

The Swanage School

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STUDENT COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 7th July 2021, 5.30pm

Present (via remote access): Isobel Tooley (Chair), Peter Collins, Alex Duke, Tanya Hamilton-Fletcher, Adam Hines, Jenny Maraspin (Headteacher), Helen O'Connor

In attendance (via remote access): Sue Fletcher (Clerk), Kay Lawton (Deputy Headteacher), Eleanor Morris (Science Teacher, for item 6.7.2), Mandy Sands (Safeguarding & Welfare Officer, for item 6.6), Jessica Starmer (Governor Observer)

Item		Action	Lead	By
	The meeting was held via remote access in line with guidance relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.			
STU 6.1	Apologies for Absence There were no apologies for absence. Carl Styants was not in attendance.			
STU 6.2	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest or conflict with any agenda item.			
STU 6.3	Minutes of the Last Meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 26 th May 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record. The minutes will be signed at a later date.			
STU 6.4	Matters Arising & Actions A summary of actions and matters arising from the last meeting had been circulated. The Chair requested an update in relation to a planned meeting of the pupil premium link governor (HoC) and the Headteacher (JM). HoC confirmed that they had reviewed best practice from schools that have demonstrated success in minimising the gap between pupil premium and non-PP students in attainment and progress. Several ideas will be taken forward by the leadership team, including consideration of a project attracting a TLR (Teaching & Learning Responsibility Payment) specifically focused on implementing and monitoring evidence-based strategies. The Headteacher noted that a TLR for attendance had already been budgeted and that linking the two might work. In response to a question on why attendance had been identified as a TLR project, JM responded that whilst attendance rates have been in higher than the			

	<p>Dorset average since the return to school post-lockdown, attendance remains a concern and if not given renewed focus is likely to deteriorate.</p> <p>JM confirmed that minimising the gap between pupil premium students and non-PP peers would remain a key priority on the School Development Plan next year.</p>			
STU 6.5	<p>Progress Review</p> <p>Progress data for Year 7-10 had been re-circulated following the last meeting, in the new 4Matrix format including subject graphs showing a visual representation of the relative performance of students in a particular subject compared with their performance across all their subjects (the residual).</p> <p>The Chair invited the Head and Deputy Headteacher to summarise key points and concerns arising from their scrutiny of the data, noting that she and other members of the committee would raise questions from their own analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Science subjects are a high priority area, with variable data across groups indicating variation across the three subjects, across teachers and across year groups. JM outlined several possible reasons, noting that the content-heavy curricula in the sciences meant that difficult decisions had had to be made in response to missed teaching arising from the first lockdown in Summer Term 2020. Some of the subsequent teaching, in Autumn Term 2020, had been at a shallower level to be able to retain interleaving, relied upon in the sciences to embed knowledge. The progress made had been promising but had then been negatively impacted by the second lockdown in the Spring Term 2021. In response to a question from the Chair in relation to Year 10 science data, AH (Physics Teacher) expressed that several issues may have contributed to poor progress scores. He reported that the base level at Year 9 had been lower than would have been expected, which had combined with the cohort missing a large amount of classroom time during Year 9 and Year 10 during lockdown. He reported that the identification of the baseline concerns had led to a reworking of the Key Stage 3 (KS) Scheme of Work with the aim of achieving a higher baseline in future. He also noted that interleaving Schemes of Work for KS4 mean there is likely to be a jump in progress moving into Year 11 as the repetition and embedding of knowledge takes effect. - Year 7 data lacked validity, due to the lack of baseline testing (as a result of the cancellation of Year 6 SATs in 2020) and the more limited time spent with this group. Prior attainment had been measured by scores from CAT testing (Cognitive Ability Tests) on arrival at The Swanage School, 			

