

Biddenham

Open Evening Newsletter



Welcome to our 'Virtual' Open Evening newsletter, which you will not be receiving at Biddenham on our Open Evening as usual, but either via your primary school or via email.



We have a number of activities and virtual events that are designed to inform you about life at Biddenham and our students' experiences of our school. These are a few of those things:

- A Virtual Open Evening
- Tours of the school after the school day
- A host of videos to watch on our dedicated website
- www.biddenham.beds.sch.uk/choosing-a-secondary-school-for-your-year-6-child/
- Virtual assemblies with primary schools

And, of course, this newsletter, where you can read about how our current year 7 students, who have been with us three weeks, have found the school. Their views are the ones I urge you to pay most attention to.

Please do take the opportunity to have a good look at all the videos and resources. We pride ourselves on being a successful, vibrant and diverse community school, committed to first class teaching and achieving the highest standards. Our students enjoy coming to school and through virtual teaching using chromebooks, each student has been able to keep in touch and keep the learning going throughout lockdown - have a look at the video that documents the work of our wonderful staff team during this difficult time...

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSSw4gzoe5M&t=1s

Our students leave us to go onto do wonderful things and you can see in this newsletter some of their fantastic achievements.

www.biddenham.beds.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Students-Achievements.pdf

The newsletter records the beginning and end of our students' journeys through the school - we are proud to have been central to their success.

We hope you enjoy their stories...

Best wishes,

David Bailey
Principal

Eleanor Grylls
Head of School

A welcome from our Head Girl

Sahar Houssaini

I am the current Head Girl at Biddenham. I enrolled in year 9 and now am in my final year of sixth form. I'd like to share my journey at this school and tell you how it has shaped me into the individual I am today and inspired my future ambitions.



School is an important part of our life and which school we choose can significantly impact on our future. The variety of perspectives of current students give a well rounded insight of the school and this is why I would like to reassure you that Biddenham will be the best choice to assist you in the next steps towards your successful education.

Understandably, joining a new school can be an overwhelming and daunting experience. However for me, the friendly faces and warm, welcoming atmosphere was inviting and instantly felt like a second home. I transferred from Westfield School, which has strong connections with Biddenham. I was given the opportunity to spend time exploring and deciding if Biddenham was the best choice for me. Being drawn towards the schools atmosphere enabled me to make the informed decision to join this school.

Biddenham is an incredibly diverse family encompassing a variety of ethnic backgrounds, cultures, race and languages. Throughout the year we celebrate and showcase the diversity of our students, from food, to clothes to music. We are taught to respect and embrace our differences. This is vital to ensure that all students feel represented within the school. Ever since my arrival at Biddenham, school became more enjoyable - from interactive lessons to the enthusiastic and energetic teachers. Thankfully the endless support my teachers have given me allowed me to explore a variety of careers to narrow down my pathway and determine the career I want to pursue. During my time at Biddenham I have participated in many competitions, conferences and residential.

Earlier this year I became a Villiers Park Scholar allowing me to experience the life of a student studying Chemistry at Cambridge. Other experiences include two medical summer schools held at Imperial College London and Nottingham as well as Nuclear Engineering at Lancaster. These week long residential would not have been possible without the support and guidance from teachers. Being accepted into the Nuffield Foundation, SMF and Sutton Trust alongside other events have ignited my interest into the dental field as they all enable me to branch out and explore the wider world.

My personal advice would be to trust your instincts and choose a school that makes you feel comfortable. This will aid you into learning better and more efficiently. I believe at Biddenham we have the perfect balance of focussing on both mental health and academics.

You will be provided with more opportunities, allowing you to find your potential and gain interpersonal skills leading to a confident and well rounded person.

Biddenham has encouraged me to achieve my best so I have no doubts in recommending this school.

A welcome from our Head Boy Emmanuel Asare

I am honoured to be Head Boy at Biddenham. I'm delighted to see that you are considering Biddenham as the place your child will continue their education.

My four years at Biddenham have been nothing short of splendid. I came from a much smaller school, so the number of students, big buildings, teachers with titles such as 'Dr' all intimidated me at first but after the first week, all of these worries disappeared. Everyone was friendly and willing to show me to my lessons, the teachers cared about the students and our wellbeing.

