

A photograph of Solihull School, a large brick building with a central tower and a flag. The building has many windows and is surrounded by a green lawn and trees. The word "gifted" is overlaid in large white letters with a registered trademark symbol.

gifted®

CASE STUDY

# Solihull School

How leadership by example  
inspires greater giving

Exceptional fundraising partnerships

Our partnership with Solihull School in the West Midlands is one that illustrates not just the power of philanthropy, but the inspirational impact of leading by example. In this case, the school's leadership met two major development challenges with stand-out persistence and a steely resolve to put tried and tested capital fundraising methods into practice.

## The background

In March 2018, we were appointed by the school to provide flexible, periodic fundraising advice to the in-house development team. Lucy Lunt, Director of Development and previous school governor, had been tasked with raising £ 2.5m over a five-year period to boost the school's bursary provision, increasing the number of fully funded six form places.

Our lead Director on the assignment, Andrew Day, immediately began working with Lucy to refine the campaign strategy and draft a convincing case for support.

"The school already offered several scholarships and means tested assisted bursaries, but governors were focused on creating a capital endowment for the long-term," says Andrew. "They could see the tangible benefits of bursaries available through its Silhillian Fund and were keen to find a sustainable way of expanding this provision and transforming even more young lives."

Fundamental to the success of the campaign was the strength of its fundraising storytelling. Existing bursary students were featured in the communications plan and their individual journeys shared with prospective donors. Tracking success and showing, first-hand, how financial support had made a profound difference to someone's life-chances struck a chord with those keen to give back to the school.

Alongside targeted messaging for academic or sporting bursaries, the school also recruited a former parent and ex-choral scholar to help with a creative 'bolt-on' of a specific funding pot for music lessons.

"The work we did with Lucy and her team was a great opportunity to instil some of the fundamental principles of capital fundraising," adds Andrew. "From crafting a compelling case, to asking the right people, at the right time and in the right way – we were able to establish a winning methodology that would equally support any future fundraising challenges."

## Staying connected

Something we always say to clients is that even when our contract ends, our relationship with you doesn't. By staying connected, we are still available to share advice and hear about the progress you're making. Between 2018 and 2023, Lucy continued to provide regular updates on the bursary campaign and our fundraising partnership with the school grew into a firm, professional friendship.

"As someone leading a very small team, it was great to have Andrew's experience and expertise on hand if I needed to check in," says Lucy. "When we welcomed a new Headmaster to the school in 2023, and discussions around launching a major campaign for facilities began, I knew exactly the approach we needed to take and that Gifted were best placed to provide us with trusted consultancy support."

## Leading from the front

In early May 2023, Lucy briefed Andrew on the ambition to secure significant philanthropic investment for new facilities, alongside the ongoing bursary fundraising programme. Gifted was appointed to undertake a fundraising feasibility study for a £2m capital enhancement of the site, focusing on teaching and learning, as well as better sports provision.

“The study revealed a positive response to the plans,” says Andrew. “We knew there would be hearts and minds to win over in the process, but the strength of the school’s leadership, its supportive alumni network and high levels of parental satisfaction, gave us the reassurance we needed to meet the fundraising challenge.”

The school’s new Executive Headmaster, Charles Fillingham, could see the importance of building a persuasive case for support and he used this to convince governors, parents and other stakeholders to join him in making a gift to the campaign. He also appreciated the power of asking people face-to-face. This involved hosting campaign information events in his own home, as a way of personally inviting potential givers to invest in not just the development of an historic site, but the transformation of young lives through improved facilities and bursary places.

“The Headmaster wholly grasped the importance of leading from the front and its impact in propelling the fundraising forward,” says Lucy. “Having given generously to the campaign himself, he was able to confidently seek support from prospective major givers amongst the school community.”

## Achieving early success

Leadership giving is the backbone of any successful fundraising campaign – and creates a groundswell of support that can quickly spread throughout a school community. During the quiet phase of the fundraising, before the campaign had been publicly launched, this approach led to the top five gifts being secured from a handful of parents and alumni.

“It was a brilliant start to the campaign,” says Andrew. “It gave Lucy the focus she needed to secure further major gifts and eventually move into the more public phase of fundraising with greater confidence. Her tenacity, persistence and belief in the project were key to the campaign passing its £1m milestone in gifts and pledges and by Christmas 2024, the campaign total was just over £1.25m.”

## Getting the message across

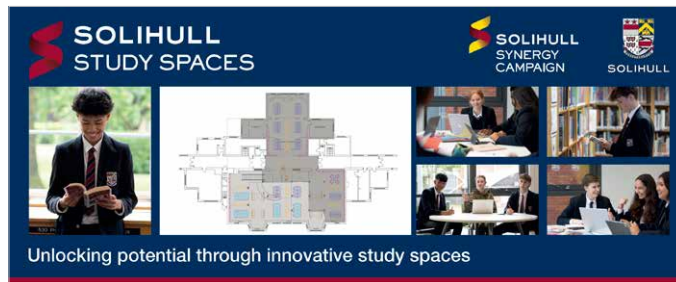
Driving the fundraising at every level was a co-ordinated donor communications plan. The school already had strong brand awareness, and it was important that the campaign messaging and materials reflected this.

“The name “Synergy” was carefully chosen to reflect the powerful connection between two core aspects of the Solihull Campaign: the new study spaces and dynamic fitness facilities.” says Gifted’s communications partner, Leigh Titman. “The term ‘synergy’ represents the idea that the blend of physical activity and academic study leads to improved results in both areas. Research has shown that a healthy body enhances brain function, improving focus and productivity. By raising funds for both the library and the fitness gym, the campaign emphasises the importance of creating a balanced, holistic environment that supports the growth of students in every way.”

