READ SCHOOL

DRAX

Annual Report

2024-2025

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DRAX

Governors' Annual Report 2024-2025

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Introduction from the Chair of Governors

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As the newly appointed Chair of Governors, I am honoured to present the Annual Report of the Board of Governors for the academic year 2024-2025. It is a privilege to serve a school with such a proud heritage and a vibrant, close-knit community of pupils, staff, and families.

Firstly, I wish to express heartfelt gratitude to two exceptional leaders. To Brian Watt, whose passing in this academic year was a great loss to our community. Brian's integrity, fairness, and unwavering commitment as Chair of Governors strengthened our governance and guided the school through challenging times. His leadership and vision leave a lasting legacy for Read School. Secondly, to David Pritchard, who stepped in as Acting Chair during Brian's illness. David's calm authority, experience, and dedication ensured continuity and stability when it mattered most. His willingness to serve exemplifies the spirit of our school community.

We are deeply thankful to them both and for the example they set. Their contributions have helped secure a strong foundation for the future of Read School.

I assume this role at a time when the independent school sector faces significant challenges, with over 40 schools closing nationwide in recent months, including some in our immediate vicinity. These developments underscore the importance of strong governance and strategic planning. As a Board, we are resolute in our commitment to ensuring Read School's longevity and success for years to come. Achieving this requires us to balance the needs of all stakeholders - pupils, parents, staff, as well as the school itself - within the financial constraints we face.

To support not only the survival but also the growth of Read, we have implemented a revised governance structure designed to strengthen accountability, broaden engagement, and ensure that every stakeholder group has a voice. Key changes include the creation of new committees focused on People, Legal and Data; Property and Health & Safety; and a change to the Safeguarding Committee to allow a more dedicated focus. These additions, alongside refinements to existing committees, will enable us to address critical areas such as staff wellbeing, compliance, and the ongoing improvement of our facilities.

I am delighted to welcome Mrs Sarah Dillon (Chair, People, Legal & Data Committee), Mr Ryan Dempsey (Chair, Premises, Health & Safety), Mr James Dean (Vice Chair, Premises, Health & Safety), Mr Brian Bugg (Chair, Education, Teaching & Learning), Mrs Jane Gosney (Member, Education, Teaching & Learning) and Dr Ruth Medlock (Deputy Safeguarding Governor) to the Governing Body. Their appointments further strengthen the expertise of our Board under the new Governance structure.

Over the summer, the school has been a hive of activity, with an unprecedented programme of repairs and renovations, including a transformation of the catering provision and enhancements to the learning environment. These improvements reflect our commitment to providing an outstanding educational experience for every pupil, one that combines small class sizes, dedicated teaching, and a broad co-curricular programme that builds confidence and character. This commitment shines at Read through a range of personal development and confidence-building initiatives, including participation in the Combined Cadet Force, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, as well as dedication and excellence in sporting activities, the arts, music and drama. Some of these countless student achievements are highlighted in this annual report.

It will be unsurprising to note that the 2024-25 academic year was notably affected by prominent financial challenges for independent schools, including the mid-year implementation of VAT on fees, an unforeseen rise in employer National Insurance contributions, the removal of charitable relief on local authority rates, and elevated inflation. These shock factors will be reflected in the upcoming financial results, which capture

both the initial impact of these pressures and our ongoing efforts to mitigate them, for example, by reducing fees to offset inflation and the new VAT charges. These shocks in addition to other non-cash accounting adjustments will unfortunately not clearly reflect the School's underlying operational performance.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the School and Board have diligently implemented strategic initiatives to ensure cashflow stability and reinforce our financial foundation for future years in the newly defined climate. These efforts have encompassed enhanced fee collection processes, strengthened cost controls, and targeted revenue-generating strategies, all of which have begun to demonstrate positive results in the current academic period.

The Board is dedicated to maintaining transparent communication with parents and stakeholders. We wish to assure our community that the school's financial status is under close review, and the leadership team is consistently prioritising long-term sustainability and growth. Following measures implemented over the past year, our outlook is positive: we anticipate a surplus in the current 2025-26 year and remain on course to fulfil our obligations.

We also remain deeply conscious of the financial pressures faced by families and continue to work innovatively and efficiently to keep Read among the most competitively priced independent schools in the region. Our focus is on maintaining the highest standards of education while ensuring sustainability for the future.

Finally, I want to express my sincere thanks to our Head, Mrs Ainley, and the entire staff for their unwavering dedication, and to my fellow Governors for their professionalism and support. Above all, I thank you - our parents and guardians - for your continued trust and partnership. Open, transparent, and collaborative communication is essential to our shared success, and I warmly encourage you to reach out with ideas, suggestions, or feedback at any time. To that end, we plan to launch a platform this year designed to streamline the process of collecting comments, suggestions, and ideas, with the aim of facilitating increased parent collaboration. This initiative will be complemented by the introduction of Parent Townhall meetings.

Together, we will ensure that Read School not only endures but thrives, continuing to nurture the individual gifts and talents of every pupil for generations to come.

With best wishes,

Lisa Dukes
Chair of Governors

Head's Annual Report 2024-2025

I am pleased to share the Read School Head's Annual Report for the academic year 2024-2025, the 358th year of Read School's existence and notwithstanding the extraordinary pressures facing independent schools, another very busy and successful year for the School.

Despite sector-wide pressures, Read School's pupil roll grew from 248 to 268 during the year. This growth was driven by several parent referrals and a healthy stream of enquiries, both of which are a testament to our reputation for nurturing, high-quality education. Boarding saw a 14% increase, and our flexi-boarding and wraparound care options attracted families seeking flexibility and support.

We also welcomed a good number of short-term international pupils, enriching our cultural diversity and providing valuable language and social experiences for our students.

Lower Junior School

Our youngest learners in the Lower Junior School embraced a year filled with creativity, exploration, and community spirit. The nurturing environment of LJS, combined with specialist teaching in Music, Art, PE, and Games, ensures that every child experienced a rich and varied curriculum, fostering curiosity and confidence.

One of the key benefits for our youngest pupils of being part of an all through school is the opportunity to participate in whole school events and activities and last year LJS pupils took part in a number of these including: European Languages Day, the Drax Church Harvest Festival, the annual Moloney Trust Competition, a Christmas Carol Concert, Read's Got Talent, our Easter Service and Commemoration Day.

