

Sixth Form Council Minutes 21/03/24

Attendance:

- Katelyn Hornigold
- Ella-Mae Ward
- Plus 12 student representatives
- Mrs Connolly
- Mrs Hiett

Improvements in teaching and learning

1. **Topic tests for year 12**

It was raised that in Chemistry, there had recently been exams which contained content that students were not told about on the topic lists and therefore had not revised. Mrs Hiett explained that the questions were on a topic known as “Bonding and structure”, and this is something that should be known at all times throughout the course, as they underpin the fundamentals of Chemistry, and without them, many questions that tested the topics on the list couldn’t be asked about.

In Computer Science, it was also raised that the topic lists students received were extremely broad, and the students were only given two days for revision. Mrs Hiett further raised how the idea of extremely specific lists were not useful as they do not emulate the A-Levels students will sit in 2025, and teachers will be aware and have their own expectations of what they are expecting students to achieve in these exams, when giving such a small time frame to revise - and study periods should be used to help revise for examinations. However, it was acknowledged two days was not a lot of time, and extensions on the notice about tests would be raised with the Computer Science Department.

2. **Communication surrounding assessments**

There were some complaints regarding the communication of assessments and the time students were given to prepare. This was specifically mentioned about Government & Politics, with students wanting more time to prepare for essays, having been given a question on Tuesday and having to write their responses on the Wednesday. Upon further enquiry, it was suggested the essays were meant to be similar to a closed book essay and the Government & Politics teachers did not want too much planning for the tests, having given students the lesson before to spend planning such assessments. It was believed Mr Warner did give reasonable amounts of time and was praised for such, and students wondered if Mr Hughes could also do this. Mrs Hiett and Mrs Connolly stated it was hard to know how acceptable this is as it is different for every department. They concluded that generally overnight homework is not desirable and two – three days should be given, however if students received lesson time to plan as well this is acceptable. Any continuing concerns should be raised with the teachers themselves.

3. **Homework answers in Maths**

In maths, there was a query over Mr Goodier’s maths sheets. Due to them being extremely difficult, students may often need to look back over them, but they cannot have answers uploaded onto Teams for revision and personal development purposes. It was raised if they could be used in class time, to which it was agreed that they could be, but often if there isn’t a certain allocated time in lesson to go through them, students do not get the most out of learning from their mistakes. Mrs Hiett has agreed to

speak to the Maths Department regarding this issue and see if anything can be done, to improve students learning from these homeworks.

4. **Independent classwork**

Year 12 stated that they had issues about independent classworks. Whilst they do not mind independent lessons, often students, in Computer Science especially, are just given worksheets and a PowerPoint to look over and found that when asking teachers questions sometimes the answers were not as developed as might be hoped. It was acknowledged that if this is the case it would be concerning, and whilst there were no Y13s who take Computer Science to confirm if this is also how they were learning, Mrs Hiatt will pass this feedback onto Mr Goodier.

5. **Subject clinics for Year 12**

Year 12 enquired as to whether there were subject clinics available to assist them in their A-Level studies. This was specifically mentioned for Biology with many of Y12 wondering if there was a clinic they could attend. The suggestion of whether Y12 students could go along to the Y13 subject clinic was also mentioned. Both Mrs Connolly and Mrs Hiatt explained that priority is currently with the Y11 and Y13 students, and once they have been supported through their exams, the focus will shift onto Y12, making it almost a “wait your turn” set up, and so subject clinics will become available.

The Y13s in the meeting talked about their concern of if Y12 did attend support clinics, then content would have to be based on Y12 work, which is less difficult and mainly not what the Y13 students want to focus on. This was agreed to be a good point and acknowledged that for some subjects, such as maths, it isn't a major issue- as the set-up is more bring any questions you have and gain help, but especially in teacher led sessions allowing Y12 to attend may hinder the Y13 revision process.

Overall, it was advised to speak to teachers specifically over whether there were subject clinics and students were reassured that the teachers will do their best to support them and find a solution, even if its something as simple as sitting with students individually in a study period or lunch to go over content.

6. **Microsoft Teams**

Microsoft teams was once again a matter of concern for the Sixth Form. It was raised that teachers add PowerPoints to the general channel so students across both years have to scroll a long way to find what they specifically want, and it may take up important time. Therefore the question was whether teachers could file PowerPoints (for example, topic by topic).

