



Headline sponsor:

**schoolblazer**

# BSA Annual Conference for Heads

*Boarding perspectives:  
Learning within, Leading beyond*

**CONFERENCE CHAIR:** DR CHRIS PYLE, HEADMASTER, LANCASTER ROYAL GRAMMAR

**VENUE:** YORK RACECOURSE, KNAVESMIRE ROAD YO23 1EX

# Annual Conference for Heads ~

## *Boarding perspectives: Learning within, leading beyond*

It is a great pleasure to host this year's BSA Annual Conference for Heads as Chair for 2025. I look forward to meeting and connecting with many of you.

It is undoubtedly a challenging time for the boarding sector. This is particularly true in the UK, where we have seen the introduction of VAT and removal of business rates relief for independent schools, as well as an increase in employers' national insurance. Schools are also competing in an increasingly global marketplace and tackling rising levels of student anxiety. The stakes have never been higher and the to-do list never longer.

What remains unchanged, though, is the sector's commitment to excellence. Boarding provides a holistic education setting that cannot be matched. Each school has a unique identity, but we all share goals: to inspire, to build communities, to build resilience. Not just amongst our students, but amongst our teams and in ourselves.

It is fitting, therefore, that the theme for this year's conference is 'learning within; leading beyond'. We will hear from Heads as well as leadership experts on topics ranging from managing teams to finding opportunities in challenges. Perhaps most importantly, we will also learn from one another and from this year's award winners, who will be celebrated over dinner. I very much look forward to it and to welcoming you.



**Dr Chris Pyle**  
Conference Chair 2025 and Head, Lancaster Royal Grammar School

**AUDIENCE:**  
Heads | Principals

**VENUE:**  
York Racecourse

**COST:**  
UK full members - included in 2024/25  
membership (an RSVP is essential)  
International full members - £750  
Affiliate members and day schools - £1,125  
Non-members - £1,500

*Includes: two-day conference, conference  
refreshments and BSA annual awards dinner.  
Please note the cost does not include hotel  
accommodation this should be booked separately.*

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK>](#)

# Day 1

## Tuesday 06 May:

*Learning within, leading beyond*

**10:30 Registration and refreshments**

**11:00 Welcome**

David Walker, Executive Director, Boarding and Director BSA/TIOB

**11:05 Chair's address**

Dr Chris Pyle, Conference Chair 2025 and Head, Lancaster Royal Grammar School

*Our conference chair will look at how the boarding sector can learn within and lead beyond in today's changeable world.*

**11:15 The CEO's compass: Navigating teams through turbulent times**

Jonathan Bowman-Perks MBE, CEO's Trusted Leadership Advisor

*Practical lessons for you to draw on from your peers worldwide in your rewarding yet lonely job at the top with commercial and personal pressures to navigate.*

**12:15 Networking lunch**

**13:15 Boarding perspectives: learning within**

- Jane Gandee, Head, St Swithun's School
- Gareth Jones, Head, Bilton Grange Prep School
- Mark Lauder, Head, Strathallan School
- Geoff Marsh, Head, Frensham and Head, Frensham Schools

*Our panel will compare their experiences of leading different types of schools, including prep, all-through, single-sex – and Australian.*

**14:00 Keynote**

**Why is school so difficult?** In conversation with Dr Carrie Herbert MBE

*Dr Herbert will share insights from Red Balloon's programme for bullied or anxious self-excluded students, which sees 93% achieving educational success as well as gaining confidence and a plan.*

**15:00 Refreshments and networking**

**15:30 Aiding the anxious generation: Strategies for improved student outcomes and retention**

- Adam Beeson, Strategic Enrolment Director, New Summit Academy and The Bridge – Costa Rica
- Dr Heather Tracy, Executive Director & Co-Founder, New Summit Academy and The Bridge – Costa Rica

*In this interactive session, facilitators will share tried and tested strategies for supporting students with social-emotional challenges.*

**16:00 Global village round table**

**1. CREATING A HOME FROM HOME**

- David Walker, Executive Director, Boarding and Director BSA/TIOB  
*Discuss the practicalities of creating the ideal boarding environment on a budget.*

**2. SAFEGUARDING AND COMPLIANCE**

- Dale Wilkins, Executive Director, Scotland/Wales and Accredited/Compliance, BSA Group  
*Understand the latest safeguarding requirements and share best practice.*