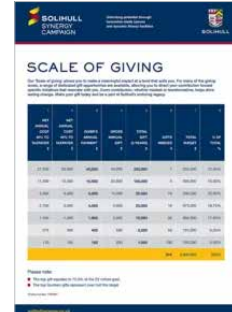
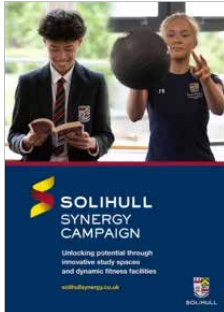
Together with the campaign logo and branding, we created a comprehensive set of fundraising communication tools and brand guidelines to support the Solihull Synergy Campaign. These materials were designed to compliment existing School branding and highlight the key elements of the campaign - innovative study spaces and dynamic fitness facilities, while conveying the vital message of unlocking student potential.

Here are some examples:

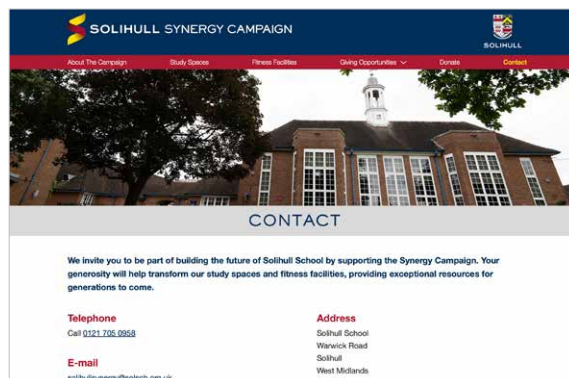
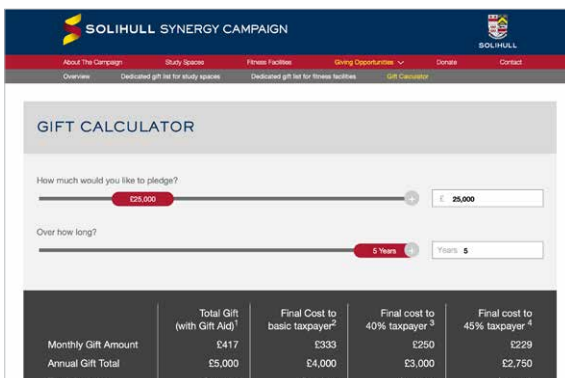
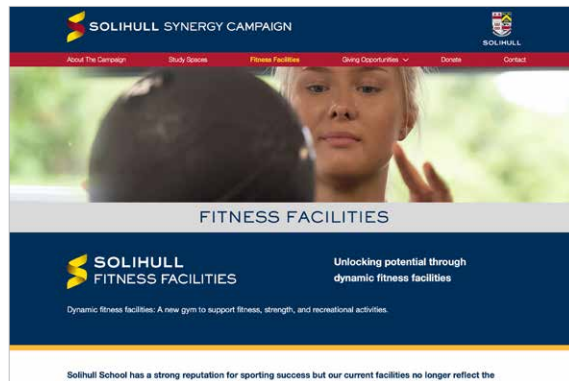
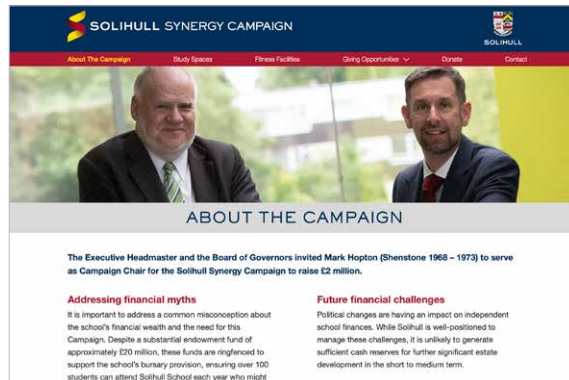
### Campaign Logo / Branding & Banners



Campaign Literature



Campaign Website



## Meeting the challenges head on

As with most capital campaigns, there were also obstacles to overcome. Lucy and the Headmaster met pockets of resistance to the plan, but remained consistent when it came to explaining the case for support and the benefits it would deliver to students and the local community.

"Again, their leadership gave the campaign an insistent voice and a palpable sense of momentum," says Andrew. "When questions or doubts surfaced, they listened and responded with evidence-based support for the designated projects and were able to show that generous giving had already been pledged to the campaign."

Having achieved the top-level gifts, it was also important to return to the campaign plan and recalibrate the focus on mid-level giving between £10,000 - £50,000. This made it possible to provide the bursar with the reassurance he needed whilst continuing to develop the financial plan.

## A case of 'PERSEVERANTIA' in practice

The school's motto – PERSEVERANTIA– encourages every pupil to 'remain persistent and steadfast in study and in life.' In many ways, this aspirational instruction was courageously exemplified by the school's Synergy Campaign leadership team and their commitment to getting an ambitious vision over the line.

"What this case study shows is that when professional or volunteer leaders genuinely walk the fundraising talk – wonderful things can happen," reflects Andrew. "Lucy and the Headmaster stuck to best practice every step of the way and thanks to the generosity of so many in the school community, are that much closer to achieving their target."

If your organisation need strategic fundraising support to help you achieve your goals, get in touch with one of our directors and find out more about how we can help.

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