

The Swanage School
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STUDENT COMMITTEE
 Wednesday 1 February 2017, 5.30pm

Present: Isobel Tooley (Chair), Geoff Atkinson, Tristram Hobson (Headteacher), John Lejeune, James Peacock, Al Stephens, Emily Wyer
 In attendance: Sue Fletcher (Clerk), Sarah Everitt (Curriculum Area Leader, item 3.5), Jenny Maraspin (Deputy Headteacher), student representative (item 3.4)

Item		Action	Lead	Date
STU 3.1	<p>Welcome The Chair welcomed Sarah Everitt (Curriculum Area Leader (CAL) for mathematics, design & technology (DT), catering and computing) and a student representative to the meeting.</p>			
STU 3.2	<p>Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from Nick Brady.</p>			
STU 3.3	<p>Declarations of Interest There were no new declarations of interest or conflict with any agenda item.</p>			
STU 3.4	<p>Student View: Academic Challenge for Most Academically Able The committee welcomed a student representative from Year 11 and discussed with her various aspects of her school experience, with a particular focus on how effectively she is challenged in lessons and whether the differentiation of content for the most academically able students is something she is conscious of.</p> <p>The student informed the committee that she finds lessons challenging, sometimes feeling “stretched to the limit”, and feels encouraged to meet the challenges. She described mixed ability groups where students help each other to learn and noted that small class sizes are helpful for feeling supported. She felt able to ask for support from the teacher in class and was confident that teachers would support on a 1-to-1 basis after class if there were particular areas of difficulty. She said she would feel able to ask for extra work and is able to access extra resources. She noted, for example, that past papers have been made available to Year 11 students and that they have a dedicated study area. As an academically able student, the opportunity had arisen to be a “peer support student” whereby she helps other students with mathematics, both in her year group and the lower years. She found this helped her own learning and understanding, rather than it being a nuisance. Asked about her experience of school trips, she said they mixed learning and fun, and that the fun elements usually enhance the learning. In being asked how she is coping with the pressure of the GCSEs, she was honest in saying that she was feeling the pressure and did not think she was coping well, but gave the committee examples of coping</p>			

	<p>mechanisms that she had in place and special arrangements that she was seeking for the examinations. Overall she felt that her own expectations of her likely grades had increased since she came to The Swanage School.</p> <p>Business studies was identified as a subject she would like to have taken had the opportunity been available.</p> <p>The committee thanked the student for her contribution, noting how valuable it is to hear directly from students.</p> <p>[The student left the meeting]</p>		
STU 3.5	<p>Teaching & Learning: Curriculum Area Presentation – Mathematics, DT, Computing and Catering</p> <p>Sarah Everitt presented to the committee, answering governors’ questions throughout. She circulated a copy of the Departmental Development Plan for the curriculum areas under her leadership remit (mathematics, DT, catering and computing). This mapped the departmental plans onto the objectives of the School Development Plan.</p> <p>I. <u>Academic challenge</u></p> <p>In noting the importance of challenging students from the start of Year 7, SE cited academic research which showed that students in Key Stage 3 generally see a dip in their level of progress (in Year 7 particularly) compared to their progress during the final years of primary school (Key Stage 2). Also, there is a wide variation between schools in the mathematics results in the KS2 SATS tests, a breakdown of which was shown to the committee. SE also noted that it is very difficult for students who fall behind in mathematics in Year 7 to catch up again.</p> <p>To date, links have been fostered with Swanage Primary School in particular, through collaborative lesson study. This has involved mutual observation of classes and will include a joint lesson planning session. The school has also joined with St Mark’s Primary and Swanage Primary for a project funded by the Jurassic Maths Hub (The “Grid Algebra Project”) which will focus on drawing links between primary and secondary mathematics teaching, to develop consistent presentation of topics between KS2 and KS3. It is hoped to extrapolate these collaborative models to all feeder schools, as the department sees primary and secondary educators learning from each other as the key to ensuring that appropriate levels are reached by the end of Year 6 and that consistent teaching strategies from primary to secondary school contribute to more positive progress in Year 7.</p>		

Challenging all students in lessons was said to be a departmental norm. SE informed governors that she insists on all mathematics teachers using grouped tables, with each table working on the same concept but to a different level. The focus is on deep, higher-order thinking and assessment activities, rather than fast learning. Dialogic questioning and an investigational approach were among the examples given of the strategies employed by teachers to achieve this.

For the higher attaining students, Further Maths classes are available, which support students aiming for GCSE grades 8 and 9. SE also noted that although there are extra-curricular opportunities, this has lessened from previous years and needs revisiting. She summarised the opportunities for gifted and talented students in DT, catering and computing, such as awards, competitions and visits which stretch the student's abilities and widen their horizons, including in relation to potential career opportunities.

2. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

SE informed governors that, along with the projects and collaborative work noted above, lesson study is the main focus of CPD in the mathematics department. She attends Dorset subject leader meetings and another part-time member of the team is doing subject specific training with a full to being a full-time mathematics teacher in the next academic year. In DT, catering and computing, where there is only one teacher, the need for outside links is considered crucial. The DT and catering teachers have joined subject-related teaching associations, share on subject teaching forums and have links with other schools for moderation of controlled assessment and curriculum planning. SE noted that the computing teacher, who is a non-qualified teacher, is supported by the Initial Teacher Training program at the school and has regular meeting with her to discuss lesson planning and assessment, along with half-termly observations. Forging links with other schools was said to be a priority for this subject area.

3. Assessment Framework

In summarising the pros and cons of the assessment framework (in mathematics), SE noted that it promotes deeper learning by encouraging rich tasks that enable students to explore conceptual understanding. She added that the framework facilitates the learning process in a way that students enjoy and can respond to. However, she noted that assessment activity standards are variable and more regular frequency is required at KS4 (Year 10 in particular). Additional time to collaborate as a department along with external benchmarking at the end of the year and mid year testing would help.

4. Homework

The ideal scenario for homework in mathematics was said to be short, sharp, regularly marked homework, shared as the starter of the following lesson to remind students what has been learnt and to connect one

lesson to the next. In noting this, SE felt that homework for the top sets in KS3 was working reasonably well but identified weaknesses for the lower sets, where homework was more sporadic and had a tendency to be superficial, and for Year 10 where she felt there is an over-reliance on “My Maths” homework. A lack of differentiation tasks was also a weakness of homework and so overall there was scope for improvement, perhaps by introducing a booklet of differentiated homework options. Year 11 were concentrating on past exam papers, topic revision booklets and independent SAM learning.

5. In-school Variation of student performance

In reporting the variation from the national average for the GCSE results in 2016, SE noted that DT and catering had done exceptionally well, mathematics was slightly below national average although the results had placed it second out of 21 schools in the county, and computing was disappointing below average. Reasons for this had been identified and were being addressed.

To address in-school variation, the mathematics department planned to keep momentum going after the mock exams by moving groups around and having specific topics focused on by different teachers. Staff would be able to take safer options when entering students for the two tiers of the GCSE examination which will both include Grades 4 and 5, and share practice on individual lesson and homework plans. Across the whole department under her leadership, there would be a focus on meeting staff training needs, moderation of controlled assessment and on providing catch-up sessions for students.

On the basis that there would be as many grade 4’s nationwide as there had been C’s last year (59% in mathematics), SE said she had predicted best and worst case scenarios for the mathematics results and summarised these. Based on grade 4 being equivalent to the lower end of a C and 5 above this, the prediction for worst to best case scenario ranged from 50-79% of students obtaining grade 4 or above, with 33-54% gaining grade 5 or above.

6. Mathematics staffing

Governors were aware that no-one in the mathematics team teaches the subject as their only activity, given that the team comprises the curriculum area leader, headteacher, deputy head, special educational needs co-ordinator and a post shared with science. SE acknowledged that this creates challenges, but she noted that over time she has developed her skills in leading the team. Holding meetings and finding other opportunities to collaborate remained a particular challenge due to the other commitments. However, she noted that every member of the team is an excellent teacher of mathematics. Responding to questions, she said she felt happy with student progress overall although it would be advantageous to have more stable

	<p>groups and additional staff dedicated solely to mathematics, including a teaching assistant for small group intervention.</p> <p>7. <u>Numeracy</u> SE informed governors that the school was moving away from numeracy as a tutor time activity, acknowledging that asking non-specialists to teach numeracy skills to a mixed-age tutor group had proved to be difficult and therefore not as effective as hoped. Development of cross-curricular activities was underway, with numeracy content in other subjects such as geography, DT and catering being mapped to find overlaps. Working together, staff will be able to identify shared objectives and jointly plan so that the connections and use of numeracy across the subjects becomes more obvious to students to support their learning. Cross curricular mathematical problem solving was also the focus of a research project being undertaken with Bournemouth University.</p> <p>The committee recognised the workload in leading the department and thanked SE for her focus in doing so, and for the time and thought that had gone into her presentation.</p> <p>[Sarah Everitt and John Lejeune left the meeting]</p>			
STU 3.6	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2016 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed.</p>			
STU 3.7	<p>Matters Arising Where not elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p><u>STU 2.10.4 and STI 2.11.3 Home-School Agreement</u> TH confirmed that the Home-School Agreement had been sent to all parents.</p> <p><u>STU 2.11.1 Behaviour & Exclusions Policy</u> It was noted that the full governing body agreed with the recommendation that Legal & Democratic Services offered by the Local Authority (or similar third party) be used if ever the need arose for an independent panel to review decisions made by the Governors' Exclusion Review Panel. The policy updates had been made and the policy published on the website.</p>			
STU 3.8	<p>Policy Review</p>			

