

HEATH MONK: THREE PRIORITIES 2020



1. DEFINING WHO WE ARE AS AN ORGANISATION

Now more than ever, we need to be absolutely clear on what we offer and where our values lie.

We need to look at what defines us and what makes us unique; particularly in an environment where Covid-19, Brexit, and the economic fall-out of both, have challenged our assumptions and uprooted many of our certainties.

We need to understand and shape what education will look like in a post Covid-19 world. I don't believe that we will ever return to business as usual. We have seen, from the recent months of remote learning, what can and cannot be replicated online.

It is clear from the response to the pandemic across the world that the role of schools in enabling parents to continue to work and in building the skills of young people in working with others is greater than has often been acknowledged (including by teachers). Schools are – and must continue to be – about far more than learning.

Similarly, parents face a very different working environment in the future. Working from home will change from an occasional practice to the predominant way of working for many companies: reducing the necessity for daily commutes and large city-centre office spaces. This will affect our parents and what they want from the BSN.

And, of course, we need to prepare young people for the future when that future may look very different, as universities embark on online-only courses and the opportunities for travel are increasingly limited.

I don't have the answers to these issues. But I am certain that we need to try to find them – and that, as a starting point, we need to return to our core values and to discover what drives us. I am keen to hear from staff, students, parents and governors over the next six months as we seek, together, to react to the post Covid-19 world. The Board of Governors has asked me to carry out a strategic review of the school and its operations as part of this process. I will be in touch with further details over the next few months.



2. DIVERSITY

The past few months have seen growing outrage and protest against systemic racism. As educators, I believe that we have a responsibility to advocate for diversity, in all of its forms, in everything that we do.

As an international school with nearly 90 nationalities represented among our student body, diversity should sit at the heart of our values, and be visible in every area of the organisation - from recruitment and promotion of staff; through the relationships that we foster with students and parents; to the way that our curriculum is designed and taught. The BSN has already done important work in this area (particularly in its teaching and curriculum). But, as with almost every organisation, there is more that we can - and must - do.

Before we can decide where we need to go we need to look at where we are now. That's why we will be carrying out **an analysis of the current situation on diversity at the BSN** - amongst staff, students, in our values and our curriculum.

I intend to set up a cross-campus **Diversity Working Group** to ensure that every area of the organisation is part of this process. This will include representatives from across leadership, Governors, teachers, support staff, the OR, students and parents. If you are interested in being part of this group, do get in touch - further details will follow.

As part of that work, we will also be developing and implementing a new **Diversity Policy**. All campuses will be involved in this process to ensure that we have a policy which is fit for purpose for a large international organisation like ours.

Of course, working groups and policies only have an impact if they become embedded into the very fabric of the organisation - a process that takes time and effort. We need to look at areas like unconscious bias and our public messaging to ensure that we don't just 'talk the talk' on diversity, but actively model it in everything we do.



3. CUSTOMER SERVICE

The BSN is a not-for-profit organisation – and the bottom line is that we need to remain the school of choice for parents who are looking for the very best education for their children. We also recognise that we have a growing number of families who pay our fees themselves, as well as an increasing number of companies who are reviewing their salary packages - often requiring (greater) financial contributions from parents.

The disruption caused by Covid-19 has already had an impact on our number on roll – and we all need to work hard to ensure that we can stabilise and improve our numbers in the future. That means taking steps to ensure that our current parents are happy with the school and that we remain open to their suggestions and feedback, as well as reaching out to new families through our communications and admissions work. As Ambassadors for the school, every one of us will have an important part to play in this.

Our customer service – at every level – will be paramount. We should all remember that word of mouth is more important in attracting families than almost everything else. Communications with stakeholders and local employers will also be crucial.

Part of providing an excellent service is also about ensuring that we are rigorous with what we spend. I know that some excellent work has already been undertaken to examine our cost drivers and to ensure that we are as efficient as we can possibly be – and I would urge all staff to consider ways in which we can continue to manage our costs, without impacting on the quality of education.