The Swanage School
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STUDENT COMMITTEE
Held on Thursday 21 May 2020 (adjourned from Wednesday 13 May 2020), 5.30pm

Present (via remote access): Isobel Tooley (Chair), Peter Collins, Alex Duke, Jenny Maraspin (Headteacher), Helen O'Connor, Al Stephens, Carl Styants
In attendance (via remote access): Sue Fletcher (Clerk), Kay Lawton (Acting Deputy Headteacher)

Item		Action	Lead	Date
	The meeting was held by remote access due to the school closure as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a continuation of the meeting of Wednesday 13 May 2020 which had been adjourned during item STU 5.7 due to difficulties with participation by the Headteacher caused by a poor remote access connection. The meeting commenced late at 5.45pm, due to difficulties with the remote access software.			
STU 5.1	**Apologies for Absence** Apologies were received from Tim Marcus (Chair of Governors) and Nicky Taylor.			
STU 5.2	**Declarations of Interest** There were no declarations of interest or conflict with any agenda item.			
STU 5.3	**Minutes of the First Part of the Meeting** Confirmed the minutes of the first part of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 May 2020 as an accurate record. The minutes will be signed at a later date.			
STU 5.4	**Matters Arising** See previous minutes.			
STU 5.5	**Children Looked After Annual Report** See previous minutes.			
STU 5.6	**Policies** See previous minutes.			

STU 5.7	**School Development Plan** See also previous minutes. JM reported that, after further reflection, she was minded to defer until January 2021 the discussion regarding the proposed introduction of Media GCSE as a core subject and moving of Philosophy & Religious Education (PRE) to be optional, with a view to implementation of changes in 2021 rather than 2020. She explained the reasoning behind this conclusion, noting that there will be other key priorities for the School in the 2020/21 school year relating to catch-up work or continued upheaval as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and so it may prove unwise to introduce a new GCSE subject and significantly alter the curriculum model during that period. The deferral would also allow for further research into questions raised during the discussion at the first part of the meeting and in subsequent e-mails, including canvassing of opinion from students and parents and consideration of alternative GCSEs which could fill the skills gaps identified. She noted that the introduction of the virtual school had exposed the need to improve a range of basic level digital skills. Such skills would be introduced where possible into the existing curriculum for 2020/21, improving students' familiarity and confidence with technologies to better equip them for future education and the modern workplace. In addition, there is likely to be scope within the Year 9 timetable for 2020/21 to introduce some basic certifications in practical skills. The Chair asked whether research backed up the identification of digital literacy as an area to focus on for employability and AD reported that the latest DfE Employer Skills Survey had found that the technical/practical skills identified as most important to employers in the South-West were specialist skills, which would include digital literacy for a large number of employment sectors. It was noted by one governor that as technologies, and therefore the skills needed by employers, are ever-changing, there is a danger of qualifications and skills taught quickly going out of date. However, others observed that familiarity with current technologies generates transferable digital skills that allow for easier navigation and adaptation to new technologies. KL also noted that syllabuses tend to be fairly general and allow teachers scope to move with the times by introducing current themes and technologies through adaptation of their teaching. Governors' welcomed the decision to defer discussion about GCSEs, agreeing that the priority for the School over the coming period needed to be on catch-up and support following the covid-19 disruption.			

| STU 5.8 | **Home Learning Review**
KL reported on how well students have adapted to learning under the new approach during the school closure, noting that 13 days of core learning and 9 days of option learning had so far been delivered via the new-style virtual learning platform. She noted that:

- 37 laptops had been sent out to support students without access to a computer. Six students were in need of a dongle to connect to the internet, and this was in hand.

- Provision has been quality assured, to ensure high quality and consistency across subjects.

- A monitoring system has been set up to enable tutors to identify students in need of support.

- Engagement is as high as 70% for some groups, and as low as 20% for others in Years 9 and 10. Increased polarisation of ability is of concern as the higher engagement correlates with higher ability groups, and the lower engagement with less able groups and disadvantaged students.

- Engagement in Years 7 and 8 is also uneven, but around 60-70% are thought to be engaging reasonably well.

- Virtual lessons, which are being recorded, have so far been very poorly attended.

- Identified issues relating to engagement include IT problems and working with the Microsoft Teams interface, which is new for many students and parents who are finding it confusing. A perceived difference in approach by teachers has been raised, including in relation to where (n the system) work is set. On this point, KL noted that the approach taken by teachers is actually very similar, in that there are only two places to post work, in "assignments" or "notebooks", and the distinguishing of an "assignment" from other work set (to prepare for the assignment) remains sensible. Additional training is being provided, and a helpdesk facility for students has been well received. A reluctance to read instructions or watch instructional videos is also affecting students, as is lack of motivation.