**3. INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

- Beth Hudson, Executive Director, Specialist Services, BSA Group and Director, BAISIS  
*Share tips on successful recruitment and integration of international students.*

**4. IMMIGRATION 101**

- Kate Hollyer, Executive Director, Legal & Public Affairs & Partner, BSA Legal Services  
*Raise your UKVI concerns and experiences with an immigration expert.*

**5. MARKETING BOARDING**

- Aileen Kane, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy CEO, BSA Group  
*Discuss positioning and promoting boarding in a competitive global market.*

**17:00 Close of day one**

**19:00 Drinks reception - Sponsored by IGTM**

music kindly performed by pupils from St Peter's School, York

**19:30 Annual conference dinner and awards - Sponsored by Moore Barlow**

After dinner speaker: Alice Philips, Head, St Catherine's, Bramley



# Day 2

## Wednesday 07 May:

*Learning within, leading beyond*

### 09:30 **Global boarding trends**

**David Walker**, Executive Director, Boarding and Director BSA/TIOB

*The latest trends, concerns and opportunities as reported by BSA member schools around the world.*

### 10:00 **Keynote**

### 10:45 **Refreshments and networking**

### 11:15 **Breakout discussions**

#### 1. EDUCATION LAW UPDATE: UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

- **Ben Collingwood**, Partner, Moore Barlow
- **Adam McRae-Taylor**, Legal Director, Moore Barlow

*Specialist independent education lawyers will give an update on neurodiversity: the increase in requests for support, latest guidance and regulation, reasonable adjustments, and practical tips.*

#### 2. A PROFILE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEMPORARY BOARDING SCHOOL PARENT

- **Guy Schady-Beckett**, Director and Head of Research, Next Step Education

*Guy Shady-Beckett will draw on his global experience dealing with boarding families to lead this breakout session on what parents look for and common concerns.*

#### 3. LIFE OUTSIDE SCHOOL: FRAMEWORKS FOR POSITIVITY AND RESILIENCE

- **Simon Pither**, Director, PRS Training
- **Jamie Daniels**, Director, PRS Training

*Understand how developing self-advocacy systems can help young people manage confrontation.*

#### 4. UK COMPLIANCE

- **Kate Hollyer**, Executive Director, Legal & Public Affairs & Partner, BSA Legal Services
- **Dale Wilkins**, Executive Director, Scotland/Wales and Accredited/Compliance, BSA Group

*Discuss the latest updates and implications for boarding with compliance specialists.*

#### 5. GATEWAYS NOT BARRIERS: PRESERVING ACCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- **David Williams**, CEO, I-GTM



### 12:15 **Networking lunch**

### 13:15 **Converting challenges to opportunities**

- **Jim Lawless**, CEO, SYMMETRY & Bestselling Author

*Jim helps leaders do the things they never thought they could, and will share his secrets in this thought provoking session.*

### 14:15 **Breakout discussions repeated from the morning session**

### 15:00 **Refreshments and networking**

### 15:30 **Emotionally intelligent leadership to maximise your people power**

- **Gina Buckney**, Founder and Director, Your People Power

*TEDx speaker Gina Buckney will share insights from her extensive experience in corporate transformation and workplace wellbeing.*

### 16:30 **Close of conference**



**David Walker**  
Executive Director  
Boarding and  
Director BSA/TIOB

David joined the BSA group in 2023. He has over 20 years' experience in boarding schools and has worked in a range of schools in the UK and Africa, alongside being a prep school governor and a trustee of a MAT. Before taking up his post at the BSA, David was Deputy Head Pastoral at a large co-ed independent school in the South-East.



**Dr Chris Pyle**  
Conference Chair 2025  
and Head, Lancaster  
Royal Grammar School

Chris Pyle is Chair of the BSA State Boarding Forum. He has been Head of Lancaster Royal Grammar School since 2012. The school has grown significantly over that period and has welcomed Sixth Form girls as boarders and day students. It has been judged Outstanding in all categories in three successive Ofsted boarding inspections. Chris was previously Deputy Head of the Perse School, Cambridge. Before becoming a teacher he completed a PhD in Geography at Cambridge University and also worked in the water industry. He holds the NPQH, is currently studying for the NPQEL in school leadership, and is Executive Lead of the NNN Maths Hub. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and regularly writes resources for schools on natural hazards and environmental change.



