



# WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL

woodhousegrove.co.uk

01 February 2021

Dear Parents

First and foremost, I hope you and your families are all keeping safe and well.

I write to you as Chairman of the Governors' Finance and General Purposes Committee, and on behalf of the whole Governing Body, to provide you with some background to the financial challenges the School is currently facing in these very difficult and uncertain times.

The Governing Body is particularly grateful to you, our loyal parent body, for your understanding and support during this unprecedented situation caused by the Covid pandemic. Let us all hope that, with a successful rollout of the vaccine and warmer weather on the horizon, the end is in sight.

When discussing matters relating to school fees, it is perhaps worth pointing out at the outset that for the convenience of parents, school fees are charged each year in three equal termly instalments. However, the School's operating costs do not fall into this pattern, especially in this year of all years. Accordingly, it will only be towards the end of the academic year that Governors will be able to assess fully the School's financial position and consider the possibility of any fee remission for the current academic year.

The second important point to note is that whilst the School is a part of a larger educational charity, it must also operate as a business to generate reasonable surpluses to be ploughed back, not only for the education of current pupils, but also for the benefit of future School generations – in short, the School must operate to ensure its survival.

Within this framework, and contrary to some views, it is important to note that, sadly, there have not been significant cost savings to the School arising as a result of the pandemic. In fact, the opposite is true. In order to ensure that the School was safe to re-open in September, significant additional and exceptional costs were incurred. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Significant extra costs in the procurement of PPE, safety screens, cleaning materials in all classrooms and offices, and ensuring proper separation of Form and Year Groups within the School to comply with Covid safety requirements.
- Additional teaching support staff hours required at both Ashdown Lodge and Brontë House to enable nine separate Year Group bubbles to operate from 7:30am to 6pm, providing parents with full access to wrap around care and ensuring that children remain separate at all times throughout the day.
- Additional toilet facilities were installed in Year Group bubbles, in addition to the extra bank of toilets that has occupied the Yard since the beginning of the year.
- Outdoor handwashing facilities installed at Brontë House.

Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire, BD10 0NR  
enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk

*I am Grovian.*



Woodhouse Grove School is part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust.  
Registered Office: Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW15JR.  
Charity No. 1142794. Company No. 7649422.



# WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL

woodhousegrove.co.uk

- The School has had to operate two dining halls at the Grove in order to ensure all children are provided with lunch whilst observing social distancing rules. A further £70k is committed before the end of this academic year to provide a full catering facility in the Hastings-Long Gallery to further enhance the School's lunchtime provision and ensure effective pupil separation at all mealtimes and eliminating the need for the use of disposable crockery, which is both expensive and environmentally unfriendly.
- Increased precautions in the Dining Room at Brontë House have seen the introduction of picnic lunches for some year groups, at a significantly increased cost to normal expenditure.
- Additional cleaning and catering staff were hired to allow the School to operate in a new Covid-secure manner.
- The School has set up its own contact tracing system and has established its own testing centre at Rawdon Meadows.
- Over £100k has been spent on enhanced IT provision, including new laptops and iPads for teaching staff at the Grove and Brontë House to enable live teaching and guarantee the quality of the School's remote learning experience.
- Owing to Health and Safety concerns highlighted by the School's external H&S consultants, and increased usage as a result of staggered departure times, and the need for alternative exit routes offsite, the driveway leading from the Front of School down to the bottom car park was resurfaced over the Christmas break.

In common with all schools and many businesses, Woodhouse Grove has received government support by way of the furlough scheme which has enabled it to retain staff on salary throughout the pandemic. However, in reality, we were not able to access this scheme last term when the School was fully operational and, given that our most expensive employees are teachers, who have been delivering lessons and providing important pastoral support, the amount of furlough support received has been limited. That said, the School is very grateful to HM Treasury for allowing independent schools, such as Woodhouse Grove, to access the scheme. Unlike maintained schools, Woodhouse Grove has not received any further funding or support from the DfE, or local or central government.

As previously highlighted, support staff and catering costs last term were far higher than budgeted and potential savings on music/trips and travel are not significant, especially as some of these are parent funded. It is not yet known when the majority of our pupils will return to School this term – we are, of course, still providing onsite education to resident boarders, nursery children, the children of critical workers and vulnerable children – and what, if any, savings there might be in the Summer Term.

I also need to point out that because of the pandemic, it has not been possible to allow the usual extensive use of the School's facilities to outside hirers, which in a normal year can provide up to £300k of external income. The swimming pool is closed, as are all residential facilities normally available in holiday periods. Insurance claims for business interruption are being pursued, but such claims will not be resolved or settled quickly and, in any case, will only cover a small proportion of this lost revenue.

Governors are, of course, aware of the additional burden the pandemic has placed upon parents as a result of school closures and the resultant necessity for home tuition. It was for this reason that a freeze on fee increases was put in place for the academic year 2020/21. This in itself represents a saving of 3%-4% for parents compared to previous years. In reality, School fees have not been lifted to cover inflation costs either.

Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire, BD10 0NR  
enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk

*I am Grovian.*



Woodhouse Grove School is part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust.  
Registered Office: Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW15JR.  
Charity No. 1142794. Company No. 7649422.



# WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL

[woodhousegrove.co.uk](http://woodhousegrove.co.uk)

I can advise you that Governors will meet at the end of March to consider fee levels for the academic year 2021-22 and will at that time also review the possibility and feasibility of fee concessions for the Summer Term 2021. It is the case that we are barely halfway through the academic year and, as I write, no date for the wider re-opening of schools has been confirmed by the government. Given this fact and the issues highlighted above, I hope you can appreciate why it is not possible for the Governing Body to make any firm decisions over fee reductions and future fee levels at present.

In the meantime, thank you to all those who have paid this term's fees, and please can I, respectfully, encourage those of you who have not yet settled your account for the Spring Term 2021 to do so as soon as possible, in accordance with the terms of your parental contract.

Yours sincerely

**Richard Hemsley FCA**  
**Chairman of Finance & General Purposes Committee**

Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire, BD10 0NR  
[enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk)



Woodhouse Grove School is part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust.  
Registered Office: Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW15JR.  
Charity No. 1142794. Company No. 7649422.

*I am Grovian.*