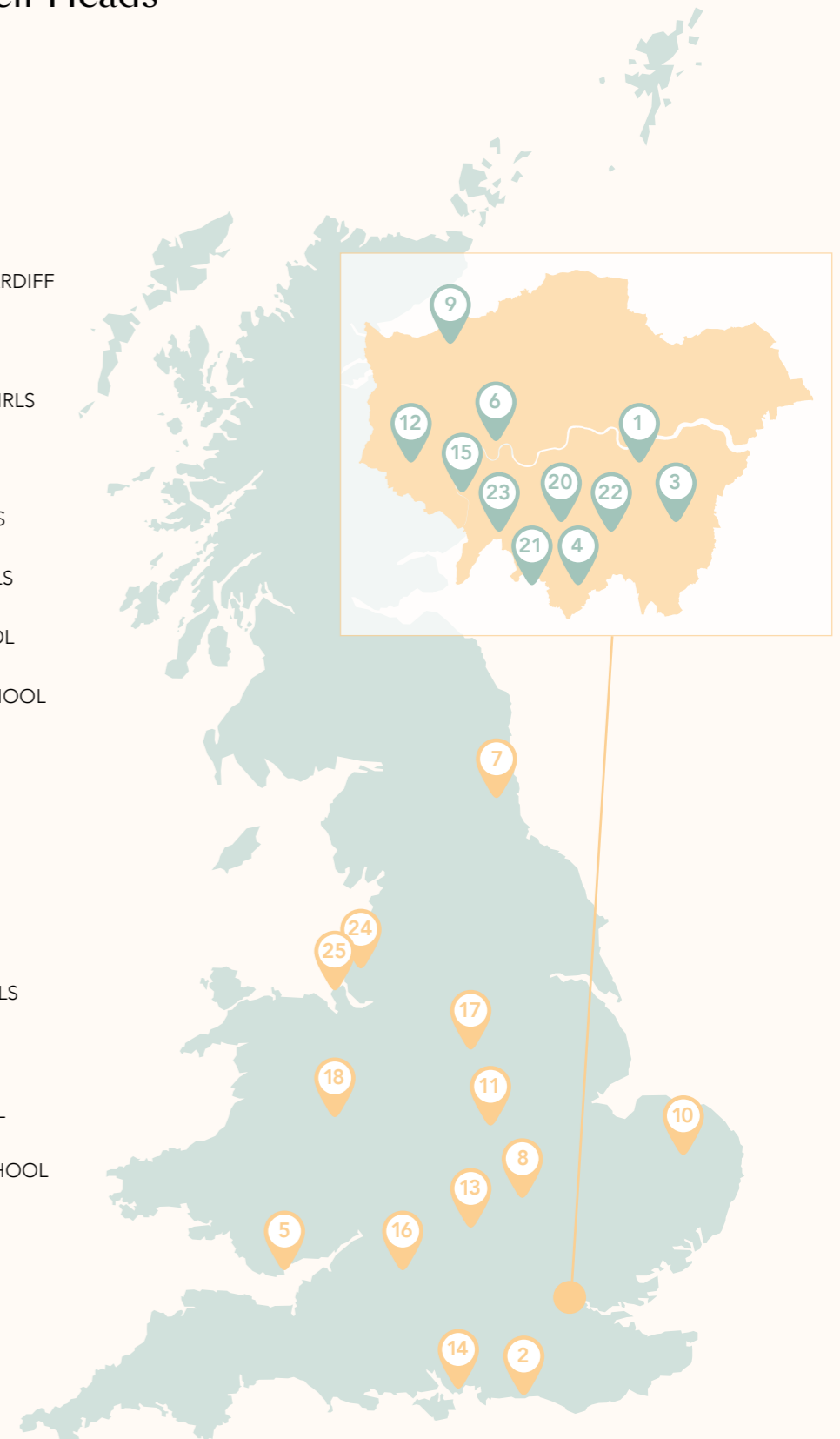
GDST schools and their Heads

- 1 BLACKHEATH HIGH SCHOOL
Carol Chandler-Thompson
- 2 BRIGHTON GIRLS
Rosie McColl
- 3 BROMLEY HIGH SCHOOL
Angela Drew
- 4 CROYDON HIGH SCHOOL
Emma Pattison
- 5 HOWELL'S SCHOOL, LLANDAFF, CARDIFF
Sally Davis
- 6 KENSINGTON PREP SCHOOL
Caroline Hulme-McKibbin
- 7 NEWCASTLE HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
Michael Tippet
- 8 NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL
Adèle O'Doherty (Acting)
- 9 NORTHWOOD COLLEGE FOR GIRLS
Rebecca Brown
- 10 NORWICH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
Alison Sefton
- 11 NOTTINGHAM GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL
Julie Keller
- 12 NOTTING HILL & EALING HIGH SCHOOL
Matthew Shoults
- 13 OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL
Marina Gardiner Legge
- 14 PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
Jane Prescott
- 15 PUTNEY HIGH SCHOOL
Suzie Longstaff
- 16 ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL BATH
Kate Reynolds
- 17 SHEFFIELD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
Nina Gunson
- 18 SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL
Jo Sharrock
- 19 SOUTH HAMPSTEAD HIGH SCHOOL
Vicky Bingham
- 20 STREATHAM & CLAPHAM HIGH SCHOOL
Dr Millan Sachania
- 21 SUTTON HIGH SCHOOL
Beth Dawson
- 22 SYDENHAM HIGH SCHOOL
Katharine Woodcock
- 23 WIMBLEDON HIGH SCHOOL
Fionnuala Kennedy

GDST Academy Trust schools & their Principals

- 24 THE BELVEDERE ACADEMY, LIVERPOOL
Julie Taylor
- 25 BIRKENHEAD HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMY
Rebecca Mahony

(as at December 2021)



The GDST

25 schools, one family
23 independent schools
2 academies

 **19,000** students

 **4,000** talented staff

Irresistible education

Pages 16 to 29

At GCSE

46% of students received Grade 9

At A Level, across the GDST

82% of our students received A* and A grades

Over

85% at Grades 7 to 9

95% received A*-B grades

Innovative and inclusive culture

Pages 30 to 39

Launched the GDST Undivided Charter for Action

GDST Learn (Professional Development Programme)

340 sessions ran as part of a total **209** programmes, courses and conferences over the academic year

The reach of the programme has expanded, with over **5,270** attendances from **1,632** individual staff

An increase of **60%** and **13%** respectively on the previous 2019/20 academic year

Reaching as many girls as possible

Pages 40 to 49

£21 million

distributed in bursaries and scholarships – equivalent to **9%** of all GDST fee income

19%

of students in our fee paying schools received a bursary, scholarship or both

1,054

students received funding of **50%** or more

40%

of students who received financial support received a full bursary

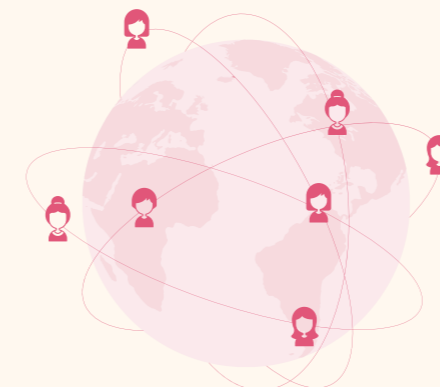
Connecting and empowering the GDST family

Pages 50 to 57

Alumnae network

75,000

members



GDST Talks

12,000+

attendees

4,800

sign-ups

12,000+

YouTube Views

A brave new world in education

When schools reopened in September 2020, they did so under entirely new conditions and operating practices.

The GDST Trust Office team worked with schools over the summer, undertaking detailed risk assessments and planning to ensure they were as safe as possible for students and staff to return to. The most significant change was the introduction of year group 'bubbles'. Movement through the school, classroom timetabling and additional cleaning rotas were carefully planned to ensure year groups were kept separate.

With the national situation constantly evolving and under review, this meant shifting parameters for the delivery of education throughout the academic year. When individual students, or whole class bubbles needed to isolate, teachers provided a combination of in-school and online teaching, with students in isolation often joining in-school lessons virtually.

The whole of the GDST and school leadership teams worked tirelessly to ensure parents, students and staff were familiar and comfortable with this new school regime. Regular communications from schools to parents about changing measures reiterated the importance of embedding new practices and procedures into everyday life to ensure that school communities worked together to keep each other safe.

An added significant disruption for students and responsibility for teaching staff was the cancellation of GCSE and A Level exams and the move to Teacher Assessed Grades. This demanded extra efforts from staff in what was already a turbulent year, with the GDST providing round-the-clock guidance and support to schools. Dr Kevin Stannard, the GDST's Director of Innovation & Learning, became a leading voice as the situation unfolded, providing thought leadership on the potential re-shaping of exams to make them fit for future purpose.

September 2020



- Students return to the classroom and schools come back together for the first time since March 2020.
- Schools return to a new world. Thorough risk assessments and updated practices included management of year group 'bubbles', management of spaces, cleaning and distancing within schools
- With positive cases, sometimes individual students, whole classes or whole year groups needed to isolate. This meant schools and teachers managing 'hybrid' teaching – teaching lessons with some students online at home and some in school

November 2020



- National lockdown; schools remain open with teachers and school staff
- GDST launches GDST Talks podcast to support families through the pandemic and how to support their children through a range of issues

December 2020



- Over the Christmas break, Heads and schools prepare to test students for coronavirus in school, when term starts again in January
- Six GDST schools participated in the 'Feeding Communities at Christmas' initiative, in partnership with Thomas Franks. Schools prepared 12,000 meals in two days for disadvantaged and vulnerable children across London and Oxfordshire

October 2020



- GDST family finalised the GDST Undivided Charter for Action
- GDST Tea Party – online event to bring alumnae together online during the pandemic

January 2021



- National lockdown announced, including closure of schools to all students except vulnerable children and those of key workers. Overnight, schools return to Guided Home Learning
- Announced that GCSE and A Level exams would not go ahead in 2021
- GDST 'Adventures in Bookland' launched
- Launch of GDST Empowerment Mentoring

February 2021



- GDST encourages the entire GDST community to come together in lockdown with 'GDST gets active'
- All GDST staff take part in unconscious bias training, as part of GDST Undivided commitments

March 2021



- Students return to school

April 2021



- Beginning of summer term

May 2021



- GDST 'Limitless Learning' relaunched for Year 11 and Year 13 students

July 2021



- End of Summer Term

August 2021



- GCSE and A Level results announced
- Results determined by teacher assessed grades

An irresistible education

A GDST education is designed for girls, based on well evidenced research to support how they learn best and in environments in which they are able to thrive. Our unfaltering aim is to provide pupils with the best possible education, driven by academic excellence, but one that is so much more besides.

Our focus this year has been to maintain this inspiring and holistic education to the highest standards in fast changing circumstances. Unprecedented collaboration from everyone across the GDST and our schools – from teachers to our IT services team, to health and safety leaders and school caretakers – has made this possible.