The Performing Arts at Read are celebrated throughout the whole school and LJS pupils staged three concerts, including a heart-warming nativity play, *Christmas with the Aliens*, a joyful Easter showcase, and a vibrant summer performance. Our Mother's Day Afternoon Tea was a delightful celebration of family, and educational visits to The Deep, Yorkshire Wildlife Park, and Boston Park Farm brought learning to life.

Upper Junior School

Upper Junior pupils continued to flourish academically and socially, with a curriculum designed to stretch and support each child. Senior School teachers delivered lessons in Maths, English, and Science, helping Year 6 pupils earn their coveted 'Bunsen burner licences' - a rite of passage that eases the transition to Senior School.

Key highlights of the year included family workshops, the Young Voices concert and World Book Day celebrations while trips to Ledston Estate and the Summer Term Robinwood residential week provided standout experiences outside the classroom.

In the Junior School as throughout the Senior School, pupils are given opportunities to showcase their talents in a multitude of arenas:

In sports Upper Juniors pupils represented Read School in rugby, football, cricket, hockey, netball, and rounders across U9 and U11 levels while cross-country and athletics competitions yielded impressive individual results.

Beyond participating in whole school musical events, church services and concerts, UJS also put on two phenomenal performances of '*Dragon Days'* and the production which included a set designed and built by

pupils, was a triumph of creativity and collaboration. The Junior School end of year Summer Concert showcased musical and dramatic talent in abundance.

Small class sizes and termly Hodder *Rising Stars* assessments enabled tailored academic support and progress tracking for every pupil. Regular parent evenings and detailed reports ensured families remained closely involved in their child's progress.

The Year 3 classroom received a full refurbishment over the summer holidays, including new carpets and decoration. Junior changing rooms and toilet facilities were upgraded, and new storage solutions were installed to support our growing collection of sports and teaching resources.

Senior School

Former Read School Headmaster, Mr EV Watkins famously states in a 1923 *Draxonian* publication that '*The work of the School is not subservient to the mere passing of examinations'* and this certainly reflects our enduring commitment to providing an education which delivers more than 'just' grades and ensures that each pupil, upon leaving the School, has skills and enablement to set them up for life.

As much as Read School strives to provide a rounded education and to maintain our historically inclusive, non- academically selective ethos, our aim is to ensure that each pupil achieves their full academic potential, and it was therefore very pleasing to see the excellent results achieved in external examinations this year.

Examination Results Summer 2025

Our 2025 A-level & BTEC results were the best in the School's history with 43.2% of grades achieved at A/A*.

It is always a poignant moment celebrating with students and families on results day and we were particularly thrilled that so many students who applied to university, achieved their first choice of place, from University of Sheffield, The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of Northumbria, Sheffield Hallam, City University London and Manchester Metropolitan University. Two students secured apprenticeships and two more opted to take a pre-university gap year.

At GCSE 88% of GCSE passes achieved were at grade 4 or above and 48% of these were grades 9-6 (A*-B). This compares extremely favourably with the national average GCSE pass rate of 67.4% and 63.6% in Yorkshire & Humber.

We are immensely proud of the 2024-2025 examination cohorts who showed great resilience throughout a demanding examination series while also notching up so many achievements throughout their time at Read School. We wish all leavers every success as they embark on the next exciting stage of their journey.

Senior School Academic Highlights

English:

- Key Stage 3 pupils undertook Reading Age tests, leading to a Buddy reading scheme with Sixth Form and Year 11 students.
- Shakespeare studies expanded with schemes on Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Romeo and Juliet.
- Year 9 began GCSE poetry analysis from the AQA anthology.
- Senior School pupils participated in the Young Writer's Poetry competition
- Theatre trips included An Inspector Calls in Hull and Richard II in London for A-level students.

- The Level 2 Functional Skills qualification (considered a direct equivalent to a GCSE at grade 4 (C)) was introduced in English, allowing pupils to demonstrate essential literacy and communication skills.

Mathematics

- Further Maths GCSE continued to stretch and challenge our best mathematicians and the popularity of A-level Maths grew with the enrolment of our largest ever cohort.
- Senior pupils participated in the UKT Junior, Intermediate and Senior Challenges: 7 Year 7 pupils achieved Bronze or higher and 2 Year 8 pupils earned Gold. In the Intermediate Challenge Read achieved 5 Bronze, 6 Silver, and 1 Gold award and in the Senior Challenge two students achieved Gold, with one stand out merit award.
- The Maths department also celebrated success in Entry Level Maths and Level 1 & 2 Functional Skills in line with our passion to foster numeracy within our students at every level.

Science

- The Read Science department continued to provide a hands-on approach to scientific study, with daily practical experiments and a range of extra-curricular challenges to inspire and stimulate our young scientists.
- Science Week featured dissections, guest speakers, and industry-led workshops.
- A CREST Club was launched for students with an appetite for additional hands-on Science and projects ranged from Parkinson's-friendly game controllers to air quality monitoring.
- Year 10 and 12 entered national Biology competitions while Year 12 completed a biotechnology module with Hull University.
- A-level Chemistry students visited York University and Drax Power Station for advanced lab work.
- Year 6 pupils were again welcomed into labs to build early practical skills.

Performing Arts

<u>Music</u>

- The Music department continues to thrive at Read School with many pupils learning an instrument and having weekly lessons in school. Three Read pupils currently sing as choristers at Selby Abbey.
- The school-wide Moloney Trust competition saw a diverse range of instruments and abilities with over 50 pupils of all ages performing for the adjudicator.
- Music groups, including Offbeat (Year 7-8 choir), Harmonize (Year 9 to VI Form choir) and a Baroque group thrived while Theory Club provided additional musical stretch and challenge.
- Pupils showcased their musical talents in school plays, musical ensembles, and public performances ay Open Days, Church services and concerts, fostering confidence and creativity.
- We were delighted to strengthen our partnership with Selby Abbey with both our Christmas concert as well as our very first Commemoration Day Service held in the abbey's majestic setting.

