



BirchfieldSchool

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From the Headmistress Mrs S Morris M.A. (B.A. Hons) PGCE

BIRCHFIELD SCHOOL

2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT

of the School Governance Advisory Committee

The report for this academic year reflects the work of the Governance Advisory committee and decisions taken over the last 12 months. We support and advise the Proprietor and Headmistress in making decisions in the best interests of our pupils. We scrutinize and approve the policies and procedures of the school. We work with the Headmistress to create development plans for future improvement. We monitor the work of the Headmistress and her staff. We monitor and evaluate the safeguarding procedures and aim to ensure that every child is kept safe whilst at school. We monitor and report on financial arrangements and annually submit accounts to Companies House. All school policies can be viewed on the school website. For information regarding the successes and activities of the children and students at the school, see the Headmistress' reports and the website.

This year has been truly momentous in the life of Birchfield School. The year started under the ownership of Birchfield Educational Trust Ltd but in November 2020 the purchase of the school by St Philips Education (a company that also runs St Dominic's Grammar School, Brewood) was approved by the Department for Education, with Mr Gary Hartland as Proprietor. We are delighted that Mrs Morris will continue as Headmistress.

This annual report is a brief synopsis of some of the positive changes and benefits already apparent to children, parents and staff. The future of the school is secure, the finances stable and the whole atmosphere one of enthusiasm. In just a few short months, we have seen the school roll increase, and interest in obtaining a place is high. The proprietor, together with his governance advisory committee, the Headmistress and the staff are determined that we protect the very special characteristics of the old Birchfield School whilst simultaneously driving the school onwards and upwards into an even more exciting future.

The Headmistress is seizing the opportunities for promoting positive change and will lead the school on the next phase of its journey. We have met with all staff individually and the excitement is palpable. We want the school to grow organically and the staff to grow with us – both personally and professionally. A school is only as good as its Head and staff. We will help the teachers – as well as the pupils – to become 'the best they can be'!

A major decision was to seek permission from the DfE for the school to extend the age range of the school to include the GCSE years – ages 13-16. We intend that those entering the Senior School at age 11 in September 2021 will be able to stay at the school in Y9 in September 2023 and be the first Birchfield School cohort to take GCSE examinations in the summer of 2026. The school will

welcome children with a wide range of abilities and will aim to stretch every child to achieve their maximum academic and personal potential. We want children to achieve academically, but also be well-rounded, respectful and polite individuals who have been given opportunities to experience the delights of music, the arts, sport and outdoor education. We want children to be happy and thriving.

Some children find learning more difficult than others – especially in the early years – and we will make provision for those with special educational needs or disabilities. We are introducing our Star Programme designed to give extra help and distinctive specialist support for children who initially struggle with the challenge of mainstream schooling. The programme will only be offered to children aged 6 to 11 years. Depending on progress, youngsters may graduate from the programme into our mainstream provision as and when appropriate.

The physical improvements to the school are already apparent. The Proprietor has sanctioned huge investment. Many parts of the school have been re-designed, re-modelled and refurbished to create more classrooms, enhanced teaching areas and improved toilet facilities. In addition, the new science laboratory, the outdoor area for our younger years and better lighting throughout the school all benefit your children. Many windows have been replaced and the whole estate has been subject to extensive re-decoration. The buildings have I suspect never looked better! Plans are afoot to replace the old outdoor swimming pool with a conservatory to act as a learning space for biology and ecology.

Outside, the superb grounds are benefitting from similar investment such that children at the school will have outstanding facilities for sport and outdoor education. The cricket square has been improved and the pavilion completely overhauled and decorated (and now includes toilet facilities). The plans include football and hockey pitches to host inter-school matches on a regular basis. The tennis courts and all-weather areas will also be improved. Even the car park and the house at the front of the school have benefited from these investments!

We know from the comments the Headmistress has received that parents and children are delighted with the quality of the improvements. There is a cheery ‘buzz’ of excitement flowing through the school. But we realise that whilst a superb environment in which children can learn is important, parents are most concerned their children are happy and making progress. We need parents to work with us and to trust us. We need your support. We know that many of you have spoken of ‘something special’ about Birchfield as a school. We as governors are determined to retain that special feeling.

This has been an exciting year for everyone involved in the school. There have of course been the huge challenges presented by the current pandemic. We believe that having the resources and expertise in the company sponsoring the school has ensured that the Headmistress and her team have been well supported in keeping the children and staff at Birchfield as safe and healthy as possible. The Headmistress and her colleagues have worked tirelessly this year and have responded to the challenge of new ownership magnificently.

We look forward to working with you the parents in the coming years and helping Birchfield School to become an outstanding school for children of all ages and abilities, talents and backgrounds. We want children, parents and staff to all be proud of being members of the Birchfield community.



Sir Michael Griffiths
Chair of the Governance Advisory Committee