



# Abberley Hall

## SCHOOL

Dear Parents,

23rd October 2020

I am delighted that so many of you were able to join Jonnie and I at our talk today. Notwithstanding the challenges of Zoom, I very much hope that you found it a useful update on all that is happening at Abberley Hall. I thought it would be helpful to send out a letter in addition to the talk for those who were unable to join us this morning.

Firstly, a bit of background on myself for those of you who don't know me. I am a banker, working for Standard Chartered Bank for 34 years in various locations including Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Botswana. I am a Non-Executive Director in the City of London. My wife and I brought up our two daughters whilst living abroad providing them, and us of course, a wonderful insight into a diverse range of cultures.

On retirement I became a Magistrate and in 2009 became a Governor of The Downs Malvern and in 2014 a member of the Council of Malvern College, followed in 2015 by appointment as Treasurer to the Council. I became Chairman of The Downs Malvern in July this year. I also sit on the Boards of the College's commercial businesses. My connection with Malvern College goes back to 2000 when my younger daughter joined what was then Hillstone School and then went on to Malvern College in 2008.

I was delighted and honoured to be appointed Chairman of Abberley Hall. It's history and heritage is second to none and the schools to which our pupils move onto are testament to the education that Abberley Hall prepares provides. This will be maintained and now, in the current climate, developed and enhanced. The health and well-being of the children that are entrusted to us is of paramount importance and with that in mind we have rearranged our Governance Structure, which will also allow greater focus on the financial and commercial aspects of the school.

I thought it might be helpful to outline this structure:

1. The **Education Committee** is chaired by Sid Inglis, Governor, who is a former pupil of the school with a distinguished career in teaching and is currently Headmaster of Elstree School and consists of Syd Hill, a former Headmaster of Elstree and Housemaster of Malvern College and Gaynor Cook a parent and recently appointed SENCO Governor. The Committee's remit covers all aspects of education in the school, our educational performance and of course the experience of pupils of all age groups.
2. The financial and commercial interests of the school are overseen by the **Commercial Committee** which is chaired by Mrs Sally Dowling, Governor, qualified Chartered Accountant and a Commercial CFO whose children have attended the school. Membership includes Anthony Goddard, Vice Chairman, Nicola Foulston, a recently appointed Governor with a successful commercial career and whose children also attended the school, and Kate Collyer,

Malvern College Director of Finance. The Committee is also responsible for all Audit related matters.

3. The **Safeguarding Committee** is chaired by Roger Brierly, Governor and formerly Headmaster of Heathfield School who was also a Housemaster at Malvern College. He has been a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) so is very well qualified to lead this important Committee. Members include Penny Bijl, Head of Learning Enhancement/DSL at Malvern College and Dan Landon, Estates Bursar at Malvern College. Attending this Committee are Sarah Angus, Safeguarding Governor and Senior Deputy Head of Malvern College as well as Kate Tripp, Director of HR at Malvern College.

The Committees, which I also attend, and of which Jonnie is a member, are made up of appropriate members of staff and meet termly, reporting into the Board of Governors, which also meets termly. I and my fellow Governors strongly believe that this structure provides appropriate oversight of the school to navigate it through these very challenging times. The Committees met during October and I am delighted at their constructive deliberations, with all members of staff involved making valuable contributions.

Over the summer holidays and during the first half of term a small group comprising governors, the Headmaster, senior staff and key Malvern College staff has been working on a Strategic Plan to ensure that Abberley Hall is correctly positioned to meet the challenges of the current and foreseeable climate. This work has covered the following:

1. The continued provision of first class teaching to support a relevant curriculum and activities that will continue to prepare pupils for the future.
2. Investment in the infrastructure of the school to ensure it is fit for purpose now and into the future.
3. Ensure that school resources are properly aligned to the changing demand for Prep School education.
4. To harness the benefits of our association with Malvern College to enhance the school's delivery of education and care without impinging on the school's ethos, heritage and independence.
5. Position the school via a revitalized marketing campaign to appeal to a wider market.

It will be no surprise that the last 6 months have presented extraordinary operational and financial challenges to the school. The move to remote learning and the smooth return to school at the start of term reflects the excellent work of all the staff and the support of Malvern College. The many comments of appreciation from our parents are very much valued and I echo these wholeheartedly. I must add here how very impressed I am by how Jonnie and Tessa have thrown themselves so professionally and enthusiastically into all aspects of school life. I have no doubt our school and its development is safe in their hands.

The reductions in fee income over the summer term, additional fee support and the decision not to increase fees this term, together with a high historical cost base, requires a reduction in operational costs and financial assistance from Malvern College. These actions, which will not of course impact on the outstanding education your children enjoy, will ensure that Abberley Hall has a very bright future where we will continue to prepare our pupils for a variety of senior schools.

The various references to Malvern College in this letter, I am sure, will not have gone unnoticed. I want to emphasise to parents that the association with the College is delivering significant benefits as evidenced inter alia by the restored all weather pitch, the improved IT infrastructure and in the coming months a refresh of the Pre-Prep environment, the repainting of the gates symbolising this.



Furthermore, the investment in the boarding house over the summer reflects this investment as do recent improvements in the Headmaster's study! In addition, advice and guidance on areas such as health and safety and safeguarding, both areas that are so important in our duty of care to our children, as well as areas of academic enhancement, are much appreciated. Our relationship with Malvern College does not represent a 'takeover' of Abberley Hall but rather one which will ensure that our school thrives and its reputation as a leading Prep School is enhanced.

It has been a major regret that I have not been able to meet you at matches, concerts or plays. I very much look forward to doing so when guidance allows and provides the opportunities for pupils, parents, staff and governors to meet one another face to face.

May I wish you and your families a safe and relaxing Half Term.

With my best wishes.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CL', with a small checkmark below it.

Carey Leonard  
Chairman of Governors