<u>Drama</u>

- The Drama department successfully broadened its academic offering in 2024-2025, building on the existing GCSE qualification to add A-level Drama.
- The rigorous Key Stage curriculum continued to focus on developing self-confidence, communication skills, creativity and teamwork, equipping students with a toolkit of transferable skills that apply to the stage, further studies, and the workplace.
- The highlight of the year was the Senior School Production of 'Chicago - Teen Edition', involving 45 senior school students in the cast, backstage, and technical teams.

- Students benefited from several key trips, including a GCSE/A-level trip to see 'Blood Brothers' at The Grand Opera House in York and an A-level visit to the West Yorkshire Playhouse to see the immersive and interactive practitioner-style performance 'Feel Me' by Paper Birds'.
- The Drama department was thrilled to receive significant support from the Moloney Trust Foundation, which funded a new sound system and Radio Mic set-up, debuting at the opening of 'Chicago'.

Creative Arts

Art

The 2024-2025 academic year was a vibrant celebration of creativity across all age groups. From intricate paper cutting for Chinese New Year to A-Level Photography, students embraced artistic expression with enthusiasm and skill.

- GCSE and A-Level: Year 10 explored themes like "Under the Sea" and "Autumn," while Year 11 completed their Sustained Projects. Sixth Form students launched into A-Level Photography, with impressive entries in seasonal competitions.
- Cross-Curricular Collaboration: The Arts and Craft Club partnered with English for the "Read for Pleasure" literacy initiative, highlighting creativity across disciplines.
- Cultural and Environmental Engagement: Students explored *Dia De Los Muertos*, recycled plastic into Spring flowers, and participated in the "Rescue, Reuse and Recycle" House Competition.
- External Recognition: Entries were submitted to the prestigious Royal Academy of Arts Young Artists Summer Show.
- Enrichment and Outreach: Year 10 and 12 visited the V&A and Tate Modern in London, while GCSE pupils presented their work to prospective Year 9s and attended an Art & Design careers webinar.

Food Preparation & Nutrition

The FPN department combined practical learning, cultural experiences, and academic achievement.

- Hands-On Learning: Year 10 students practiced butchery and created vegetarian and vegan dishes. Year 11 attended a cheese-making workshop with *Yorkshire Dama Cheese*.
- Cultural Celebrations: Chinese New Year was marked with dumpling-making workshops led by a visiting expert.
- International Enrichment: February's food trip to Sorrento, Italy included visits to mozzarella and olive oil producers, pasta/pizza cookery classes and historical tours of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- Creative Challenges: Students created themed focaccia breads and gingerbread houses, showcasing artistic flair in culinary form.
- Academic Achievement: In addition to the larger number of students who achieved the core GCSE FPN qualification, several Year 11 pupils earned AQA Food Science / Healthy Eating unit awards.
- Future Pathways: Plans are underway to introduce the Level 3 Food Science and Nutrition qualification in Sixth Form, expanding career opportunities in the food industry.

Design Technology

2024-2025 was certainly an inspiring year for Design and Technology, with students across all year groups embracing innovation, creativity, and hands-on learning.

- **Enterprise and Innovation**: Year 7 launched into enterprise lessons, developing business ideas and pitching them in a 'Dragon's Den' style challenge.
- **Creative Contributions**: DT students designed and built the set for the school's *Chicago* production, created signage for school spaces, and supported charities with laser-cut poppies and Pudsey Bears.

- **Competitions and Projects**: Pupils competed in a regional DT challenge in Leeds, while Year 9 built functional mini trebuchets in the "Castle Attack" project.
- **Digital Design**: Students began learning CAD software, gaining real-world design skills.
- **Community Engagement**: DT stalls at the PFA Summer Fun Day were a hit with families, showcasing the department's creativity and outreach.
- **Senior Achievement**: Year 11 and 13 completed impressive NEA projects, and Year 10 visited the Design Museum in London for inspiration.
- **Sustainability Focus**: Pupils explored recycling by transforming bottle tops into plastic sheets, reinforcing eco-conscious design principles.

DT at Read continues to empower students to think creatively, solve problems, and make a meaningful impact through design.

Senior School Sports

2024-2025 was a dynamic and rewarding one for sport at Read School, with a packed fixture list across a wide range of disciplines. Pupils competed in rugby, football, cricket, hockey, netball, rounders, athletics, badminton, tennis, golf, and both girls' football and cricket—demonstrating our commitment to inclusivity and excellence.

- **Competitive Spirit**: Read maintained strong performances against both independent and local comprehensive schools, fielding teams that balanced participation with competitiveness.
- **Community Links**: The PE Department further strengthened partnerships with local clubs including Selby RUFC, Goole CC, and Howden FC, enhancing training and facility access.
- **Academic Sport**: GCSE and A-level PE and BTEC Sport continue to thrive, with strong uptake and excellent outcomes. Moderation feedback has been glowing.
- **Football Academy**: Our collaboration with Pontefract Collieries has flourished, with three Sixth Form students representing Read with distinction.
- **Marbella Sports Tour**: October's senior tour to Spain was a resounding success, offering pupils the chance to compete internationally in rugby, football, and netball while building camaraderie and unforgettable memories.

Read pupils continue to approach every fixture with passion, resilience, and pride—hallmarks of our sporting ethos.

Humanities

The Humanities Department has offered students a rich tapestry of learning experiences this year, blending academic rigour with immersive fieldwork and cultural exploration.

<u>Geography</u>

- Year 11 students undertook a field trip to Malham Cove and Skipton, investigating stream characteristics and conducting environmental surveys to assess Skipton's role as a market town or tourist destination.
- Preparations are underway for the department's fifth trip to Iceland in October, promising another unforgettable opportunity to study volcanic and glacial landscapes first hand.

<u>History</u>

- Pupils honoured Read School's fallen alumni during the Remembrance Day service, researching their lives and sharing reflections at the Church of St Peter and St Paul.

- The Easter Normandy trip deepened students' understanding of historical events by connecting them to real people and places, reinforcing the personal dimension of historical study.

From the rugged beauty of Yorkshire to the solemnity of Normandy and the icy wonders of Iceland, Humanities students have explored the world and its stories with curiosity and respect.

Business & Economics

Read is fortunate to have a thriving Business Studies and Economics department, with students combining academic learning with real-world enterprise and career exploration.