	<p>1. <u>Academically More Able Policy</u> APPROVED minor amendments.</p> <p>2. <u>Numeracy Policy</u> APPROVED minor amendments.</p> <p>3. <u>E-safety / ICT Policy</u> The Chair noted that discussions on the format of the E-safety and ICT policies had led to a decision to keep the two policies separate, and to keep the E-safety Policy in its current form but to add an easy-digest summary page with the the key points. The ICT Policy would be reviewed separately with a view to eliminating overlap and inconsistencies with the E-safety Policy. Committee review of these was carried forward to the next meeting.</p>	Publish	Clerk	Feb '17
		Publish	Clerk	Feb '17
		Carry forward	Clerk	Mar '17
STU 3.9	<p>Progress Data – Autumn Term Performance data for Years 8 and 9 for the Autumn Term had been circulated. Several trends emerging from the data were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data suggested that, in general, students arriving with higher level KS 2 SATS results showed less progress compared to other entry levels. TH noted that he had originally believed that teachers were less inclined to predict grade 9 and therefore predicted progress dipped for the higher attaining students, but further analysis suggested that there were also cases where grades were lower still. The reasons for this had not yet been unpicked and TH would report back at the next meeting. - The Chair noted that predictions for music, mathematics, French and drama looked far too optimistic, compared to top 20% national estimates. TH agreed that predictions may be less accurate for the subjects which see students less frequently and assess less deeply in Years 8/9 (music, French and drama). - In both Year 8 and 9 boys were noted to be significantly underperforming the girls. TH noted that this was often the case, particularly in the lower years. The staff governor confirmed that in his experience there was a marked difference in maturity levels during the lower years, with boys generally less interested in, or finding it harder to apply, quality control to their school work and to take advantage of the assessment framework to help them. TH noted that the assessment framework generally suited a methodical approach, more often employed by girls, and that the school needed to give further thought in how to address the disparity. 	Report	TH/JM	Mar '17
		Review	TH/JM	Mar '17

	<p>TH reported that the presentation of data would, in future, move away from using predicted grades, which tended to lead to over-optimistic data, and will instead use mock exam grade, expected grade and a grade that would indicate the potential achievement given hard work and diligence above expected levels. Comparisons would no longer be to the top 20% nationally, but to the top 50%, to try and counter temptations to over-predict.</p>			
STU 3.10	<p>Reports</p> <p>1. <u>Special Education Needs (SEN)</u> The SEN governor (AS) had nothing to report to this meeting. TH would ask the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator what time of year would be most appropriate for attending the committee to discuss SEN, and will also check when the annual audit of the school's SEN provision is due..</p> <p>2. <u>Mental Health</u> The committee had received a summary of the audit undertaken by EW and the Safeguarding & Welfare Officer on current provision at the school for supporting emotional well being and mental health. EW reported that this had been a useful exercise and showed that the school has a comprehensive offering on which there were no particular areas of concern.</p> <p>Information from "My Concern", the database for logging any reported concerns, was tabled. This showed the breakdown of reported concerns by category. JM confirmed that only she or the Safeguarding & Welfare Officer add reports to the database and therefore there should be good consistency in how incidents/reports are tagged (categorised). Any member of staff can report a concern and governors noted that the high number of concerns logged should be viewed positively as a sign that the procedures are working well and are known and used by staff.</p> <p>Noting that the categories with the highest proportion of concerns were self-harm, home issues, well-being and drugs, EW said that further analysis of the "My Concern" reports was now needed, to assess whether the school's offering maps to the problems being experienced by students, and to understand how multiple instances of the same issue was affecting the data. It was also suggested that a breakdown by year group might be helpful in identifying whether "spikes" occurred during particular years or periods of stress for students.</p>	Discuss with DD	TH	Mar '17

	<p>EW reported that she would also consider whether and how to audit academic resilience among students, noting that template audits are available (e.g. “Young Minds”). JM recommended that, as a first step, looking back at the emotional resilience part of the PASS survey undertaken last year might be helpful.</p> <p>An aspiration would be to enable all staff to be able to benefit students’ wellbeing on a low-level day-to-day basis, as opposed to in reaction to major life events, as would the possibility of using break-times to offer support in some way as part of the wider offering. The aim would be to fully de-stigmatise mental health issues and it becoming the norm to talk about them. In conjunction with the Safeguarding and Welfare Officer, EW would also look at development of a Mental Health Policy, consider how to fully embed links with outside agencies and research training options for report back at future meetings.</p> <p>The committee thanked EW.</p> <p>[EW left the meeting]</p> <p>3. <u>E-safety</u> NB was not in attendance to give an E-safety report.</p>			
STU 3.11	<p>Any Other Business None.</p>			
STU 3.12	<p>Confidentiality No item would require confidential minutes. Personal details given by the student representative would not be minuted.</p>			
STU 3.13	<p>Next Meeting The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 22 March 2017 at 5.30pm and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curriculum presentation by the CAL for humanities. - Progress figures for core subject areas (English, mathematics) 	Brief/Check	JM	Feb ‘17
	<p>The meeting closed at 7.30pm</p>			