**Note of Governors Monitoring Visit – Thursday 5 March 2020**

Governors attending: Jane Swettenham

Julian Beard

Katharine Boulton

David Churchill

Governor focus: Sixth Form

**9.00 – 10.00am Sixth Form Overview – Andy Cooke (Head of Sixth Form) / Carole Herman**

AC started by giving the Governors a summary of his own background. He had started at SHS as a trainee teacher in 2007 in Business Studies. He found it easy to move into leadership roles and took on responsibility for BTEC before becoming Accounting Lead.

From 2012 he was looking for more development and initially unsuccessfully applied for maternity cover in the Sixth Form before in 2013 taking over the Head of Y12 role, replacing Jo Cookson who was moving into a Deputy Head role. He is now 7 terms into the overall Head of Sixth Form role – but still keen to keep developing so is also teaching Geography to KS3/4 students. Whilst not a natural fit, this does have the advantage of allowing him to get to know the younger students, key in developing internal candidates for the Sixth Form.

Current results – the results of the SHS Sixth Form have shown a steady improvement from 2014, particularly looking at the higher grades of A\*-B. There was a slight dip in 2018 after a number of years of growth, mirroring results in the rest of the country, but the current prediction is that the grades will continue to carry on improving. The A level results for 2019 were excellent and exceeded expectations.

Year 11 transition to Year 12 - this is a key document showing the new procedures that have been put in place to manage this key period for students and school alike.

At the start of Y11 there is an assembly to introduce internal students to the Sixth Form and start them looking forwards to their next steps.

SHS also have strong links with local Havering schools - which do not have their own Sixth Forms - particularly Redden Court School, Marshalls Park Academy and Emerson Park Academy. These are schools that have been identified as having similar standards, ethos and attitudes to SHS, so making the transition of those students who do join SHS as smooth as possible. The Sixth Form team are guided by the schools and go in to either run assemblies or workshops with the students to introduce them to the SHS offering. However, with increasing internal candidate numbers it is now time for the Sixth Form team to pull back slightly on external recruitment.

November then sees the Open Evening. This has taken the form of a "trade fair" in the Sports Hall for the last couple of years. At this event the key thing is to be clear on the school’s expectations and a detailed prospectus is produced which clearly details all grade requirements for each subject.

Applications to the Sixth Form have changed this year with the introduction of the "Applica" software package that allows online applications. This has necessitated the introduction of option blocks - based on the last cohort subjects. It is acknowledged that it is difficult to balance the blocks and some choices have been limited. However, this has always been an issue at some stage in the process and by highlighting this early in the process it makes it clear for all students and their parents what the options are meaning expectations can be managed.

In this first year of the application system more than 400 applications have been received and all will be interviewed over three nights next week which is hugely time intensive. However, again, with the level of internal applications increasing it is felt that a new approach will be needed going forward and from next year there will be a reduction in the number of interviews.

Current numbers - Y13 - 160 students with 4 repeating the year / Y 12 - 150 students. There are lower numbers in Y12 as the school has increased the entry requirements for students (whilst maintaining a level of flexibility for internal students who are known to the school). It is also to be noted that a number of students are lost in the first few weeks as many hold offers for other schools / apprenticeships etc. However, this is usually managed before the October census date. The aim is to have 200 students in Y12 but there needs to be a balance between numbers and the right students on the right courses for them and who will be capable of succeeding. It is also to be noted that 16+ funding is lower than funding for years 7-11. With an increase in the KS3/4 pupils at the school there is more funding generally and this means the school will not need to keep on expanding 6th form numbers. This increase in numbers lower down the school should ultimately lead to increasing numbers of internal applicants wishing to stay on to 6th form. The aim is for 65% of 6th Form to be internal SHS transfers so reducing the need to market externally and reduce the pressure on staff to get to know students very well, very quickly.

It must also be noted that there are increased choices for students at 16+ and 18+ with apprenticeships joining with university and college courses as options. The interest in university is declining. The introduction of more unconditional offers has had an impact on results. It is important for the 6th form team to keep abreast of changes to 16+/18+ education and adapt its offering accordingly to meet the needs of the students.

