

The Swanage School  
**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STUDENT COMMITTEE**  
Held on Wednesday 21 November 2018, 5.30pm

Present: Isobel Tooley (Chair), Nick Brady, Peter Collins, Tristram Hobson, Jenny Maraspin, Al Stephens, Carl Styants  
In attendance: Sue Fletcher (Clerk), Danni Drodge (Curriculum Area Leader, for item STU 2.3), Kay Lawton (Curriculum Area Leader (for item STU 2.3)

Item		Action	Lead	By
STU 2.1	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies were received from Amanda Rowley and Nicky Taylor.			
STU 2.2	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> There were no declarations of interest or conflict with any agenda item.			
STU 2.3	<p><b>Curriculum Area Leader Presentation: English, Languages, Drama, Music, Humanities, Art and Project Based Learning</b>  The committee congratulated the CALs on the excellent GSCE results for most subjects.</p> <p>Kay Lawton (CAL for English, languages, drama and music) and Danni Drodge (CAL for humanities, art and project based learning) gave a presentation based on questions relating to the School Development Plan posed in advance by the Chair. Topics covered were:</p> <p><u>Leadership:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>New staff:</u> The CALs summarised the induction and support provided to date for new staff members in their departments.</li> <li>- <u>Contextual seating plans:</u> most team members in humanities are using these, and generally find them helpful for behaviour management and for identifying individual needs for differentiation within lessons. The seating plans are also helpful for cover supervisors. KL supports their use in principle but has not yet enforced use within her curriculum area as there have been other priorities to address.</li> <li>- <u>Quality assurance:</u> is being managed through several strategies, for example:</li> </ul>			

- Work scrutiny within teams. In English/language/drama/music, the team had scrutinised grading of work, exploring discrepancies where they had marked the same sample differently. They had also focused on target setting, planning and adaptation of strategies. This had identified some variation in the quality of work in pupil's books and the need for all staff to have sufficiently focused schemes of work. In humanities/art there had been scrutiny of assessment, quality of work and differentiation. This had led to planned developments in relation to the presentation of work in philosophy & religious education (PRE) and in relation to evidencing evaluative and analytical skills in art (these skills being necessary to achieve progress beyond a standard pass).
- Schemes of work: both CALs considered specific, evolving schemes of work to be fundamental to the quality of teaching and will continue to work with staff to develop understanding of the benefits, sharing good practice through exemplars.
- Networking: links have been made with Ferndown Upper School and it is hoped that networking support for lone subject practitioners may arise from this.
- Lesson observations: both experienced and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) had been observed, with follow-up through continuing professional development (CPD) activities. Observations had focused on, for example, how teachers know every child has made progress, leading to CPD sessions on best practice for embedding assessment in lessons. Discussions on progress were also taking place in relation to the variation of ability and attitude to learning encountered from one student group to another, and the need to vary teaching and adapt pedagogy to each group. The need to improve pace of progress for some students during Years 10 and 11 had been identified and pacing in some areas of the curriculum during the lower years would also be reflected upon, with plans made to address any weaknesses.
- Concerns: Progress and attainment for the Year 11 cohort overall was a significant worry. It was noted that a large number of students within this cohort had been identified as having significant barriers to learning for a variety of reasons, and a number were struggling to access the content. It was further noted that 10% of the cohort are "transitional" students, having moved schools since Year 9, creating some issues in relation to adjustment and momentum of learning. Noting that academically weaker students should still make progress, governors suggested that wider factors such as over-statement of academic level on entry or during the lower years may need to be reflected upon to explain the disappointing predicted progress scores. CALs outlined the intervention sessions that are in place for Years 10 and 11, and the plans to increase this further. Interventions included lunchtime clubs, after school sessions, 1-to-1

support and targeted activities for selected groups of students. The relative lack of intervention time allocated to the lower years was recognised, it being noted that this was another reason for ensuring that all lessons are focused and appropriately paced through the use of excellent schemes of work across the board.

- Workload: Concerns were expressed about the impact of workload on middle leaders (including Heads of House), particularly in relation to morale and risk of burnout. CALs remained committed to identifying and addressing improvements to planning and teaching, but outlined their worries over their ability to cope with the volume of issues requiring their time, fearing that present working hours and pressure were unsustainable over the long term. They suggested that introducing KS3 co-ordinators may help. Governors asked how the Senior Leadership team were helping to address these concerns. Senior Leaders are considering this.