- The 2024-2025 academic year began with a GCSE group challenge exploring planning and collaboration, culminating in creative (and edible) pasta tower designs.
- Our March Careers Week welcomed over 40 companies to Moloney Hall, giving pupils from Reception to Year 13 valuable insights into diverse career paths. Industry feedback praised Read pupils' curiosity and professionalism.
- Enterprise and Charity: Year 10 and 11 students launched their own ventures for the Christmas Fair, raising significant funds for charity while spreading festive cheer.
- Academic Achievement: Year 11 and 13 GCSE and BTEC Business and A-level Economics students completed their courses with excellent results and gained hands-on experience in the workplace
- Business Studies at Read continues to inspire entrepreneurial thinking, career readiness, and community engagement and we are very proud of the sustainable links developed through the Read Business Network for the benefit of current and future Read School pupils.

Modern Foreign Languages & Classics

In 2024-2025 Read School's Languages Department continued to thrive, offering a rich and diverse curriculum that reflects our global outlook. With nearly 10% of pupils from overseas, Read remains a truly international school.

- Curriculum Breadth: Pupils studied French, Spanish, Latin (from Year 8), with the additional options of German and Chinese and qualifications extending to GCSE and A-level and beyond.
- Cultural Celebrations: The European Day of Languages featured a celebration of languages, a vibrant cake competition and dress-up day, raising over £400 for Selby and District Foodbank.
- Chinese New Year: Pupils engaged in cross-curricular activities including dumpling-making in Food & Nutrition, paper cutting in Art & Design, and storytelling in Early Years.
- Trips and Exchanges:
    - A joint French-History trip to Normandy offered immersive experiences in language, culture, and military history, including visits to D-Day sites and war cemeteries.
    - The inaugural German Exchange to Filderstadt gave pupils a chance to explore Baden-Württemberg, visit cultural landmarks, and experience German family life.

Computing

This year saw exciting developments in Computing and iMedia, with curriculum enhancements and hands-on innovation.

- **Curriculum Expansion**: Year 7 and 8 pupils benefited from new iMedia modules, including vector graphics and digital design.
- **Competition Success**: The International Bebras Challenge saw 12 students earn Gold Awards, qualifying for the Oxford University Computing Competition.
- **STEM Engagement**: Students attended the Royal Institution Christmas Lecture on AI and explored deepfake technology, VR headsets, and robot dogs at the National STEM Centre.

- **Machine Learning Projects**: Year 9 pupils used IBM Watson to create interactive AI projects, blending creativity with coding.
- **Industry Exposure**: Future Computer Science students visited London for *SheCanEngineer* STEM Day, engaging in space station design, Lego robotics, and networking with female engineers.
- **Inclusive Learning**: Computing units were adapted to support all learners, with notable progress among SEND pupils.

Adventurous Activity

Combined Cadet Force (CCF)

The Read School CCF is over 100 years old and provides pupils with opportunities to develop leadership, teamwork, and resilience through challenging training and adventurous outdoor activities.

In 2024-2025 cadets (and the Read CCF staff team!) again demonstrated outstanding commitment, leadership, and community spirit through a wide range of achievements and activities.

- **Leadership & Recognition**: Flt Sgt Leon Tabiner-Taylor and Sgt Sam Lowes earned ILM Level 3 qualifications in Leadership and Management. Leon was appointed North Yorkshire Lord Lieutenant's Cadet for 2024/25, with Sam set to follow in 2025/26—marking three consecutive years of this prestigious honour for Read School.
- **Cadet Progression**: The RAF section celebrated three new Master Cadets, while army cadets progressed through Basic, One Star, and Two Star training, supported by our new air rifle range and First Aid certification.
- **Instructional Roles**: Cadets undertook Methods of Instruction and Junior Instructor courses, preparing them to mentor younger peers.
- **Ceremonial Excellence**: The contingent led a Remembrance Day parade and commemorated the 80th anniversary of VE Day with a drumhead ceremony and picnic. A new Union Banner was unveiled, supported by fundraising and a letter of recognition from His Majesty King Charles III.
- **Community Impact**: Over £1500 was raised for SSAFA through events like "Books and Bakes" and a 10km walk led by Fg Off Oliver. Cadets also supported local initiatives, from decorating the church to mentoring younger pupils.
- **Adventurous Spirit**: Cadets participated in camps, competitions, and excursions including tactical training in Cyprus, adventure training in Nidderdale, and STEM visits to RAF Leeming. Highlights included flying, gliding, bouldering, and clay pigeon shooting.

The CCF continues to be a cornerstone of character development at Read, instilling resilience, leadership, and service in every cadet.

Duke of Edinburgh Programme (DofE)

Read School's inclusive and in-house DofE programme continues to empower students through challenge, teamwork, and personal growth.

- Bronze Level: 26 Year 9 pupils completed expeditions in the Wolds and Nidderdale, demonstrating teamwork, resilience, and leadership. Pupils supported one another and even applied first aid skills during a real-life scenario.
- Silver Level: 12 participants undertook expeditions in the Peak District and Yorkshire Dales, walking up to seven hours daily and camping over multiple nights.
- Gold Level: Seven Sixth Form students completed demanding expeditions in the Dales, walking eight hours daily over four days. Draxonian Dylan Clarkson received his Gold Award at Buckingham Palace in June.

- Young Leaders: Amelia Dugmore, Emily Medlock, and Lucy Thompson were selected as DofE Young Leaders, taking on roles in mentoring, promotion, and kit management.

The DofE programme at Read School continues to build essential attributes such as confidence, problem-solving, teamwork, and communication—mirroring the values of our CCF programme.

Sixth Form

The Sixth Form at Read School grew significantly in 2025-2026 continue offer a vibrant, inclusive, and enriching environment for students from diverse backgrounds.

