

Development Plan

Berlin British School

Graham Lacey, January 2011

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INTRODUCTION

To one of the questions asked to help shape this Development Plan, a parent responded that the school has lost its compass. The purpose of this Development Plan is to provide a sense of direction for the school over the next five or so years. To chart that direction, it is first necessary to establish the character of the base from which we should set out. The various constituencies who were consulted are almost unanimous about one thing at least: the school is fundamentally British, but with a strong international dimension. From that premise much that is contained in these pages follows.

The British characteristics of the school lie in its teaching methods, its curriculum, its commitment to help the personal as well as academic development of the whole child, the acknowledgement that character and life skills are shaped by activities outside the classroom as well as within it, the interdependence of personal happiness and the fulfilment of academic potential. The British educational tradition has a reputation for excellence, academic structure and rigour, and we seek to engender the highest academic expectations – in an atmosphere that is at once purposeful and relaxed. We are not ashamed to admit that our academic programmes are demanding and challenging; that is why the school chose two public exam systems whose high standards are recognised the world over.

To be committed to British educational values also means that we believe in the essential worth of each individual. Hence, in the classroom we adhere to the Socratic method of teaching, and dialogue. Within and outside it, we applaud anyone – of whatever ability – who tries their very best to fulfil their potential, even if it be a footballer who falls over his feet or a musician with no sense of rhythm. We nurture the overall development of each individual through encouragement, reward and the open expression of our appreciation. None of these qualities can grow without the establishment of a clear framework of discipline whose borders are clear for all to see, respect and support.

There is no conflict, as those whom we consulted were also quick to assert, between our Britishness and our internationalism. We welcome and accommodate the kaleidoscope of nationalities that make up our pupil body, a reflection of the cosmopolitan city and our increasingly globalised world. As this Development Plan suggests, we wish to promote our internationalism through celebrating diversity and respect for difference.



Having established a clear consensus about the position and character of the base from which we should start our journey over the next five years, we may chart a future course, even if we cannot determine our ultimate destination. The content of this Development Plan was created by distilling the views of the constituencies who were consulted. There has been a surprising degree of consensus over the most important issues. Where none could be found, we have at least identified the area in which further discussion is needed. This Development Plan should be regarded as a living and evolving document and will be subject to later alteration in the light of further debate, future developments which none could have predicted at the time it was written, and an evaluation of our own performance in reaching the objectives we have set ourselves in it. But it does, we believe, return the lost compass.

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1 Academic

1.1 Senior School

The strongest feature of the Senior School remains the quality of teaching, the rigour of the academic programme and public exam courses, and the standard of public exam results. We will build on this reputation by:

- Retaining, and attracting more, highly motivated and committed pupils, particularly to study the IGCSE and IB courses
- Ensuring there is an appropriate balance between meeting the curriculum needs of native German speakers, and those from English speaking countries in particular
- Establishing an objective non-verbal reasoning test, and appropriate EAL support, for pupils for whom English is not their first language, as a means of identifying potential for successful performance in public exams
- Formalising procedures and policies for pupils' selection of IGCSE and IB subject choices
- Ensuring Year 12 academic and linguistic entry standards are high enough to ensure all IB pupils study for the full Diploma, and procedures are in place to provide early warning of likely non-qualification
- Securing appropriate physical and human resources to enhance the school's reputation for providing excellent careers and higher education advice
- Securing, and publishing full details of, a steady improvement in the quality of public exam results, especially in the context of the 'value added' to them by the school

1.2 Middle School

The quality of teaching, the level of individual attention, the small class sizes, the emphasis on inter-active teaching and learning and cross-curricular work, all contribute to the pupils enjoying their learning and to the provision of a first class academic programme. Now we need to ensure these qualities are reflected and publicised in written policies and procedures which are then practised fully and consistently across this section of the school. To that end we will:

- Ensure details of the content, structure and development of the curriculum in these years are agreed, published to current and prospective parents in particular, and practised by all teachers
- Continue to re-balance the curriculum to give it a more international focus
- Ensure the internal assessment procedure is clear to parents and pupils, and fully implemented and practised by staff
- Establish an objective non-verbal reasoning test for pupils for whom English is not their first language and offer the necessary level of EAL provision at appropriate points within the timetable

1.3 Lower School

In a strikingly unusual physical setting, the Lower School is unique in the region in offering a clear and structured programme of learning, based on the National Curriculum for England and Wales, for the 3 – 5 age group, taught through the medium of English. We need to promote and market these qualities, as well as the general standard of education, more vigorously by:

