SAFA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

At SCS we aim to enable our learners to have success for today and to be prepared for tomorrow.
نحن في مدرسة الصفا كوميونيتي نسعى الى تأهيل طلابنا للنجاح اليوم وتحضيرهم لمواجهة المستقبل

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEMBERS MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 16H00

PRESENT:	L. KHATIB	(CHAIRPERSON) (PROPRIETOR)	(LK)
	S. MERCHANT	(PROPRIETOR)	(SM)
	T. GREGORY	(SUSTAINABILITY ADVISOR)	(TG)
	M. AL HAMRI	(PARENT) (ISLAMIC AND ARABIC)	(MH)
	T. GREGORY	(PARENT) (PARENT LIAISON)	(TRG)
	Z. HARRINGTON	(PRINCIPAL) (SBS)	(ZH)
	L. MCGEEVER	(HEADTEACHER PRIMARY) (SBS)	(LM)
	L. FRIDD	(PRINCIPAL) (SCS)	(SD)
	M. DAVIES	(HEADTEACHER SECONDARY) (SCS)	(MD)
	J. LUUKAS	(HEADTEACHER PRIMARY) (SCS)	(JL)
	M. ASHTON	(DEPUTY HEADTEACHER SECONDARY) (SCS)	(MA)
GUEST:	O.LUKEMAN	(ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL ASSESSMENT) (SCS)	(OL)
MINUTES:	L. LE GRANGE	(PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO PRINCIPAL) (SCS)	(LLG)

The meeting was convened at 16h00 by LK and the following items were discussed.
Apologies were received from MH.

1. Academic Performance Overview

AY23/24 National Parameter Testing Outcomes and External Examination Outcomes

- Reviewed **National Parameter Data Attainment** – specific progress to be discussed at a later board meeting.
- Focus on **Core Subjects**: Mathematics, English, and Science.

PT Phase 2 and Phase 3 Outcomes

- **NGRT** outcomes for GCSE and BTEC Year 11 were discussed.
- A-Levels performance and comparison to other schools reviewed.

Mathematics

- Phase 2: Data outstanding; curriculum interventions ongoing.
- Phase 3: Data outstanding.

PTS (Progress Test in Science)

- Historically we have had a strong performance.
- Phase 2 and 3: All data outstanding.
- **Three-Year Trend**: Significant improvement in Phase 3 (62% to 92%).

PTM (Progress Test in Mathematics)

- Three-year trend shows a massive increase, with January showing outstanding results.

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2. Subject-Specific Reviews
Science

- The PTS is more **knowledge-based** than application-based. Students perform very well as this does not test their reasoning or knowledge application. SM suggested that an international external exam that focuses on this specific gap be sourced so as to be able to accurately assess students' science results.
- LF stated that we make use of internal transitional testing from primary to secondary and again from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Thereafter GCSE's and A-Levels exams apply.
- SM stated the importance for sourcing external science exams, looking for additional methods beyond PTs (Progress Tests) to assess students. He further stressed and challenged that science requires, more than ever, a critical thinking approach and enquired as to what is being done to ensure we are meeting these demands for students.
- LK and OL both stated that PTS was compulsory, however we make sue of much more rigorous in depth internal assessments to ensure students are able to meet or exceed the standard in GCSE's and A-Level examinations. Governors were assured that the focus was not solely placed on PTS'.

Mathematics (Year 10 and Year 11)

- LK enquired as to the performance in the Year 10 early entry GCSE examinations.
- OL explained that 10% of Year 10 students are new to SCS, thus taking these students a little longer to get to the SCS standard.
- LK asked about the support that is offered for students in Year 11. OL stated that curriculum planning and changes will address previous years' misconceptions.
- OL continued to explain that the gender gap between boys and girls in mathematics has narrowed. It was found that girls become less confident as they progress through secondary schools, while boys gain confidence. He stated that in science this was the reverse.
  He mentioned that we are evenly split across the school in terms of the boy to girl ratio, however we do have year groups which are "boy-heavy". The focus to address girls' confidence is mathematics is an area of focus for us as a school.
- MD went on to explain that it is predominantly boys who take mathematics at A-Levels and that this is demographic dependent in most cases.
- TG enquired as to the number of Emirati students who take mathematics in Sixth Form. OL explained that we had lost a large number of Emirati students to single sex schools and Stanine 9 students to other schools who offer discounts.

