



# FYLING HALL SCHOOL

Robin Hood's Bay  
North Yorkshire  
YO22 4QD  
UK

T: +44 (0)1947 880353  
E: [office@fylinghall.org](mailto:office@fylinghall.org)  
W: [www.fylinghall.org](http://www.fylinghall.org)

## Our Strategic Direction 2014-19

### Our Vision

The Trustees of Fyling Hall School aim to steer a course towards the year 2023 and our centenary year that will enable us to embark on our second century securely financed, handsomely equipped and widely respected.

Although we will always be responsive to a changing world, we must have the confidence to resist mere educational fashion as we conserve and develop the school's distinctive character. This character is rooted equally in the natural beauty of our setting and the family warmth of our small community. In the combination of place and spirit lies our unique quality – and our greatest strength.

Thus, we aim for a school in our centenary year which may be greatly changed by improved facilities, rigorous business planning and enhanced reputation – but it will remain recognisable as the school Mab Bradley founded and Clare White continued: an unfussy, happy establishment where children flourish and learn to the very best of their potential.

### Our motto

'The days that make us happy make us wise'.



# FYLING HALL SCHOOL

## Introduction: Where We Are Now

The statement of Our Vision which opens this document aims to distil the varied, but impressively similar, visions of Fyling Hall put forward by staff, parents, pupils and friends as well as the Board of Trustees five years ago. This led to our strategic direction of 2007, updated in 2009 and 2012 and now to this 2014 formulation of our strategic direction. Much is unchanged in what we want to achieve and we have achieved much in the last five years. But the world has changed around us so we face new challenges and we address here how we intend to meet these.

We agree that Fyling Hall's greatest strength – or Unique Selling Point, in marketing terms – is not any single asset (view, heritage, buildings), but the very particular combination of our location, both for its beauty and environmental value, and the genuinely family-like atmosphere. This atmosphere has always pervaded the school and, in some mysterious way, even as pupils and teachers come and go, is transmitted from one generation to the next.

However, this unique combination, which we rightly cherish, of rural setting and family intimacy depends on our being a small school, in a delightful but thinly populated corner of Yorkshire, with an inclusive mixed ability, co-educational intake. All three of these factors – size, location and composition – present economic challenges. The number of boarding pupils is steadily declining due to many factors and, anyway, fee income cannot expand beyond the numbers we can accommodate. Half our catchment area for day pupils is under the North Sea with much of the rest populated chiefly by sheep; and our commitment to being non-selective academically does us no favours in league tables. These are in-built economic constraints which must be incorporated into any planning process.

We face challenges common to all schools. Some were there five years ago, others new. We commit more than a tithe of our fee income to bursaries as we believe it right to do so. We aim to maintain fees at a reasonable level but that inevitably means that we have to make hard choices about expenditure. Previously a predominantly boarding school, we currently have more daily pupils than boarders. With a substantial proportion of our boarders historically coming from the armed forces, we are vulnerable to any reform of the Government's forces boarding policy. Fewer pupils stay throughout the whole of their school years and so we have a more transient pupil population with many staying a relatively short time.

However, we know we do a good job for our pupils and the ISI report of March 2012 <http://www.isi.net/schools/6471/> shows these judgements:

Early Years Foundation Stage **good** with **outstanding features**.

Boarding **good**.

With respect to the day school, (using the scale excellent/good/satisfactory/unsatisfactory):

- Quality of teaching: **excellent**
- Pupil achievement: **excellent**
- Extra-curricular opportunities: **excellent**
- Personal development of the pupils: **excellent**
- Pastoral care: **excellent**
- Governance: **excellent**
- Leadership and management: **excellent**

It's hardly surprising that so many small independent schools close. Fyling Hall, it's fair to say, has survived – and flourished – against considerable odds. Ask anyone who knows the school and there is fierce and heartfelt commitment to the philosophy on which Mab Bradley began this school, and which underpins our education to this day.