- Fully and clearly recording the programme of learning, emphasising the early literacy and numeracy policy, the development of the 'early years profile', and the 'every child matters' agenda
- Utilising further the environment to enhance the teaching and learning in this section of the school
- Ensuring the internal assessment procedure is clear to parents and pupils, and fully implemented and practised by staff

1.4 On all three sites

- Only recently has more thought been given to the recording and promoting of the methods of teaching and learning (or 'pedagogy') which make a vital contribution to the identity of the school. They may already be practised but have not been co-ordinated or documented, nor their value or importance promoted. Such methods draw heavily on the British tradition of interactive teaching and learning, fostering independence of mind and developing intellectual appetite. We also encourage our pupils to challenge authority in a constructive way, and develop an ability to think critically so that their minds are stimulated and engaged in the learning process. For teachers, and current and prospective parents, the school's pedagogy needs to be much more clearly defined, partly through a closer association with the IB Learner Profile or Early Years Foundation Stage, and promoted.

- We also need to promote and further publicise current features of the curriculum (e.g. cross-curricular work and emphasis on language learning) that span all three sites and distinguish BBS from other schools.
- Our commitment to the education of the whole child is reflected in the teaching of Personal, Social and Health Education. The PSHE programme needs to be reviewed, if necessary revised, co-ordinated between the three sites, and then clearly documented and publicised before being practised by the appropriate staff. We have a duty to educate our pupils beyond a narrow academic context to ensure they are aware of the challenges of 21st century life in the broader context of health, lifestyle and social issues.
- Finally, we need to ensure that parents and pupils have confidence that the school is effectively and closely monitoring pupils' academic progress through an effective tracking procedure which is quick to identify a pupil who is exceeding, or falling short of fulfilling, their potential. The methods of this procedure need to be fully established, documented and published so that assessment procedures are totally transparent and accessible, and early warning is provided to ensure appropriate remedial action is taken.

2 Extracurricular programme and special programmes

Clubs

One of the strongest features of the school is the range, variety and quality of clubs which pupils may join and participate in to ensure that there is variety and breadth to their school day, and education. As the school age-range has expanded it has become no longer appropriate to have a 'one size fits all' approach, so that:

- A range of 'after school activities', suitable for the age range, will now be offered to Lower School pupils - to whom membership of some Middle School clubs will remain open
- Year 11 - 13 pupils will continue to be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, some of whose work is not confined to between the start and end of term. Their participation will be monitored, but there will no longer be a formal requirement to join one or more termly clubs
- Current policy and practice for the administration, provision and functioning of Middle School clubs will continue

Sport

We wish to build on the already rich and varied programme of sports provision by:

- Utilising the near-by availability of water to offer sailing and rowing, and continue to develop the Senior School site to provide more sports facilities there
- Encouraging more pupils, especially in the Senior School, to compete to represent the school in sports activities and fixtures against other schools
- Reviewing the provision of sports in general to ensure suitable use of available resources

Expressive Arts and Music

We wish to enhance further the variety, quality and extent of opportunities in this area, as well as ensure that these strong features of our school are made accessible to the wider community by:

- Displaying more art work in public places such as galleries
- Continuing to cooperate with and perform musical and choral pieces in other institutions and in public places
- Continuing to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument of their choice
- Ensuring there is a sufficient number of music practice rooms available

In addition to annual Lower and Middle School productions the Senior School production will be re-established as an annual fixture

Trips and excursions

Staff, who give up much of their own time to organise and run a range of educationally worthwhile trips in Germany and abroad, will be encouraged to continue this practice. The school will:

- Ensure that appropriate procedures and policies are in place to maximise the prospects of the pupils remaining safe and well whilst on day or residential school trips
- Ensure that trips take place at appropriate times in the school term and year so that there is as little disruption to school routine and the education of pupils as possible
- Continue to encourage staff to offer educationally valuable trips and ensure their efforts and commitment are appropriately recognised

Special programmes

The school's facilities and resources currently lie idle for most of the time that staff and pupils are not at school. We will take steps to end this so that (1) the school's profile is raised within the local and wider community amongst non-BBS children and parents and (2) there is an additional revenue stream for the school. To that end:

- Holiday IB Revision and pre-IB Courses, the first to be offered in Berlin, will be provided for pupils at BBS, and other schools in Berlin and beyond
- We will aim to extend provision of holiday and weekend courses offered in co-operation with the English Holiday Course Company
- We will consider the establishment of a Language Centre and the provision of holiday language courses, for use by the public as well as current and prospective pupils
- We will build on the success of the school being a centre in November for UK university entry tests, by offering in addition internal and external candidates interview training
- We will aim to increase the number of IB external candidates for the May and November IB re-sit exams