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3. SEND and EAL Support

- ZH enquired as to how the SEND students are supported through the GCSE and A-Level examinations. OL stated that significant efforts to support students with special educational needs were undertaken. These students have special examination access arrangements stipulated by the examination boards. This year has seen the largest number of Year 10 (current Year 11) students with access arrangements. This may include a separate room, additional time etc.

- We have a small number of ELL students in primary and in secondary. There's been an improvement in support for ELL and EAL students.

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4. Next Steps for Academic Improvement

Phase 2:

- Focus on raising attainment for Emirati students in mathematics and English.
- Close the gap between boys and girls in English and mathematics.
- For boys in English we focus on skills and then helping them apply those, this has helped enormously as it is all broken down into pieces as opposed to one big whole.

Phase 3: Curriculum modifications have been implemented and will be deeper embedded to further improve outcomes.

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5. NGRT Outcomes (Reading Tests)

- JL stated that the data showed consistent improvement over the last six to seven years that we have been doing these. It has been compulsory to do these over the last two years.
- JL also stated that there are no official boundaries set for SAS 120+. He also stated that given one third of the school is EAL, it is impressive for the SAS120+ to be as it is.
- LK asked about the Emirati students. JL stated that the gap between boys and girls was not that large and that SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar) was the main concern. He mentioned that our focus on SPaG, especially for Emirati students, was more targeted.
- JL mentioned that NGRT outcomes were used to inform our action plans and curriculum development. He also mentioned that this helped us identify which students need additional assistance.
- JL explained that we make use of Pupil Tracker data which is provided to teachers at the start of the academic year. Progress Trackers are used in Parent Teacher Meetings. Staff are trained to use this information throughout the year. This is new that we can include pastoral information making this a triangulation of data giving us a holistic view of a student.
- Part of our focus will be to raise Emirati attainment ensuring they receive additional intervention and reviewing how reading and phonics are taught across the school.
- JL stated that a review of reading will look at effective strategies and embedding topics into other subjects, background knowledge.

GCSEs and BTECs Overview
GCSE Results

- Significant improvement in grades, especially for Year 11. LF remarked that SBS had also performed phenomenally well.
- OL presented the data for the breakdown per subject by year group.

- It was noted that there was a rise in gradings 8 and 9 across the year group, in previous years, there were students who obtained straight 9s, this was not the case this year, rather more students had consistently attained strong grades across the board.
- MD remarked that there was a higher number of students opting for grade remarks, with vast improvements noted. He stated that the demographic of students at SCS resulted in more students taking Maths and Science at A-Levels.
- OL stated that SCS works on the "If Challenged" target grade rather than the "Most Likely" grades and our students had outperformed these significantly.
- **Average Grade**: 7.2 across all entries.
- **Gender Performance**: Girls outperformed boys overall.
- The progress since the mock exams is in general quite extraordinary, most students increase their grade by at least one. Less than 1% of the grades were less than 4 and these were achieved by students that were unsure if they would even be able to write the exams due to emotional distress and other far-reaching factors. This has proven the enormous efforts not only by students, but by staff. This Year 11 cohort were very focused, engaged and were a well-distributed group.

Value Added

- Value Added for all students: 2.18, showing significant progress.
- Boys' performance improved significantly from January mocks to final exams. Girls generally perform well throughout and make steady consistent progress.
- We are also significantly higher for all subjects compared to international and UK schools according to MD. All students were above the line for attainment bar two.

Subject Breakdown

- **Top-performing subjects:** Food was the top performer. History and Geography were next with 100% achieved over grade 6.
- **Business Studies**: Grade boundaries have increased massively, making it harder for students to achieve high grades. This is to address the imbalance of students taking business across the world. This will most likely be in effect for the next four to five years.
- 24 subjects achieved "outstanding" results.