The school motto, simple as it is, expresses that philosophy: *The days that make us happy make us wise...* Allowing for poetic shorthand, we take 'wisdom' to mean the process of learning through which, ultimately, we might hope to attain wisdom, and 'happiness' to be a concept much more profound than mere transient moments of fun. Long-term happiness as experienced by a child at school is surely a composite of healthy growth, friendships, fruitful

# FYLING HALL SCHOOL

activity, stimulation, achievement and feelings of being both secure and valued within a community. It must follow that a child who is happy in this profound sense is a child ideally placed to learn to the very best of his or her ability. And that, of course, is our overarching aim.

Throughout various consultations, we find little or no will for deep-rooted reforms in the philosophy, size or composition of the school. That is not to say there was a general feeling nothing needed to change. Evolution is constant and improvements based on the plans of previous years have been implemented. There is always more to be done and so we build on past successes and now look to our next rolling five-year plan - drawn up with the Headmaster and school executive – to incorporate some of those ideas into a broad statement of our policy.

## Our principles

It is worth setting out first, though – obvious as they may seem – the unchanging principles which govern the education we offer at Fyling Hall.

- **Safety:** We protect children from harm, both physically, with sensible rules and risk management, and emotionally, with sound and sensitive pastoral care.
- **Academic Attainment:** We carefully identify and maximise the potential of each individual pupil, through good teaching and warm staff-student relationships based on mutual respect and trust, in an environment conducive to study.
- **Health:** Sport, outdoor activity and nutritious food are intrinsic to the school's daily life, and we teach the associated life-long health benefits.
- **Character development:** By giving increased responsibility to pupils as they grow up, we foster confidence, self-respect, team-work and leadership skills.
- **Environmental awareness:** We aim to build an appreciation of the school's beautiful surroundings and heritage into an intelligent concern for a fragile world.
- **Moral and spiritual growth:** We both practice and preach the simple, traditional virtues of courtesy, honesty, integrity, pride in appearance and kindness, while encouraging more profound spiritual exploration.
- **Widening horizons:** We promote a stimulating range of extra-curricular interests and activities in the arts, current affairs and community service.

All proposals for change are aimed at improving the way we put into daily practice these seven key principles.

Before moving to future directions, however, we should briefly note the additional responsibilities borne by the Trustees, because these duties will, on occasion, constrain our freedom of operation, and must be taken into account in any planning process.

- The Board of Trustees is legally bound to safeguard the school's financial viability at all times.
- We must accept the obligations laid upon us by the Charities Act and ensure we are serving the wider community.
- We have legal obligations to our Landlord, and neighbourly responsibilities within the local community.
- We are responsible not just for our pupils, but for the safety, welfare, training and career development of all our employees.

# FYLING HALL SCHOOL

## The Future

### Teaching and Learning

**We are determined that every child will realise his or her full academic potential.**

While we are very deliberately not an academic hothouse – and our ability to withstand the pressures that turn some schools into exam-passing factories is appreciated by many parents as one of our strengths – this should not be confused with a lack of commitment to the highest possible standards of teaching and learning.

*Monitoring academic achievement:* Although we have always had some very bright pupils, our mixed ability intake means we are never going to be near the top in league tables. Our success is measured rather in the improved performance of each of our pupils – our ‘value added’. Value-added is quantified very carefully across the key stages. **This will be extended in KS3 as mentioned in the ISI report.**

*Our curriculum:* All small schools today face difficulties offering the range of subjects requested by students – non-selective schools like ours even more so, because we are under pressure both to expand the more demanding academic disciplines in order to fulfil the needs of our most academic children while diversifying into more vocational subjects to engage and stimulate the more practically minded. These are not decisions to be taken lightly – and we realise that the Headmaster needs flexibility, on occasion, to accommodate individual requirements. The trustees have reviewed the academic curriculum and continue to monitor our offering.

*Teaching:* A culture of commitment to the school and to everything the community stands for is inherent in a good school which puts its pupils first.