3 The supporting context

3.1 Pastoral system

There is a strong tradition of pastoral care in the British educational system, and this is reflected in the attention and care bestowed on BBS pupils by staff who recognise the interdependence of personal wellbeing and the fulfilment of academic potential. Both need to be supported by a clear disciplinary structure for which the boundaries of acceptable behaviour are clear, and consistently enforced. The application of a clear, unambiguous and fully recorded system of rules and sanctions must be mirrored by an equally clear and consistently awarded set of rewards:

- The current 'behaviour guidelines', published in the early life of the school, need to be supported by a more detailed set of rules and regulations, particularly in the Senior School, to reflect the larger number of older pupils in the school. It is important that from the point of enrolment pupils and parents commit themselves to support the school rules, in the knowledge of exactly what the school considers inappropriate behaviour. They should also be made aware of the likely consequences of transgression
- The system of rewards needs to be reviewed in each section of the school, and if necessary reformed through the establishment of clear criteria so that rewards are made appropriately and consistently, and their value not cheapened, across each section of the school
- A clear and agreed policy, supported and implemented by all staff, on behaviour management needs to be established, and published for pupils' as well as staff's benefit
- Through the publication of an updated job description, the role of the Senior School Form Tutor needs to be clarified, and if necessary enhanced
- If it emerges from the already begun consultation process that the school should retain a school uniform, its regulations need to be unambiguous so that they can be consistently and confidently enforced by parents and staff. The purchase of uniform articles needs to be made through external outfitters, available on-line and at an affordable price, which should be the only legitimate source of purchase

3.2 Management structure

The role, responsibility and function of the Verein and Vorstand currently may appear opaque to some members of the constituencies who depend on the results of their deliberations and decisions. A close relationship of mutual trust between Vorstand and school staff needs to be encouraged. The existence of blurred lines of responsibility here is reflected within the school itself where the division of responsibilities, particularly in middle management at Senior School, need to be more clearly drawn.

- The legal structure by which the school is run, the terms of the constitution, and the process of election to the Verein and Vorstand, need to be reviewed, clarified and in their new form published
- The lines of responsibility between the roles of Verein and Vorstand on the one hand and senior management on the other need to be clarified and published
- Closer personal and professional relations links between members of the Vorstand and school staff need to be established through the growth of a culture of mutual respect and the provision of more frequent school events at which there is opportunity for the exchange of information and views
- A reform of middle management, particularly in the Senior School, needs to be undertaken so that the lines of responsibility, particularly between pastoral and academic responsibilities, are clearer
- The management of IT needs to be reviewed, and a clearer distinction made between the roles of management of and technical support for the system on the one hand, and running IT academic programmes on the other

3.3 Staff

A school can only be as good as its staff, and the BBS staff are its most valuable resource. The recruitment of excellent staff, who are committed to raising standards further and ready to protect and promote the principles on which the school's identity rests, remains a top priority. To that end, the school will look to:

- Recruit teachers who are ready to practise the identified school pedagogy in their teaching, and contribute to the wider life of the school
- For future employees introduce a new salary structure that reflects conditions of employment in the 21st century, provides incentives, and rewards good professional practice as well as experience and duration of employment

- Improve the appraisal system for members of the academic staff, and introduce formal appraisal for administrative staff, to help professional development as well as enhance performance
- Ensure there are sufficient resources for external courses, but also consider utilising 'in-house' expertise, to promote the cause of professional development and good professional practice
- Ensure that the number and deployment of administrative staff are adjusted to reflect the changing size of the school and type of administrative services
- Maximise the efficiency of the administration team and measure its work and practices against equivalents in other similar schools

3.4 Information Technology

Both teaching and administrative staff need to have confidence in the efficiency and quality of IT hardware and software so that IT may be used as an effective teaching and learning tool, help internal and external communication, and support and improve the quality and efficiency of administration. To that end:

- We will aim to ensure greater and better access to IT facilities for whole-class groups for teaching purposes
- We will aim to run state of the art equipment in the learning and administrative environments, supported by the development and necessary level of efficient maintenance of network facilities
- Financial resources need to be found to appoint a Systems Manager, primarily responsible for developing as well as managing and maintaining the network and hardware, as well as to invest in new hardware to ensure efficient and reliable use by staff
- Full familiarisation and exploitation of the potential of Serco need to be completed to justify investment already made
- 'Acceptable usage' and data protection policies need to be developed and implemented

3.5 Facilities

An immediate, short and long term approach needs to be adopted here. Some immediate repairs and refurbishment need to be completed if we are to avoid justified criticism of facilities not matching fees, and thought needs to be given to ensuring effective functioning of basic amenities over the next few years. We should consider moving to a single site where a whole-school identity may be more easily forged.