**Jonathan Bowman-Perks MBE**  
CEO  
Trusted Leadership Advisor

Jonathan has learnt from the brightest and the best CEOs, Chairs, Principals, Heads, Vice Chancellors, Generals, Partners and Managing Directors. His forthcoming third book, "The CEO's Compass: Navigating Teams Through Turbulent Times", does what it says on the tin. As a Leadership Advisor and Coach to world-class CEOs and Top Teams, there are few messy problems or challenges that he has not yet come across. He has the privilege of meeting fascinating leaders, Politicians, Special Forces Soldiers, Generals, Explorers, Olympians and Entrepreneurs. As host of the Inspiring Leadership Podcast (rated in the global top 1.5%), he draws on their personal stories and wisdom to help others navigate the least-worst outcomes to survive and thrive in the turbulent leadership world. Jonathan was Assistant to the Head of the British Army, Chief of Staff of the Army's largest Brigade and commanded his Company on three operational tours. He was a leader in PwC, IBM and as Penna PLC's MD of Board and Executive Coaching. He was awarded the MBE for his services to leadership in training UN leaders who helped prevent the East Timor massacre.



**Jane Gandee**  
Head  
St Swithun's School

Jane Gandee, Head, St Swithun's School Jane began her teaching career in 1993 having dabbled briefly in accountancy after a degree in French and Spanish at Girton College, Cambridge. She taught languages at Lord Wandsworth College and Oakham School before becoming head of Spanish and then head of languages at Queenswood School. In 2005, she became director of studies at City of London School for Girls and she took up her current post in 2010. Jane is a keen sportswoman, having represented Cambridge at athletics and cross country and captained the university women's football team. She still runs competitively when time allows and particularly enjoys running with colleagues at BSA conferences.



**Adam Beeson**  
Strategic Enrolment Director  
New Summit Academy and  
The Bridge – Costa Rica

With nearly two decades of international school teaching and leadership experience in Europe and the Americas, Adam is an educator with a passion for creating meaningful relationships with learners and facilitating experiences that lead to cross-cultural understanding and global competencies. From 2015-2020, Adam served in a number of roles within the Academic Department at NSA. He is actively involved in the wider field of international school education, adding his insight as a presenter at the International Baccalaureate (IB) Global Conference of the Americas, serving as an IB Examiner and member of the International Schools Anti-Discrimination Taskforce, and contributing to various publications, including the Wellbeing in International Schools Magazine, for which he was also a founding member of the editorial team. Adam is a Fellow of the Salzburg Global Seminar, an Austrian-based think tank and policy centre, and serves in a volunteer capacity as Community and Outreach Coordinator for the Global Citizenship Alliance.



**Dr Heather Tracy**  
Executive Director & Co-Founder  
New Summit Academy and  
The Bridge – Costa Rica

Heather studied at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, earning a Master of Education in Human Development & Psychology. In 2014, Heather completed her Doctorate in K-12 Leadership with a dissertation about the importance of academic enablers for at-risk adolescents to build resilience and learn and live more effectively and efficiently. Previously, Heather researched Math and English support programmes for the MCAS in Boston Public Schools, taught English as a Second Language to teenagers and adults, taught college reading and writing courses, and served one year as a volunteer English teacher in the Costa Rican public school system. Being a part of the founding team of New Summit Academy in 2004 has been the highlight of her career, and she feels blessed to be able to be a part of the team creating innovative, holistic, and quality education for unique young men. Heather co-authored Supportive Immersion theory (2016) and articulated PROPS skills as the 21st century skill set needed to thrive in today's world.



**Dale Wilkins**  
Executive Director  
Scotland/Wales and  
Accredited/Compliance  
BSA Group

Dale joined the BSA in 2017. Dale leads on all safeguarding and inspection matters for the BSA, including managing the Commitment to Care Charter, and has developed a process of BSA Accreditation for international members. He also liaises with ISI, Ofsted and DfE on matters relating to compliance and inspection standards, and compiles the BSA Self-Assessment toolkit. For 31 years Dale was a boarding practitioner. After boarding positions at Norwich School and Tettenhall College, Dale became a Housemaster at Old Swinford Hospital in 1992, and was promoted to Deputy Head in 2007, and subsequently also DSL. He has also been a multi-agency trainer for the Dudley Safeguarding swimming.