Staffing - 8 tutor groups per year with each group led by staff who run either A level or BTEC Courses. There is a tutor plan in place to make the most of tutor time and ensure that all groups cover the same information. Once a term each student has a 1:1 with their tutor and the tutor manages the relationship through a written log for each student. This means that there is a seamless transition in the event of any staff changes.

Y11 Conference - this takes place in January after the December mocks. Results are handed out in brown envelopes and the students are guided to their next steps: A levels - BTEC - not meeting expectations. The students are helped to write action plans for their next steps. A maximum of 3 A Levels is encouraged. Applica is useful at this stage as it allows blanket messages to be sent to students, effectively keeping them "warm" and still in contact with the school.

After GCSE exams, induction days are held, giving students a realistic experience of the school. On results day, the initial focus is on internal students with external students coming in on the following day. Minimum requirements are '4' in English and Maths then each subject set their own requirements. There had been discussions about increasing to '5' but it was felt that this would significantly impact numbers. External students are expected to have '4' but internal candidates may be reduced to '3' in certain subjects - for example Media and Psychology have accepted '3' and still got excellent results.

First day of term is just Y7 and Y12 on site.

Support Policy - this is a method to support the student and work with them if there are any issues. Like the behaviour policy there are levels of involvement with staff, senior leadership and parents. However, the key is always to work with the students to understand any issues and concerns and help address them early on.

Exam pressure - this was felt to have increased with the removal of AS levels, which effectively removed the "dry run" in Y12. However, SHS have ensured that the students have plenty of opportunity to experience exam pressure with mocks in Y12 plus end of year exams. Tutor time is used to help with study skills and ensuring students have practical skills in revising and preparing for exams. Parents are involved at the start of Y12 as well. There was the acknowledgement that anxiety cannot be removed, but the aim of the support policy is to pick up issues or concerns as soon as possible to help those struggling. With 2 sets of mocks plus an internal exam, there are plenty of opportunities for students to experience exam conditions. Plus, there are regular workshops with external providers to help with resilience. There is also work experience for Y12 students to help them with career aspirations.

Y13 D Grade contract - this comes into force where students are achieving at the lower end of expectations. The student, teacher, school and parents are all involved to understand the expectations and requirements. There are regular reviews under the support policy, if appropriate, otherwise reviews are termly.

Higher education options are launched with a parents evening, to make sure everyone is involved. Plus, there is attendance at a higher education fair at Essex University. However, university is becoming less attractive with probably less than 50% of Y13 students applying.

The UCAS application deadline is 15 January but students are encouraged to apply earlier, before Christmas. This helps with Oxbridge applications which are even earlier - 15 October. This year 7 students applied to Oxbridge, 4 had interviews and one has an offer for Cambridge. This is an ex-Emerson student who is taking 5 A levels, Maths based.

Oxbridge preparation consists of high fliers being identified and either visiting colleges or the colleges coming into school. There is also a shadowing programme which has a cost but there are bursaries available. Early application dates mean there is more time to do interview preparation, preparation for tests and exams. The school offer a high level of support meaning about 5/6 students are offered interviews.

A high number of students also go onto work or apprenticeships - very few students have no plans on leaving the school.

Attendance is managed on a privilege system. Students are expected in school at 8.30am every day - even if they only have a Period 4 lesson. However, they are able to leave at lunch time if they have no Period 5 lesson. Where work, behaviour or attitude is below expectations, however, that Period 5 privilege is revoked and this is often sufficient to encourage them to improve.

Summary - it was clear from AC's presentation that there is a very strong 6th Form in place at SHS. The recruitment process - both for internal and external students - is rigorous and the high expectations are set from very early on in the process. Each department is clear on its own grade expectations, although "known and known well" internal students are clearly supported to make the right option decisions and there is flexibility on grades to a certain degree.