	<p>however whilst for two groups these were taken under controlled conditions, for one group the delivery of the tests was potentially flawed. CAT tests will be repeated in Year 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Year 8 data had better validity, although the differences in progress across subjects did mean that some concerns about validity remained. It was noted that the prior attainment profile of this cohort is the weakest. - KL described several issues that may have affected the marking and progress profile of English, her conclusion being that students are likely to be performing at higher levels than reflected in the data. She clarified her belief that teaching, both in class and via Teams, is good and that review of assessment and grading would continue. - In response to a question on whether grading in drama was potentially over-optimistic, JM outlined the success of the subject in the last two years noting that benefits of cross-curricular links with English and developments in essay writing had contributed to excellent results. She anticipated that a progress score of around 1 would be possible in drama as well as other traditionally high performing subjects such as design & technology. - The process of awarding teacher assessed grades for Year 11 (in lieu of GCSE exams) would prove beneficial for internal grading practices. Continuing professional development (CPD) sessions would focus on embedding assessment for learning and better communicating the things identified by assessments and data with stakeholders, including students, and discussing with them strategies for achieving higher grades. The additional Inset Days approved by the Board of Governors would be used primarily for these purposes. - The visual representation of data provided clarity on gender-based differences in residual scores across year groups and subjects. In relation to physics, AH reported that a larger proportion of boys usually go on to take physics at A-level and that the residuals data had shown clearly that female students in physics are performing below their best compared to boys. As a result, he had met with female students to discuss this and had subsequently adapted some of the contextual examples used in teaching to reflect a wider range of real-life interests, had included more female role models, and had provided suggestions for independent reading. It was observed by several governors that despite progress in equality, stereotypical perceptions embedded in wider culture continue to contribute to some subjects being perceived as a “boys’ subject” or a “girls’ subject”. Staff members noted that on occasion this is given by students as a reason for not being interested in a subject. It was expressed that the presence of both boys and girls in co-educational schools may contribute to feelings of over- or under-confidence in a subject based on gender lines, and 			
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	<p>that studies of language used by girls and boys have shown that this also plays an important role in self-confidence and esteem. The value of recognising these issues and the importance of challenging gender stereotyping (for example by ensuring appropriate examples and role models are referenced in lessons) was noted.</p> <p>Governors were pleased to note the use of data to inform discussion and practice. JM confirmed that leaders are focused on ensuring the next data drop is evidence based, and improved data validity is expected. She observed that whilst teachers can feel undermined by what data tells them, it is a powerful tool when used for developmental purposes and focused on the continual desire to improve the experience and progress of students.</p>			
STU 6.6	<p>School Development Plan and Risk Management Review</p> <p>The Committee received updates on two areas of the School Development Plan (SDP), along with relevant risks identified by the Risk Register:</p> <p><i><u>SDP objective 2.2:</u> Quality of provision and support for all SEND students is consistently good. All intervention has evidence of demonstrative impact on the progress of participants.</i></p> <p><i><u>Related identified risk:</u> SEN provision is not effective in helping students with SEN to make appropriate progress.</i></p> <p>A presentation by the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) had been circulated in advance. The Chair observed that the data presented shows that where impact of SEN interventions is measured, a positive impact can be seen. JM confirmed that there had been a move to more rigorous screening and review of the appropriateness of interventions for individual students, such that interventions are put in place, or discontinued if not proving effective, with greater purposefulness. She reported that the newly appointed SENCo (replacing the current SENCo, who is leaving at the end of term) had demonstrated clear commitment to a “plan-do-review” model, where impact of strategies is measured and less effective strategies changed.</p> <p>The link governor for SEND confirmed that he has been impressed with the developments in SEND provision and commitment being shown to continual improvement.</p>			

