

The Swanage School  
**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE**  
Held on Wednesday 11 November 2020, 5.30pm

Present (via remote access): Jessica Starmer (Chair), William Knight, Jenny Maraspin, Vanessa Millman, Carl Styants  
In attendance (via remote access): Anna Carvisiglia (Business Manager), Sue Fletcher (Clerk), Kay Lawton (Deputy Headteacher)

Item		Action	Lead	By
	<p>The meeting was held via remote access as a result of guidance in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Chair recorded thanks to Carl Styants for his previous chairing of the Committee and support.</p>			
STF 2.1	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Apologies were received from Paul Angel and Tim Marcus.</p>			
STF 2.2	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b>  There were no declarations of interest or conflict with any agenda item. Business Manager Anna Carvisiglia would not be present for item 2.14 to discuss the recruitment process for her replacement.</p>			
STF 2.3	<p><b>Minutes of the Last meetings</b>  1) 17 June 2020: The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.  2) 21 October 2020 (joint meeting with the Finance &amp; Premises Committee): The minutes of the confidential meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.  3) 29 October 2020: The minutes of the confidential extraordinary meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record with one abstention, it being noted that there had been a difference in recollection as to the decisions made.</p> <p>The minutes will be signed at a later date.</p>			
STF 2.4	<p><b>Matters Arising &amp; Actions</b>  [VM lost connection to the meeting]</p> <p><u>STF 3.4 (STF 2.8) Risk Register: Succession planning for senior leadership team</u>  The Chair reminded the Committee that this action related to a suggestion that it would be good practice</p>			

	<p>to review succession-planning and recruitment processes for senior leadership posts, following the recent recruitment of Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. However, as recruitment for a new Business Manager was underway, the Chair proposed that this be deferred until the Spring Term when a review could take in any experiences gained in relation to planning and recruiting for this post as well.</p> <p><u>STF 3.5.4 Headteacher's Report: Catch-up for students – insurance for Saturday opening</u> The Chair reported that the Business Manager had confirmed that the school's insurance would extend to Saturdays, should Saturday classes be required for catch-up sessions as a response to the effects of the pandemic lock-down.</p> <p><u>STF 3.6 (Confidential minutes): Deputy Headteacher Recruitment</u> The Chair recorded that the recommendation to appoint Kay Lawton as Deputy Headteacher had been approved by the full governing body.</p> <p><u>STF 3.11 Policies</u> The Chair reported that the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy had been re-published. The Staff Code of Conduct and the Staff Induction &amp; NQT Policy were approved by Chair's Action as agreed, following agreed amendments.</p>			
STF 2.5	<p><b>Scheme of Delegation and Annual Plan</b> The Chair suggested that this be left until after the governance review by the full board, as suggestions for cutting duplication with other committees and restructuring the meeting schedule may arise from that.</p>			
STF 2.6	<p><b>Headteacher's Staffing Report</b> JM reported on one update since the paper was circulated, which was that a Facilities Manager has been appointed. She informed governors that the appointee is an experienced site manager, having worked at a large school and care homes previously. A four-day handover with the current Facilities Manager would be possible and comprehensive handover documents were in place.</p>			
STF 2.7	<p><b>Staff Contracts Review</b> A summary of points discussed by the working group assigned to review staff contracts had been circulated; this showed actions agreed and AC noted that most decisions had been to make minor changes to job descriptions and letters to improve clarity, as they did not amount to contractual changes. It was AGREED that the working party would reconvene to conclude the deliberation and report back to the Committee on any recommended contract wording changes.</p>	Convene working party meeting	Clerk	Dec '20

	[VM rejoined the meeting]			
STF 2.8	<p><b>School Development Plan (SDP)</b></p> <p>Governors discussed with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher the progress to date on SDP objectives relating to the Committee's remit. These fell under three headings as follows:</p> <p>I. <u>Staff wellbeing</u></p> <p>JM reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Chair had delivered a stress management session to staff as part of the continuing professional development (CPD) programme, which had been well received.</li> <li>- The School Counsellor's remit now included meeting with staff and signposting to support services, feeding back to the leadership team on common triggers of stress at work, and potential actions that might be taken to improve wellbeing at school. It was clarified that this role is not provision of counselling, which it was thought would not be appropriate from one staff member to another.</li> <li>- a number of actions have been taken to try and reduce stress during the pandemic response, such as stripping back extracurricular activities. She noted that the Curriculum Area Leaders were feeling the pressure of fixing gaps and planning interventions and of the unknowns in relation to exams in 2021.</li> <li>- The Heads of House were working well together as a team to tackle pastoral support for students as well as working on moving forward on improving communication with better use of technology.</li> <li>- Meetings with new staff had been positive.</li> </ul> <p>Overall, JM/KL expressed concerns about staff mental health and the impact of the pressures and uncertainties being experienced as a result of the Covid-19 mitigations. They noted that the mitigations mean there is less interaction between staff, reduced use of the staff room and other social impacts that also contribute to reduced wellbeing among staff. JM referred to a recent Ofsted report [Covid-19 Series: Briefing on Schools, October 2020] which highlighted the additional workload and pressures being felt by school staff as a result of the pandemic and the reports from many school leaders that the pressure on staff and leadership teams is unsustainable.</p> <p>The Chair asked after the Senior Leadership Team, noting that their well-being is also important to monitor and asking if there is anything governors can do to support them better. JM expressed that in a recent exercise to plan SLT meetings across the year, it had become apparent how much time is required to prepare for governor meetings and that, whilst the SLT were fully in support of being held</p>			