There is a clear transition framework in place that ensures students hit the ground running when joining in September of Y12. There is a definite change in focus for student management - away from the behaviour management of KS3/4 to a more supportive framework in Sixth Form, working with students to support them and help them to develop themselves. The staff are aware not only of current education policy but also looking forwards to how changes (the move away from university for example) affect the students and how best they can support them. The current pressures on young people are clearly understood - acknowledging the anxiety and exam stress that students face - and support is in place to help students learn how to cope with this. The Governors were impressed by the Sixth Form offering.

**Lesson observations:**

**10.00am – 11.00am Y12 Sociology A Level (Tom Bishop) / Y12 PE BTECH (Gemma Cosentino)**

Katharine Boulton and David Churchill observing - moving between the two classes

Sociology - A full class of 13 students were revisiting contents of a previous class to check for understanding. The students initially worked in pairs to answer questions and then did a "fill in the blanks" exercise. Although very much a revision class, Mr Bishop ensured it was an interactive session, asking questions of specific students and then drilling down with lots of "why" questions to check for understanding. When open questions were asked of the group, there was less response, so he ensured follow up with targeted questions to individuals. He was constantly aware of students wanting to get involved, but it was very calm, no shouting out, just putting up hands. It was calm and well-ordered class with lots of positive language "good", "excellent" "tell me about that" were constantly used.

PE - 11 students in class, but should be 15, mainly boys and more lively debate. Ms Cosentino was talking through a theoretical approach to teams, talking through a presentation and asking the group questions on the slides "give me an example of that". There were lots of questions directed to individuals, with names used to keep attention. Again, lots of positive language "good" "excellent". Final exercise was a brain storming with students put into pre organised groups.

Sociology - checking understanding from the first exercise. Again, lots of positive reinforcement. The group were told that their essay skills were "already good, but will get better". When one student asked for clarification on one question, rather than answering himself, Mr Bishop asked the wider group for input, to check the understanding of the whole group. Overall, this was a calm class where the students were interested in the topic and happy to talk in class, answering questions but also ask questions themselves when they did not understand.

**Y13 PE A level Mr MacDonald 10.00-10.30am**

JS and JB observed an A level PE class conducted by Mr Macdonald on the Bernoulli principle. There were 11 students in total 6 external and 5 internal. We had the opportunity to speak to six of the students. Five of the students had joined SHS’s 6th form from other schools. They came from a number of schools including Redden Court School, Marshalls Park Academy, Emerson Park Academy and Brentwood Ursuline School. They had heard that SHS had a good 6th form. One student joined for the Cricket Academy. Another student had joined Shenfield in year 7 and had decided to stay on as his brother had done well in the school’s 6th form. The external students had integrated well and spoke highly of the support they had been given by the 6th form team. They felt that Shenfield offered a good variety of subject options at both A level and BTEC. They were enjoying the course and felt that they were challenged and supported. They acknowledged they had to take responsibility for their own learning and work independently outside of lessons which teachers encouraged. The lesson had commenced with a short introduction followed by a short video presentation of the Bernoulli principal. There followed a Q&A session to assess understanding. All students throughout the lesson actively participated in answering questions and enthusiastically participated in the various group practical exercises which examined the Bernoulli principal in practice.

**Y13 A Level Psychology Ms Kadem 10.30-11.00am**

JB and JS then observed Ms Kadem’s A Level Psychology class. The students were examining the A level mark scheme in detail to fully understand how to secure the highest grades. The students were looking at an E grade answer and discussing how this could be improved to become an A\*/A answer. Students were engaged in detailed analysis of the answers they were discussing and were questioned closely by Ms Kadem on how those answers could be improved with reference to the mark scheme and the terminology and level of detail the examiners would be looking for. We had an opportunity to speak to Ms Kadem. She explained that half of the class were external students but all had settled in well. She advises students to ensure that they spent at least some time every evening and at weekends to relax as she is conscious of the pressures that students face especially in the run up to exams. The students are assessed through a mix of mocks and assessments.

**11.15am - 11.40am Y12 Media A Level (Matt Sherriff)**

**Katharine Boulton and David Churchill observing**

A full class of 15 students this was an information giving class - giving the students detail on the requirements for their practical work - the creation of a website for either a band or a magazine. There was little opportunity for the students to get involved but they did ask questions as and when. They all seemed engaged in the work to be done - and could answer questions when asked.