#### Literacy:

- GL literacy testing: KL reported that analysis of GL literacy testing results had been informative. In Year 7 the results largely matched the English department's benchmark, but the 2018 Year 8 results showed a downturn for the pupils entering with SATs levels 4 and 5 when compared to this cohort's 2017 results and their English benchmark. Efforts were being made to address this.
- Literacy in the curriculum: KL noted that she was continuing to lead on development of literacy skills throughout the curriculum, but that embedding this was challenging. A re-focus and training for new staff was being delivered through CPD sessions, sharing of data, and use of exemplars. Sessions to date had been aimed at increasing the amount of time across the curriculum spent on activities which developed literacy skills (e.g. grammar, evaluation and analysis) and improving the academic quality of these activities.

#### Project Based Learning (PBL):

- DD outlined the revised PBL curriculum, reporting that there are now four separate projects: PRE, Geography, History and Independent Learning Projects (ILP). Each project includes topics which are on the GCSE specification and incorporate skills needed for GCSEs. Feedback from students had been positive.

#### Assessment and Assessment Frameworks:

- CALs were confident they had a good understanding of where efforts should be focused in each subject in Key Stage 4 (KS4), and also outlined their conclusion that there also needs to be a school-wide focus on ensuring that KS3 appropriately prepares students for KS4. Small changes were already being implemented to help address this, for example the introduction of different plays in KS3 drama to better equip students with skills required for GCSE and the redrafting of schemes of work for KS3 history to improve the connection with KS4. The quantity of French tuition in KS3 was recognised as being insufficient for most students to reach a suitable level by KS4.
- Exam questions are routinely practised in most subjects, with students being required to redraft to improve their technique.

#### Disengaged students:

- KL and DD reported data on the number of students identified as disengaged in each year group and by subject, and noted that Year 11 had a high proportion of disengaged students compared to other years. The CALs outlined a number of strategies being employed by staff to support and re-engage these students, which included the provision of free GCSE revision guides, higher ability extra lessons for inspiration, communication with parents, and liaison with the Heads of House for whole-school approaches for individuals.

#### Financial Management:

- No significant or unusual items of expenditure were anticipated for the curriculum areas this academic year, though new books would be needed for the introduction of new plays in KS3.
- The CALs reported that some staff are concerned about the available finances. However, it was not clear whether this was a concern about funding for schools nationally or about The Swanage School specifically.

The Committee thanked KL and DD for their presentation and for the volume of work they and other staff undertake to continually reflect on current practice and outcomes, using this review process to inform initiatives for the benefit of teaching and learning.

[KL and DD left the meeting].

STU 2.4	<p><b>Minutes of the Last Meeting</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2018 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed.</p>			
STU 2.5	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><u>STU 1.6 Link governor appointments</u> The full governing body approved the link governor recommendations put forward by the committee: Pupil premium: Nicky Taylor E-safety: Nick Brady Mental health: Al Stephens</p> <p>The full governing body agreed that Peter Collins would take on the SEND governor link role, first meeting with Al Stephens for a handover.</p> <p><u>STU 1.11 FFT Benchmarks</u> TH reported that teachers are continuing to use FFT benchmark grades, but are being trained to be more selective in their use, e.g. for cohort level analysis rather than individual. The benchmark grade will be removed from parents' reports.</p> <p><u>STU 1.12 Policies – Careers, Information &amp; Guidance</u> The Clerk reported that Nicola Newman, link governor for careers, had met with Sam Probert, the School's careers lead. Revisions to the Careers Policy will be considered at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>AGREED</b> that approval of the Non-examination Assessment Policy, on which a model was awaited, would be delegated to the Deputy Headteacher as it is largely procedural.</p> <p><u>STU 1.14.2 Behaviour &amp; Exclusions Policy</u> JM reported that the Heads of House had decided to keep the "consequence ladders" appended to the Behaviour &amp; Exclusions Policy and that these would be revised to include reference to permanent exclusion as a possible outcome in relation to some serious breaches of behaviour.</p>	<p>Agenda</p> <p>Discuss with Exams Officer</p> <p>Update policy</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>HOH/ Clerk</p>	<p>Jan '19</p> <p>Dec '18</p> <p>Dec '18</p>
STU 2.6	<p><b>Curriculum</b></p> <p>1. <u>GCSE Options &amp; EBacc</u> The committee had received a discussion paper from TH, who presented possible options for the curriculum as had been discussed with the wider leadership team.</p>			

Governors agreed with the leadership team in favouring the option of keeping the curriculum subjects as at present but allowing greater choice in KS4 by removing French as a core (compulsory) subject and by dropping the need to take a humanities subject. This moved away from students being required to follow a GCSE curriculum compatible with the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), although students would still be able to achieve the EBacc through their combination of subjects if they chose.

It was agreed that a change in the Ofsted framework meant that schools can have greater confidence in moving away from an EBacc model and meet the needs of a greater number of individual students with a more flexible curriculum.