	<p>The Committee was satisfied it has received appropriate evidence to consider the objective to have been achieved.</p> <p><i><u>SDP objective 1.1</u> Build and safeguard emotional and mental wellbeing for staff and students.</i></p> <p><i><u>Related identified risk:</u> Students' mental health/anxiety levels affect them. Wellbeing of staff/students/community users suffer as a direct or indirect consequence of an infectious disease outbreak.</i></p> <p>A report from the Safeguarding & Welfare Officer, Mandy Sands, had been circulated, along with summary data on known wellbeing and mental health issues. She joined the meeting and reported that more issues arose when the school returned in March 2021 (following the Spring 2021 lockdown) than in September 2020 (following the Summer 2020 lockdown) and this appeared to be due to many families struggling to a greater extent during the second lockdown, perhaps as this had taken place during winter and had compounded financial and welfare issues already at play. The school had helped several families with basic physical and emotional needs, as well as more complex family matters and mental health issues. She noted that the capacity for the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) is 12 students and fully booked at present, with additional means of support being sought.</p> <p>JM recorded thanks to Ms Sands, who had worked relentlessly to ensure that provision of appropriate support has been made for students, parents and staff.</p> <p>A governor asked if there is any information to compare the percentage increase in welfare enquiries/cases with other schools, to determine if this is a national or localised picture. MS and JM both reported hearing from other schools that an increase has also been experienced although had not investigated whether there is any national data.</p> <p>MS agreed with a governor observation that students appear more open in talking about emotional stress and mental health and reported that the message “it’s OK to not be OK” is continually reinforced around school. She noted that parents are also increasing open in relation to concerns about their children.</p>			
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	<p>MS reported that to some extent parents and pupils are educating the school about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) issues and traditional binary gender choices, reflecting the safe environment the school offers to discuss sensitive issues.</p> <p>Asked if there is a gender difference in the willingness to be open about mental health issues, MS and other staff present expressed that there did not appear to be and that boys in particular now raised issues they might previously have kept to themselves. Reference was made to a student leadership project on boys' mental health where prefects led assemblies and spoke to tutor groups.</p> <p>There was a discussion on the individual response of students to negative social media, with a governor suggesting that staff may benefit from training to raise awareness on how to recognise whether a student is more or less likely to respond in a particular way to social media, and of other factors which may trigger a negative response.</p> <p>JM reported that the new SENCo intends to aim for an Employer Wellbeing Award, which would certify the school as reaching high standards of care and support for staff, building on foundations already in place. A number of staff had self-referred to the provided counselling service, evidence of awareness of the service and the value of having the provision available.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ms Sands, noting that the support provided has been impressive given the competing demands on internal and external resources.</p> <p>[Ms Sands left the meeting.]</p>			
STU 6.7	<p>School Development Plan 2021/22</p> <p>1. <u>Ongoing and future plans for teaching and learning in relation to disruptions caused to learning by the pandemic, including the availability and use of "Covid catch-up" funding / grants for academic support in 2021/22</u> A paper had been circulated.</p>			