Pioneering a legacy of innovation

This academic year saw a combination of periods of school closure to all but vulnerable children and children of key workers during national lockdown and schools being open, but with additional government guidance in place.

When schools were open, students isolating received their lessons online. The combined teaching requirement brought very different – and often even greater – challenges of providing quality education than during the previous academic year.

In response, our Guided Home Learning initiative – pioneered in response to the first national lockdown – was developed further. Delivered between January and March 2021, our holistic and innovative approach meant GDST girls found that their educational experience remained engaging, exciting, varied and uplifting, and that outstanding teaching and learning continued at the GDST as standard. Live lessons were delivered by our expert teachers and taught in line with students’ existing timetables. This provided continuity, consistency, structure and routine – key pillars of sound mental health and wellbeing for young people at a time of significant unpredictability. GDST and school IT teams provided constant support and training to students and parents on programmes and systems to make sure there was no interruption of learning.

We worked hard to ensure that the very special opportunities that make the GDST unique were not lost, but transformed online. For our Junior and Prep School pupils, this included Year 1 and Year 2 pupils across all our schools coming together virtually to eco-code as part of the Junior Techathon. Our partnerships with iconic institutions were also developed to offer unforgettable virtual learning experiences for more pupils than ever. Pupils in Years 3 to Year 6 took part in live science experiments, courtesy of the Royal Institution, and girls of all Junior and Prep school years took part in live Shakespeare workshops delivered from the Globe Theatre. These initiatives were hugely popular – broadening horizons when the world felt small, at home in lockdown. Delivering them online meant we could give access to any event to hundreds of pupils, with some events, including the Junior Techathon reaching over 1,000 pupils.

For our Senior School and Sixth Form students, we advanced our interactive and self-paced ‘GDST Limitless

Learning’ initiatives, where students carried out research, shared ideas and debated in real-time with their peers from other GDST schools. We also adapted our ‘GDST CareerStart Programme’ for Guided Home Learning, to encourage Sixth Formers across the GDST to learn together on topics such as university preparation and work-ready skills, including financial management, presentation skills and networking. This included a virtual edition of ‘GDST Enterprise’, with student teams being mentored by GDST Alumnae and competing with each other to set up a social enterprise. The added challenge of doing this in lockdown, via Guided Home Learning, made students even more creative and enterprising in the way they approached these opportunities.

Throughout, we were mindful of managing students’ ‘screen time’ and wherever possible, sought to blend online and offline approaches. This year, we adapted the rich extra-curricular offering, so critical to a well-rounded education and wellbeing, including sports, music, art and drama.



Adventures in Bookland

In January 2021, as part of our Guided Home Learning programme, we launched Adventures in Bookland, a series of online on demand content to celebrate the magic of stories, creativity and make-believe for pupils from Reception to Year 6 across GDST schools.

We were joined by a wonderful storyteller who relayed stories from a range of authors including Ross Welford, Clara Vulliamy, Fleur Hitchcock and Penny Chrimes. Pupils across our family of schools had opportunities to broaden their knowledge of children’s literature, to appreciate the art of storytelling and to be inspired and restored by the power of stories during difficult times.

Adventures in Bookland also had a strong pastoral element, and included books that covered loss, worry, and overcoming fears, such as Black Dog, and Lila and the Secret of Rain, encouraging younger students to share their worries and reminding them that talking about how they feel in these uncertain times is not only normal but healthy too.



Katharine Woodcock
HEADMISTRESS, SYDENHAM HIGH SCHOOL

A hybrid approach: keeping students active in lockdown

“At GDST schools nothing should hold a girl back and despite all the challenges thrown their way, Directors of Sport pulled out all the stops to keep our pupils active. They embraced imaginative, forward-thinking and innovative ways of delivering PE, both within and beyond the curriculum. A glance at PE social media channels revealed exciting ways of keeping

pupils active, with Directors of Sport collaborating across the GDST family and sharing excellent practice and ideas. Whilst our usual schedule of local fixtures, GDST rallies, our Pineapple Studios Day of Dance and Select Team training, amongst other things, could not take place, PE departments kept sport alive in our schools. Training in year group bubbles took place when schools were physically open and when closed, departments became creative online. In the spring term the ‘GDST Gets Active’ campaign saw schools clock up thousands of kilometres, be that walking, running, skateboarding or cycling, with Croydon High School being crowned champions. Dance went online, proving that once again Covid was not going to stop us keeping fit, mentally and physically, and our ‘GDST Lockdown Dance Competition’ was a huge success.

“Directors of Sport and their departments worked tirelessly and in extraordinarily challenging conditions, with constant sanitisation

of equipment, restricted use of facilities and of course complex risk assessments, culminating in an impressive number of Sports Days taking place in the summer term. Teamwork is so important in sport and so it was wonderful to share lessons learnt and future aspirations at our online Sports Matters Conference in June.

“With a new dawn of possibilities ahead of us, we are embracing the opportunities we now have to get back to a “new normal” in our sporting endeavours. Our future rallies schedule is packed with new additions. Cricket is now firmly rooted in our programme of activities and football is making its presence known and is certainly a sport that is poised for further development.

“At GDST schools the notion of “sport for all” is paramount, whilst the GDST Select Team Programme focuses on supporting our elite athletes. We know that women’s sport is finally starting to get the recognition it should.”



Caroline Hulme-McKibbin
HEAD, KENSINGTON PREP SCHOOL

Support and inspiration through challenges

“Lockdown presented all schools with unprecedented challenges that no one could have predicted or been prepared for. Kensington Prep was fortunate, having already had an embedded online learning platform that parents and girls were used to regularly using, so the instant change to Guided Home Learning was introduced quickly. But the ramifications of lockdown were immense and wide-reaching. Staff at the GDST were invaluable in supporting the Head, Senior Leadership Team and wider teaching

body with advice and fora to enable the sharing of experience across the family of schools. Legal, HR, Estates and Finance advice was exceptional, and the Trust’s expertise was vital to help everyone unpick the never-ending stream of government regulations and updates – often requiring to be implemented with little or no notice. The new content for Guided Home Learning created by Trust was inspiring, added wider experiences for the girls and was warmly appreciated.”



Marina Gardiner Legge
HEADMISTRESS, OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL

A seamless switch to online

“Despite all the rigours of Covid, the speedy switch to online learning and dealing with the worry around a world pandemic, we were very well supported by the expertise and guidance of the Trust. It was clear that live lessons were the way forward and, enabled by the Trust, we were able to switch at short notice and received really positive feedback from parents and students as to the quality of our online learning. The school is grateful to Trust Health & Safety for the regular risk assessments received each time there was a revision or movement on the ‘road map’ out of the pandemic, as well as frequent updates on Health & Safety matters. This empowered all

our school staff to focus on the welfare and education of the community. The reduction in fees offered to parents was very greatly appreciated, as was the establishment of a Hardship Fund for parents who were really struggling. GDST Life enabled Sixth Form students to connect, network and collaborate across the Trust, and the GDST Rungway mentoring app was a great asset especially when visits to universities were prohibited. The clear and inspirational leadership from the Trust Senior Management Team and Council was enormously valuable in guiding our whole school community through rocky and treacherous waters. We are very grateful.”



Kate Reynolds
HEAD, ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL BATH

A view from a Boarding School

“As an established bring your own device (BYOD) school with a strong record of staff tech training, Royal High School Bath shifted seamlessly from lessons to Guided Home Learning when lockdown was announced. Parents, many with children in other local schools, were hugely appreciative of the swiftness of our response which meant no learning days were lost due to Covid. In the Prep School where pupils needed physical resources, the indomitable Head of Prep drove from door to door dropping off work to families otherwise unable to visit us to collect packs. The ever-changing Covid landscape was particularly

challenging for our 120 boarders from 17 different countries. Boarding staff ensured we were compliant with the BSA Covid Charter – a reassuring benchmark for families weighing up the risks of travel for their daughters. Boarding staff mastered the differing tests and travel restrictions imposed by the government’s ‘traffic light system’, working closely with parents to provide guidance and to ensure not a single positive PCR test was recorded in the boarding houses during the 2020-2021 academic year. This was critical to parental confidence and contributed to 98% return of boarders in September 2021.”



Igniting ‘Limitless Learning’

One GDST innovation born from the pandemic that has had a significant impact is our ‘Limitless Learning’, real-world education programme for Year 11 and Year 13 students.

The brainchild of Emma Pattison, Headmistress of Croydon High School, Limitless Learning was introduced in response to the news that exams would be cancelled in 2020. The GDST network was mobilised to create a groundbreaking programme of ‘real-world ready’ courses, from mobile journalism, to cooking at university and financial management. It also included ‘bridging seminars’ to allow students to delve further into their A Level subjects or university courses, as well as subject courses reflecting teachers’ passions, with students able to expand their knowledge of well-loved subjects or discover a new passion.

We had already committed to continuing the programme in 2020-2021, and the cancellation of

exams for a second time made this even more important. Our refined programme included expanded workshops, greater breadth of subject areas and even more collaboration between schools. This expansion included keynote sessions on a range of topics from inspiring speakers, including on ‘Mental Toughness’ from Rally Champion Penny Mallory. We also ran ‘City Socials’, a chance to meet students from across GDST schools who were planning to attend the same university.

The success of Limitless Learning has underlined even more the power of the collective as a key differentiator of a network like the GDST. The next phase of development is underway and will see an expanded programme of Limitless Learning for all ages.



The potential of online collaboration

Emma Pattison
HEADMISTRESS, CROYDON HIGH SCHOOL

“2020-21 saw not only a reiteration of programmes like the ‘University Bridging Seminar Programme’ and the ‘City and Subject University Socials’, but also the development of an Academic Book Club, forums focusing on different jobs within a career area, sessions targeting A* grades at A Level, a day-conference for gifted and talented students in Years 10 and 11 and Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) sessions for Year 10 pupils.

“Both individually and collectively, this year’s initiatives celebrated the power of the GDST network and showcased the potential of collaborative online projects across the Trust with pupils reporting very favourably on their involvement.”



Rosie McColl
HEAD, BRIGHTON GIRLS

Inspiring risk-taking and confidence

“We became the first school in the country to offer a Skateboard Scholarship and we now have over 50 girls taking part in beginner sessions. The sport is inclusive, it’s of-the-moment, it’s brilliant for encouraging risk-taking and for instilling confidence in girls, and – importantly for us – it’s a very popular activity in our local community, used by local groups not only to bring people together but to boost their mental health and self-esteem. In school, we are seeing amazing results. Through such initiatives, we aim to redefine what a modern girls’ education looks and feels like; we want to challenge

stereotypes and champion the individual, and to do so in a way that supports our city.

We call it ‘learning without limits, Brighton-style’ or, as I like to put it, we are riding the zeitgeist (on a skateboard)!”





Alison Sefton
HEAD, NORWICH HIGH SCHOOL
FOR GIRLS

Commitment to pastoral care

“At the GDST, academic excellence goes hand-in-hand with outstanding pastoral care. Students’ wellbeing is prioritised in our approach and front and centre of everything schools across the GDST do. This includes our partnership with the Positive Programme, which we have been running since 2016.