It was also noted that the CALs had been far more supportive of allowing French to become optional at KS4 than they had been when it had been discussed 2 years ago. TH noted that at present approximately 40-50% of students are withdrawn from French to take additional English and maths in any event, and that a number of students are also permitted to reduce their curriculum by dropping a subject.

The proposed changes could also be made without negatively impacting on Progress 8 scores, given that Progress 8 remains a key measure of a school's success, by continuing to ensure that Progress 8 "buckets" are filled as far as possible.

Under the proposals, the total number of GCSEs taken would drop from ten to nine (being six core / compulsory subjects including PRE and three option choices) and the advantages and disadvantages of this were discussed. It was generally concluded that whilst some higher achieving students and their parents may perceive this negatively, for the majority of students, including the higher achievers, taking nine subjects would better enable them to focus on obtaining their best grades in the subjects taken and help to alleviate stress during Year 11. Students would remain able to take ten subjects if they chose by the inclusion of further maths. It was therefore felt the proposed model would continue to meet the needs of academically more able students, and better support the majority of students.

In relation to combination of subjects when choosing three options, governors favoured an approach of only requiring one subject from the "EBacc" subjects and allowing the other two options to be freely chosen from either the "EBacc" or "Open" subjects. It was noted, however, that if a student who chose only one EBacc subject then dropped the subject this would leave a partially empty "EBacc bucket" which would negatively impact on Progress 8 scores.

[PC left the meeting]

Governors also agreed a proposal to further extend flexibility for individual students by including a work experience option in cases where this would be of benefit, e.g. one day a week taking the place of the two subjects from the “open bucket”, noting that whilst not necessarily leading to a formal qualification this may have a significant, positive impact on the small number of students for whom it would be appropriate, and could stand a student in good stead for securing an apprenticeship after school. TH noted that the school would retain responsibility for the students whilst on a work experience placement, and that a work experience co-ordinator would be required. Checks would be required, as at present for the Year 10 work-experience weeks.

TH suggested, and governors agreed that work experience could be combined with an ICT qualification in some cases. It was noted that some ICT qualifications can count towards the “Open bucket” for Progress 8 purposes.

There may be other students for whom additional maths and English support would be more beneficial than a ninth GCSE, and individual conversations would be had with these students and their families when choosing GCSE options.

It was agreed that further broadening of the curriculum through the introduction of technical subjects was not feasible nor affordable, it being noted that alternative providers, e.g. Kingston Maurward College, are available locally. Nor was it felt that a more “radical” approach to the curriculum or moving towards a highly specialised curriculum would be of benefit to the School or its students.

TH noted that moving French out of the core subjects would free up 4 hours a week in the curriculum. Best use of this time had yet to be considered. It was suggested that if extra hours became available for English, they could perhaps be “skills based”, with a focus on applying these skills to other subjects.

In conclusion, it was **AGREED**:

- that French would become optional rather than core, and that the requirement to take at least one of history or geography would be dropped
- that students would be required to take one subject from the “EBacc bucket” (choosing from computer science, French, geography, history, separate sciences) and take two other subjects from either the “EBacc” or “Open” buckets

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that a work experience option, probably taking the place of two optional choices and most likely restricted to particular students for whom it would meet a need, would be added to the offer, and where possible would be tied in with an ICT qualification</li> <li>• to continue with the current range of optional subjects. (It was noted that introduction of a completely new subject would mean that another subject would need to be dropped and it was felt that the risks of introducing any niche subject was too great in terms of staffing. It was noted that the existing curriculum catered for a broad range of interests and that (for example) dance could be a PE specialism.)</li> </ul> <p>3. <u>Literacy and Project Based Learning</u> This had been covered in the CALs presentation.</p> <p>4. <u>Curriculum Policy</u> <b>AGREED</b> to re-approve the policy, but suggested the wording relating to the EBacc be altered to reflect the discussion above.</p>	Re-publish policy after amendments	TH/Clerk	Dec '18
STU 2.7	<p><b>Attendance Data</b> JM expressed confidence that the School's renewed focus on attendance is preventing a further gradual downward drift. She reported that this year to date, staff have been more effective in dealing with poor attendance and that over 30 meetings have so far been held with parents, with more to follow. The HOH had received training from Dorset County Council's Attendance Officer. Several cases have been referred to Dorset's attendance panel.</p>			
STU 2.8	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> AS noted that through her own work she had put in a bid for mental health project funding which would potentially be able to benefit the School.</p>			
STU 2.9	<p><b>Confidentiality</b> No item would require confidential minutes.</p>			
STU 2.10	<p><b>Next Meeting</b> Tuesday 29 January 2019.</p>			
	The meeting closed at 8.40pm			