



Key Decisions and Discussions of the Governing Body 2021-2022

Biddenham International School has 13 Governors who meet as a whole Governing Body four times a year. The list of Governors is shown below; it is made up of lay members with an interest in the school and education, the Principal, Mr Bailey, as well as a staff representative. Two of the lay members are parent governors. Governors also attend regular committee meetings twice a term; there are two of these - the Curriculum Committee and Business and Welfare Committee. The purpose of the Governing Body is to discuss and agree the strategy that the school takes to find the best way for all students to get the best educational outcomes and grow into well rounded young adults.

This document summarises those discussions which have taken place during 2021-2022. Detailed minutes of the meetings are available.

September 2021

The first meeting of the academic year is largely taken up with looking at the educational outcomes of those taking GCSE, A level and BTEC exams. In 2021, these were awarded as teacher assessed grades, due to Covid, so there were no real national comparisons, although the school is part of a large group of schools, SISRA, which share their data and results in order to drive improvements in teaching and learning, as well as assessing progress.

The key messages were:

- A level students had done well, with more higher grades, based on 2019 benchmarks.
- Disadvantaged students, a concern nationally, due to Covid interruptions, had done well at Biddenham. Where other schools had struggled during lockdown periods to maintain 'attendance', the provision of Chromebooks, and live teaching through technology had made a real difference to student engagement, and therefore their results.
- Progress had been a grade higher than expected progress.
- There were very few appeals against grades, which turned out to be a very unusual position to be in. It showed the robustness of the teacher assessment process that had been put in place.
- BTEC results were very good, as we have come to expect.
- The GCSE results showed some good results, although there were some concerns about English. Groups which had done well, include higher prior attaining students, and pupil premium students. However, in quite a few cases, the school did not have level 2 data, so could not include 32 students to analyse their progress - most of these students had done well.
- Most subject areas had done well, and in terms of groups, post 16 and pupil premium students had done well.

Destination data for students was discussed, as the school likes to ensure that the educational or training path of every student is known, so support can be given where necessary. Around half the students had stayed on into our sixth form.

There were other important agenda items. The first was the support being given to students starting at Biddenham in year 7 through a very successful two week summer school which had been enjoyed by many, with teachers from school leading a great variety of non-school subject sessions. This was paid for by an additional grant from Government. The Principal explained that school had returned to normal, with lots of curricular activities and visits going ahead.

Finally, there was a long discussion about the numbers of students to be in school, and our 'Pupil Admissions number' (PAN), which was then 200 per year. 257 children had chosen Biddenham, and the agreement with the Borough was to accept this number, and to consider what the PAN should be in the future. There was clearly an increase in demand across the Borough, but the number also reflected the school's popularity.

Whilst the Governing body was clear that it wanted to be able to offer a place to all children within our catchment area, and act as a Community School, there were concerns about how big the school should be become, as the school prided itself on students being well known, and well supported. The understanding at the time was that we needed to consult on an increase in numbers, and so we agreed to have further discussion prior to a consultation.

Full Governing body meeting Wednesday 24th November 2021

A key agenda for this meeting was the Safeguarding arrangements in school. The Annual Safeguarding Report and a number of areas of safeguarding were discussed and how policy and practice are developed to address them, in addition to the training given to staff. These included a new harassment reporting process, mental health training for staff, the worryingly high level of threshold for CAMH services, school councillor provision, the Council's early help service, sexual harassment responses, and training for racial micro-aggression and homophobia.

The Head Boy and Girl gave a detailed account of their activities to support voluntary active ties. They also raised the issue of the dress code for 6th formers, which some felt was not gender neutral enough. It was agreed that this would be discussed with students. They had discussed the new online payment system at the Student Forum, and some of the teething problems arising from as parents and carers joined the system and got used to it. The new changing rooms were brought up, as more female students felt embarrassed about changing in open areas, and the idea of adding curtains was discussed. There were also some issues regarding students contacting their sixth form mentors, which would be addressed.

The school Development Plan was discussed and agreed. There were six high level targets. It was important to note that the targets had been set along with the objectives in discussion with staff, so it is a document being actioned on a termly basis. Detailed scrutiny by Governors would happen in committees, and through the work of the Link Governors.

The Principal reported on initial numbers for the following academic year, and the building work which the Council had agreed to fund through the appropriate Government grant. On the basis that the next year 7 could be as big as the current one, there was a need for more specialist rooms, including Science and IT rooms, as well as increased space for dining.

Governing Body meeting 16th March 2022

One of the issues discussed as a result of the work of the School Forum, was how best to run parents' evenings. There had been a mix of views about the advantages and disadvantages of face to face, and online meetings. They had taken their views to the Senior Leadership Team, who were also in the throes of reviewing this. The Governors were in favour of a blended approach, if that were possible.