I vividly remember the second week of year 9, we were given the task of writing about ourselves. After completing the task, these were then framed at the back of our classroom. A couple days later, on my way to a lesson, I bumped into a teacher who then exclaimed, "You must be Emmanuel, you were born in Italy!" so a random teacher, I had never met surprisingly already knew me, turns out it was Mr. Brown - our Head of 6th Form. He explained to me that he had taken the time to read through all our written descriptions. That was a moment that stuck with me. At that point, I realised that this was the school for me, the dedication shown by the staff was unlike anything I'd ever seen before. With the help of these teachers, and the students that surrounded me I was able to realise my full potential. You really are a product of your surroundings.

The school has many opportunities. In Year 9 I joined the Student Forum, where we discussed critical school issues and try to resolve them in a way we, the students, see fit. Student opinion is something the Senior Leadership Team really cares about. In year 10 I joined our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Club, through that, I partook in an engineering residential at Southampton University, entered various STEM fairs, and broadened my knowledge in Engineering. In year 11, I even had the wonderful opportunity to build a small satellite for Cranfield University.

Year 13 has barely begun, but I know with certainty that it will be just as good, if not better than the rest. Academics and well being are equally important. The school offers pastoral and academic one-to-one mentoring sessions. Being taught from another pupil in a similar age group who has been in the same position, helps students to have a better understanding and reassure them of their potential to achieve. We have societies run by our own students to inspire and inform others about careers, workshops on personal statements, UCAS, and entry exams as well as exploring universities.

Everyone at Biddenham will go above and beyond to make sure that as a student there is something for you. The more work you put in, the better you do. Biddenham will find the very best in you.



Our Virtual Open Evening is available on our website and is proving to be very popular. It contains lots of information about our school including open evening talks, top tips for starting secondary school and videos about the school, staff and students.

Visit www.biddenham.beds.sch.uk/choosing-a-secondary-school-for-your-year-6-child/

Pictured below are two of our new year 7 students James from Livingstone and Zuzanna from Great Denham Primary telling us about their experience at Biddenham in the open evening video.



IT IS A 'GOOD' FOR BIDDENHAM

It was 'good' news for our school when we were inspected by Ofsted and received a really positive report being deemed to be a good school in all categories. Inspectors found that, 'Pupils enjoy their learning' and pupils are making good progress...and behave well because as one student put it, 'everyone here wants to learn.'

The report confirms the view of local parents who chose Biddenham as their first choice secondary school. It is also popular with staff at the school with over 20 having chosen to send their children to the school and, indeed, ex-students many of whom come back to work in the school. Comments from current students included, 'The school cares about us being successful and makes sure that we do succeed,' 'they understand me' and 'the school is 'like a big family.' Mr Bailey said, 'This report validates our own view of the school and is pleasing for us all. We are proud of our students, past and present, and their achievements and this report reflects that, recognising that our students do well in an aspirational school with a strong family 'feel'.

HEADING UP THE YEAR 7S

I was appointed as Head of Year 7 during a very different and surreal time.

Normally, we would go into primary schools to start building those all important relationships with both students and families. As this wasn't possible, we wanted to ensure that our new year 7s didn't miss out on their 'transition' experience.

Phillipa Copley, our Director of Transition put together a fantastic project which allowed students to complete Go Big Go Awesome tasks and work towards a diploma certificate. Alongside this, we created information videos and fun Friday challenges - from baking to sign language - we wanted to offer our students the opportunity to feel like they were part of the Biddenham family at a time which was very uncertain for them.



I thoroughly enjoyed speaking to students through video links to primary schools and individual phone calls home. We had a whole year group live google meet and a week later, the students met their tutors and the rest of their tutor group which was a fantastic end to the summer term with our new students happy and excited to start with us in September.

The first few weeks of term have been excellent. Starting at a brand new school during a pandemic is not easy and I am so proud of the way our students have adapted to the 'new normal' - they have shown such resilience. They were the only year group in school on day one and the following week consisted of fun transition activities with their tutor groups. Year 7 have their own allocated space at break and lunchtime and they are now used to the new routines and procedures in place.