“We hear a lot about the unprecedented times that we are living in as we all juggle the changes to routine forced on us by a global pandemic. A global pandemic that has spanned over 18 months and is set to be with us for even longer, is half a lifetime for our youngest girls in the Nursery.

“The GDST leads the way in many pioneering initiatives and approaches, including our partnership with the Positive Programme, which has been in place for teachers and students across our schools since 2016. At Norwich High School for Girls, we aim to provide an environment where girls can become confident, aspirational and have the resilience to reach their goals. All of those attributes are supported by a conscious teaching of what it means to have good mental health and a knowledge of where to go and who can support you when things are more challenging. No matter how much support teachers and other staff offer or provide for girls, some will never reach out or chat with us. Research proves students will most often turn to a friend or older peer to seek support. For a number of years, we have run a Big Sister peer mentoring programme which is led and managed by a group of Sixth Formers. We also have a team of trained Headucate Mental Health ambassadors in the Sixth Form and a Wellbeing Captain. This provides a strong team of Sixth Formers who know the current challenges facing younger students and understand their needs from recent experiences. All of this is backed up by a dedicated

pastoral team of School Nurse, School Counsellor, Form Tutors and Heads of Year.

“Adaptability is key and during the pandemic our wellbeing provision moved online. Big Sisters were able to arrange video calls with younger students while we were in the period of Guided Home Learning and all students continued to be able to tap into the support of the pastoral team remotely. It gave me real pleasure, as a Head, when I walked round school after the lockdown and would see younger students still engaging in their Big Sister meetings via their iPads. As the bubbles are burst and there is more mixing in school, I know that girls are delighted to meet their Big Sisters in person but I am also comforted to know that, should the need arise, both the mentor and mentee know how to adapt.

“Every member of the Norwich High School for Girls community is committed to the wellbeing of our students and of each other. With the students actively involved in peer support, the staff didn’t want to be left out so there is a WhatsApp Norwich High Cheer group, a Facebook Walking group as well as staff Mental Health ambassadors.”



Academic Excellence

We are proud of the outstanding academic education provided by each one of our schools, with so many girls achieving outstanding exam results and going on to study at leading universities in any given year. This year, however, was very different. Exams did not take place for students and GCSEs and A Levels were awarded by Teacher Assessed Grades. Our results were a very positive endorsement of our successful Guided Home Learning offer.

At A Level, across the GDST

82% of our students received A* and A grades | **95%** received A*-B grades

At GCSE

46% of students received Grade 9 | Almost **70%** Grade 8 to 9 | Over **85%** at Grades 7 to 9

University destinations

Over **6%** of GDST A level students are going on to study at Oxbridge universities | **71%** to Russell Group universities



Matthew Shoults
HEADMASTER, NOTTING HILL
& EALING HIGH SCHOOL

Delivering an outstanding education

“In the last year, we have deepened progress in what is central to an excellent education and preparing girls for the future: deepening our academic strengths; fostering leadership and entrepreneurship in our students; encouraging confidence of voice; and ensuring girls have a strong sense of compassion.

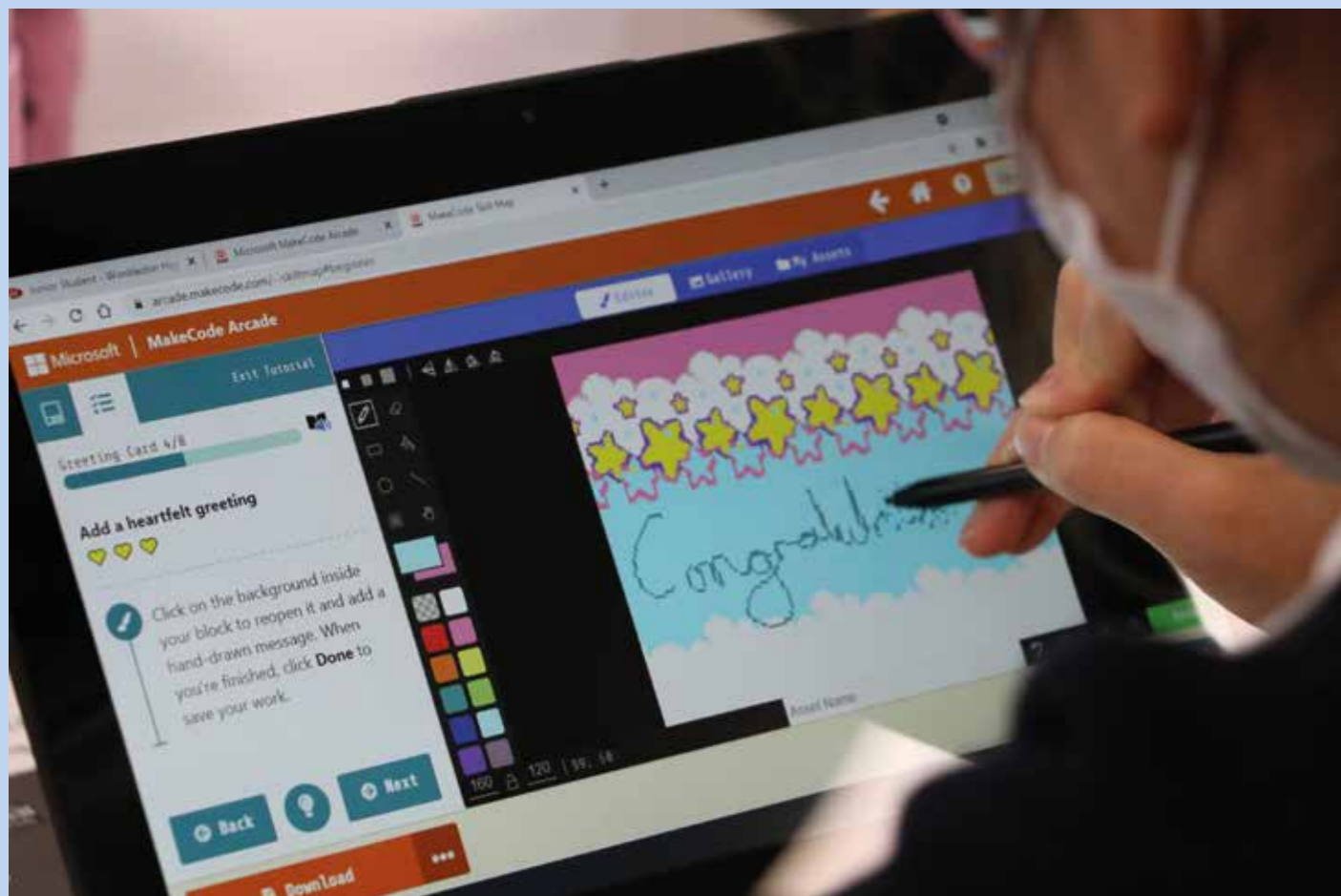
“These priorities will help our students to be ready for the world

they experience both now and when they leave for further study. Part of that readiness comes from an outward-facing perspective. In both partnership projects and lectures, we have been able this year to continue our work, and some relationships have actually accelerated, as use of technology blossomed: girls have connected with fellow students in state and independent schools, here and overseas. Our new enterprise projects have allowed girls across the Senior and Junior Schools to set up small companies and flex their commercial muscles, while the GDST Mini MBA, piloted and shaped this year at Notting Hill & Ealing High School, will allow Sixth Form students across the GDST to develop the skills of business leadership.

“Among the challenges of the past year, one of the pleasures has been seeing students adapting to circumstances and being enterprising, whether through leading clubs online, or helping out others through volunteering and fundraising ventures. The school has a strong commitment

to this ethos: that all students understand their capacity to make things happen and gain the skills and experience to do so. The individual and collective initiatives of girls have been impressive: one student even organised for all 1,000 employees of Ealing General Hospital to receive a hand-written letter of thanks for their hard work during the pandemic!

“In a post-Covid world, there has been much debate about how working patterns may change in the future. Certainly, our students developed their ability to connect remotely and learned new digital skills. At the same time, it has become clear that in the workplace and other settings, the ability to communicate and influence directly, and the related interpersonal skills, will be just as important as in the past. Our expansion of Chromebook devices for students from Year 5 upwards and digital skills training is essential to our students; but so are the public speaking programmes which are integrated across the school.”



Dr Kevin Stannard
DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION & LEARNING

“Even before the pandemic began, we were already ensuring that our girls are future-ready: equipping them with technological skills and knowledge; providing a device for every one of our pupils; supporting our IT teams and e-learning specialists to be experts in their fields; and developing opportunities for our pupils to come together and showcase their ideas through events like the Junior and Senior Techathons.

“An unexpected outcome of this incredibly difficult period is that we have been catapulted into a very different digital dimension. And we have shown that these technologies can foster the arts and sustain pastoral care as much as they facilitate academic learning. We are confident that the GDST’s Guided Home Learning will leave a legacy of innovation, collaboration and creativity that will enrich face-to-face teaching well after lockdown has (hopefully) become a distant memory.

“When we set up Guided Home Learning, it rapidly became clear that EdTech could be so much more than just a facilitator of live teaching and learning. It presented opportunities for collaborative teaching and learning between our schools. GDST teachers work across the family of 25 schools, pooling and sharing ideas, resources, pedagogy and expertise, thereby enriching and broadening their students’ virtual classroom experience and bringing the curriculum to life.”

Designing the future school

The GDST capital investment programme is focused on improving the teaching and learning environment in all our schools. We have a duty of care to ensure our pupils and staff are safe and working in places that are inspiring and healthy environments which support the delivery of excellent education.



Our first priority is to ensure our schools are compliant and well maintained. As such we are continuing with a major programme of maintenance projects across our schools to upgrade our facilities where needed. Further, we are constantly reviewing how we minimize the carbon footprint of our Estate, rolling out improvements to building fabric as well as heating and lighting systems, optimising our buildings to ensure they are fully utilised, and adapted for optimal usage wherever possible.

Investment in our Estate is focused on enhancing our schools, by providing innovative, collaborative technology-rich teaching spaces to underpin the 'future schools' programme. In parallel, we have also delivered a series of more major projects, supporting our schools to enable growth through the enhancement of their Estate, whilst at the same time continuing to address condition related issues. At all times, we focus new development on minimising our carbon footprint, and where we do build new, we target carbon zero.

Such projects have included improvements to the internal and external environments at our schools in Brighton and Shrewsbury to enable us to rationalise and create fully integrated schools on one site. At Bromley, an extension of the Junior School has improved teaching spaces and created the opportunity for further growth. A new Sixth Form centre was opened at Northwood College for Girls this summer, creating both open plan study spaces, social and collaborative zones, plus a new gym. In parallel, the new School of Science is set to open in August 2022, providing

girls with state-of-the-art science laboratories for use by pupils and other young people in the local community, as part of the school's partnership programme.

At Putney High School, development continues on the new music and science facilities, set for completion in the new academic year. This work integrates the school's research into the benefits of biophilic teaching spaces, which are designed to incorporate elements of the natural world, such as plants and views of trees.