**11.45 – 12.15pm Y12 Drama A Level (Paul Tully / Emma Sherwood)**

**Katharine Boulton and David Churchill observing**

A class of 11 students with 2 missing. This was a very practical session, the focus being on the students "devising" piece for their A Level. There is a real balance for the teacher between guiding the students and directing them. Mr Tully was very unobtrusive in his approach, watching and only coming into work with the groups as and when they needed support. Ms Sherwood is a new teacher and was shadowing Mr Tully in order to help deliver the class to another group. She had joined SHS in January and actively wanted a role with a Sixth Form. Although very new to the school she was very clear on the work of the department and worked well with the group she was overseeing. The work is based on The Homecoming by Pinter and as such is quite a dark piece. Both groups were physically marking out their pieces with one group taking it a stage further with on line research to guide their piece. The two groups were so involved in their own work that they did not disturb each other even thought the room is relatively small.

Overall, the students we observed were all very engaged with their studies. The classes were calm and conducive to debate and asking questions. The teachers employed a range to techniques to check student understanding and push them to develop answers. There was lots of positive reinforcement and positive language used.

**Y13 A Level Biology Mr Fletcher 11.20-11.45am**

JB and JS observed Mr Fletcher’s year 13 A level Biology class. This is a class of 12 although 2 students were absent today. Mr Fletcher was concerned that unless there was some downward adjustment to the entry requirements that the numbers studying Biology A level would drop. There are 10 students currently in year 12. Mr Fletcher explained it was essential to know your students well and what works for each student. Students learn differently and teachers must respond to that. Some students use mind maps for example as they are visual learners whilst others take notes. They are encouraged to do independent work outside lessons as it is important that they become independent learners. They must read up and around subjects. The teachers deliver the content but always take the opportunity to reinforce learning by going back to earlier topics. He did so during this lesson moving away from the current topic of root hair cells and doing a snap revision segment on amino acids. It is about constantly building and revisiting year 12 work. The A level is very content heavy. There was a question and answer session on both topics in which the individual student’s knowledge was being constantly tested. They were required to use appropriate terminology in their answers. Assessments of students’ progress is important and is constantly ongoing. The class was a mix of external and Shenfield students.

**Yr13 BTEC Business Studies Ms Bhimjiyan 11.45-12.10pm**

Finally, JB and JS visited Ms Bhimjiyan’s Business BTEC lesson. This course is equivalent to 3 A levels. The students were finalising a written project on a marketing activity. We spoke to a number of students who were a mix of external and internal students. All students reported a positive experience of SHS’s 6th form. They felt they were well supported by the 6th form team and by their form tutors. The external candidates had settled in well. They were encouraged to work independently outside of the classroom. Those who had joined from other schools felt PREP was useful and effective in supporting their learning and developing independence in their studies. They had found it took a little time to get used to as this approach was different from their previous schools. Students were given good careers advice for the next stage. Apprenticeships were becoming increasing popular and some students had applied to both apprenticeships and univeristy.

**12.20pm – 1.15pm Student Leadership Team**

**All Governors**

Head Boy - Daniel / Head Girl - Annabel

Deputy Head Boys - Lewis and Jack / Deputy Head Girls - Nicole / Lauren / Victoria

The group talked us through their experiences since taking on the SLT roles. The key thing they all were surprised at was the level of involvement they had had and the autonomy they had been given by the school. They were doing events every few weeks - from Sports Relief fundraisers to Talent Shows to help raise money for both the internal school and external events. The overwhelming consensus was that they wanted to help, to be involved, to help people outside school and to make a difference They were also given responsibility within the 6th Form to manage issues - for example when the study room was closed, having to sort out the issues with the lack of printer - as well as responsibility for the Prom. They felt as a group they had come together and worked well to achieve everything they set out to. The skills they had developed with all of this were felt to be useful and transferrable.

