

IDPE and Bolton School

Bursary fundraising – linking the past, present and future

By Laura Firth, Head of Development at Bolton School

Summary

In 2015 as part of its centenary celebrations, former Direct Grant recipient Bolton School launched its 100 Campaign for Bolton School Bursaries, which aimed to raise £5 million for the school's bursary fund. This case study explores how Bolton School used its history to inspire the school community to support future generations of pupils to achieve their potential.

Background

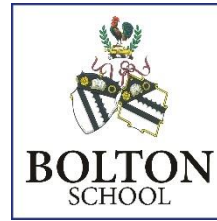
A former Direct Grant recipient, Bolton School is an independent day school foundation in Bolton, Lancashire for 2,300 children aged 4-18, comprising of a mixed infant school, single-sex junior and senior schools and sixth form. One in five children in the two senior schools receives some level of bursarial support for their education, and of these, one in three have their fees paid in full.

The school started fundraising for its bursary fund immediately after the abolition of the Government's Assisted Places scheme in 1997, and a development office has now been in place for well over ten years. Well-established and well-resourced (with a FTE staffing level of 4.75), the development office manages a database of over 11,000 alumni to oversee a thriving and detailed alumni engagement programme of events, communications and services, and a strong fundraising programme which raises, on average £1 million annually for the school.

The school's alumni community cares greatly that current and future generations of pupils have the same chance to succeed that the Direct Grant and Assisted Places schemes offered them, and are the main source of donations to the school.

The challenge

Equality of educational opportunity has been fundamental to the ethos of Bolton School since its foundation in 1915.



After the successful completion of a £3.5 million capital appeal to build a new Sixth Form Centre in 2013, the school made bursaries its fundraising priority, with the long-term ambition of building a bursary fund able to support one in three children, replicating the level of access enjoyed during the Direct Grant era. Using the school's centenary celebrations in 2015 as a catalyst, it launched the 100 Campaign for Bolton School Bursaries, which aimed to raise £5 million for the school's bursary fund by August 2018 – a target that was achieved earlier this year.

The solution

Crafting a clear, concise message to summarise the aims of the campaign, and the importance of its success to the school's long-term ambitions for the bursary fund, was crucial. By linking the campaign to the centenary celebrations in 2015, we were able to celebrate and honour the school's heritage, and look forward to the next 100 years in the school's history. This offered opportunities to cultivate potential major donor prospects, who were profiled in celebration of the school's centenary, as well as creating a shared sense of achievement and pride amongst the school community. This messaging, linking the past and the present with the future, appealed to potential donors across the school community, and was used in brochures, an annual giving report, and on digital infographics which were emailed to alumni, parents and friends, and shared widely across the school and alumni social media channels.

The school's previous fundraising success had been founded upon major gifts, primarily from Alumni and Charitable Trusts, and it was clear from the outset that this would be the case for the 100 Campaign, too. Cultivating existing major donors, as well as identifying and converting new prospects, was a key priority. Once engaged, potential major donors were offered a 'menu' of gift options to consider, ranging from sponsoring a sixth form bursary to endowing a bursary place in perpetuity. This enabled us to link donors with named recipients, connecting past, present and future members of the school community in a virtuous circle, which offered a clear framework for ongoing donor stewardship.

Key takeaways

- Linking the past to the present can inspire donors to support a school's future
- Develop a concise message and a clear brand for your campaign, to use across all communication channels
- Ruthlessly focus your fundraising energies on the income streams that are most likely to deliver success with your campaign target