- Leadership and Mentoring: Sixth Formers again played key roles across the school, from running the weekly newsletter to serving as Classroom Support Assistants and reading buddies. Prefects and House Captains in Lower Sixth excelled in their leadership positions.
- Charity and Community: Students led Comic Relief initiatives including bake sales, red nose sales, a football match, and a themed assembly. Evelyn Crompton raised awareness for the Lost Chord Charity.
- Social Enrichment: The bi-weekly Coffee Club became a much-loved tradition, offering a sensory and educational experience in gourmet coffee.
- Celebrating Student Leaders: outgoing Head Girl and Boy, Mary Couch and Leon Tabiner-Taylor made their valedictory speeches at the July Commemoration Day and we celebrated the appointment of Tyla Champagnie and Evelyn Crompton as new Heads of School, supported by Deputies Samantha Lowes and Max Bondarchuck.

Read School Boarding Community

Boarding remains a cherished part of Read School life, offering a nurturing, inclusive, and flexible environment for pupils aged 9 to 18.

- Global Community: This year's boarders hailed from the UK, Barbados, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Spain, and Ukraine, including children of Armed Forces families—reflecting our truly international ethos.
- Boarding staff have created a warm and supportive atmosphere, with tailored evening and weekend activities that foster friendship and wellbeing. This year's trips included visits to York, Leeds, the east coast, trampoline parks, Ninja Warrior, aqua parks, ice skating, climbing walls, and escape rooms—ensuring boarders enjoyed a rich and varied experience.
- Full, weekly, and flexi boarding proved especially valuable for families during exam periods and busy school weeks.
- On Commemoration Day, we proudly recognised our boarding pupils for their conduct, humour, and personal development throughout the year.

Boarding at Read is more than 'B & B' accommodation within school - it's a vibrant community where personal development and independent are developed and lifelong memories and friendships are made.

Parents & Friends Association (PFA)

The PFA was again been a cornerstone of community spirit and support at Read School, delivering a vibrant calendar of events and initiatives throughout the year.

- **Events and Fundraisers**: The year began with bacon butties and refreshments, followed by the Artisan Fair, PFA bar, and Dads' BBQ at school events. The Winter Ball at Oaks Golf Club was a standout success, and the inaugural May Bank Holiday Fun Day brought festive fun with stalls, performances, and bouncy castles.

- **Pupil-Focused Support**: From welcoming Father Christmas at the Christmas Fayre to hot chocolate mornings and Easter treats, the PFA has enriched the school experience for pupils across all ages.
- **Infrastructure and Enrichment**: Major projects included a new accessible toilet and a polytunnel to expand gardening opportunities. Additional Chromebooks, recorders for LJS, and MFL Day support.
- **Ongoing Contributions**: The PFA provided raffle prizes, departmental resources, and enhancements like boot scrappers for the sports hall and a new CCF flag. Afternoon Tea for VE Day added a special touch to commemorations.
- **Gratitude and Collaboration**: Thanks to the tireless efforts of committee members, parent helpers, and school staff, the PFA continues to thrive. Special thanks to Oliver Dukes (Chair), Lisa Dukes (Treasurer), and Ruth Medlock (Communications), among others.

The PFA's dedication and generosity made a lasting impact in 2025-2025, and we look forward to building on this success in the future.

Facilities and Estates

2024-2025 saw significant improvements across the Read School campus and an intensive summer upgrade programme, led by Mr Oliver Dukes and Governors Mr Jim Dean and Mr Ryan Dempsey ensured optimum readiness for the new academic year.

- Refurbishment Projects: 2024-2025 Upgrades included the Sports Hall changing rooms, Junior School showers, Junior School changing rooms, and bathrooms; recladding of the Mathematics block; new windows in Ramsker Humanities block and enhancements to the Base.
- Boarding Improvements: Various upgrades were made throughout the boarding houses, improving comfort and functionality for our residential pupils and adding new bedroom furniture.
- Outdoor Development: Continued work on the back sports field has further enhanced our outdoor facilities.
- New catering programme: a major initiative to bring catering back in house was launched in Spring 2025 as said goodbye to Wilson Vale and thanked them for their five years of partnership.
- Looking Ahead: Plans are already in motion for further renovations during the October half-term, ensuring our learning environment continues to evolve and improve.

We are grateful to all involved for their hard work and commitment to making Read School a safe, modern, and inspiring place to learn.

Gardening Club (Read School Horticultural Society)

The Gardening Club at Read School flourished this year, cultivating not just plants but a deeper sense of environmental responsibility and teamwork among pupils.

- **Polytunnel Project**: Thanks to support from the PFA, the club successfully launched a new polytunnel, dramatically expanding growing capacity and enabling year-round planting and learning.
- **Sustainability in Action**: Pupils embraced eco-conscious practices, including recycling initiatives and composting, while learning about seasonal planting and biodiversity.
- **Cross-Curricular Impact**: The club collaborated with departments such as Science and Food Preparation & Nutrition, linking gardening to nutrition, biology, and sustainability.
- **Community Engagement**: Produce grown by the club was shared with the school kitchen and local community, reinforcing the value of farm-to-table awareness.
- **Student Leadership**: Older pupils mentored younger members, fostering leadership and collaboration while maintaining garden beds and planning seasonal rotations.
- **Wellbeing and Enrichment**: Gardening sessions provided a calming, hands-on outlet for creativity and mindfulness, contributing to pupils' overall wellbeing.

Extra-Curricular Enrichment Programme

A vital part of a Read School education, the enrichment programme continued to offer pupils a wide-ranging and inclusive array of opportunities beyond the classroom. From after school academic clubs and creative workshops to sports, leadership roles, and outdoor adventures, Read pupils of all ages were again encouraged to explore new interests and develop valuable life skills.

The calendar of enrichment activities on offer is refreshed termly and continues to provide an invaluable opportunity to pursue activities of personal interest. 2024-2025 highlights included:

- STEM and Creative Clubs: CREST Club, Gardening Club, Art & Design workshops, Chess Club, and DT challenges fostered innovation and collaboration.
- Leadership and Service: Sixth Form mentoring, CCF, and Duke of Edinburgh Award programmes, School Council and volunteering built confidence, resilience, and teamwork.
- Cultural and Global Engagement: Trips to Marbella, New York, Sorrento, Normandy and Germany, broadened pupils' horizons. A German Club is offered to both Junior and Senior pupils.
- Community and Charity: Pupils led fundraising events, supported local causes, and participated in initiatives that strengthened school spirit and social responsibility. Over £3000 by Read School pupils and staff was raised in support of local and national charities.