A long anticipated programme of work at Wimbledon High continued throughout the year with the final phase due for completion in August 2022. This has included the creation of a new Sixth Form centre, Junior School hall and additional play space.

We are progressing plans for a development at Notting Hill & Ealing High School Junior School, subject to planning approval. In what is set to mark the beginning of an exciting new phase for the school, the building will also accommodate additional Sixth Form teaching spaces, as well as a new Junior School, designed to be a carbon zero building.



Angela Drew
HEADMISTRESS, BROMLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Building skills for the future

"We were grateful to the support of the GDST Estates Team in ensuring that the building of our beautiful light-filled extension to Bromley High Junior School maintained its momentum in spite of the impact on supply lines and the constraints of Covid-compliant working conditions.

"The formal opening of the building had to wait until September 2021 but, for many months now, the Junior girls have been revelling in the new spacious Reception classrooms, modern Science lab, Digital Learning Hub, Art and Design rooms, Dance and Drama studio, collaborative learning space, learning support room and, most popular of all, the beautiful new library leading out onto a tranquil learning courtyard.

"A bespoke curriculum, inspired by the OECD'S 'Skills for 2030', is designed to maximise the potential of these flexible modern learning spaces, so that Bromley High can continually adapt to a fast-changing world and provide the best possible preparation for its pupils to thrive in the 21st century workplace."





Environmental sustainability

Our commitment to environmental sustainability is rooted in our mission, to help girls learn without limits, so they can lead lives without limits.

This has never been more urgent than today. As future leaders, policy makers, change-makers and innovators, girls in GDST schools will in time use their education to shape the world in ways that will make a difference for us all.

But time is of the essence. We need to make environmental sustainability our collective responsibility right now if we are to solve the planet's biggest and most challenging issue before it is too late. Our teachers work tirelessly to provide this through the education of the girls in our schools every day, but also by how we behave as an organisation, if we are to ensure GDST thrives for many generations to come.

Our strategy is focused on minimising our carbon footprint, reducing our energy usage, our dependency on fossil fuels and implementing greener procurement practices, as we work towards our goal of net zero carbon by 2050.

In spring 2021, we launched an energy management tool that offers insight to the energy usage in our schools and the things we can do to involve students and staff in reducing our carbon footprint.

As part of the Estate strategy and the long-term maintenance programme, our existing buildings are continuously being upgraded and improved in terms of their energy efficiency. For example, works carried out this year at our historic Temple Building in Brighton, including improving windows and adding loft insulation, are expected to reduce carbon emissions by about 13% for the building.

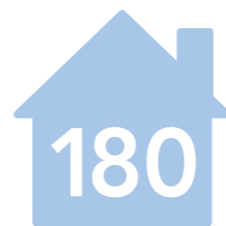
For our newly built spaces, we are embracing new technology to allow us to deliver low-carbon heat, moving away from reliance on fossil fuels to heat our spaces. For example, our new Junior School at Notting Hill & Ealing will be heated via Air Source Heat Pumps and underfloor heating. A combination of a super insulated fabric, airtight construction and natural cross-ventilation is expected to allow the building to achieve a minimum of 76% reduction in carbon emissions with an ambition to reach Net Zero.

Our 2020/2021 carbon footprint report showed that our decision to procure 100% renewable electricity from October 2020 has resulted in:

a reduction of
1,500
tonnes of carbon

↓
down
14%

the equivalent to 180
homes' energy use for
an entire year



We are striving to embed sustainability in everything we do and empower our staff, students and stakeholders to be part of the solution. For the academic year 2021-2022, our ambition is for all 25 of our schools to participate in eduCCate Global's Bronze Award scheme: the goal is to begin building strong foundations on climate change literacy, as well as creating a community of sustainability champions across our schools who will work together to implement solutions.

Recognised for excellence

We are proud that our schools are regularly recognised for excellence in delivering an outstanding academic education, innovation and pastoral care, amongst other areas of what makes an unrivalled education.

2020-2021 awards

Tes 2021:

Student initiative
of the year



Wellbeing initiative
of the year



Senior School
of the Year



Independent Schools of the Year 2020:

Independent Girls'
School of the Year



The Green Award for
Environmental Achievement



South Hampstead
High School
GDST

Whilst no external inspections were able to take place during the academic year due to Covid restrictions, the GDST carried out extensive audits of school safeguarding.

Building an innovative and inclusive culture

Our educational approach is underpinned and driven by a culture of innovation and inclusivity, the driving force that runs right through every aspect of the GDST and touches every aspect of school life.

This culture is evident every day across all our schools, from innovative approaches to teaching and new learning initiatives to the pioneering spirit of our students, who are encouraged to take the initiative and take risks. Across our schools, students use their voice to speak out on issues that matter to them and to take action in their communities.





UNDIVIDED

THE GDST IS COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY,
INCLUSION, AND REAL CHANGE

GDST Undivided: our commitment to diversity, inclusion and real change

In response to the murder of George Floyd and the outpouring of support from our pupils, staff, alumnae and parents, we launched GDST Undivided, a programme of action and commitment to diversity, inclusion and real change across our organisation and covering all aspects of our educational offer and operations. The programme cements our commitment to ensuring GDST schools provide inclusive environments in which the wellbeing of every young person comes first, and where every pupil – no matter what their background – can learn without limits.

The launch of our Undivided programme, which ensures the embedding of a culture of inclusion for all, and especially those who have any of the nine protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act, is supported across the GDST family.

The programme supports all key areas of the organisation including staff development, recruitment and retention; diversification of the curriculum and the pupil experience and support for our parent and alumnae community. This year has seen steady progress in the strategic development of our work. Significantly, we signed up to an Undivided Charter for Action, which was a collaborative effort across the GDST family, with input from students, parents, alumnae and staff. The finalised Charter for Action was presented to staff before the autumn half term and it will guide our efforts, ensuring that we set ourselves targets and hold ourselves to account, measuring our progress over time.

By February 2021, all GDST staff had taken part in mandatory unconscious bias training as a first step in raising awareness of the issues. This year has laid the foundations of this pioneering

programme for the future. Our ongoing commitments to Undivided and as champions of justice in all its manifestations will continue to be a golden thread that runs through our organisation's activities.

In our schools, we promote a diverse and inclusive culture, where students regularly take the lead, spearheading initiatives on issues that matter to them. Each of the 25 schools in the GDST came together with representatives from their Junior and Senior Schools for our first Undivided Student Council this year. This kick started collaborative work across the schools, where students shared their experiences, successes and challenges.

Across the network, important events across the calendar have been celebrated such as Black History Month, International Women's Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, LGBT+ Pride Month and religious festivals from many different faiths and beliefs.

In addition, the curriculum audit is underway across all schools in order to ascertain where we can broaden our curriculum to include wider representation and understanding of all protected characteristics and different points of view.



Claire Bale

MARKETING DIRECTOR, NOTTINGHAM
GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL AND TRUST
CONSULTANT FOR DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION

"Diversity and inclusion is key to the success of any organisation. Especially one that, like ours, is focused on supporting individuals to be the very best version of themselves, to have the qualifications, skills and, most importantly, self-belief to make a difference in the world.

"It is an area that has always been important to our schools, and more recently, has been given greater focus, with the support of the Undivided Steering Group. The Undivided Charter for Action sets out our commitment to support all individuals across the GDST family, especially those who have any of the nine protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act. The Steering Group has helped to provide training, collaborative activities, resources and a safe space for everyone to learn together. Our future vision is to enable the GDST to be at the forefront of inclusive and equitable organisations, and to develop a culture in which every single person feels a sense of belonging."



Carol Chandler-Thompson
HEAD, BLACKHEATH HIGH SCHOOL

Standing Undivided

“Undivided is testament to the strength of the GDST family. Students, parents, alumnae and staff came together, determined to do all we can to make real and meaningful change. The Undivided Charter for Action was a true collaboration of members across our GDST family and is now alive in our schools as both a source of inspiration and to hold us account.

“Schools across the GDST continue to work closely together to ensure that we are doing all we can to drive this commitment forward. This determination to do all we can to drive equality and make the world a better place reflects the beliefs of our pioneering founders and also the special GDST spirit that I see every day in school.

“The social conscience demonstrated by students and staff at Blackheath High School who take the initiative to speak-up for each other and speak out on issues that matter to them, never ceases to impress me.”

Examples of action in schools include:

- In December 2020, Sutton High School became the first school in the UK to adopt the Halo Code, a Black hair code that aims to end hair discrimination in schools and workplaces. Blackheath High School, Norwich High School for Girls, Nottingham Girls’ High School, South Hampstead High School and Sydenham High School have also signed-up to the Halo Code this year.
- Nottingham Girls’ High School introduced a “Diverse Narratives” section in their library to ensure diverse authors are celebrated and showcased, and to ensure that students of all different characteristics are represented.
- Northwood College students ran a ‘Taboo Week’, with student-led discussion sessions on topics, such as, being an LGBTQIA+ ally. They also ran a Neurodiversity Week, in which students with experience of neurodiversity led sessions on dyslexia and autism.
- At Howell’s, students created an ‘Inclusion Wall’ in a central part of the school, populated with posters, lightbulb moment statements and artwork to express their views. The school now has a permanent Student Board for wider Undivided issues. Their Equality Prefect Team will use this space to share further student news as the year progresses.
- Portsmouth High School, like many other GDST schools, established an inclusion and diversity group, made up of pupils, parents, alumna and staff. It meets half-termly to discuss ideas and initiatives related to inclusion and diversity.



GDST Undivided Charter for Action

The GDST is Undivided.

Undivided in our commitment to putting our pupils first.
Undivided in our fearlessness. Undivided in our sense of family,
where every individual is valued, respected, and included.

In our mission to continually grow and improve,
we set out the following Charter for Action.

We recognise the work that has been done to date and we acknowledge
the steps that need to be taken to further improve the experience
of everyone in our community.

These are our commitments:

1. A culture of inclusion

- The GDST will continue to embed a culture of inclusion. A family of schools where everyone feels that they belong and where every person is valued and supported. This will encompass what and how we teach, the role models we elevate, the voices we amplify, and the cultures and faiths we celebrate.

2. Pupils – education and the school experience

- The GDST will support schools to create opportunities for pupils to share feedback, discuss ideas and contribute to their whole-school diversity and inclusion strategies, as well as that of the GDST.
- Every school will provide a representative to a new GDST Student Diversity Council which will feed into organisation-wide action plans for increased diversity and inclusion.
- The GDST will ensure that school policies are clear, visible, and inclusive of every pupil.
- The GDST will regularly survey our pupils so that their experiences can be channelled to make measurable improvements.

3. Schools

- The GDST will support each of its 25 schools to work with their school governors and other stakeholders in developing their own pledges on diversity and inclusion; the GDST will assess progress annually.
- The GDST will expect senior school leaders to engage with families regularly, to ensure everyone feels listened to and represented.
- The GDST will expect schools to share resources to help their wider school community to educate themselves on issues of diversity and inclusion.