BTEC Results

- "Outstanding" results in Business, Sport, and LAMDA.
- HPQ students all achieved A* to C grades, which is phenomenal.

Year 10 Modular Exams

- Students performed extremely well. These exams were in history and geography and have caused the Business team to consider this approach for business and economics. These are content-heavy subjects so the modular approach is more viable for students to achieve better results.

Early Entry Exams

- LK enquired as to who decides whether students qualify for early entry exams. MD stated that the school decides for students who do mathematics. The modular geography and history are course specific, if a student chooses that subject they will do a modular exam. These exams are also beneficial for students who struggle with exams, they are able to bank a good result or retake the exam later on to improve their grade. It takes off some of the pressure of the number exams at the end of the course.

HODs and Predicted Grades

- LK asked how SLT had HODs prepared for predicting grades, how they were trained to arrive at the grade they predict, and how expectations were raised for departments.
- MD explained that exam analysis meets were held and each student's outcomes were discussed with a full panel of SLT members. The team will ask, what went well, what can be improved for each student, including the top performers. These discussions help HODs with the curriculum planning for students to be mastering curriculum and deepening their knowledge ensuring they achieve those As and A*s.
- OL went on to explain that the analysis document provides context for why a student might not actually be performing well, HODs are given three year trends and even if the courses are suitable.

- It is important to note that this is the first year of GCSE students (current year 12 students) who were not impacted by COVID and so the results they have achieved are not due to pre-released content, formula sheets being provided or content being restricted. It is thus that you cannot compare cohorts year on year. This group of students was larger than any previous years, and there were considerably less 3s and notably more 7s, 8s and 9s. The profiles of these students had them averaging grades of 6-7.

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6. A-Levels and AS Levels Performance

- This group was still affected by COVID. There has been a natural drop in A* awardings, but overall, results were still phenomenal.
- Some concern over **Physics** performance, but the overall picture is positive.
- SM asked if this was due to teacher performance. MD explained that the group of students in question would most probably not have made it into physics without the COVID impact.
- MD stated that before COVID the “norm” for A-Level results was Cs. He mentioned that it was unfortunate that institutions discount these grades, achieving a C is incredible and these are the students who perform at university level. As and A*s are not the normal grades that can be expected. A C demonstrates the students' hard work and this should be commended.

Design and Technology Grades

- TG enquired as to the reason the grades do not seem to be in keeping with the rest of the results. LF explained that the HOD was being removed for the next academic year, affording time to find the right person capable of ensuring students perform academically and to the best of their ability achieving the grades in keeping with the rest of their subjects.

BTECs:

- Increased number of students, with strong performances in RSL and EPQ.

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7. Staff and Resources

- Importance of conducting **exam analysis meetings** with HODs to discuss outcomes and improvements.
- Focus on **mastering curriculum content** and deepening students’ knowledge from lower years to higher levels.

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8. Retention and Enrollment

- Continued focus on retaining Year 6 students into secondary.
- Challenges with retaining key staff, as there is competition from other schools in terms of package offerings, and especially regarding sports and high-performing students.

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9. Other Key Discussions

- **Parental Awareness**: TG stated that further efforts need to be made parents more aware of the school's outstanding results. He remarked that these results change everything, SCS can compete with the long-standing schools, that SCS produces unique students with different perspectives, not robot-types. He mentioned that the results should be vastly and loudly celebrated. He reiterated that the facilities were exceptional and with the new pitch coming, the media should be talking about SCS.

- LF thanked TG for his comments and stated that without the staff that we have , these results would not have been possible. She remarked from the security guard at the gate, to the support staff, the facilities team and second to none, to the teachers in the classrooms, all of the successes would not be possible without any of them.
- She stated that the threat of staff being poached is very real and it is important to ensure we remain competitive in our package offering so that we maintain our key personnel.

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10. Challenges

- **Parking and ECAs**: Challenges with parking and extracurricular activities were noted, especially around pick-up times. Although LF mentioned that parking across all schools in Dubai were challenging.

Meeting Adjourned at 17h26.