**We welcome and support the ongoing process of review and appraisal of teaching staff, and continue to make continuing professional development (CPD) a priority.**

**We must continually seek to strengthen our teaching skills.**

*Input by Non Teaching Staff:* Fyling Hall has a very successful tradition which continues to this day of encouraging non-teaching staff to share their skills and interests. **We will seek out and foster this sort of initiative whereby staff share their skills and interests with pupils.**

*Composition of the student body:* We warmly welcome the cultural diversity that our international intake brings to the school. **We shall continue to seek both international and national pupils who can benefit from an education at Fyling Hall.**

Similarly, we are justifiably proud of being a school where vulnerable children thrive and flourish, but **we must exercise skill in identifying those children whom we can help, and recognise that we have neither the facilities nor staff to cope beyond a certain level of need. We must also be careful in not allowing the welfare of the majority to be compromised.**

### Beyond the Curriculum

*Our location:* Given universal agreement over the importance of our rural environment, the Board is passionately committed to exploiting the rich resources of our location. We now have a forest classroom. **The woods, fields, moor, surrounding farmland and shoreline should be used as imaginatively as possible for teaching purposes, for leisure pursuits and for raising environmental awareness.**

*Extra curricular activities:* The quality of our extra curricular provision has varied in the past. It is probably inevitable that the range of interests catered for will fluctuate, reflecting current fads and changing populations. However, a diverse and stimulating mix of activities is vital

# FYLING HALL SCHOOL

to a rounded education, particularly in a boarding school. While we always serve our pupils well in sport and physical pastimes, we had a lean time in some of the arts. This has been turned around and now we have vibrant and growing participation in musical and drama activities across the school. We have two notable assets in the Barn theatre and the Rose Garden amphitheatre which are used for creative purposes. A thriving culture of extra-curricular activity cannot be dictated by the board – to succeed it must develop out of the enthusiasms of staff and pupils. **However, we encourage and facilitate a rich mix of activity to suit all our pupils, both creative, non-sporting pursuits and traditional sporting ones.**

*Catering:* We recognize that our food is a great asset to the school, and **we shall continue to support our cook and her team as she provides quality local foods and educates students in the benefits of lifelong healthy eating.**

## Our Staff

The Board recognises that staff should be a school's most valuable asset – a school is only as good as its teaching and the support to this teaching. The warm relationships between staff and students, moreover, are central to the precious family atmosphere of Fyling Hall, as is the continuity provided by long-serving teachers and non-teaching staff. Salaries however – as at any school – represent far and away our biggest cost. At Fyling Hall, it's probably fair to say our staff has had to bear much of the burden in times of economic stringency, and the Board is profoundly grateful for their loyalty.

We have already put in place new contracts and a new teaching salary scale and we will review this regularly to ensure it remains transparent and fair. Given the financial constraints dictated by our size, we are never going to be in a position to offer lavish remuneration, but in the short term we have provided an affordable increase in salaries. In the longer term, as part of our business planning, **we are looking at salaries elsewhere, and are committed to ensuring that our overall levels of pay and benefits, if not generous, are fair.**

At Fyling Hall we have always tried to avoid multiple 'add-on' payments for extra duties, but a boarding school in term time is inevitably a 24-hour operation, and **the Board is committed to ensuring that the burden of work is fairly and equally shared amongst the staff.**

We have reviewed and revised non-teaching staff contracts and **have put in place a system of review for non-teaching staff to help them benefit from professional development.**

## Our buildings and facilities

*Buildings:* Fyling Hall has never been, and never will be, a grand establishment. We believe that a friendly supportive atmosphere matters more to a child than fitted wardrobes. Having said that, we are aware that some areas of our dormitory accommodation in particular needed fairly radical refurbishment, over and above our permanent rolling programme of repair and renewal. For much of the school, this has now been achieved as bunk beds have been removed, dormitory sizes reduced and refurbishment is ongoing. **We are committed to refurbishment and upgrading of all the dormitories as funds allow and to review utilisation of space. We also want to make the school more energy efficient as funds allow.**