We have student voice and kindness ambassadors who are representing their year group and today, we celebrated the diploma project with a certificate for every student presented to them by our Head of School (Ms Grylls) and Principal (Mr Bailey). When I walk around school and spend time getting to know my year group, I see enthusiastic, happy students who look forward to coming to school each day. I hope they have a wonderful first year at Biddenham - I feel very lucky to be their Head of Year and I hope they continue to come and tell me something great they have achieved in their day as it is the highlight of mine!

Deena Gill
Head of Year 7

See the Go Big, Go Awesome tasks later in the newsletter!

YEAR 7 STUDENT AMBASSADORS



After receiving nearly 50 applicants year 7 now has their five student ambassadors with each student representing a house.

The Ambassadors are:

- James (Akabusi)
- Iman (Tendulkar)
- Hannah (Hurst)
- Jessica (Radcliffe)
- Maira (Davies)

They already have big ideas of what they would like to do to help support their year group and are always ready to listen to others suggestions to continue their drive to represent their peers.

Our year 7s tell us what they think of life as part of the Biddenham family so far...

What my first day at Biddenham was like!

If I could put my first day at Biddenham into one word it would have to be: stressful. I did not know what way to come in, what block to be in and I did not know half of the people in my class. This was quite nerve racking, if you ask me. Luckily enough for me there were teachers everywhere so if I did need help from a teacher they were there to guide me.

“During my transition to secondary school there was a pandemic, this is not how I imagined my first day at secondary school to go. We had to wear masks when transitioning from one period to another, we had to wipe down our desks after every lesson and on top of that we had to socially distance ourselves from our classmates so that it would be a safer environment for everyone coming to school.

“My favourite thing about my first day was reuniting with my friends from primary school as it had been months since we last saw each other in person! My least favourite thing about my day was that I was not in the routine of getting up early so I was very tired! I expected to get lost quite a lot when really that was never the case.

“The main difference between secondary school and primary school is that there are way more people, different subjects and it’s a lot bigger.

“On the first day we also had the opportunity to become student ambassadors. After reading through what it takes to become a student ambassador and what the role required, I found myself to be very interested so I emailed my teachers on why I would be a good ambassador and I was lucky enough to get the part! Every term the student ambassadors change meaning new people get a chance to experience what being a student ambassador is really like.

I am very happy to be a part of the Biddenham family and I am really excited to see what opportunities Biddenham will lead me to.”

Iman 7EC

“My time so far at Biddenham has been amazing. I have made the most amazing friends here even though I knew no one coming into the school. The school has supported me throughout lockdown and kept checking with me to see if I was doing okay, especially as I was worried about the first day.

“All the teachers have been really kind and supportive including my form tutor who has helped me along the way. The teachers are pushing me to do my best in all lessons. Overall, Biddenham is a really good school to be at and all my worries have gone.”

Sophie 7GM

“I have only been at Biddenham for a few weeks but I already feel like I have been here my whole life. When I joined everyone was so nice and friendly and always willing to help you find the right classroom. Even though we haven't had all the transition days I have settled in fine. It is easy enough to find the right class when you know where all the blocks are.

“In the first term you will either have Food Technology, Art and Drama or you will have Dance, Textiles or Resistant Materials. It might seem scary going in on your first day not knowing where to go but when you get there teachers guide you to where you need to go.

“Within the first few days you will get your chromebook to do most of your work on as you can't do it all in books now because of Covid -19. In your lessons your teachers will ask you to join their google classroom this is where all your homework will be if you forget to write it down in your planner. Your planner will be given to you within the first few days so you can write your homework down when the teachers give you it. You may be thinking you will get a lot more homework than primary school but actually it is manageable as you don't get homework in every lesson. If you are off one day you will still be able to do the work as it will be on the google classroom.

“You should definitely come to Biddenham as they are the most welcoming and helpful school you will ever go to.”

Hannah 7GM

Starting at Biddenham

“Since I have joined Biddenham I have made friends, encountered lovely teachers and enjoyed different lessons. Biddenham is a lovely school and the teachers are very kind and try to help resolve your queries.