The enrichment programme remains a vital part of Read School life, helping pupils grow into well-rounded, curious, and compassionate individuals.

In Summary

In 2024-2025 Read School continued to thrive through adversity, driven by a shared vision of excellence, inclusivity, and community and the hard work of its talented teaching and support staff. With strong academic outcomes, vibrant enrichment opportunities, and a united team of staff, governors, parents, and Draxonians, we look forward to another year of growth and achievement.

You can relive the spirit of the year in our short Commemoration Day Service video 2024-2025 *Draxonian* pictorial flipbook attached.

Best regards,

Mrs Ruth Ainley
Head

Link to Commemoration Day Service July 2025: http://bit.ly/454vTzo

Link to 2024-2025 Draxonian Flipbook: https://heyzine.com/flip-book/6791fd702b.html

History, Mission, Values and Vision

Background and History of Read School, Drax

Founded in 1667 by the Charles Reade, Read School has proudly served generations of pupils for 358 years. Originally established to provide an education to boys in the Selby area, the school has evolved into a thriving co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 4 to 18.

- Historic Roots: The school's foundation charter emphasised academic excellence and moral development—principles that continue to guide us today.
- Growth and Innovation: Over the centuries, Read School has expanded its curriculum, facilities, and community, embracing modern educational practices while honouring its traditions.
- Boarding Legacy: Boarding has long been a cornerstone of school life, offering a warm and inclusive environment for pupils from across the UK and around the world.
- Community and Character: From its early days to the present, Read School has remained deeply connected to the local community, fostering values of kindness, resilience, and ambition.

Today Read School stands as a beacon of heritage, excellence, and opportunity, preparing young people to thrive in a changing world while remaining true to its founding ethos.

Read School Mission and Aims

Our core aim is to provide outstanding day and boarding education for boys and girls aged 4–18, with small class sizes, exceptional teaching, and a responsive curriculum tailored to each child's needs.

- We remain committed to nurturing a warm, inclusive, and aspirational environment where every pupil is valued and supported.
- We foster a welcoming school culture that embraces pupils of all backgrounds and abilities.
- Our broad and enriching curriculum inspires a lifelong love of learning and enables every pupil to fulfil their academic potential.
- We aim to develop kind, confident, resilient, and well-rounded young people equipped with the skills and character to thrive in their future careers and contribute positively to society.

Read School Values

At Read School, our values are the foundation of everything we do. They shape our culture, guide our behaviour, and inspire our community to strive for excellence with integrity and compassion.

- Kindness - fostering a caring and supportive environment where every individual feels valued.
- Tolerance and Respect - embracing diversity and treating others with dignity, empathy, and understanding.
- Good Manners and Discipline - promoting courtesy, responsibility, and self-regulation in all aspects of school life.
- Care for the Environment - encouraging stewardship of our shared spaces and a commitment to sustainability.
- Fair Play - upholding honesty, teamwork, and sportsmanship both in and out of competition.
- Hard Work - recognising effort, perseverance, and the pursuit of personal bests.
- Enjoyment - celebrating the joy of learning, discovery, and shared experiences.

Current Governing Body

Governor	Role/Committee	Appointed
Mrs Lisa Dukes	Chair of Governors	June 2023 Appointed Chair August 2025
Mr Graeme Campbell	Vice Chair of Governors Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee	March 2022
Mr David Pritchard	Member of the Finance & Audit and People, Legal & Data Committees	February 2020
Mrs Kim O Hara	Chair of Safeguarding & Compliance Committee	March 2022
Mr Ryan Dempsey	Chair of the Premises, Health & Safety Committee Member of Marketing, Communication & Foundation Committee	April 2025
Mrs Sarah Dillon	Chair of People, Legal & Data Committee Member of Safeguarding & Governance Committee	December 2025
Mrs Tracy Butler	Chair of Marketing, Communication & Foundation Committee Member of Safeguarding & Governance Committee	March 2023
Mr Brian Bugg	Chair of the of the Education, Teaching & Learning Committee	April 2025
Dr Ruth Medlock	Vice Chair of Safeguarding & Compliance Committee	July 2025
Mr James Dean	Vice Chair of Premises, Health & Safety Committee	April 2025
Dr Richard White	Member of the Education, Teaching & Learning Committee	March 2020
Mrs Jane Breach	Member of Marketing, Communication & Foundation and Education, Teaching & Learning Committees	July 2024
Mrs Jane Gosney	Member of the Education, Teaching & Learning Committee	December 2024

In Attendance at Board Meetings	
Mrs Ruth Ainey	Head
Mr Scott Hunter	Bursar & Clerk to Governors

Other Staff Members In attendance for various Committees

Departures in the 2024-2025 Academic Year	
Mr Brian Watt	April 2025
Mr Chris Sunley	December 2024

Mrs Sarah Dillon, Mrs Jane Gosney, Mr Ryan Dempsey, Mr James Dean, Mr Brian Bugg, and Dr Ruth Medlock joined the Governing Body since the last Annual Report, further strengthening the People, Legal & Data, Premises, Health & Safety, Education, Teaching & Learning, Marketing, Communication & Foundation and Safeguarding & Governance Committees.

Representations to the Governing Body

Representation to the Governing Body may be made at any time to the Chair of Governors, c/o the Clerk to the Governors at Read School:

Bursar / Clerk to the Governors

Read School, Drax, Selby, North Yorkshire YO8 8NL, UK

Email: bursar@readschool.co.uk

Tel: 01757 618248

Committee Chairs' Reports

Safeguarding & Governance

As Safeguarding Governor, I am pleased to report that the school's commitment to the safety and welfare of every pupil has remained our absolute priority throughout the 2024-2025 academic year. The Governing Body continues to provide robust oversight, working closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the wider leadership team to ensure a culture of vigilance, openness, and continuous improvement is embedded across all areas of school life.

This year saw increased focus by creating a dedicated Safeguarding Committee, strengthening our policies, enhancing staff knowledge, and addressing the evolving landscape of digital safety through the Learning for Life lessons.