- The GDST will encourage schools to share resources and work collaboratively with local schools in activities and subjects that support a diverse and inclusive education, as part of ongoing outreach work.

4. Staff, Trustees and governors – representation, recruitment, training, and progression

- The GDST will regularly review its recruitment policies and practices, and ensure those engaged in recruitment are equipped to draw candidates from as wide and varied a pool as possible.
- The GDST will provide a robust programme of training for all staff on issues of bias, beliefs, and behaviours.
- The GDST will further enhance our continuing professional development programme to support the career progression of all staff.
- The GDST will commit to appointing candidates to leadership and governance positions that better reflect the diversity of our students and of society.

5. Alumnae – empowering our girls and alumnae through the power of our network

- The GDST will share progress against our Charter for Action with our alumnae and seek their input into our Undivided programme, to learn from their lived experiences and harness their expertise.
- The GDST will engage with our alumnae to provide inspirational role models for the younger generation through talks, interviews, and mentoring, sharing their stories and celebrating their journeys, especially those from under – represented groups.

We will set meaningful and challenging targets for our work in all these areas, and share progress with the GDST community regularly.



Beth Dawson
HEAD, SUTTON HIGH SCHOOL

Embedding inclusivity

“As our school has grown in size, it has also been a time of growth for our pupils, who have deepened their understanding of the importance of inclusivity. We are proud to be the first school in the UK to adopt the Halo Code and our new Diversity and Inclusion area, The Space, will provide a safe space for pupils to discuss, debate and innovate in this incredibly important area, alongside the introduction of our identity course for Year 7 (CHIMe – Confident, Happy, Individual, Me).”

“With the challenges of the pandemic, our sense of community has also grown stronger, through courage, truth and joy, and we are grateful to have been able to provide exceptional opportunities for Guided Home Learning, such as our ‘Take Five to Thrive’ wellbeing project. Our new sports curriculum, introduced in September 2020, also enables growth in physical strength, resilience and mental stamina, with a focus on fitness for life, finding a healthy habit and trying a range of sports.”



Suzie Longstaff
HEAD, PUTNEY HIGH SCHOOL

Challenging our school community to think differently

“In a year where we have so much enjoyed being back together as a community, our students have played a key role in developing the culture of the school with wellbeing, inclusiveness and intellectual agility firmly at the heart of everything we have achieved. Girls know they are valued and their views respected.”

“Students and staff have been challenged to think differently, keen to share their ideas, to listen and learn from one another, whether in

Putney’s many active debating groups or through critical thinking in the classroom.

“We have not shied away from difficult discussions, learning that society’s ills are not “someone else’s” to solve. The It Starts with Me programme has offered a proactive approach to helping our young people gain a more confident understanding of the diverse society in which they’re growing up in; replacing complacency with a sense of shared responsibility.”



Dr Millan Sachania
HEAD MASTER, STREATHAM & CLAPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Students taking action

“I was delighted that earlier this year Streatham & Clapham High School won the Times Educational Supplement Independent School of the Year Award in the Student Initiative category.

“The initiative concerned was that of an Upper Sixth student, Joely, whose project neatly exemplified the brilliance of our students and how they thrive in our school culture.

“A year ago, Joely went far beyond just identifying a problem; rather she took decisive action to make a difference. Joely’s passion for mathematics impelled her to act proactively to

address the gender gap in terms of the number of young women undertaking Maths-related careers. Thus, she independently brokered partnerships with multinational companies, such as Zurich Insurance, to create an award-winning website, Pioneer, in order to address this issue. Her Pioneer project, a not-for-profit enterprise, has put on summer schools, built a team of 14 outreach officers, and has already reached over 21,000 young women.

“So what does this story represent? It is a story about a brilliant student, of course, of whom the school is so proud. But it is also a story about much more. It’s a story which proclaims Streatham & Clapham High School’s core value, which is promoting, celebrating and engineering diversity.

“Diversity and inclusion are very powerful and much-cited words these days. We think a lot about the concept of diversity at Streatham & Clapham, and have done so for years. The diversity of our girls’ backgrounds, reflecting London 21st-century society, is of course a really striking feature of the school. Indeed, it is a feature that drew me to the school

in the first place, back in 2012. But it goes beyond the girls’ backgrounds. Rather, it is about generating diversity of thought, diversity of spirit, diversity of outcomes, all the while harnessing the power of diversity of culture, creed and background.

“Why is this important? Well, of course it is about celebrating difference; nurturing a harmonious, empathetic mindset that is respectful of others and compassionate in outlook. But in addition, at Streatham & Clapham High School, we focus on building our girls’ authentic identities and perspectives to spark creative energy, the sort of innovation that Joely has exemplified. We use it to engender fearlessness and to hone character. And from all this derives our girls’ self-fulfilment, mental repose, resilience and happiness, the very values and ideals that underwrite the school’s ethos.”



Helping students find their voice

At the GDST we aim to empower our students to find their voice and speak out on issues that matter to them.

Each year, we run the Somerville and Gurney essay competition, open to Year 12 students. The competition is just one example of how we encourage students to use their voice, and also ensure we are listening.

As one entrant to the competition wrote,

“GDST schools do a brilliant job at uplifting girls and women, and recognising strength in femininity and girlhood is crucial. However, it is also crucial to recognise the barriers students will face due to their gender when they enter the work force, and teaching them to set standards on how to be treated and resist patriarchal undertones which exist all around us starts with language. Even more importantly, it starts with respecting the wishes and voices of the girls speaking out.”

Leading innovation for the future

This year, our focus has been to ensure we react quickly and seize the opportunity to learn lessons from the pandemic, continuing to innovate and shape an even brighter future for girls’ education.

In 2021, we launched an extensive review of ‘Education Technology’ (EdTech), which is set to play a vital role in transforming education and defining the future school. Whilst the recent crisis in education may have accelerated the pace of change in terms of EdTech, it is also the catalyst for the fundamental shift that is required to create an education system that successfully prepares children for a rapidly evolving future.

Our aim is to use our experience of Guided Home Learning to inform and enrich our educational offer. The review will examine our current platforms and how we use them, and identify options for the future. It will help us to ensure that we remain at the forefront of offering a dynamic, cutting edge education, as well as strengthening our position in offering valuable insight to the wider sector.



GDST Learn – Our Professional Development Programme

Central to our culture is our dedication to professional development. During the 2020-21 academic year, national Covid restrictions meant our central learning and development programme for teachers, GDST Learn, continued online through the autumn and spring terms, with some face-to-face sessions resuming in the summer term.

We are now in the process of reimagining how we combine the benefits of online training and the efficiencies that result, with bringing staff back together in person when the value of face-to-face is of significant value to justify doing so. This will make GDST Learn a far more dynamic, fit-for-purpose programme of professional development.

Our ability to convene shorter, more agile meetings between our different communities of practice provided crucial support for schools and staff at a time of prolonged uncertainty and rapid change. The permanent shift to online sessions whenever appropriate makes even better use of staff time and gives further scope to reinforce learning between sessions.

Schools Programme, additional Mental Health First Aid training and more pastoral-focused training courses provided.

Self-paced eLearning is also available through the GDST Hub, with 3,745 members of staff starting at least one eLearning course during the academic year, with a total of 9,138 courses started. We completed the roll-out of Health & Safety online eLearning to all schools and an Unconscious Bias eLearning module has been made mandatory for all staff to complete as part of the Undivided programme.

GDST Apprenticeship programmes have also continued to be offered to staff during the pandemic, with 33 staff members starting a new Apprenticeship programme during the year, and 115 having started or completed a recognised apprenticeship programme. The apprenticeships being studied range from leadership and management, ICT, catering, health & safety, accountancy, school business management, and teacher training.

Highlights of the programme have included:

- a comprehensive training programme to support the new Undivided initiative.
- additional EdTech training to support staff with the delivery of online and hybrid lessons.
- widening the series of subject collaboration meetings, providing for even more subjects and more regular engagement with Heads of Departments throughout the academic year, and supporting them with advice and guidance throughout the Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) process.
- a focus on supporting wellbeing across the GDST at a time when it was needed most, with even more staff completing the Positive

340 sessions ran as part of a total 209 programmes, courses and conferences over the academic year

The reach of the programme has expanded, with over 5,270 attendances from 1,632 individual staff

An increase of 60% and 13% respectively on the previous 2019/20 academic year



Dedicated to staff development and growth and promoting from within

With 4,000 staff and 25 schools located across the UK, the GDST is committed to being an employer that provides teachers and support staff with opportunities to grow and develop their careers with us, both within their current school and within our network.

Our highly experienced and dedicated HR Team works closely with the Executive and the leadership teams in our schools to identify and nurture the many talented practitioners who choose to work at the GDST, so that we invest for the long term and help them flourish within the organisation.

Some examples of internal promotions in the last academic year into leadership roles within the GDST family include:



Beckie Brown,
HEAD, NORTHWOOD COLLEGE FOR GIRLS
Joined as Director of Sixth Form (2016), promoted to Deputy Head Academic, now Head (from Sept 2021)

“I joined the GDST in 2016, as Director of Sixth Form at Northwood College. Throughout my time with the Trust and as my career progressed from Director of Sixth, to Deputy Head Academic and now as Head, I have always felt as though I had the tools, the training and the support to succeed. Annual Senior Leadership Team conferences enabled me to network with colleagues from sister schools and share ideas and initiatives, with Teams and email communications keeping the dialogue going long after conferences had ended. GDST Learn courses, delivered by experts in education, policy and child development, helped me to feel knowledgeable, prepared and able to effect real change in my school. More recently, as I prepared for headship and now complete my first term in the role, I have really valued the coaching I have received from Coaching Impact and the generosity of the GDST Senior Management Team and fellow Heads in mentoring and supporting me. The GDST family has been absolutely vital in my career progression and indeed the sense of fulfilment and enjoyment in the roles I have undertaken. Growing and nurturing talent in our organisation is now something that I feel passionate about as a Head.”



Cecile Halliday
NORTHWOOD COLLEGE FOR GIRLS
Joined Sutton High School as Prep School Deputy Head, now Head of Junior School at Northwood (from Sept 2021)



Laura Knowles
OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL
Joined South Hampstead High School (2014), now Deputy Head, Pastoral at Oxford (from Sept 2021)



Fionnuala Kennedy
HEAD, WIMBLEDON HIGH SCHOOL
Joined as Deputy Head, Pastoral (2015), promoted to Senior Deputy Head, now Head (from Sept 2020)

“If I had a pound for every occasion someone told me what a terrible time it must have been to become Head of Wimbledon High, I wouldn’t be rich exactly, but I’d definitely be able to refurbish a classroom or two. Mid-pandemic, with schools opening and closing, swathes of children isolating, staff struggling to balance teaching from home with their own children’s home schooling, and then the significant social movements of Black Lives Matter and Everyone’s Invited to negotiate – perhaps it did indeed look from the outside that 2020-2021 was not an ideal year to become a Head for the first time, and that it would be difficult to continue to develop a culture of innovation and inclusion when logistics and operational complexity were by necessity the main drivers.

