



Projects in
Central &
Eastern Europe

Chair of Trustees: Rhiannon Wilkinson, Headmistress Wycombe Abbey
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HMC PROJECTS – IN BRIEF

HMC Projects in Central & Eastern Europe – usually shortened to *HMC Projects* – is a charitable trust which organises scholarship programmes targeted at talented young people from non-affluent backgrounds in central and eastern European countries, so that they can come to study in the 6th Form in UK boarding schools in membership of HMC, GSA, SBA and Society of Heads.

The trustees are: *Rhiannon Wilkinson* HM Wycombe Abbey (chair), *Rachel Owens* HM St George's Weybridge, *Richard Maloney* HM Uppingham, *David Knapman* Rector Dollar Academy, *Will Phelan*, Principal Stamford Endowed Schools, *Joy Hopkinson*, former Deputy Head New Hall School, *David Morrison*, former Bursar Chigwell, *Angus McPhail*, former Warden Radley, *Ian Small*, former Head Bootham, *John Lever*, former HM Canford, *Peter de Voil*, former Head Frensham Heights & The English College in Prague.

Sixth Form Scholarship Programmes

There are two scholarship programmes for students who join the Lower 6th initially for one year, although it is now the normal practice for schools to invite students to stay on for the second year of the Sixth Form. Full details of the two programmes – the full scholarship programme and the reduced fee programme – can be found on the HMC website www.hmc.org.uk/projects It is pleasing to report that both programmes continue to develop well.

Student quality and philanthropy (on the part of schools) lie at the heart of the programmes.

Although much has changed over the past 25 years (since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening up of countries in central and eastern Europe), the *raison d'être* of the programme remains arguably as valid as ever. *HMC Projects* seeks to identify very able, interesting and distinctively different young people from far less privileged backgrounds, who in turn bring an enormous amount to the schools which host them.

For both the full and reduced fee programmes *HMC Projects* and the country coordinators are targeting academically able and talented young people from non-affluent backgrounds, but there are differences in how each programme is organised.

Combined parental income of student applicants for *full scholarships* must be restricted to £30,000 p.a. In a significant number of cases, particularly in the poorest of European countries, parental income of applicants remains pitifully low and can be way below that figure. Scholars offered a full scholarship are placed by *HMC Projects* in a school which has offered a firm place on the programme. HMC Projects encourages schools to be as prescriptive as they wish and takes huge care to place successful scholars in the most appropriate school – getting that match right is of crucial importance to the success of the programme.

Students who perform very strongly in the selection process, but who cannot be offered a full scholarship may have their names added to a list of reserves. These candidates are offered the opportunity to apply for a *reduced fee scholarship* along with the small number of those specifically selected by the interviewers because parental income may exceed £30,000 p.a. Schools which have offered a place or places will choose their preferred applicants from those who apply. Reduced fee scholars pay partial fees to the school: typically, 20-25% of full fees. They do not pay an administrative

fee and so receive no bursary or any other benefits from *HMC Projects*. They are however invited to the Orientation Course.

This coming September over **90 new *HMC Projects* Scholars** will start at 55 schools: They come from 14 countries in all: Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. In all since *HMC Projects* started in 1993 some 1700 young people have come through them to a range of boarding schools (HMC, GSA, State maintained & Society of Heads) in all parts of the UK and in some cases abroad.

The situation in Europe today offers little cause for complacency. Political and social unrest in several countries – not only in Ukraine – have focussed the spotlight once again on former east bloc countries and highlighted the fragility of some of these fledgling democracies. This in turn re-emphasises just how relevant and noble are the original aims of the scholarship programme.

For their part schools support the programmes for a whole variety of reasons, idealistic and pragmatic. Most have of course increasingly developed their own international links, but *HMC Projects* has developed a network in former Eastern Bloc countries which means that it is extremely well placed to identify some of the most different, interesting, intellectually able and ambitious young people – precisely the sorts who can act as catalysts in any Sixth Form. *HMC Projects* has particular expertise and contacts in the countries where it operates and identifies types of students who may not appear through more conventional routes or through profit-making agencies. Many schools have offered scholarship places each year; others in alternate years; others with sponsorship from specific sources – the pattern varies.

For participating schools *HMC Projects* Scholars:

- Diversify the nature of the pupil body;
- Bring to the school their “story” – a very positive message;
- Bring a sense of internationalism, promoting global citizenship;
- Provide excellent role models for other pupils;
- Inspire others in the classroom;
- Demonstrate excellence in co-curricular activities;
- Provide a current and continuing link between the school and another European country.

Students are selected through entry procedures conducted in home countries and interviews by members of *HMC Projects* (usually trustees and executive – serving and former headteachers or senior teachers who offer their services on a *pro bono* basis). In five countries we collaborate closely with ASSIST (American Secondary Schools for International Students and Teachers www.assist-inc.org).

To mark 25 years of the programme we have recently published *The New Europeans, a History of HMC Projects* by David Gibbs (1947 – 2016), former HM Chigwell School. We have distributed this widely to schools and interested parties, and further copies (in either printed or electronic format) are available from the Director.

HMC Projects Executive

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