Summary of Recent Safeguarding Improvements

- **Policy & Compliance Review:** A comprehensive review and update of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy was conducted and approved by the Governing Body. This ensures full compliance with the most recent statutory guidance, including any updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024.
- **Enhanced Staff Training Programme:** We continue to provide mandatory module training for staff focusing on the identification and response to online harm, misogyny and incel culture and peer-on-peer abuse.
- **Boarding:** The recent upgrades to the Boarding House provide a warms and welcoming environment for Boarders. Working closely with the Head of Boarding, we have strengthened the system for checks and communication between pastoral and medical staff, ensuring consistent welfare support is in place for all boarding pupils, particularly during weekends and holiday periods.
- **Data Monitoring System:** The school continues to invest in its internal pupil monitoring and referral system. This new platform provides DSLs with real-time data analysis, enabling faster identification of trends, prompt intervention, and more accurate case management documentation.
- **Clearer Reporting Routes for Pupils:** We have continued to promote and embed multiple confidential channels for pupils to report concerns, including expanding the visibility and accessibility of the pastoral.

Priorities for 2025-2026

Staff and Governor Training: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 training.

- **Listening to Pupil Voice**: run the Pupil Voice survey 2025, involving the school council to review the results and consider improvements.
- **Improving feedback systems**: enable collecting of comments, suggestions, and ideas through the development of a pastoral area on the school website.
- **Safeguarding Information**: improve information for Parents and Carers through adding a Safeguarding section to the school website.

The Governing Body is assured that the school maintains the highest standards of safeguarding practice. We extend our sincere thanks to all staff for their tireless dedication and commitment to the welfare of our pupils.

Kim O'Hara

Chair of the Safeguarding, Health & Safety Committee

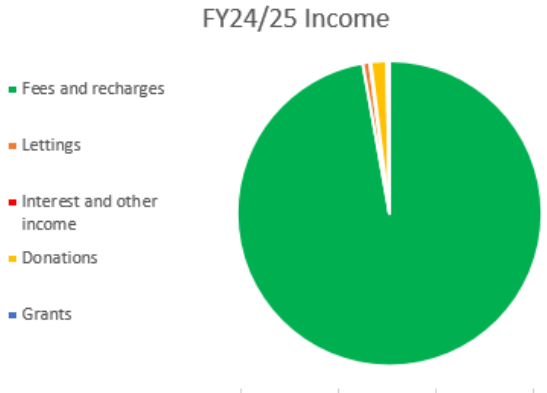
Finance and Audit

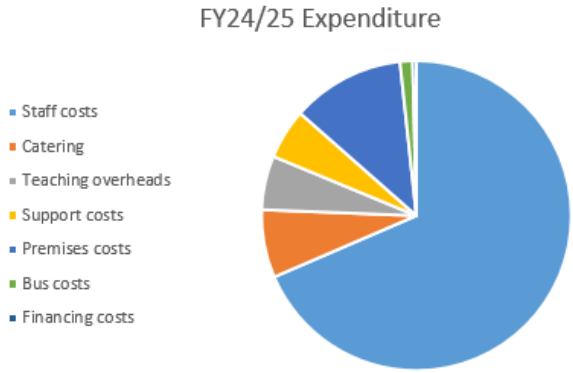
The Finance and Audit Committee convened regularly to review the school's financial status and provide oversight on several projects during the financial year. Key matters that were discussed include:

- Reviewing the monthly management accounts and financial forecasts, including cash flows.
- Oversight of the external audit process and preparation of the annual report.
- Review of the cost base to ensure that value for money on school fees maximised, and to mitigate the impact of the government's decision to require VAT on school fees.
- Review of other revenue-generating opportunities.
- Reviewed and approved fee increases and key fee collection decisions.

The draft headline results for the last financial year ended 31 August 2025 reveal a nearly 9% increase in income versus the previous year, which can be attributed to the increases in student enrolment and inflationary fee adjustments. Concurrently, total expenditure has risen by 12%. The majority of this expenditure increase is due to inflationary pressures resulting from general cost-of-living rises, the abolishment of charitable rates relief from 1 April and changes to Employers National Insurance which have directly influenced the costs associated with delivering education and maintaining the premises.

The School has continued to invest in the maintenance and enhancement of its facilities, which remains critically important. As the charts below illustrate, over 97 percent of income is derived from school fees and recharges, with the remaining balance provided by lettings, donations, grants, and other sources of income. The highest levels of expenditure were driven by staff, premises, catering, and support costs.





Recent policy changes, combined with a higher cost-of-living in the UK, have placed unprecedented financial strain on independent schools. These measures include the imposition of VAT on school fees from January 2025, removal of business rates relief, increases in national minimum wage, and changes to employers' national insurance contributions, have significantly impacted the cost base during the financial year.

The Committee continues to focus on cost management to ensure that wastage is minimised and expenses are focussed to provide good value for money, whilst ensuring that the quality of education and services remains the highest priority. Cash flow continues to be prioritised to ensure that an adequate cash balance is maintained to allow liabilities to be settled as they fall due. We also continue to explore all opportunities to generate additional revenue.

The financial performance for the new financial year, combined with ongoing efforts to address economic headwinds, provide us with a stable risk-mitigated foundation for the School's continued prosperity.

Graeme Campbell
Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee

Premises, Health & Safety

The Premises, Health & Safety Committee is responsible for overseeing the maintenance, development, and strategic improvement of the Read School estate. Our remit extends across facilities management, health and safety, statutory compliance, catering, and the overall safeguarding of students, staff, visitors, and the wider school community.

Over the past twelve months, the School has experienced significant progress in both its physical environment and safety culture. These improvements reflect the school's commitment to providing a secure, inspiring, and well-maintained learning environment. Our continued priority is to build on this momentum in the year ahead.

The committee meets monthly with the on-site team to review maintenance priorities, statutory compliance activities, and upcoming inspection requirements. These sessions focus on assessing infrastructure performance, catering operations, and the status of identified works. Each meeting concludes with a structured site walk-through to validate priorities, identify new requirements, and review progress.