“But, crucially, I did not become the Head of just any school within just any Trust: I had the privilege of leading Wimbledon High School within the GDST, which means we believe not in one, singly identifiable culture being created and adhered to, but in every individual in the community contributing to a culture day by day, which therefore by its nature is always-changing, organic, authentic and – most of all – innovative. And no pandemic, however long-lasting, can quell that collective energy.”

Reaching as many girls as possible

Our efforts in providing an irresistible education, founded on and driven by a culture of innovation and inclusivity, are only worthwhile if families choose a GDST school, and girls want to join and stay at one of our schools.

Reaching as many girls as possible is fundamental to our charitable purpose. This means not only ensuring girls can benefit directly from being in a GDST school, but that all our schools work tirelessly to ensure our reach extends way beyond the schools' walls and into local communities. This is achieved through our leading partnership and outreach programmes which all our schools contribute to; the GDST's influential work in championing and pioneering education for girls within the sector; and in how our girls go on to give back to society, inspiring the next generation of women.





Supporting families in every way possible

Our priority during the pandemic has been to support families in every way possible, helping ensure that those faced with unexpected financial hardship could be helped to ensure that their daughters' education would not be disrupted.

As part of this commitment, we announced that school fees would be frozen throughout 2020, beyond the period of the first closure of schools. This freeze on school fees was extended to the full academic year of 2020-2021 and then until January 2022, with the last fee increase having taken place in September 2019.

We were able to support 184 families, awarding over £2.5 million. In addition, we agreed deferred fee payments with many other parents whose financial situation was temporarily affected. Originally, the hardship fund was available specifically for the summer term; however, it was subsequently decided to extend it for the whole of the 2020-21 academic year.

The GDST Hardship Fund received nearly 1127 (or 604 unique) applications for financial assistance in the course of the academic year from families experiencing severe financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

This funding was over and above the GDST's allocation for bursaries and scholarships for the year. Overall, in 2020-21:

£21 million

distributed in bursaries and scholarships, equivalent to **9%** of all GDST fee income

1,054

(2020: 1,105)

pupils benefited from a bursary, **206** of whom also received a scholarship

19%

of students in our fee paying schools received a bursary, scholarship or both

426

(2020: 428)

received full bursaries, which accounts for **40%** (2020: 39%) of bursaries and **3%** (2019: 4%) of students in our fee paying senior schools

An ambitious bursary programme

The GDST has always prided itself on being able to offer one of the leading bursary programmes in the UK, as part of our unwavering commitment to reaching as many girls as possible and providing life changing opportunities for girls where the impact will be greatest.

Recent events have only reinforced our commitment to our bursary programme, as well as our aspiration to build an even more ambitious programme for the future. As a charity, we invest all surplus income into the education of our students. But even before the pandemic, the number of applications for bursaries from bright and ambitious girls was far greater than could be accommodated.

Our work this year has been to lay the foundations for growth in preparation for our 150th anniversary, which we will celebrate during the school year 2022-2023. Our aim is to significantly increase the number of bursaries we can award across our schools to bright girls from all walks of life, linking strongly to our

ambitions for even greater inclusion and diversity in our schools.

Throughout 2020-21, many of our individual schools were able to build on the success of the original GDST wide bursary appeal by reaching out to their own communities (primarily alumnae, but in some cases also parents and former staff).

At the beginning of 2021, we were delighted to confirm a gift from the Black Heart Foundation to support three additional Sixth Form bursary places – one each at Sydenham, Sheffield and South Hampstead. These three students were all eligible for 100% bursary awards. The Black Heart Foundation was founded in 2000 and launched the Black Heart Foundation Scholarship programme in

2013. The Foundation aims to support individuals from under-resourced and underrepresented backgrounds.

In July 2021, telephone fundraising campaigns were undertaken by six of our schools to raise money for the individual schools' own bursaries and assistance funds from alumna donations. This was unfamiliar territory for the GDST, but the initiative was received very warmly and a total of £120,000 was donated in just two weeks, with additional donations received following the campaign.

One key learning from this work was the positive impact of strong and long-standing alumnae engagement programmes in inspiring alumnae support.

Recipient of the Black Heart Foundation at Sheffield High School for Girls, Ella was made Head Girl of the school from September 2021.

"I was delighted to be awarded the Black Heart Foundation Scholarship, which has enabled me to thrive in such an inspiring and supportive environment. Because of this, I really do look forward to coming to school each day, where I am surrounded by like-minded individuals, and have already grown so much in confidence."





A culture of philanthropy

The GDST has always benefited from significant generosity from alumnae, current and former parents, staff and former staff. This generosity of spirit is cultivated amongst girls within our schools, where schools promote a culture of supporting others.

As young women leave our schools, many go on to become leaders who break new ground and in turn inspire our students as role models driving progress for women. Alumnae, along with other members of our community, give back to our schools and students by volunteering their time, delivering talks to students and attending networking events, as well as making financial donations to support our bursary campaigns.

In December 2020, we launched GDST Giving, a publication which celebrates the culture of giving across the GDST and highlights the impact of philanthropy in a range of ways. The first issue was sent out as a hard copy with a second issue sent by email in July 2021 – focusing entirely on the way bursaries have changed lives.

By celebrating giving in this way, we can continue to lay foundations as we seek to increase our bursary provision through growing our philanthropic income. Another new development in this area has been the launch of the Minerva Circle, a special recognition group for all those alumnae and other supporters who have indicated they plan to leave a charitable gift in their Will to the GDST or one of our individual schools.

Legacy gifts represent a significant gesture on the part of individuals seeking to make a difference. The Minerva Circle will allow us to thank these individuals during their lifetime and allow them the opportunity to become closer to the GDST and our life and work today.

Life-changing bursaries



Julie Keller
HEAD, NOTTINGHAM GIRLS'
HIGH SCHOOL

“Due to our progressive and creative outreach programme, working in partnership with local state schools to support pupils’ learning, many exceptionally bright girls across Nottingham choose to apply to Nottingham Girls’ High School (NGHS). They understand that we are an independent school with a difference, where individuals find their voice and where our diverse community ensures that everyone feels a sense of belonging.

“In 2020-2021, three of our bursary students went on to study medicine at university, and we are extremely proud of their determination to make a difference in the world. Carly described her experience with the following words ‘NGHS is unlike anywhere else in the way they encourage you to reach your full potential’, and this means the world to us.”

Role models of the future



Sally Davis
PRINCIPAL, HOWELL'S SCHOOL, LLANDAFF

“A bursary to a school like ours changes students’ lives; of that I have no doubt. I am a firm believer in the Marian Wright Edelman quote: “You can’t be what you can’t see”. Most of us are not trailblazers, we need to see other people, often people like us, succeeding at the type of thing we want to do. We need it for inspiration, leadership, paths to follow, and to help us believe that we can succeed. Students at Howell’s are provided with inspiring role models throughout their time at school. In the last few weeks, alumnae who have returned to school to meet students have included an Olympic medal winner

and an award-winning composer. They talked to the students about the opportunities that were made available to them at Howell’s, and how the school gave them both the skills and the confidence to take risks and challenge themselves. Our bursaries are awarded to students who we believe will gain most from a Howell’s education and will contribute fully to the life of the school, and the results speak for themselves. Our bursary students go on to become role models for the next generation of young people; they are the doctors, engineers, politicians and activists of the future.”

Bursaries and scholarships

We are very grateful for the generous support of the following organisations towards bursaries and scholarships this year:

AKO Foundation

The Black Heart Foundation

Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust

Drapers’ Charitable Fund

Educational Trusts’ Forum

The February Foundation

French Huguenot Church of London Charitable Trust

Garfield Weston Foundation

HSBC

John Lyon’s Charity

Lillywhite Family Trust

Nick Maughan Foundation

The Ogden Trust

Ogilvy Trust

Percy Hedley 1990 Charitable Trust

Walker Trust

We are indebted to all companies, charitable trusts and foundations, and individuals – including alumnae and current parents – who so generously support GDST bursaries and assistance funds.



Julie Taylor
PRINCIPAL, THE BELVEDERE ACADEMY

A view from our Academies

“This year has been as challenging at the Academies as it has for all our other schools; however, it has also brought out the best of us! The high expectations that sat behind Guided Home Learning meant that our schools provided the best online learning programme of all the schools in Merseyside. We were quick to integrate live lessons and to learn all the fantastic functionalities of Google Classroom to make learning interactive and enjoyable for all our pupils. Most importantly, we ensured that the academic and pastoral curriculum was consistent and as good as it could be for all our pupils. We were so grateful for the fundraising done by our sister fee paying schools in providing us with additional Chromebooks for some of our disadvantaged pupils. In addition, we loved joining in with GDST online events and were obviously as competitive as everyone else. We came seventh in the GDST Get Active competition (after the continued “encouragement” of our Head of PE) and loved being part of the Song Contest. Our Sixth Formers benefited from Limitless Learning and staff felt so supported in all the online meetings, forums and chances to share ideas that were a constant throughout the year. Being part of GDST made all the difference at the academies and illustrated our place as providers of an outstanding, all-round education in our local area.”

Partnerships and community outreach

At the GDST and across our schools, we are committed to delivering leading partnerships that support local communities and drive meaningful impact.

In December 2020, in response to the urgent need to support holiday hunger, six of our schools – Croydon High School; Kensington Prep School; Northwood College for Girls; Oxford High School; Streatham & Clapham High School, Wimbledon High School – joined forces with international catering company, Thomas Franks.

Together, we committed to preparing 12,000 meals in two days for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and adults across London and Oxfordshire. Schools

volunteered the use of kitchens and catering staff to provide healthy, nutritious meals.

The Feeding Communities at Christmas initiative was created by GDST Chief Executive Cheryl Giovannoni and Frank Bothwell, the owner and founder of Thomas Franks, and an extension to the support the GDST has provided since its inception in March 2020. We were delighted that the GDST won the Thomas Franks Ltd ‘Feeding Communities Campaign of the Year’.