**Beth Hudson**  
Executive Director  
Specialist Services and Director  
BAISIS, BAISIS

Bethan joined the BSA team as Training Manager in 2017. Bethan has worked in two independent boarding schools in the UK and Switzerland, the latter as Housemistress to 36 pupils. Following her time in Switzerland, she was a Pastoral Manager for an inner-city state academy before working in the charity sector for Debrett's running the 'Debrett's Foundation' training programme. In her role, Bethan plans and manages all day seminars, conferences, INSET and consultancy, as well as being Director of BAISIS. She believes boarding can be a positive force for young people and in order to fully support their needs staff can never learn too much. As such she is passionate about the CPD BSA delivers to our pastoral communities in the UK and worldwide.



**Gareth Jones**  
Head  
Bilton Grange Prep School

Gareth has worked in prep boarding schools for over 25 years, leading two over the last 10 years. Formerly a Housemaster and Director of Sport at the Dragon School, Oxford, he then became Head of St Andrew's Prep, Eastbourne before taking up his current role as Head of Bilton Grange Prep, part of the Rugby School Group, in September 2021. Gareth sits on the IAPS Pastoral Committee, having also sat on their Sports Committee previously, and has experience of governance in both the independent and state sectors.



**Mark Lauder**  
Head  
Strathallan School

Mark began his teaching career at Shiplake College in Henley-on-Thames, where he was Head of the History Department, Resident Tutor and Master I/C of Rowing. He then headed to Oxford in 1999, to become Head of History at St Edward's School, as well as a Housemaster. While there, he continued with his rugby refereeing, coaching U16s rugby and U15s rowing, and ran the naval section of the CCF. In 2007, Mark was appointed Deputy Headmaster and Head of Boarding at Felsted School, where he maintained his coaching and teaching roles. It was from there, in 2010, that he headed north, to take on the role of Headmaster at Ashville College in Harrogate. In 2017, Mark moved to Strathallan School.



**Geoff Marsh**  
Head  
Frensham and Head  
Frensham Schools

Geoff has been Head of Frensham Schools for the past two years (coed P-6, girls' boarding and day 7-12). Prior to this he was Principal of the Riverina Anglican College in Wagga Wagga (coed K-12). Before going to Wagga Geoff was Deputy Head of Frensham Schools for 17 years. Geoff had a brief interlude helping run the Sydney 2000 Olympics for three years. Prior to this he worked as a physics and chemistry teacher at Chevalier College in Bowral for six years where he also worked in boys' boarding.



**Carrie Herbert MBE**  
Chair and Founder  
Red Balloon Learning

Carrie trained as a teacher before emigrating to Australia, returned to the UK in the eighties to complete a Master's Degree at UEA and a PhD at Cambridge. Carrie worked as a consultant in equal opportunities before founding Red Balloon in 1996. She has written a number of books on the subject of bullying and harassment in schools and in the workplace. Carrie Herbert was Master of the WC of Cutlers from 2020-2022.



**Kate Hollyer**  
Executive Director  
Legal & Public Affairs & Partner  
BSA Group

As a qualified solicitor with more than 10 years' experience advising clients on UK immigration law, Kate assists members with all immigration and safeguarding legal matters. Prior to joining BSA in 2022 Kate was Partner and Head of Department at a leading full-service UK law firm. Having resided in state, preparatory and senior school boarding houses since 2014 with her Housemaster husband, Kate has a unique perspective of boarding life.



**Aileen Kane**  
Deputy CEO and  
Chief Operating Officer  
BSA Group

Aileen is Deputy CEO & COO of BSA Group. She leads operations at BSA Group and works closely with members to provide guidance and training. Aileen also works with government departments, local authorities and other agencies to support members and heads up the group's work to find places for refugee children escaping from conflict countries.



**Alice Philips**  
Head  
St Catherine's, Bramley

Alice was educated at Kendal High School for Girls and went on to read English at Newnham College, Cambridge. After ten years as an English teacher, and then Head of English at the Royal Masonic School, Rickmansworth, she moved on to Deputy Headship at Tornead School, Guildford in 1993 and has been Headmistress of St Catherine's, Bramley, an independent school for girls aged 4-18, near Guildford, since 2000.



**Ben Collingwood**  
Partner  
Moore Barlow

Ben specialises in advising independent schools and other charities on wide ranging areas of education law, with particular focus on reputation issues, pastoral, safeguarding, historic abuse allegations, SEN, exclusions, parent/pupil complaints, data protection, parent contracts, admissions and staff matters of all types. He has written and spoken widely on issues facing the independent schools sector, providing comment in The Times, The Guardian, The Lawyer and Law Society's Gazette and at the national conferences and training programmes for the various associations that support independent schools including BSA, ISBA, HMC, IAPS and AGBIS.