The Governing Body assesses the financial state of the school in each term, and at this meeting, we also agreed the Standard Financial Value Statement (SFVS), a framework within which the finances are dealt with and monitored. The current position, partly as a result of rising student numbers is having a small surplus; whilst not acting as a contingency fund, it does mean that there were no cuts threatened.

The school had reviewed the Covid precautions, as there were, by now, no national guidelines. External doors could now be closed, though not windows. Masks were not obligatory, but could be worn on an individual basis, and the one way system was now being kept as it worked so well. On the academic impact, there were issues of behaviour to address, as students got used to school days, and the proportion of spoken to written work needed to be re-calibrated. The advantage now though was that staff were highly conversant at putting lessons on line for students not in school.

The Pupil Admission Number was raised to 240, and it turned out that this was possible without consultation. This was a conservative approach, even though over five years it would mean an additional 200 students on the school site, and potentially more sixth formers. The building work was reported on, and governors heard about the planning required to manage changes to existing rooms. It was agreed that a key part of the changes to the layout of the school should be a path on the other side of the Biddenham Turn entrance, which would be much safer for students entering on foot or bicycle.

A highlight of the previous term had been a production of the Manchester Carols, involving the school choir, an orchestra drawn from across Bedford Schools and adults from local choirs. The performance had filled the sports hall with audience and participants, and had been an amazing event.

All key policies are brought to the full Governing Body. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy was agreed by Governors. This policy led to a prolonged discussion regarding a recent case involving the police and the role of school staff when this happens, given a case in London reported on nationally. This included the issue of searches of students and their belongings, and what would happen in the event of an arrest taking place in school. It was accepted that this is incredibly rare at school.

Full Governing Body Meeting 22nd June 2022

The Governing Body had a major discussion about the School Development Plan. This was an opportunity to look at specific areas of the plan, including 'Strengthen parent and community partnerships, Numeracy; instil a love of Maths through embedding the fundamentals of Maths throughout the curriculum, and identify and address the impact of interrupted learning on key stage 3 and key stage students. There were a raft of views and ideas suggested that will be incorporated into the plan.

In terms of contracts, the Governors discussed the cleaning contract and the printing contract. The Business Manager is keen to negotiate some changes to the cleaning contract, to improve the service provided to the school, which Governors agreed to. Five quotes for the printing service had been received, and the Governors agreed to a five year contract with Konika Minolta, which was cheaper than the others, and would lead to some changes which would reduce the use of printing.

The main focus of the discussion was to report an event which took place in school before the Easter holiday, between a member of staff and a year 7 student. During a lesson, the member of staff had mocked the student, involving her headscarf, worn for religious reasons. This encounter had been dealt with immediately by the Principal, involving the student and her friend, the member of staff, and the parents. The member of staff apologised to the student, who was satisfied with the apology. The parents were initially unhappy, reporting that there had been a couple of other occasions when something similar had happened. The Chair of Governors had written to parents to apologise for the incident, and undertook to have this discussion at the Full Governing Body. The Governors considered the facts, the way it had been handled, and the consequences of the incident. The member of staff had not been disciplined, as it had been done without malice, but he is no longer at the school. The police also thought that it did not constitute a hate crime.

The school had already started racial literacy training and up to that point 60 members of staff had taken part. The school is also working towards becoming an anti-racist school, using the 'seven pillars', and there was a small working group taking this forward. This included how staff should report concerns, something which staff had said they lacked confidence about doing effectively.

There were a number of issues discussed briefly at this meeting - the impact of Covid infections, especially amongst staff in the previous term, the work on the buildings, staff recruitment, including involvement in the Chiltern Trust teaching programme, the leadership structure, in view of the increase in number of students, and the Government's push to Academy status. As I write this, this proposal appears not to be taken forward in Government legislation.

Full Governing Board

	Start	End
Parent Governors: Catherine Walters Carlene Nisbett	February 2021 April 2022	February 2025 April 2026
Local Authority Governor: Anne Day	September 2019	September 2023
Principal: David Bailey		
Staff Governor: Abdul Shakoor	November 2021	November 2025
Partnership Governors: Georgina Ainscough Nikhita Saggu	November 2021 November 2021	November 2025 November 2025
Co-opted Governors: Carole Bell Saqib Hussain Sarah Crafter Nezma Begum Caron Vacciana Jennifer Brown	March 2022 January 2022 January 2022 January 2019 March 2022 September 2022	March 2026 January 2026 January 2026 January 2023 March 2026 September 2026