

# **BIRCHFIELD SCHOOL**

## **2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT**

of the School Governance Advisory Committee



BirchfieldSchool

*The report reflects the work of the Governance Advisory committee over the last 12 months. We are delighted that Sir Gavin Williamson has joined the committee during this year; his expertise and experience will be invaluable. 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 safeguarding procedures and aim to ensure every child is kept safe whilst at school. We monitor financial arrangements and annually submit accounts to Companies House. School policies required by the Independent School Standards Regulations can be viewed on our website. For information regarding the successes and activities of pupils at the school, see the Headmistress' regular Newsletters and the website.*

The annual report is a brief synopsis of just some of the positive changes during the year, and the benefits that subsequently accrue to your children. These exciting developments are being recognised widely, leading to increased recruitment to the school thanks in no small way to you – the parents and pupils – sharing your appreciation of the school with friends.

Last year the school celebrated receiving an outstanding Inspection Report. The challenge for Mrs Morris and her team this year has been to maintain and even improve upon these standards of excellence. As many sportsmen and businesses will attest, getting to the top is the 'easy' bit; the real difficulty is to STAY there! The governance committee has been delighted that progress has been sustained across the school.

We have a development plan designed to further improve the facilities enjoyed by your youngsters. We are pleased that planning permission has now been obtained and this summer we will be preparing the groundwork for the new classrooms by the Tiger Turf. The site will be cleared and new drainage installed – perhaps not exciting, but essential works! The new cricket nets have proved to be a brilliant asset to the school. Boys and girls of all ages are learning to improve their skills and the progress being made is tangible. We can anticipate great successes 'out on the square' in the coming years.

Perhaps the most significant change at Birchfield School since coming into the St Philips Education group has been the commitment to expand the senior section of the school up to the age of 16. Our students now have the option of remaining at Birchfield for their GCSE examination courses. We understand that some parents have reservations having originally joined the school some years ago, with the expectation that their child would move to a senior provider at the end of Year 8, aged 13 years. We are confident that the changes we are making will reassure you that the excellence of Birchfield as a 'prep school' will translate into Birchfield as an excellent provider of examination courses.

A significant appointment has been made during the year. The new Head of Senior School is Mrs Pascale Mellor. She is a Mathematics teacher who has an outstanding record as a leader in both curricular and pastoral roles in her previous schools. Mrs Mellor started at the school at Easter and has already made a positive impact with staff, parents and pupils.

Our first Year 9 group starts in September and our Year 8 pupils are excited about the opportunities and challenges ahead! We are offering a core range of GCSE courses which will provide an excellent preparation for further specialisation at A. level. Parents and pupils attended an Options evening before Easter to learn more about the subjects on offer.

The school continues to welcome children with a wide range of abilities and aims to stretch every child to achieve their academic and personal potential. We provide additional support for those that need it to enable all youngsters to make progress. We want all children to be well-rounded and polite young people who have been given opportunities to experience the delights of music, the arts, sport and outdoor education as well as the core elements of the curriculum. We believe that happy children are more likely to thrive!

Our superb grounds continue to be the envy of many! The sporting facilities demonstrate our commitment to developing more than the academic talents of your children. Although children have different levels of skill and aptitude for different sports, we believe that engagement in sport can develop extremely positive character traits - such as teamwork, leadership and resilience - that are important in adult life.

Facilities are important, but GREAT schools depend upon great teachers. We are striving to ensure we recruit the very best teachers and enable them to flourish and develop. We have been delighted with the quality of teachers we have been able to attract. We have specialist teachers starting in September to add to our existing expertise. A warm Birchfield welcome awaits new English, History and Computer Science teachers as the school expands.

You will be aware that Mrs Morris will leave at Christmas to be a schools' inspector. Governors, staff, parents and children are in awe of the tremendous job she has done as Headmistress, and we are delighted that by agreeing to join the school's governance committee we will benefit from her wisdom and continuing involvement. We were pleased to appoint Mrs Amy Jones, her Assistant Head, to be the new Headteacher as from January 2024, a decision that I know has been welcomed by parents.

Another exciting year has also had its challenges. You will be aware from the media that so-called 'social media' continues to be a potential source of friction amongst young people. We would urge all parents to discuss the issues that medium brings and help us to help children to manage this 'new world' appropriately. Fortunately, we know that our parent body is hugely supportive of both their youngsters and the school. Working together, we can ensure that your children develop into young adults of whom we can all be proud.

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

Have a great summer break!

Sir Michael Griffiths  
*Chair of the Governance Advisory Committee*  
July 2023