	<p>accountable and felt very supported by the governing body, they would appreciate all efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness, for example through reducing duplication and unnecessary matters, to ensure that the focus is on moving the school forward to achieve the development objectives, whilst continuing to manage the response to Covid-19.</p> <p>2. <u>Monitoring and performance management</u></p> <p>KL reported that, prior to the pandemic outbreak, a system of performance monitoring meetings between leaders and their teams had been put in place, focused on support and achieving objectives. She noted that whilst the regularity of meetings had shifted as a result of the pandemic, they have still been taking place and are responsive to the needs of different teachers. For example, meetings between Curriculum Area Leaders and some teachers had been taking place on a weekly basis, whilst meetings with other more experienced teachers were less frequent. The increased use of SharePoint had assisted CALS to monitor performance by being able to see progress on schemes of work at a glance. She noted that, going forward, the aim would be for CALS to meet with each teacher at least twice each half-term to ensure that objectives are progressing, with an “at-a-glance” version of the SDP having been produced for easy reference.</p> <p>KL also reported that it is hoped to improve the effectiveness of BlueSky by using functions for written dialogue between staff. The timing of the performance monitoring process had been brought forward, with reviews taking place in July rather than October, with a view to being focused on the year ahead from the very start of the academic year. JM noted that administrative time has been allocated for chasing, monitoring meetings and follow-up, and reporting to SLT, leaving them freer to focus on ensuring the process is meaningful for staff and achieving a purpose. She expressed that the renewed energy put into the process has meant that personal objectives support the school’s development objectives and therefore are in line with its vision, that staff are more engaged and that leaders are more aware of teacher’s development and progress and where additional support is needed.</p> <p>3. <u>Continuing professional development</u></p> <p>A governor asked about group reflective thinking and learning, asking whether the pandemic had impacted on this. JM responded that it is still taking place, with the Heads of House having taken a lead in exploiting technology to ensure group reflection continues in a streamlined fashion, for example using shared tasks and action boards to communicate, and that this had proved very productive. CPD sessions were research based and primarily focused on projects relating to the SDP. Bournemouth University had expressed interest in being involved in one of these projects, on management of change. JM also noted</p>			
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	<p>that a new teacher development framework is being used to develop unqualified teachers, incorporating use of the IRIS video software for shared, reflective learning.</p> <p>In response to a question, JM confirmed that staff had received specific training on delivering lessons virtually over Teams during the first lockdown. CPD sessions at the start of the academic year had also focused on virtual learning and had included sharing of good practice from departments that had received good engagement during the lock-down. She acknowledged that the initial lack of adoption of the platforms by students, who had found them harder to navigate than anticipated, had been surprising, and sessions to develop students' knowledge of the platforms are being put in place. It was suggested that providing sessions for parents could also be beneficial.</p> <p>Governors recorded thanks to leaders and staff for the significant work going into improving processes.</p>			
STF 2.9	<p><b>NQT Support</b></p> <p>The Chair noted that the Committee's role was to have oversight of the process for supporting newly qualified teachers and to consider how best to see evidence of this.</p> <p>JM noted that there are currently no NQTs, but that NQT-type support is in place for three unqualified teachers. In relation to evidence, she suggested that resources and the programme of study could be shared with governors, and that a governor meeting with staff during their first year would also be worthwhile. It was noted that holding "entry" interviews has been mooted previously and agreed this was a good idea. It was suggested that a lead governor for NQTs and induction might be appropriate and that Helen O'Connor be asked if she would be willing to consider this.</p>	<p>Entry interviews</p> <p>Consider link gov role</p>	<p>Chair or link gov</p> <p>FGB</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Dec '20</p>
STF 2.10	<p><b>Staff Survey</b></p> <p>The Chair noted that the responses to the staff survey had, on the whole, been extremely positive but the focus for improvements would necessarily be on those areas which had scored less well or where one or more negative answers indicated at least some level of concern among staff.</p> <p>In response to questions on what actions have arisen in response to the survey, JM noted that the need to increase the opportunities for staff and ensure they feel valued was one of the key outcomes and outlined plans to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- introduce secondments to the leadership team for staff with aspirations for middle leadership.</li> <li>- support staff to undertake the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership.</li> </ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- continue exploring opportunities for support staff to take on additional responsibilities and qualifications, citing recent changes to HR &amp; Admin support, allocating hours for an Attendance Officer role and putting in place an IT structure to support training.</li> <li>- continue exploring opportunities for teaching staff to take on additional responsibilities and pursue projects helpful not only to the school but also to their career development, particularly for teachers of non-core subjects where opportunities for leading curriculum provision are lower under the current departmental structure, citing as examples opportunities relating to the development of art in the community and of work-based curriculum provision.</li> </ul> <p>The previous Chair of the Committee noted that lack of opportunities for management experience was a theme arising from exit interviews, particularly from teachers of non-core subjects, and would welcome consideration of how to give them experience/recognition equal to, for example, being a head of department in a larger school.</p> <p>One or two specific responses to survey questions were raised by governors, it being recognised that as the survey was anonymous it would not have been possible to follow up on these directly but asking JM whether the reasons for the negative responses were understood. JM informed governors that the survey had been discussed at the staff Inset Day in July 2020, including reference to particular questions where concerns had been indicated, and all staff should be aware that she would be happy to discuss any individual issues or suggestions for improvement. The Chair felt this was an appropriate response given the anonymity of the survey.</p> <p>It was noted that one member of staff had “strongly disagreed” in relation to whether the school was effectively governed. Although the reasons for this were not known and therefore could not directly be addressed, governors agreed that it may help to create further opportunities to promote a flow of information to staff about governance and to give an opportunity to raise questions. It was suggested that governors might give another presentation or make themselves available in school, as in the past, and agreed that a regular update in the new half-termly newsletter would be a good way to raise the profile of governance both for staff and parents.</p>			
STF 2.11	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>In noting that the school has, over time, adopted a significant number of policies which are largely “procedural”, it was suggested that an effort should be made, as policies come up for review, to remove any unnecessary wording and split documents between “policy” and “procedure”, with governors only concerning themselves with the former. It was recognised that procedural detail can be helpful to staff but</p>			