“On my first day at Biddenham I was feeling quite anxious but excited as well. As I walked into my new tutor group my tutor welcomed me to my desk and a few minutes later I had already made a friend and was no longer worried. A sense of happiness shivered over me as I kept on making friends and seeing new, lovely teachers. The only way to make friends is to be yourself.

“As it says on the Biddenham logo this secondary school is very multicultural and all students come from very different backgrounds, but we all come together to form a family.

“Biddenham is a wonderful school.”

Amelie 7GM

“Biddenham is an amazing school and they make your transition a lot smoother by preparing you. This will be helpful as moving into year 7 can be and probably will be challenging. I have been in Biddenham long enough to know I’m already loving it! This school has amazing teachers that can help you with any of your problems, especially getting to places.

“Going from being the oldest in the school to the youngest will be hard and that is why we have transition days. It will take some time to get used to the school, I don’t know where to go sometimes but you get used to it. The transition isn’t really hard, apart from the first two or three days where it’s just you getting used to the school. Luckily, you have still got a long time to think about the move and to get prepared.

“My experience so far is amazing, getting your own chromebook, going into lessons, even just getting a chance to meet new people. The biggest challenge for me was the first day because you don’t know any of the people or the teachers. Our transition was different because of the situation but yours will probably be smoother so that’s one less thing you have to worry about. You probably will be nervous and scared but also excited to come to a new school; that’s exactly the same as I felt. These feelings will change all the time before you join a school and they might stop you from doing something. Always try something new there are so many opportunities that you need to take so don’t be afraid to do anything! ”

Zofia 7LMC

“My week at Biddenham was amazing. It was hard to adjust in the beginning but gradually I got used to it with the help of the teachers and some students. The Biddenham staff help you adjust quickly, they are really kind and helpful.

“Mrs Gill is the Head of Year 7 and Mr Bailey is the Principal. There are different blocks in Biddenham and they could sometimes get a little confusing, but slowly you will get used to it. Because of COVID- 19 every room you enter you have to wipe down the table and chairs and also sanitise, but that’s ok. The subjects I have are mainly English, Maths and Science.

“They are really fun. This term in Science we are learning about animal and plant cells. In English we are learning about refugees and asylum seekers. The one thing I would say is start it slow you don’t need to know everyone or everything just go with the flow and you’ll be fine.”

Zunaira 7HCB

Y6 into Y7 Be Awesome, ‘Go Biddenham’ Diploma



The year 6 Be Awesome, ‘Go Biddenham’ Diploma was an award that we set up during the lockdown to support our year 6s joining us into year 7.

The Diploma activities allowed our new students to:

- prepare themselves for their smooth transition to Secondary school life
- gain new KS3 academic knowledge
- begin to gain and develop skills such as time management, planning and research
- demonstrate creativity, independence and resilience
- help Biddenham staff learn about them, how they learn, their interests and thus helped us to help support them in their first steps to success at Biddenham.

All Y6 students completed a number of activities that were core modules and then chose from the elective subject specific activities.

Click on this link to read more about the Diploma and the activities students could take part in www.biddenham.beds.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Y6-Be-Awesome-Go-Biddenham-Diploma-overview.pdf

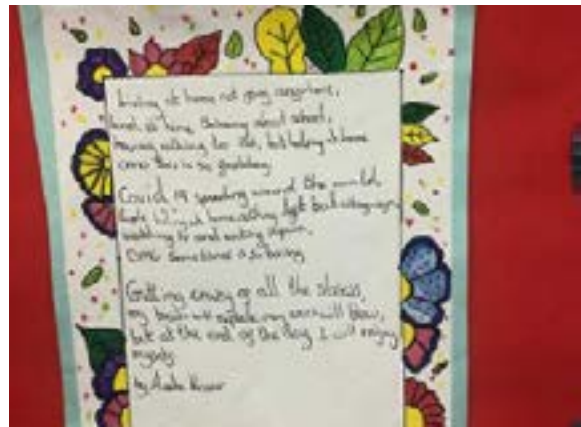
Students could choose to achieve different levels of the Diploma. Recognition, bronze, silver, gold or platinum depending on how many activities they successfully completed, and 'wow!' what a collection of awesome work we had!

