



Date: Friday, October 29th 2021

Subject: A Letter from Principal David Gray, taken from his Presentation to the Friends of BHS UK

Dear Friends,

Please allow me to give you an update on the current situation at Brummana High School and in Lebanon.

School opened on time in early September and face to face for the first time since March 2020. It has been wonderful to see the great joy and jubilation of students back on campus. BHS remains a beacon of hope and a bubble of normality and light in a bleak, unpromising landscape.

The students are our future. We invest in them as do the parents. They represent hope for a better world. Therefore, we must teach them well, instill in them a positive spirit, celebrate their individuality, encourage respect for others, tolerance of others' beliefs, and help them to seek successful solutions to apparently intractable problems.

Education is key, and perhaps the last hope for Lebanon's long-term future. If our schools collapse the country has no future.

Morale of the staff is low but they are fighting hard. Pay rises have been implemented out of the school's slim reserves by the Governing Body. Fresh dollars, like gold in Lebanon currently, from the BHS Old Scholars Association, help to raise the spirits of those whose salaries are now worth nothing and buy nothing.

The school survives - just. Plenty of students but too few families who can pay the modest fees. They are all suffering. BHS is now digging into its hard-earned reserves to also cover deficits of the last two years, \$500,000 in 2020 and \$750,000 in 2021, and to pay staff a living wage. The school has three years left of existence at this stage, by which time reserves will be exhausted.

It is impossible to purchase basic resources owing to capital controls and the worthlessness of Lebanese dollars (lollars). Everything has to be paid for in 'fresh'. So books, laptops and other materials are either unavailable or unaffordable because of hyper-inflation and the fact that most goods in Lebanon are imported.

I frequently go to the UK with an empty suitcase and return with one full of books bought cheaply and the odd laptop purchased at a low rate. Otherwise we photocopy or scan and send what we can to the students. A book which used to cost \$20 is now \$100 and simply unaffordable for most.

The Country:

Lebanon has a new but largely powerless Government, with no money and no foreign influence. The importance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and any potential funding the organisation intends for Lebanon has become almost paramount to the state's survival. Corruption, one of the main items the IMF stress must be addressed, runs through the country from top to bottom. There is no national infrastructure and no welfare state. Everything, including education, has to be paid for by the people. Currently 50% of the population are unemployed, and 70% live below the poverty line.

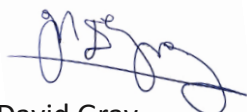
The US dollar, exchanged today at 20,000 Lebanese Lira is astronomical compared to the LL1,500 exchange rate just two years ago. Rocketing inflation makes the simplest service or commodity beyond the reach of most. And many people now live on food grown in their gardens.

We need help and now. Fundraising constantly, in foreign currency, draws attention to our plight and to the importance of Brummana High School. It raises awareness of the essential work done by this unsung Quaker school in the Middle East over 150 years to turn out good, peace loving, well-educated people, who, because of their education, can draw people together open-mindedly and tolerantly. Fundraising guarantees our students' education and sustains our teachers and support staff through these most desperate times.

BHS is a school which celebrates freedom of thought and expression and lays the ground rules of any happy, prosperous society. It must continue to do so and to send out its students in the future as leaders of countries and professions as it has done in the past.

On behalf the whole school community, thank you very much for your support.

Yours sincerely,



David Gray
Principal