- Short term
 - Refurbishment of boys' and girls' changing and washing facilities in Senior School, and sanitary facilities at Lower School
- Medium term
 - Investment in upgrading utilities to ensure safe use and more efficient consumption
- Long term
 - Keep open the possibility of moving the school to one site, with discrete sections, and with appropriate facilities to match those of our competitors

3.6 Finance

With no alternative sources of income, the school's financial health currently relies exclusively on managing running costs and increasing the school roll (see 4.1). A contribution towards financial stability and growth may be provided by:

- Re-structuring the fees to provide incentives for initial enrolment, retention of pupils once they have been enrolled, and enrolment of pupils' siblings
- Ensuring our fees are attractive to prospective parents when compared with those of our competitors
- Emphasising the inclusive nature of our fees (e.g. that they include purchase of text books and travel between sites)

In order to make the school accessible to academically able pupils whose parents would normally not be able to afford to send them to the school, and to forge closer and better links with the local community, we need to:

- Offer as many means-tested bursaries as the school can afford

The management of school budgets remains largely centralised, partly because the management structure prevents delegation of responsibility to middle management. Once this has been reformed (see 3.2) in the Senior School at least:

- Management of budgets will be delegated to identified 'Heads of Faculty' who will be accountable to their Head of School

3.7 Services

Whilst the school may be proud of the standard of many of the services, we must review, look to improve and add to them so that they match, if not better, those offered by our competitor schools and contribute to the school's appeal. In particular we must:

- Review regularly the standard of service and food provided by the school's catering company
- Ensure that the bus company runs an efficient and reliable service and that its routes are sufficient, and each appropriate
- Ensure that the quality of medical care on each site is high
- Work towards ensuring that both staff and pupils have access to sharing confidential personal information and concerns with a counsellor employed by the school but not part of its management

4 Securing the success of the School

4.1 *School roll*

We need to expand the roll in all sections of the school, but particularly the Senior School where there is the greatest physical space and where the size of some classes may be increased for optimum educational benefit. The attractions of the IB Diploma have contributed to a steady increase of pupils in Year 12 and 13 since the programme was introduced in 2002, and we would like to see a comparable rise in the size of other year groups within the next few years. The need to conform to state regulations places a limit on expansion in the Lower School, but there is also scope here and the Middle School for increased numbers. To that end we aim to:

- Increase the numbers of pupils in Foundation and Year 1 to the maximum possible, and open a nursery wing for at least ten infants
- Ensure there are two classes of optimum size (c.20) in each of the Middle School year groups
- By marketing the value and transferability of the IB Diploma, as well as improving further the quality of educational provision, to establish BBS as the best IB Diploma school in Berlin, thereby attracting motivated and committed students to join us from other schools in Year 12

Our status as a British school with a strong international dimension should be mirrored in the balance of nationalities within the pupil body, not least to ensure that English is the language of informal communication as well as formal instruction. To that end the school will:

- Direct its appeal towards, and its marketing at, particularly those groups, institutions and organisations where English is the first language

4.2 External relations

One way of securing a higher roll is for the school to raise its profile within the local and wider community. The school needs to catch up with its rivals by a more vigorous campaign of marketing in identified areas as well as mobilising support and help from those constituencies which benefit or have benefited from the school. It also needs to encourage a culture of greater participation on behalf of the parent body. So resources will be channelled and/or greater efforts made towards:

- Forging closer links with private corporations to provide sponsorship for school building projects
- Establishing links with more schools abroad, especially in the UK, through study visits and exchanges, cultural and sporting programmes or fixtures etc:
- Starting a data base of alumni and friends of the school whom we would invite to school events, partly with a view to raising funds for identified school projects (see below)
- Mobilising more parental involvement in the life of the school by more aggressively publicising to new, current and prospective parents the importance to the school of the work of the PTA
- Identifying a specific building project whose construction would encourage the contribution of potential donors from the local community

4.3 Publicity

Having established and clearly defined the product, it is now our responsibility to market it, a move long overdue in the changed climate in which the school now competes for custom, and in the knowledge and with the confidence that the appropriate publicity will secure the results necessary to lead to a steady growth in the size and prosperity of the school over the next five or so years. In short, to secure this success, we must *communicate* and *inform more*. To that end we will:

- Provide more professionally presented, and fuller content to, school booklets for distribution to current and prospective parents
- Produce a prospectus
- Continue to update and add to the content of the website, and improve further its presentation, layout and image



- Promote the new school logo and motto through their appearance on all school publicity, including signage in the school, so they become ubiquitous images
- Ensure the entry and reception areas on each site are warm and welcoming
- Embed a culture of written communication and supply of information to all stakeholders so that they are fully informed of our educational provision, appreciate the standards of our professional care, and support school events