Outstanding examples of outreach projects in our schools:



- South Hampstead High School’s Debate Hub continued to welcome a growing number of partner school pupils in the local community (and beyond), by collaborating through debating (even during lockdowns, by shifting workshops and competitions online). Hundreds of girls have been empowered to express their views with greater confidence and conviction. Staff also continued to teach Latin, French and Spanish to local primary school pupils and South Hampstead also secured a government grant to fund a languages library for one local school. The school also expanded the reach of partnerships by using digital platforms. New global links include a sustainability project with Umubano Academy in Rwanda; an education project in the favelas of Rio; and the Calcutta Social Project, which champions female education; they commented: “The excitement, confidence and friendship they’ve received from your girls is truly amazing.”
- Putney High School launched a series of projects including an innovative new partnership with state and independent schools in Wandsworth so they can learn from each other and help all children thrive post-Covid. This follows the success of the school’s long-standing collaboration with Roehampton University to raise aspirations amongst local primary school children. The Horizons project is open to Year 5 pupils, following them through until their transition to Senior School. Putney’s Year 9-10 students act as mentors over the course of the two years, exploring topics from Philosophy, STEM and the Environment to Sports Science, Art and Music. The school is also working with six local Senior Schools to lead a robotics project made possible through First UK. Participating teams are challenged to build a robot to compete in the ‘The Ultimate Goal’ game, honing skills in Design Thinking, Project Management, Software Engineering and Product Design.
- Croydon High School has worked closely with the Rowdown Foundation over the last five years, helping local, financially disadvantaged children to fulfil their potential through their ‘Inspire to Aspire’ programme. The school provides specialist tuition and mentoring over a ten-week period in the autumn term, leading up to 11+ and entrance assessment tests. The aim is to build confidence and aspiration and to improve the children’s performance when applying for places at grammar or independent schools offering scholarships or bursaries. Croydon High has also offered several other activities in conjunction with Rowdown, for example the four-week Confidence Club for Year 5 girls. The school has a commitment to provide at least one full bursary, the Rowdown Scholarship, through the mentoring scheme for entry to Croydon High in Year 7. Our goal is to work towards increased funding for this tremendously worthwhile partnership through the school’s philanthropy programme.
- Newcastle High School for Girls launched the ‘Newcastle High School for Girls All Girl Masterclasses’, designed for girls with curious minds and with the aim of helping girls from local primary schools to discover new passions and develop their confidence. The All Girl Masterclasses were launched in May 2021 for girls in Year 5 and continue as the girls progress into Year 6. Taking place on a Saturday morning, this popular series includes masterclasses in Cricket, Philosophy, Poetry, Psychology and Classics all which have been chosen to expose the girls to new learning experiences.



Nina Gunson
HEAD, SHEFFIELD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Working with partnership schools during the pandemic

“At Sheffield High School for Girls, we firmly believe in the importance of schools working together to improve outcomes for young people. In a “normal” year, we work with around 15 state school partners to deliver a variety of long-established programmes, one-off events and specific projects with a particular focus or aim.

“Through practical restrictions and resource constraints, the Covid pandemic certainly challenged the school’s partnership landscape and some of our face-to face events couldn’t go ahead.

“However, I am delighted that we were still able to provide opportunities that benefit our students and students in our partnership schools. We were able to continue one of our more established programmes, Cool2BClever, in a virtual format; we continued to be innovative in bringing new projects ‘online’; and even managed to establish a new formal partnership with a local secondary school.

“One example of how our partnership work adapted to meet the challenges presented by Covid was our Inspire 2 Aspire Careers Project. As Year 11 students were unable to complete their work experience due to restrictions, they were set the challenge of researching a career area they are interested in and then making a video resource or planning and delivering a presentation to an audience of teachers and Key Stage 2 children in local primary schools. The project was delivered in conjunction with our primary partners in some of the most deprived areas of the city, who are trying to improve the careers provision in their schools. There were some outstanding videos produced and the students loved the virtual Q&A sessions.”



Digital first - launching an “always-on” digital marketing campaign and content rich strategy

This year, we have evolved our approach to ensure we reach prospective parents, with most being what is commonly referred to as ‘digital natives’. Our focus in 2021 has therefore been an integrated, multi-channel digital marketing campaign. Launched on International Women’s Day, 8th March 2021, this highly-targeted, ‘always-on’ year-

round campaign was launched across multiple digital and social media channels. For the first time, we also extended our digital campaign internationally, to reach those parents who may be considering relocating to the UK, and in the process considering a GDST education for their daughter.



Mary Beer
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, STREATHAM & CLAPHAM HIGH SCHOOL

“2020-2021 was a year of relentless reinvention as we had to discover new ways to meet current and prospective pupils and their families’ needs with most of our conventional channels unavailable. The year of 2021 began with yet another lockdown that lasted nearly to Easter. Families and their daughters were at the height of screen-fatigue and so the task of GDST Marketing Directors was to find new ways of cutting through – keeping school culture and community alive; celebrating offers of places and promoting acceptances when most candidates hadn’t had a chance to visit the premises in person; responding to national upheaval with both compassion and thought leadership. This meant doing more than turning into a ‘digital operations department’.

“A second academic year in a pandemic called on all GDST marketers to demonstrate the difference and value of the education our schools offer, no matter what. We created podcasts and walking trails, called on alumnae to tell their stories and connected the entire school family via new digital and traditional media delivered to our audiences wherever they were. At Streatham & Clapham High School, we noticed that our recent alumnae who finished their university degrees in lockdown earned an exceptional proportion of first class honours, when other British students were understandably succumbing to the pressure. The resilience these young women could demonstrate was forged through the encouragement and opportunity our family provides.”

Raising our profile, increasing awareness and communicating the benefits our unique offer

An effective and rigorous marketing strategy is an investment we make to ensure parents know about the GDST and understand the benefits of an all girls’ education in one of our schools. This effort includes ensuring parents are aware of the bursaries and support we provide.

Over recent years, a key objective has been to raise the profile of the GDST and the schools within our family. This has been achieved through a high profile brand awareness campaign, implemented from 2018. As awareness of the GDST and the benefits of our educational offer have increased, the strategic aim of marketing activity has evolved to deliver more regular and consistent engagement with our target audiences, via more discrete media choices.



Outstanding innovation in schools’ Marketing and Admissions

The culture of innovation extends right through every part of the GDST family. Alongside teaching staff, schools’ marketing teams have innovated like never before as they faced the unprecedented challenges the pandemic brought.

Whilst schools reopened in September, government restrictions meant that schools were unable to host prospective families onsite for school tours or open days during the autumn term admissions season.

Visiting a school in-person, meeting students and teachers, soaking-up the atmosphere of the school is what helps parents decide where they believe their daughter will thrive. With schools unable to host

visitors in school, our marketing teams brought to life the warmth and personality of their schools through “virtual” open days that showcased the school, providing taster experiences and opportunities to meet the Head and hear from teachers. Whilst nothing can replace the “real life” experience of visiting a school, the heroic efforts that marketing teams went to received plaudits far and wide.

Connecting and empowering the GDST family

The great strength of the GDST is in the power of our network – the GDST family – including students, teachers, staff, parents and our alumnae. The inspiring education students receive in our schools helps create a powerful force of women, many of whom are motivated to helping raise each other up, as well as doing all they can to inspire the next generation.

The events of recent times have presented both new opportunities and new imperatives to connect and mobilise the GDST family. Our focus this year has been to capitalise on these opportunities and do all we can to support our community and harness the power of what makes the GDST so special.





Connecting the GDST teaching family

One outstanding example of how events have helped connect and increase collaboration of the GDST family is through the work of GDST Trust Consultant Teachers, who work across key subject areas from sport to Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) and Maths.

As expert practitioners and leaders in their subject area, they spearhead collaboration by being a point of contact for subject teachers across the GDST, by initiating events and sharing the most relevant and up-to-date resources. We have thriving and well-connected groups of practitioners who work together throughout the year to propel best practice in every school. This was particularly relevant during the period of Guided Home Learning. Our Trust Consultant Teachers were on hand to support their communities, pool resources and share ideas when teachers had to adapt quickly.

GDST Talks

A key opportunity presented by the move online was for the GDST to connect directly with parents, alumnae and the GDST family in ways that we had not envisaged before.

In November 2020, we launched GDST Talks, a series of online seminars that tap into the expertise of the GDST and alumnae network as well as other distinguished experts. The initiative was the result of us wanting to find ways to support families throughout the Covid crisis by offering advice, guidance and inspiration across a range of important and topical issues.

GDST Talks 2020-2021 focused on topics such as helping your child understand the pandemic and how to support their mental health; how to speak to your child about racism; and reassuring your child when the world feels like a frightening and unpredictable place.

The success of GDST Talks has been overwhelming in bringing parents together and providing some much-needed support and inspiration

during challenging times. By hosting the talks online, we have been able to reach many more parents and alumnae across our GDST family than ever before. We were very proud to be offering families meaningful insight and guidance from distinguished and accomplished speakers, true to our position as pioneers in, and shapers of the future of, girls' education.

Over the summer months, we worked on plans to develop this initiative further in response to the overwhelming support from GDST parents, alumnae and even parents whose children attended other schools. We are also in process of rolling out our podcast series, "Raise Her Up" off the back of the success of this programme, enabling us to reach and support even greater numbers of our own community and beyond.

Over **12,000** sign-ups

4,800 attendees

Over **12,000** YouTube video views



Jo Sharrock
HEAD, SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

Supporting our parents through GDST Talks

"Our parents are part of our GDST family and last year, as they faced unprecedented challenges and increasingly high levels of anxiety, we wanted to find a way to help and so was born our incredibly popular GDST Talks series. Hosted and chaired by the Headteachers of the GDST, these talks have been incredibly impactful as we are able to reach parents across the country and address the issues that really matter to them.

"At the height of pandemic, we were able to offer our parents a talk with Dr Deborah Woodman, Clinical Lead for Psychology at the Evelina London who advised them on how to help their child understand and deal with Covid. As Dr Woodman shared her calm and positive message of practical help, I could almost hear the collective sigh of relief across the country as parents realised they were not alone in facing the challenges ahead.

"Other inspiring and highly relevant talks followed as we brought a whole host of experts into the front rooms and home offices of parents seeking to support their daughters. They have made sure that our parents feel a sense of connection with each other, experiencing a sense of mutual support as they navigate parenthood.

"One of the hallmarks of a GDST school is the close relationship between parents and school – a partnership built on high levels of trust and shared purpose. These talks have further strengthened that bond and, whilst they arose from the necessity of the pandemic, I am sure they will remain as a staple of being part of our connected and empowered GDST family."



Expanding and deepening the GDST alumnae network

The GDST Alumnae Network is one of the largest of its kind in the world. It now has over 75,000 members.

Our aim is to invest even more in nurturing and expanding this powerful network by providing value and inspiration for a lifetime of rewarding opportunities to support each other and to serve as important role models for our students.

We aim to help establish a culture of lifelong, meaningful connections, a virtuous circle of support that can be called on by our students as they progress through their GDST schools, into higher education and beyond, to become the next generation of alumnae, who then go on to create a positive impact on society as a whole and give back to the network in meaningful ways in the future.

This year, we worked hard to support and engage alumnae within a somewhat altered reality. Many 'normal' events and mentoring programmes continued unabated, but took place online. This has encouraged even greater, more significant participation at major events (that would previously have been school-centric), which were shared across the alumnae network. This meant that many high-profile speakers became accessible to a far wider audience than ever before.

Our illustrious list of speakers included:

- Wimbledon High School alumna Afua Hirsch: Race, diversity and belonging, memories from her days at Wimbledon High School and how they informed who she is today.
- South Hampstead High School alumna Katya Adler: Her career as the BBC's Europe Editor and the political landscape at the end of 2020.
- Oxford High School alumna Diana Fox-Carney and husband Mark Carney: An exploration of the tensions between economic and environmental values.
- David Olusoga: From his book, Black and British – A Forgotten History, a perspective on Britain's history and the centuries-old entwined relationship between black and white Britons.
- David Baddiel: From his book, Jews Don't Count, an exploration of how and why antisemitism has been overlooked.
- Streatham & Clapham High School alumna Elsie Owusu: Why diversity in the built environment matters – the benefits of increasing equality of gender, race and culture diversity in architecture.