A matter of praise however did go to Mr Thompson, who whilst putting PowerPoints in the general section of Teams, numbers the PowerPoints to make them easier to find for students. The Y13 have found this especially helpful in their A-Level studies, and so if teachers cannot file or continue to use the “classwork” tab, they may be able to do this.

Mrs Hiatt conceded this is a very reasonable suggestion, and made sure to reiterate how teachers are constantly being taught how to use Teams and progress is being made. There is training in place and Mr Hughes is working to advocate his methods, so behind the scenes teachers are trying to make this system work more fluidly for the Sixth form (and ultimately lower school too).

7. TA data

On the subject of TA data, a question was raised as to whether TAs could be released on a Friday so students may have the weekend to reflect on their grades and work, in order to have more reflective discussions with form tutors. Mrs Hiatt and Mrs Connolly stated the answer is most likely no, as TAs are released intentionally when there is support available for students to access. The timings of TAs are considered and they are distributed when form tutors and pastoral care is available for people to go to if disappointed or in need of immediate discussion. The solution to this query was to therefore not start TA discussions straight away (e.g. Monday morning) to give everyone time to think about them.

8. Home study passes

Students across both Y12 and Y13 were curious as to the nature of home study passes. Many felt it was unfair to lose their home passes if they were sick for a week and their attendance was hampered. Both Year Leaders remarked that students need to see that being in school and receiving education is the best thing for your A-Levels. Whilst it was recognised that there are good reasons to not attend school, and both Mrs Connolly and Mrs Hiatt do not expect you to attend if you are ill, the fact remains that if you are missing school, the best thing to minimise that impact is to not have a home study pass so you study in school.

There was clarification that attendance is looked at half termly, and you need 95% attendance. This is done to be more fair so absence in September, for example, doesn't affect the decisions of if you have a home pass in May, so students will have the ability to gain a study pass throughout the year.

9. Study sessions in study centre

Students wondered if they could have supervised study periods in the study centre, so work such as group projects could be done. This was looked into last meeting and it was concluded that the issue with this is Mrs Howell looks after the library, but supervision in the study centre is provided by support staff as and when they can. Therefore it would cost the school more in terms of teacher time to have supervised study periods here, so it is not a very viable option. However efforts are being made to increase the amount of supervision in the study centre.

10. RTP

Across both Y12 and Y13 students had queries over RTP. The question was whether it could be integrated into the timetable, as some lessons seem to be missed more than others. The staff agreed they would prefer it integrated, however the reason it isn't is because it would take away teaching time from the lower school every week for a subject, which isn't ideal. However it is noted that it is disruptive to the sixth form and that the impact on lessons is regrettable but unavoidable.

11. Psychology

Year 12 especially wondered if Psychology could give clearer feedback on tests. This was mentioned last time, and was clarified that teachers are not keen simply to dictate model answers as they are keen to help the students think more deeply about the characteristics of successful answers. Students said when asking for feedback they got asked "what do you think?" but Mrs Hiatt deemed this to be a reasonable question to ask to promote individual learning as long as it was backed up with further supportive questioning.

12. Computing

There were concerns over a project in Computer Science. Year 12 used the example that having completed a group project, there was no feedback only a mark. Having gone back and improved it, students asked for improved feedback but this was not forthcoming in detail. Mrs Hiett suggested the best thing to do was ask the teacher to look over it and review it in a week or so, speaking to the teacher directly over any concerns students may have. Mrs Hiett will also raise this with Mr Goodier.

Facilities

1. Fobs

There were questions regarding whether the sixth forms fobs could be allowed to open the languages foyer doors. Whilst it was sympathised with, Mrs Hiett and Mrs Connolly stated how teachers also could not open these doors, as it is a safeguarding risk to be able to open them during certain times of the school day (such as during lesson time) especially as they only close very slowly. This therefore cannot change and Sixth Form students should use other entrances that their fobs will work for.