- A timetable has been piloted with some students, to try and counter "task saturation", where information overload and a choice of tasks causes uncertainty or panic over where to start (unlike in a classroom where there is a single-task environment), resulting in not starting at all or dipping into tasks ineffectively. A more extreme difference in provision, such as releasing one task at a time, may also be considered, particularly for those students who are struggling or not yet accessing Teams to any great extent. | | | |

	- A small number of students have been provided with paper copies, along with books, however building engagement and resilience with the technology is considered by far preferable, both to develop skills and as resources for setting and copying work on paper are limited. - Tutors contact students and each week by phone or e-mail to "check-in". A governor asked about the role of parents and how they are coping. KL responded that engagement of parents was similar to students in terms of the technology, and that feedback had indicated that some were struggling to motivate their children to work. It was suggested that a buddying system may be worth consideration for those students who are struggling to engage. Governors commended staff for the efforts being made to make the virtual school a success. It was noted that other schools are known to have similar or more significant issues, and a consensus among teachers is building that content will have to be re-taught when schools re-open. JM reported that the School would be closed to all students during half-term, and that this had been discussed with families of students who would be eligible to attend (no concerns had been raised).			

STU 5.9	**Link Governor Actions**
	The Chair asked the Committee to consider what would be most useful for link governors to focus on in the present circumstances.
	
	1. E-safety
	    TM was not in attendance to report.
	
	2. Special Educational Needs
	    PC noted that he had been in touch with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and had offered his support, but was aware there was very little practical help he could give. The SENCo had not raised any concerns.
	
	    JM confirmed that some SEN students have had difficulties accessing online learning, although there are good accessibility options in Teams. The SENCo and one of the Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) were phoning parents of SEN students every week to offer support and a number of SEN			

	students were in school. The other HLTA was online with a group of 17 SEN students each day, teaching and supporting. 3. <u>Mental Health</u> AS noted that there may be a wide range of support needed for children which the school would be better able to provide when schools reopen. Some grants were being made available, although none yet specifically for schools. By working with a charity, however, it may be possible to access some funding and she reported on initial conversations with the Purbeck Community Trust. She confirmed that the funding for the "Walk & Talk" project had finished. An additional £500 donation from the Rotary had been used to increase the Counsellor's hours to enable telephone sessions to take place. It was suggested that a survey of students and parents in relation to mental wellbeing might be valuable. JM noted that all families should be receiving a weekly phone call from tutors which is centred around welfare and wellbeing. Any concerns are logged on the monitoring system. 4. <u>Pupil Premium</u> NT was not in attendance to report. The Chair asked if pupil premium students had experienced any particular access issues. JM confirmed that they had been a priority for laptop provision, four pupil premium students required a dongle to get online which was in hand and in the meantime they had been provided with paper copies of work. Tutors had also been prioritising pupil premium students when making calls home. JM noted that appointing a home learning champion to specifically focus on pupil premium students would be given some consideration, along with exploring the buddying idea suggested earlier in the meeting.			
STU 5.10	**Progress Review** Spring progress data for Year 7-10 had been circulated. The Chair noted that overall the data suggested that progress was poorer than usual when compared to the same point in previous years. JM agreed, and noted that the data had been collected only recently, during the lockdown period, as the original submission date had clashed with the start of lockdown when priorities had to quickly shift. She noted that teachers may therefore have been less optimistic with their gradings than usual. The Chair asked whether the quality assurance processes, book reviews and mark-books might have altered teachers and leaders perceptions of their gradings and therefore whether the grades may simply be realistic, rather than affected by teacher pessimism. This was not thought to be a factor, but coupled with the			

	increased polarisation of groups noted earlier in the meeting, it was concluded that the indications are that there are significant challenges ahead. GCSE Grades KL reported that GCSE grades (in respect of the cancelled GCSEs in 2020) need to be submitted to the exam boards by 12 June 2020. She noted that time and care is being taken to ensure that the grades given by the School reflect realistic judgements and are not subject to unconscious bias; staff know their students well, and have lots of assessment data to work from. Use is being made of FFT Aspire to check how the grades compare with the expected confidence levels, and this analysis is being used in discussions with Curriculum Area Leaders (though the results are not being adjusted purely to fit in with the statistical expectations). At present, it is understood that only grades and rankings are to be submitted and that backing evidence will not be required. However, if grades fall outside normal distributions or FFT expectations it is possible that they would be adjusted, or further evidence required. JM noted that in some subjects improvements in planning and teaching provides evidence for grades being higher than might be expected.			
STU 5.11	**Any Other Business** A governor (who declared an interest of working at Teach First) made leaders aware that there would be an early roll-out of the Early Careers Programme for newly qualified teachers, offered by four suppliers (of which Teach First was one). She also noted that Teach First may be able to help place some trainee teachers with the School.			
STU 5.12	**Confidentiality** No item would require confidential minutes.			
STU 5.13	**Next meeting** To be held on 1 July 2020, with all agenda items subject to review based on the current situation. Items may include: - Head of House presentation / annual review – pastoral care - Sex & Relationships Education review - Year 7-10 progress review - Policy review: Sex & Relationship Policy; Behaviour & Exclusions Policy			
	The meeting closed at 6.50pm			