Building is, of course, enormously expensive. What's more, we have only limited (flat) land on which we could build, even should we be in a position, financially, to do so. We are also constrained by being in a National Park, on a Heritage coastline and having Grade II listed buildings. Therefore the Board and management have undertaken a thoroughgoing review of

# FYLING HALL SCHOOL

the existing usage of all our buildings. We have drawn up plans for new building options and achieved some relatively small-scale ones (e.g. Latin and Square dorms extension, refurbishment of other dorms). **The new Art Room and roof extension is nearly completed over summer 2014. Further improvements are planned as funds allow.**

*Environmental awareness:* We are already committed to reducing the school's carbon emissions and any new build or refurbishment will consider how to maximise energy efficiency and use this as a learning tool for pupils.

*Staff accommodation:* We are keenly aware of the benefits to the school of staff being resident on the premises and, while our options are necessarily limited, **we continue to what we can to provide sufficient accommodation of a good standard on site for resident staff.**

*Facilities:* We fully recognize the importance of ICT, and having invested substantially in new facilities, are committed to a rolling programme of upgrades. **Over summer 2014, a new WiFi network has been installed with plans for bring your own device for 2014-5 and beyond.** Alongside this, we maintain our faith in the importance to education of the printed word in books, and will keep our library well-resourced.

## Business and Financial Planning

Our aim in day-to-day financial management remains transparent, carefully monitored control of expenditure.

It might be argued that planning at Fyling Hall has tended, historically, to be reactive, with plans for investment being drawn up *ad hoc* in response to a profitable year or two, we continue to aim to be more pro-active. The challenge facing us – as it always has – is balancing necessarily limited pupil numbers and our desire to keep our fees affordable with the need to invest in and improve our facilities. While we disregard a culture of thrifty and commonsensical housekeeping at our peril, we work within a longer, rolling longer term timeframe. **We will develop clear goals and economic targets in a realistic business model underpinned by detailed risk assessment.**

More immediately, although the bulk of our income is derived from fees, we have for many years let the school during the summer to other charities and groups. **We shall consider whether there are other initiatives that could provide income from use of the school during vacations.**

## Marketing

We are aware that most of our pupils have found the school through personal recommendations but increasingly our presence on the web is leading potential pupils to us. We are aware of the effects of demographic change on student numbers and know that we need to work harder to maintain our roll, particularly in the junior school.

**We shall continue to develop marketing the school.**

**We shall continue to cultivate ongoing relationships with the local and national/international community to enhance the image & standing of the school** and help Whitby see Fyling Hall as its own, local, independent school.

## Alumni and fund raising

We have already stated that the atmosphere developed by the school community is one of its major strengths. We know that loyalty to Fyling Hall continues for many even after they have left the school and **we shall continue to strive to maintain a friendly relationship with former pupils, by circulating information and hosting formal and informal reunion events.**

**We have a coherent register, of former pupils** and this will be regularly updated and improved.

# FYLING HALL SCHOOL

## Benefit to the community

We provide work for many people living locally in an area where many traditional areas of employment (farming, fishing) are reducing. In return, we believe that the school has a loyal staff who are committed to its values.

**We do share our facilities with the local community and intend to continue and enhance this.**

## Governance

The Charity Commission states that 'Trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a charity, and ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up'.

We are aware of this at all times as we make decisions that affect the school and the lives of people within it. We see our main roles as: leading the strategic direction of the school; ensuring that the school complies with legislation and regulations; and monitoring and evaluating the progress of the school.

As a board, we have undergone many changes in the last few years but now believe that we are a strong team working well together and being proactive. **We are aware that we need to plan for succession and are always keen to recruit suitable and interested trustees with the requisite skills.**

**The board of trustees and executive, Fyling Hall School, August 2014**