**Adam McRae-Taylor**  
Legal Director  
Moore Barlow

Adam specialises in employment and education law and advises on issues such as unfair dismissal, discrimination cases, safeguarding, parent contracts and data protection. Adam trained and qualified in employment law with a Magic Circle firm in London. Before joining the Schools & Charities Team at Moore Barlow, he spent two years working in-house for a charity.



**Guy Schady-Beckett**  
Director and Head of Research  
Next Step Education

Guy has served as Director and Head of Research at Next Step Education Limited (Independent Schools Show & Bonas MacFarlane) since 2014. Previously he ran Drayson Beckett Limited, a specialist education consultancy working long-term with schools and universities on business development (with a focus on digital transition), market research and brand / product repositioning for 20 years. Prior to that he taught English at Windlesham and Durston House. He holds a PhD and an MA in History from Birkbeck, University of London, with distinction honours, as well as a second MA from University of the Arts London. His BA was in English from UCL.



**Simon Pither**  
Director  
PRS Training

Simon started martial arts at a local Judo club when he was 14. Ten years later he got his first instructor qualification and has been teaching martial arts and running self-defence courses ever since, culminating in his current role as the President of the UK Sector of the European Federation of Krav Maga. While running courses for students, teachers, nurses, community clubs, charities and corporate organisations over the years, it became apparent that everyone wished they had learned it earlier.



**Jamie Daniels**  
Director  
PRS Training

Jamie has been interested in and teaching self-defence and martial arts for thirty years, culminating in learning and instructing Krav Maga. In that time he has seen again and again how it's not martial arts people need, rather it is some simple physical techniques and a healthy dose of understanding as to what constitutes a dangerous situation, how to spot one developing, and what to do about it. As well as a history in the security industry, Jamie has been working in the education sector for over 15 years. This has also helped Jamie understand the pressures and demands that young people face today.



**Jim Lawless**  
CEO  
SYMMETRY  
and Bestselling Author

Beginning his career as a solicitor, Jim is now the CEO of SYMMETRY and helps clients adjust to the future of work and the constant rate of change in modern society. He has worked with the likes of ITV, BP, Fiat, Virgin, Vitality, Xerox, Microsoft, Unilever and Apple. Author of "Taming Tigers: Do Things You Never Thought You Could", Jim has developed several rules to change a business or an individual's life around. These rules have been tried and tested by Jim himself, by becoming a jockey in 12 months and taking the British freediving record, becoming the first Briton to dive deeper than 101m in a breath, and by others such as the CEO that turned the bank, Northern Rock, around. Jim was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts in recognition of his business writing.



**David Williams**  
CEO  
I-GTM

David is the co-founder of I-GTM, the leading provider of a travel record-keeping and management solution designed specifically for UK boarding schools. His mission is to ensure that schools receive precisely what they need from I-GTM — capturing accurate records of the boarder roll and streamlining travel planning while enhancing safeguarding, efficiency, and compliance. I-GTM's technology addresses the challenges of student travel, offering a centralised platform that empowers schools to oversee, monitor, and manage travel records with confidence.



**Gina Buckney**  
Founder and Director  
Your People Power

Gina is a 2 x TEDx Global Speaker and has been pioneering large-scale corporate change for 20 years. Gina combines personal experience working in high-pressured environments alongside science-led and solution-driven programmes. Some of her early positions include Head of UK Retail Customer Services for BT and IT Transformation Programme Manager for Lloyd's Banking Group. At 27 she became the youngest BT Contract Director and was awarded the largest managed service banking contract with a value of over £400m and a global team of 450.



# BSA Supporting Excellence Awards categories:

- Emma Pattison Award for Compassionate Leadership
- Sustainability in Boarding Award
- Best Community Work via BSA 'On Board' Initiative
- Boarding House Extension or Refurbishment Award
- Boarding Innovation Award
- Belonging and Inclusion Initiative Award (formerly the INDEX Initiative Award)
- International School of the Year Award
- Stephen Winkley Award
- Supporting International Boarders - School Award
- Supporting Junior Boarders Award
- Wellbeing and Mental Health Initiative Award
- Khadija Saye Photography Award
- Best Artwork Project Award



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