

## **Key decisions and discussions of the Governing Body 2022-23**

Biddenham International School has 13 Governors who meet as a whole Governing Body four times a year. The list of Governors is 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. Each Full Governing Body meeting is attended by the Head Boy and Girl, reporting on their view of the school activities and issues, and the views of the Student forum.

This document summarises those discussion which have taken place during 2022-2023. Detailed minutes of the meetings are available.

### **14th September**

The Governors heard very positive news from the Head girls about the development of links between the 6th form and the rest of the school, including the mentoring scheme, and the progress of the Safeguarding lead students. It was noted that all the senior prefects were girls, and most of the representatives at the student forum were female, and that the school needed to encourage boys to take an equally active approach to the school community.

Governors discussed the energy costs of the school, the effect on the school budget and on those families which were already struggling to make ends meet. A number of schemes are in place to support families. For the school, the improving reputation of the school had led to rising numbers in all years, meaning that the budget would not be so pressurised. It was agreed that the school needed to ensure that the positive messages about the school needed to be communicated across the community.

There was a detailed analysis of the school's summer results. At Key Stage 5, (A level), the results were significantly higher than those in 2019. There was positive 'value added' for students, despite all the stresses and strains caused by Covid restrictions, especially for this year, which did not have the experience of public examinations at GCSE level. It was confirmed that most students reached their chosen destinations, although a few had had to go through university clearing, and apprenticeships featured well in the destination of students. This was a confirmation that the strategies put in place were working.

At Key Stage 4, (GCSEs), the results were higher than in the previous 5 years. Governors noted that this would be an unusual situation for the school, as it meant that staff hadn't inflated the teacher assessed grades during the Covid epidemic. The role of chrome books and the extent to which the staff had exploited the online teaching was a real advantage to students, no matter where they came from during the entire period. It was noted that low attendance had had an impact on some students' results. SEND children had performed above the national average, as well as students who had higher prior attainment. Governors were provided with a list of 48 students who had achieved on average an additional grade of progress, than would have been expected. It was agreed that some subjects needed a review, and that this would translate into the School Development Plan, and the Principal's objectives.

## **23rd November**

The student report identified the amount of work being done by 6th formers with the rest of the school, as well as developing the Discover Society for 6th form students. They are running a sanitary provision scheme across the school, had reviewed the school's safeguarding policy and developed a child friendly version, developed a buddying system for students in school, as well as the mentoring programme. They had been leading on charity activities, including support to the Food Bank through a harvest festival scheme, and the Christmas in a box scheme. Governors were deeply impressed by the breadth and scale of activities.

Clare Warburton, the Deputy head for Safeguarding reported on the safeguarding activities in school. There had been an independent audit of safeguarding, which had found the school's systems were robust and well understood by staff and students. In addition, there had been progress in co-ordinating the use the support services, including mental health and counselling to ensure they were used in a planned way for each individual student for which there is a concern. Heads of Year had each taken a specialist area of safeguarding to provide a focus for support for staff. The annual report showed a high number of referrals to children's social care, and there had also been an increase in the number of children referred to Prevent. Governors noted that the issue of extremist views on social media had been addressed through assemblies, (e.g. Andrew Tate)

The Safeguarding policy was discussed and agreed, and specific areas of safeguarding were discussed in detail, including student mental health and depression, dealing with applications for staffing and what to look out for, apps and online games, and domestic abuse.

The governors also came to a view about the use of Pupil Premium, and how far it should be used to fund activities and positions that have an impact on the whole school, and how far it is focused on individual students. Currently, the school includes both approaches in its use of the funding. There had been a detailed committee discussion, and this was reprised at the Governing body meeting. It was felt that, despite the fact that some other schools focused significantly on individual and their needs, that the approach the school takes has made a difference to those deemed to be 'pupil premium' students. They also recognised that there were many students who didn't fulfil pupil premium requirements, but lived very similar lives and therefore needed support. Governors agreed with the approach taken.

## **22nd March**

The Head Girls gave their report. One of the key features that was noted by Governors was that boys are missing from the senior prefect team, and the students fora. Governors were concerned that this needed to be addressed, and the Principal said that plans were in place to do this.

The main discussion centred on the proposal to respond to the LA's request to increase the Pupil Admission Number from September 2024. The LA wanted this to be increased to 270. Governors discussed the fact that the school had already increased its PAN to 240, and that growing too fast might threaten the family nature of the school and the fulfilment of its values and principles. The Principal had already agreed to take 250 in September 2023 to help ease the problems the LA was facing. The additional buildings were intended to allow the school to manage the revised number of 240 per year. The

school's results are good, partly because the form tutor numbers are kept to 24, enabling all the additional work to be done with individual students. Increasing the number of pupils per year would require even more specialist areas, although it was felt that the LA would use calculations from the DfE that we could take 270 per year within the existing buildings. Governors agreed by majority vote that the PAN should remain at 240 for September 2024, with flexibility to go over this if required, and that any agreed increase to 270 subject to being content with the offer from the LA to support the school with building work.

## **29th June**

The Governors had a broad ranging discussion about the strengths and skills which they brought to the Governing Body. It was felt that the strategic responsibilities of the school were addressed by the skills and experience of Governors. It was agreed that there ought to be a training day arranged to ensure Governors were aware of all the Governor responsibilities and to help identify the key issues they need to focus on.

There was a detailed discussion about the current predictions of student outcomes against the targets set, and how accurate they were. It was agreed that getting the predictions as accurate as possible was important, not only for the school, but for the expectations and career ambitions of students. Staff had been asked to be especially cautious, given the changes the Government had indicated in awarding grades. We noted that the situation in science was now a complicated one, as there were so many options to consider for each student. Governors noted that quite a proportion of students had no Key Stage 2 data, and so it was hard to come to a view about their predictions and progress. However, it was felt that robust systems were in place. This was against a background of the shifting approach to awarding grades, as a result of Covid. At A Level, the expectations was that value added would be at least at expected levels.

The Principal noted the impact of Covid on the students. Attendance was lower than it had been in previous years, and of course there had been strike days to complicate the situation. There had been one Permanent Exclusion in this academic year, but a rise in fixed term exclusions, part of a national trend, although lower than in other Borough schools. The school had carried out a school survey with staff, students and parents, and the school was currently reviewing and responding to the comments positively. A key area had been behaviour, and this was being addressed with vigour.