	<p>i) <u>Summer School</u> JM reported that all new Year 6 students have been invited to attend a Summer School week (w/c 26th July 2021) to ease transition to secondary school, although take-up to date had been disappointing.</p> <p>ii) <u>National Tutoring arrangements</u> JM reported that discussions with other local headteachers had led to a consensus regarding concerns over the quality of tutors / mentors appointed through an external company and that on balance they would prefer to recruit their own. Other uses of tutoring funding would be reviewed and a plan developed in respect of this funding stream.</p> <p>iii) <u>Curriculum proposals / changes arising</u> These were summarised in the paper and discussed under “achieving the vision”, below.</p> <p>In response to a question JM confirmed that to date one bubble of students in Year 9 had been sent home to self-isolate after a positive Covid case had been confirmed and that live teaching and work had been provided via Teams.</p>			
	<p>2. <u>2021/22 teaching and learning / curriculum priorities</u></p> <p>i) <u>Science transition</u> Miss Morris (Chemistry Teacher) joined the meeting and reported on a project on science transition from Year 6 to Year 7, undertaken in connection with her National Professional Qualification in Leadership. She reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project stemmed from research suggesting that curriculum links between primary and secondary schools are weaker than pastoral links and have little bearing on transition arrangements. - The purpose of the project is to improve progress and attainment through better academic transition, the avoidance of duplicate teaching and greater continuity between the teaching of the KS2 and KS3 curriculum. - It had been recognized within the Science Department that the KS3 Scheme of Work has little reference to what is known to have been achieved by students at KS2, and that to date there has been little knowledge of this. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project had involved identifying key objectives not understood well by primary school children, providing outreach sessions to teach key knowledge and skills relating to these, and re-testing to see if the objective was then better understood. In addition, well understood core objectives had been identified and duplication during KS3 could therefore be eliminated. The Scheme of Work would be tailored to improve the fit between KS2 and KS3. - Running similar surveys and sessions in future should enable a greater impact to be made in KS3 by targeting potential gaps and smoothing the transition to secondary school. - The reasons for some of the objectives being poorly understood was not clear but follow-up meetings with primary school science specialists would explore the impact of Covid and lack of science labs in primary schools. If the latter is an issue for primary schools, they could be invited to use the The Swanage School's labs. - Mutual CPD sessions with primary science teachers should be considered, it being noted that liaison with maths and English primary leads has always been strong and that developing stronger science links would be valuable. <p>Governors thanked Miss Morris.</p> <p>[Miss Morris left the meeting.]</p> <p>ii) <u>Achieving the vision</u> JM reported on overall strategy for managing the response to the disruptions caused to learning, noting that whilst it is tempting to try and identify and fix gaps as the main approach, the leadership team had concluded that it would be best to spend time relentlessly focused on getting the best progress out of students through improvements designed to ensure high quality teaching & learning provision across the board, improving across all 50 teaching hours (per fortnight). Examples of strategies to achieve this, and the impact that might be achieved, were given in the circulated paper. Investing in CPD and embedding the practice of responsive teaching as a pedagogy are key strategies, as is further improving all aspects of formative, summative and diagnostic assessment, particularly in KS3 where there would be a move to delivering statements against objectives rather than grades. Smaller tutor groups will focus on character development, empowering students as active agents in their own learning which would become an underpinning philosophy.</p>			
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	<p>The chair asked about the danger of staff fatigue if perceived that workload will become even greater after an already difficult year. Staff governors expressed that most staff are positive about initiatives that lead to positive impact, despite workload, and believe there is buy-in from staff on the vision for teaching & learning. JM noted that the pedagogical approach relates to refining classroom delivery and interactions, and smarter use of assessment, rather than requiring replanning of lessons or resources.</p> <p>Asked if the vision ties in with the attitude to learning project the Committee heard about at the last meeting, JM expressed that many things going on in school currently, such as the attitude to learning initiatives, new thinking in relation to tutors groups, expansion of project-based learning, empowering students to take control of their own learning, and further development of skills and character, had potential to be transformative when synergy between them is achieved.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the balance between empowering children as self-aware learners (a student-centered approach) with an approach based on quality teaching delivered by subject experts underpinned by strong behaviour management. There was consensus that a hybrid model will work well and reflects what is planned - knowledge delivered by subject specialists and students learning further by developing that knowledge through application in interesting, challenging contexts designed also to develop abilities and skills, valued by employers, through inquiry-based learning and projects.</p> <p>The Chair observed that a setting of clear behaviour expectations, consistently applied, needs to be evident as the vision is realised, to lessen real or perceived impact on learning. JM noted that “The Swanage School Way” has suffered as a result of lockdowns, but that the principles and human scale relationships that underpin it remain key to the vision going forward, which is aligned with the founding principles of the school.</p> <p>JM summarised the aims for the coming year as being further development of project-based learning, developing character and re-establishment of “The Swanage School Way”, embedding a “work hard, get smart, be kind” ethic. In response to a question on tutor group size, she reported that achieving smaller groups would be achieved through every teacher becoming a tutor (except herself and the Deputy Headteacher). There had been a positive discussion on this with Heads of</p>			
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	<p>House and Curriculum Area Leaders who traditionally have not had a tutor group. The nature of the tutor group relationship would be developed throughout the year.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the vision and plans as a good reset of the core ethos and The Swanage School Way.</p> <p>[Jessica Starmer and Peter Collins left the meeting]</p> <p>3. <u>Behaviour management</u> A presentation on behaviour trends had been circulated. This was not discussed in any detail during the meeting and there were no questions other than those raised at other points during the meeting.</p>			
STU 6.8	<p>Link Governor Reports</p> <p>1. <u>Special Educational Needs</u> SEND provision had been discussed under STU 6.6 and there were no further questions or concerns raised.</p> <p>2. <u>Mental Health</u> Mental health support had been discussed under STU 6.6 and there were no further questions or concerns raised.</p> <p>3. <u>Pupil Premium</u> A report from the link governor had been given under Matters Arising (see STU 6.4).</p>			
STU 6.9	<p>Policies</p> <p>For expediency, the Chair asked governors to grant her authority to approve the policies by Chair's Action in one week, taking on board any comments they might make in the meantime by email. The policies had been circulated in advance and were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Home-School Agreement Policy 2. The Behaviour and Exclusions Policy 3. Preventing & Tackling Bullying Policy 	Comment Approve Republish	All Chair Clerk	Jul 21 Jul 21 Jul 21

STU 6.10	Committee Self-evaluation and Impact The Chair thanked committee members for accepting the advance request to summarise their reflection on the impact the Committee has had over the past year. She observed that several of the suggestions for improving impact would overstep the role of the Committee in terms of operational and management boundaries, but that the exercise had provided useful feedback. The comments had been collated and circulated and would help form the basis of an overall governance impact statement which would be considered at the meeting of the full board of governors on 14 July 2021.			
STU 6.11	Any Other Business None			
STU 6.12	Confidentiality No item would require confidential minutes.			
	Next Meeting Date tbc, Autumn Term.			
	The meeting closed at 7.55pm.			