	<p>agreed that, so long as procedures comply with all relevant aspects of law and with the overarching policy approved by governors, this can appropriately be considered operational detail which is not necessary for governors to approve. It was also noted by the Clerk that not all policies, particularly non-statutory ones, have to be legally approved by governors.</p> <p><b>AGREED</b> to recommend, as part of the governing body's review of efficiency and effectiveness, that the approach to approval of policies, and the drafting of policy and procedure, be revised to take on board the comments above.</p> <p>In relation to the proposed Recruitment &amp; Retention Policy circulated, the Committee recorded thanks to Nicky Taylor for her work in drafting this, concluding that the document should form an internal procedure but that an approved "policy" was not required.</p>	Feed into governance review	CoG, Clerk, FGB	Dec '20
STF 2.12	<p><b>Headteacher's Performance Monitoring</b> Chair of Governors Tim Marcus was not in attendance to report on this item.</p>			
STF 2.13	<p><b>Teaching &amp; Learning Responsibility Payments</b> [Confidential minutes]</p>			
STF 2.14	<p><b>Business Manager Recruitment</b> [Anna Carvisiglia was not in attendance for this item]</p> <p>The Chair reported that an application pack had been put together and the advert published, with a closing date of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The Selection Panel had agreed that it would be preferable to hold interviews in person if possible, but to do so outside of school hours due to Covid-19 mitigations in place – these would be held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020, for which planning is in hand.</p> <p>Noting that the Business Manager is (under the current Scheme of Delegation) an appointment only the full governing body can make, gaining the approval of the recommended appointee was discussed. It was concluded that the scheduled date of 9<sup>th</sup> December for the next full board meeting would be acceptable timing, and that whilst in theory the preferred candidate could be contacted prior to this with a "subject-to-approval" offer, in this case an offer would <i>not</i> be made until approval is granted, to avoid a change from the expected process without the consideration of the Board.</p>	FGB agenda	Clerk	Dec '20

STF 2.15	<b>Any Other Business</b> None.			
STF 2.16	<b>Confidentiality</b> The discussion on Teaching & Learning Responsibility payments would require confidential minutes as the outcome is subject to approval by the full governing body.			
	<b>Next Meeting</b> The next meeting will be held on 10 March 2021.			
	The meeting closed at 7pm.			