Michael Tippet
HEAD, NEWCASTLE HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Giving back and staying connected: school alumnae engagement during the pandemic

"While the pandemic has meant that we could not run most of our programme of in-person activities with alumnae, the online world that came in its place meant that the barrier of distance dissolved and with it new opportunities were created.

"The introduction of regular reunions and catch-ups online aimed to lift spirits during the long periods of

lockdown and alumnae of all ages from across the world shared their experiences and reminisced about times past.

"Our online Christmas Carol Service for alumnae was another memorable moment and we hope we brought seasonal cheer to those darker days.

"Before Christmas we also remembered our Year 13 cohort who had left in the summer of 2020 and who we felt deserved some TLC during quite bumpy first terms at university or elsewhere. We bought a Costa voucher for each of them to have a hot chocolate and cake in the dark days of November and our school minibuses became delivery vans as our facilities staff delivered Christmas 'NHSG alumnae gifts' to them at the end of term at their home addresses in Newcastle.

"The impact of the pandemic on business was also a worrying time for many of our alumnae and the NHSG Inspiring Business Alumnae Network, which had only just launched in March 2020, carried on undeterred. We have had two excellent online network

meetings where alumnae were able to discuss pressing business issues and support one another.

"Alongside the school reaching out to our alumnae, the help we as a school have received from alumnae has been phenomenal. Again with travel and distance no longer an issue, more alumnae have been able to contribute in so many ways. Through the power of Zoom, we brought all the NHSG Head Girl teams since the school's inception in 2014 together twice in the past year to contribute towards the development of both our diversity and inclusion, and mental health programmes in school. They were so pleased to support their former school and we were very grateful to have their input.

"In addition, alumnae have connected with pupils online to judge debating and talent competitions and to give live talks, and they have shared their thoughts about a number of topics through our school's social media channels. Our alumnae are a powerful group of women and the pandemic has truly brought the wider NHSG family even closer together."



Alumnae supporting each other throughout the pandemic

Initiatives to bring our community together and offer a little positivity and light during difficult times included the GDST Tea Party in October 2020, bringing the alumnae network together for a virtual tea party.

With many people having had limited contact since March 2020, especially our elderly network members, we needed to find a way to bring the GDST spirit to life within these constraints. The event attracted hundreds of alumnae from around the globe, coming together virtually to share stories, a cup of tea and a nice piece of cake together, enjoying each others' company and reminiscing about all manner of memories from their school days.



Adèle O'Doherty
ACTING HEAD, NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL

Online connections

"We were delighted that despite Covid, several alumnae were keen to give virtual talks and we welcomed back Maddie Skillen, Rosie Saxton and Claudia Pieczka at different points in the year. Maddie Skillen gave an inspiring talk on Women in Tech Careers which was part of our involvement in the Erasmus+ project on Equal Opportunities. Likewise Rosie and Claudia, both very recent alumnae, gave talks as part of the same project but on British Sign Language.

"From further afield, we were delighted to reconnect with alumna Charlie Golding, who now lives in Australia. During the lockdown period she has written a book aimed at helping children understand the pandemic and start conversations about how the restrictions affect their lives. The book is entitled When the World Went Inside.

"Connection is a two-way process and so we also gave an assembly to current students at Northampton High School which shared triumphs, successes and challenges of a range of alumnae."



Birkenhead High School Academy "Start a New Story" appeal

Central to fundraising efforts at our outstanding all through academy on The Wirral is support for the school's key strategy of supporting and encouraging reading. One inspiring example of this strategy is the school's 'Reading Discovery Programme', which sees current Sixth Formers paired with girls from throughout the Junior School during the school day to encourage reading and talking about the stories together.

With fundraising efforts suspended and local libraries closed, lockdown limited access to a steady supply of new reading material at a time when books, which spark imagination and creativity and offer valuable life lessons, comfort and reassurance, were more important than ever.

To help overcome the barriers that lockdown brought, Birkenhead High School launched an appeal amongst the school's wider community, the GDST family and alumnae to help raise funds to provide books for Junior School and Year 7 and 8 students during lockdown. The school partnered with a local bookshop and created a 'wish list' of books and Principal Rebecca Mahony wrote to all alumnae,

asking them to donate £10, which would cover the cost of one book.

The generosity of the GDST network was overwhelming, with the appeal surpassing all expectations, raising £6,000 in a matter of days, with the final total reaching £11,000.

The appeal meant nearly 700 new books were purchased for students, with enough books to give every single pupil in the Junior School and in Years 7 and 8 their own new book with the school community coming together to ensure the books were delivered to pupils with a personalised, hand-written note from one of many donors who supported the appeal.



Rebecca Mahony
PRINCIPAL, BIRKENHEAD HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMY

"Start a New Story" appeal

"Last year was one of the most challenging for our academy, however the response to our 'Start A New Story' appeal, ensuring new books for all of our Junior School children and girls in Years 7 and 8, was phenomenal. The generosity of the incredible GDST wider family resulted in us smashing our target and with the extra money raised, we were also able to boost our library and class reading resources.

"The strength of the GDST community spirit cannot be replicated anywhere else and it has made us all realise how powerful we can be when we work together and most importantly, what a difference we can make to so many young people's lives. We all know that reading can open so many doors for our students and this campaign has been the true success story of the year. We are so grateful for all the support."



GDST Life

This year saw a major step forward for alumnae engagement.

In September 2020, we launched GDST Life, an online platform where alumnae can connect with each other, having access to a host of new networking opportunities, mentoring support, events, news and resources, and much more.

It is there for students, too, from the moment they join the Sixth Form, giving them the opportunity to connect with others across the GDST family of schools.

Along with alumnae, the platform is open to staff, former staff and Sixth Formers. Now that GDST Life is fully up-and-running, we are focused on further building user numbers and introducing a range of in-platform initiatives to increase engagement levels, so that it becomes a self-sustaining online community.

GDST Empowerment Mentoring Programme (GEM)

In January 2021, we launched the GDST Empowerment Mentoring Programme (GEM) as a pilot scheme, running until October 2021.

Developed in collaboration with an alumna of Streatham & Clapham High School, the GEM Programme is a highly personalised and bespoke mentoring programme, designed exclusively for the GDST's Black and Minority Ethnic alumnae.

The programme was established with personal invitations extended to potential mentors and mentees, followed by individual pairing of participants into mentoring relationships for a six-month period. The pilot attracted more than 60 alumnae, with an event planned to be held at the end of the initiative to invite feedback for a full roll-out of the programme in 2022. Early feedback has been positive, and we are now looking at how we can shape and build the programme for the future.

GDST Alumnae making waves in 2020-2021

Dr Nikki Kanani
SUTTON HIGH SCHOOL

Winner of the GDST Alumna of the Year Exceptional Contribution Award for the key role she has played in the UK's roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

Amy Williams
SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

Amy Williams, winner of the GDST Alumna of the Year Trailblazer Award – founder of ethical advertising platform.

Ellie Robinson
NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL
Paralympian (swimming), Tokyo 2020*.

Hannah Mills
HOWELL'S SCHOOL, LLANDAFF
Gold medal winner (sailing), Tokyo 2020*.

Sarah Jones
HOWELL'S SCHOOL, LLANDAFF
Bronze medal winner (hockey), Tokyo 2020*

Samira Ahmed
WIMBLEDON HIGH SCHOOL
Winner of the GDST Alumna of the Year Award – multi-award-winning journalist, writer and broadcaster.

Alexandra King
NOTTINGHAM GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL
Awarded an Emmy for her CNN documentary, "No Olvidado: Death and Dignity on the US border," which investigated the migrant death crisis on the US border with Mexico.

*Tokyo 2020 took place in August 2021

Financial Summary

Income and Expenditure – year to 31 August 2021

| INCOMING RESOURCES | £m |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| School Fees | 234.9 |
| Other Income | 6.7 |
| Academy Trust Government Grants | 12.2 |
| Trading Income | 1.5 |
| Investment income | 2.2 |
| Voluntary income | 3.8 |
| Total incoming resources | 261.3 |
| RESOURCES EXPENDED | |
| Charitable activities | 248.9 |
| Other costs | 2.7 |
| Total resources expended | 251.6 |
| SURPLUS FROM OPERATIONS | 9.7 |
| Actuarial and investment gains | 25.4 |
| NET SURPLUS | 35.1 |

The GDST is one of the UK's largest educational charities, and any surplus is reinvested in enhancing the education provided by our schools.

Full audited accounts can be found on the [Charity Commission](#) website.

Group Balance Sheet – year end 31 August 2021

| FIXED ASSETS | £m |
|---|----------------|
| Intangible assets | 0.5 |
| Tangible assets (incl. buildings & equipment) | 434.8 |
| Investments (both restricted and unrestricted) | 179.9 |
| | 615.2 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | |
| Debtors | 6.6 |
| Cash at bank | 17.2 |
| | 23.8 |
| CREDITORS: due within one year | (36.3) |
| NET CURRENT ASSETS | (12.5) |
| NET ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES | 602.7 |
| CREDITORS: due after one year | (105.6) |
| TOTAL NET ASSETS (incl. buildings & equipment) | 497.1 |
| Endowed funds | 3.0 |
| Restricted funds (incl. bursary & Academy funds) | 102.4 |
| Unrestricted funds (incl. buildings & equipment) | 391.7 |
| TOTAL FUNDS | 497.1 |

Legal and administrative information

The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) is a company limited by shares (company no. 6400) and a registered charity (no. 306983). Incorporated in England.

Registered Office

10 Bressenden Place,
London SW1E 5DH

Trustees (as at December 2021)

Juliet Humphries (Chair)
Kathryn Davis (Deputy Chair)
Rita Dhut
Ann Ewing
Masha Gordon
Richard Harris
Mary Hockaday
Fraser Montgomery
Pete Oliver
Stuart Ross
Prof Judy Simons
Vicky Tuck (Deputy Chair)

Senior Management Team / Executive Board (as at December 2021)

Cheryl Giovannoni,
Chief Executive

Jane Beine,
Director of HR

Amy Bouchier,
Director of Marketing,
Communications & Philanthropy

David Boyd,
Director of Legal and Risk Assurance

Cathryn Buckle,
Director of Estates

Jonathan Davis,
Chief Financial Officer

Dan Hall,
Director of Information Technology
Services

Martin Pilkington,
Strategy Planning Director

Dr Kevin Stannard,
Director of Innovation & Learning

Biographies of the Trustees and the Senior Management Team are on the [GDST](#) website.

Professional advisors

Auditor

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London EC2A 1AG

Bank

Natwest
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Internal auditor

KPMG LLP
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8 Finsbury Circus
London EC2M 7AZ

Royal London Asset Management Limited
55 Gracechurch Street
London EC3V 0RL

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Two Snowhill
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