They then talked us through the interview process. They had to write a letter of application detailing why they wanted the role. There was then a first interview with Mr Cooke and Mr McDonald, then a shortlist was interviewed by Mr Cooke and Mr McDonald together with Ms Herman. There was felt to be an increasing amount of pressure as the process went on which was scary to some degree but they all responded well to and actually enjoyed.

Background of students: only Head Boy, Daniel, is an SHS internal student, all the others had joined SHS for Sixth Form. The reputation of SHS at Sixth Form was cited by many as it was locally deemed to be one of the best offerings. Those who had joined from Redden Court highlighted the "home from home" feel at the school - something Mr Cooke had also referenced. As well as the 'feel' of the school, the wide curriculum on offer was a big draw. The group were doing mainly A Levels, but Deputy Head boy Lewis is doing BTECH. All were applying for university.

In terms of support from the school for next steps, they felt that the initial assembly useful in starting the process of applications for university. They had login details for university and apprenticeship applications and worked with staff on their personal statements. Where students were unsure about their next steps, careers interviews were arranged for them to get the support they needed. Members of the group had personal experience of this and how the support had helped them when they were stressed and anxious.

The Sixth Form Leadership team were praised as being supportive, knowledgeable and accessible. Their office next to the Sixth Form Café meant they were always on hand. Form Tutors were also praised for their help with options plus their on-going "checking up" on students. They "give up their time for us". Form time was described as relaxed and it was nice to have a Form Tutor who wasn't one of their subject teachers. Subject teachers were praised for the respect they had for the students, there was an acknowledgement that the students had chosen to be at SHS and they were treated like adults. This wasn't always the case for other local schools and SHS was felt to have a distinctive ethos of treating students with respect - "mutual respect" between teachers and students was cited. The students were expected to want to learn and be independent with their learning, but teachers would always mark extra work completed and adapted lessons to the class. There was an understanding that different students worked in different ways and teaching staff helped with that. Staff were happy for students to influence lesson plans and revision topics. The teaching staff understood that it could be difficult to make the transition into Sixth Form and helped ease them into the new world. There was plenty of feedback, with end of topic tests allowing teachers to then focus on gaps in understanding. Feedback was constant as was looking forward to exams with plenty of model answers, example questions and mark schemes available.

The timetable was felt to be flexible with a mixture of free periods - where they could choose what to do - and study periods - where they were expected to be in study rooms. This was again in contrast to other schools were such flexibility wasn't allowed.

Looking at the role of the Student SLT, all felt that they were able to act as role models to the younger students, mainly due to the number of events they worked on with them. However, behaviour in the lower school was overall felt to be good and potentially better than in their previous schools.

The group have weekly team meetings where they plan their events. They felt that they worked well as a group with everyone able to contribute according to their individual strengths. Daniel, as the only SHS alumni, is clearly deferred to as someone who knows who the school works, but he is obviously aware of not wanting to be in control and wanting a collaborative approach, which seems to be successful.

The group were all so enthusiastic about the school, the staff and their whole experience, we did have to ask about what wasn’t done quite as well. Key concerns are the size of facilities - common room, café, study rooms - for the number of students. So, space is an issue. Catering was also a concern - opening times of the café and food offerings not always seen as being healthy but equally no opportunity for students to heat own food as no microwaves/kettles. Wider issues were the car park especially at end of day. However, these were all minor issues overall.

Summary: The Student Leadership Team are a credit to the school. Passionate, articulate and self-assured, we could have talked to them all afternoon! They are responding well to the pressures placed on them and thriving. The Governors would like to thank them for their time today, particularly Daniel, Annabel and Nicole who chaperoned us to our various lessons during the morning. We would like to wish them well in their exams and every success in whatever they do on leaving the school.

At the conclusion of the visit governors fed back to CJH and AC. JS on behalf of governors thanked AC for the excellent work of the 6th form team. Praise from students for staff was overwhelmingly positive. Students felt supported by the 6th form team, their tutors and subject teachers. The 6th form clearly has an excellent reputation in the community and beyond which is reflected in the significant numbers of external students who seek to join our 6th form. It is clearly a strength of the school.