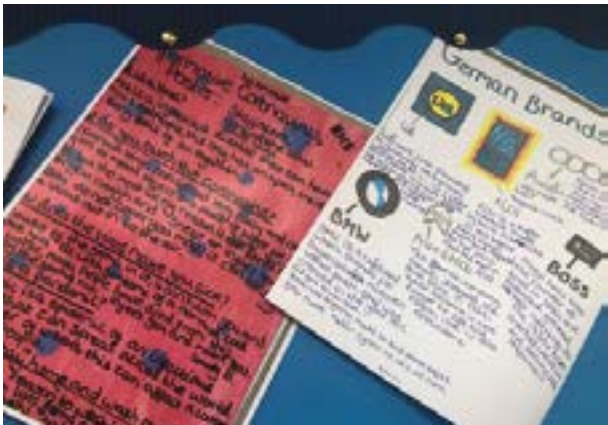
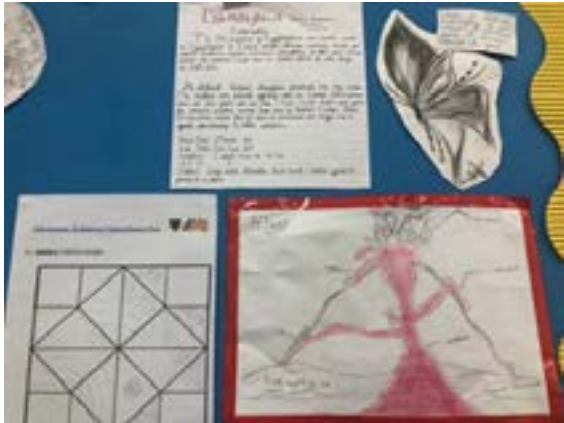
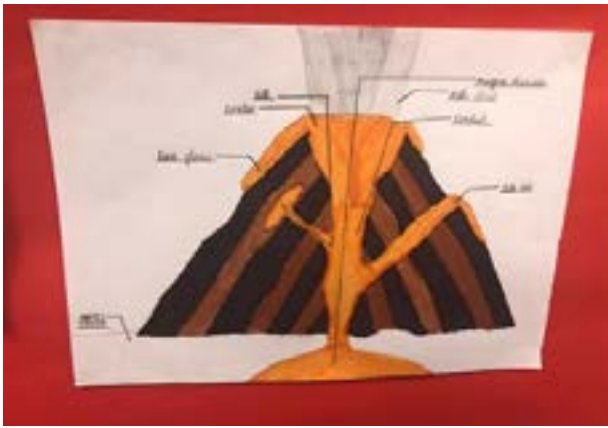
From erupting volcanoes, redesigns of bedrooms and cardboard models of furniture as well as awesome letters to Miss Copley, Tour De France fitness routines, drum routines and paper weaving to name just a few!

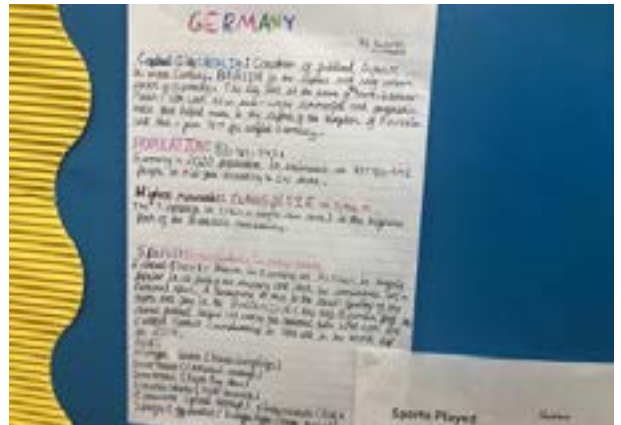
All 206 year 7s achieved the Diploma with flying colours! We celebrated their achievements with an awards ceremony where they received their certificates. A huge congratulations to all year 7s a huge achievement and their first one of many as part of the Biddenham family.

Diploma Award Level	No. of year 7s who achieved this
Recognition	97
Bronze	22
Silver	16
Gold	42
Platinum	29

Gallery of activities











Presentation of Diplomas