Key Improvements Delivered

- External refurbishment of the Maths Block
- Refurbishment of Upper Juniors toilets and changing rooms
- Ongoing enhancements to catering facilities and service standards
- Dedicated independent supply for the School's ICT infrastructure
- Strengthened site access and safeguarding measures, including improved sign-in processes, visitor lanyards, and perimeter fencing
- Replacement of windows across priority areas
- New cladding to the PE block
- Improved external presentation, including painting and removal of overgrown foliage from the main building roofline

Forward Strategy

The committee remains committed to improving transparency, condition awareness and proactive asset planning. Our focus for the coming year is to further strengthen building visibility by monitoring each block individually, enabling clearer performance insights and a more structured, long-term investment approach across the School estate.

Through strong collaboration between the committee and the site team, we will continue to enhance safety, reinforce compliance, and support the long-term sustainability and excellence of Read School's facilities.

Ryan Dempsey FIET
Chair of the Premises and Health & Safety Committee

People, Legal & Data

Establishment

The People, Legal and Data Committee is currently being established under the School's new governance structure to provide strategic oversight across three interconnected areas: staff wellbeing, legal and regulatory compliance, and data protection. By bringing these domains together under one dedicated committee, we aim to ensure focused governance, improved coordination, and alignment with sector best practice.

Forward Strategy

As the committee enters its first full year, the strategic focus will be on embedding robust governance practices and driving continuous improvement across its core responsibilities. Key priorities include:

Employment Law and HR Governance

- Reviewing and auditing employee contracts and policies
- Oversight of external HR providers where necessary to assist the running of the school

Staff Wellbeing

- Establishing a framework to support staff across all roles and career stages.
- Enhancing feedback and engagement mechanisms, including annual staff surveys.
- Reviewing staff well being and considering measures that would be beneficial to staff.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- Conducting a full audit of existing policies to ensure alignment with current legislation and sector guidance in conjunction with other specialist committees.
- Reviewing and strengthening risk management and compliance monitoring processes.

Data Protection Governance

- Sourcing specialist advice
- Reviewing and refining data governance structures, with a focus on accountability, transparency, and GDPR compliance.
- Supporting other committees work on digital safeguarding and cyber security resilience across the school.

The committee will work closely with other governance groups to ensure cross-functional alignment and to share best practices. Sarah Dillon has been identified as the future Chair of this committee, pending completion of Governor onboarding. In addition, we plan to appoint a further Governor with expertise in data governance to strengthen the committee's capacity and insight.

Lisa Dukes
Chair of Governors

Education, Teaching & Learning

Members of the Education, Teaching and Learning Committee have continued their termly visits to the school throughout the 2024-25 academic year. As in previous years, the priority during these visits has been to observe classroom teaching, engage in dialogue with teachers and the Head, and speak directly with pupils about their learning experiences. These visits are framed by the School Improvement Plan and the ISI Framework, which continue to guide our focus and evaluation.

The committee is pleased to report that the school has sustained its high standards in education, teaching, and learning. The 2025 national examination results for both the Junior and Upper Schools were once again excellent, significantly exceeding national averages. These outcomes reflect the continued strength of teaching and learning across the school.

Key observations from this academic year include:

- **Effective Use of Flightpath Data**: The school continues to use flightpath procedures to monitor pupil progress and attainment. At GCSE level, both boys and girls demonstrated progress well above expectations based on prior national assessments.

- **High-Quality Teaching**: The teaching observed across both Junior and Upper Schools remains of a consistently high standard. Lessons are well-structured, purposeful, and appropriately challenging.

- **Pupil Engagement and Independence**: Pupils are actively engaged in their learning, respond thoughtfully to questioning, and demonstrate increasing independence and confidence in articulating their ideas.

- **Outstanding Behaviour**: Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary, contributing to a positive and focused learning environment.

- **Enrichment Through Extra-Curricular Activities**: A broad and diverse range of extra-curricular opportunities continues to enrich pupils' educational experiences and support the development of key life skills.

- **Staff Commitment and Collaboration**: Teachers, subject leaders, senior leaders, the Head, and support staff have shown exceptional commitment to the school's improvement priorities. There is a strong culture of collaboration and a willingness to share and adopt best practices.

The committee remains highly optimistic about the future of education, teaching, and learning at the school. The dedication of staff and the enthusiasm of pupils provide a strong foundation for continued success.

Brian Bugg
Chair of the ETL Committee

Marketing, Communications & Foundation

The Marketing, Communications and Foundation Committee is responsible for guiding all internal and external communications and marketing activities across the school, as well as providing strategic oversight for community engagement and Foundation initiatives.

This year, the committee welcomed Mr. Ryan Dempsey, whose appointment brought valuable expertise and momentum. We met regularly to review priorities and progress, with a central strategic focus on driving pupil enrolment. Despite a particularly challenging external environment, this objective was successfully achieved, as outlined in the Head's report. A key contributor to this success has been the delivery of impactful and engaging events, including school open days, Sixth Form evenings, and both domestic and international recruitment fairs. We commend the Head and her team for their dedication and professionalism in executing these initiatives, as well as their ongoing outreach work within the local community.

We also extend our thanks to Read School parents, friends, and family members who have actively supported and promoted the school within their own networks. Their advocacy continues to play a vital role in raising the school's profile.

Enhancing the school's digital presence has remained a priority. Progress has been made in the development of the Read School website, social media platforms, and strategic marketing resources. These improvements are essential to strengthening communication with current and prospective families and to better articulating the school's values and vision. We will continue to focus on these areas throughout the coming year.

We are grateful to all families who participated in school surveys this year. Their feedback is invaluable, and we remain committed to listening and acting on these insights to improve the school experience.

Finally, the Read School Foundation continues to play a vital role in coordinating the school's fundraising, grant activities and social commitments, working in close partnership with the Parents and Friends Association (PFA) and the Draxonians. We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support and commitment of both groups, whose efforts have significantly contributed to the school's success throughout the year.

Looking ahead, the committee has identified the following key priorities for 2025–2026:

- Continue to drive pupil roll growth, with a particular focus on marketing the Junior School, Boarding, and Sixth Form.
- Further develop and promote the school's sporting activities.
- Enhance communication with parents and stakeholders through improved digital platforms and messaging.
- Ensure pupil and parent voices are actively captured and reflected in decision-making.
- Strengthen community connections and proactively seek new opportunities for the school, its pupils, and the wider community.

Tracy Butler
Chair of Marketing & Communications Committee and of the Read School Foundation