2. Form rooms

12KRE wondered why they had been moved from V15 into one of the science labs for their form time. They felt this isolated them from the rest of the year group, and often they missed out on receiving notices because no one knows where to locate them now they have been moved. It was explained they swapped with a year 10 form because the lower year cannot remain unsupervised in the science labs and so had nowhere to go if the weather prohibits them being outside. Year 12 have the common room and can eat there so 12KRE being in the Science block shouldn't be too hindering. It was noted however that once Y11 and Y13 leave, there will be spare form rooms available, and it can be looked into for them to be moved out of Bancroft.

3. Year 12 Common Room

There have been further complaints about the Y12 common room. There still seems to be not enough room for everyone (to which Mrs Hiett agrees), and there is pressure for sofa space. The solution to this was just to share, and it is known that even though Y12 have other spaces to go to in breaks and lunches some cannot be used for eating, and this means everyone is packed in the common room and adjoining rooms, but currently no solution has been found.

Furthermore, the site team have mentioned that rubbish seems to be being left behind the sofas and around the common rooms. Y12 should treat the common room with more respect, and help where they can. Year 13 also agreed here that often if something is spilled everyone stares and leaves it, behaviour unanimously agreed upon as unacceptable, and there is a general reminder to all Sixth Form to treat the common rooms well and not leave them littered with rubbish and mess.

4. Costa

Year 13 students wondered if Decaf Coffee could be added into the Costa menu. This seemed like a fair suggestion and Katelyn would raise it with Mrs Mulgrew.

There was also a query as if there could be more dairy free options in the Costa, like panini's with no cheese. This would also be raised with Mrs Mulgrew to see what could be arranged.

Whilst talking about coffee there was curiosity as to why students were allowed coffee and not energy drinks in school. Mrs Connolly explained it was to do with the fact the rules are designed for the entire school not just Sixth Form, and they cannot encourage lower school to consume energy drinks. It was also noted how energy drinks contain twice as much caffeine as coffee and the consumption of them has led to people having suicidal thoughts, and addiction. As a school it is their safeguarding duty to minimise the risks of these things occurring, so they cannot be sold or consumed on site.

5. Sixth Form Kitchen

Year 13 talked about the fact the Sixth Form Kitchen can get really messy and dirty sometimes, and that there is no provision to be able to clean it. Students would not mind cleaning it if provision was provided so there was an enquiry as to whether we can get some spray and paper towels to enable cleaning of the kitchen, so it is in better use. There were no immediate issues seen with this idea, so it was agreed that it would be raised with Mrs Mulgrew.

6. Toilets

A general concern about the facilities was the toilets. It has been noticed that after school the lights in the bathrooms turn off very quickly and so when using the bathroom it may just go dark. This was deemed to not be a large issue during school hours, as is a continuous influx of students using the bathrooms but after school when no one is around it is an issue. It was agreed that the timer on the lights may be too short and Katelyn would talk to Mrs Mulgrew about the possibility of being able to improve and lengthen the timer.

AOB

1. Going out at lunch time

Year Twelve queried about being able to go to town during lunch. Mrs Hiatt stated there was never a rule that students would be able to leave, the rule was students may earn Home Study Passes, and that students should never be leaving the allocated zone for lunch.

2. Lunch Duty

Concerns were raised over lunch duty for Y12. They stated that often if they tried to ask lower school students (it was mentioned to specifically be year 10) then they would not stop, or would do so temporarily,, and disregard the Y12s as soon as they left the room. Mrs Hiatt will pass this on to Miss Harrison, and noted that the Y10 year leader office was in Bancroft so if needed the people on lunch duty could go get assistance from them. Mrs Hiatt also agreed to try organise some messages out to the Y10 (and possibly all the lower school) about being respectful to the Y12 who are just trying to do their jobs.

There was also a question of if an identifiable way of determining year groups such as badges or something. This would get passed on, although one suggestion was that if the younger years were bold enough to lie about their year group to get into the lunch queue earlier, they had earned their way in. Mrs Connolly and Mrs Hiatt did not support this view.

3. Changing in PE

Year 13 raised how they have recently been spoken to by staff for being in PE kit when not in PE lessons, but they did not have space to change immediately before their PE lessons and thus couldn't,

so felt the threat of punishment to be unfair. Mrs Hiett agreed she found the lack of space for changing curious and her best solution was using the toilets, or waiting for younger years to leave and changing after them. It was acknowledged it was annoying to have to use break and lunchtimes, but is a viable plan until something more permanent can be established. This will be discussed with the PE staff.