



THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the Local Governing Body for the Thomas Alleyne Academy was held by teleconference (Microsoft Teams) on Tuesday 19 January 2021 starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)
Robert Baldock
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton
David Gray
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)

Tara McGovern
Jo Mellett
Gary Phillips
Lynsey Steadman
Jenny White

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)
Klaas Luchies (Assistant Headteacher)
(Item 2 only)

Robert Dale (Clerk)

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cate Ducati.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- There were no additional declarations made.

ITEM 1C: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- Agreed and to be signed as an accurate record of proceedings in due course.

ITEM 1D: MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

- Actions had been followed-up as indicated below:
 - Consider the timing for an election of a parent governor at the next meeting. **Action deferred.** Guidance was that elections should not be held during lockdown (unless absolutely essential) so this would be deferred for the present.
 - Send the website audit template to Robert Baldock (who had volunteered to carry out the next governor website review). **Action complete.** Robert Baldock would provide a brief oral report under Item 7.
 - Prepare plan to attract a wider diversity of candidate to the local governing body. **Action deferred.** This action was also temporarily suspended but would be activated once the school was open again.
 - Add Link Governor report from Jenny White to next agenda. **Action complete.** Jenny's report had been circulated and added to GovernorHub.

- Ensure updated policies were added to the school's website. **Action complete.** Five revised Policies (Behaviour for Learning, Homework, Social Media, Remote Learning and SEND) have been added to the school website.
- A recent speaker at a local STEM conference was a former TAA (and Da Vinci) student (Chloe Tayler) now studying for a PhD and working as an apprentice at GSK. Governors agreed that it was desirable to approach her to join the LGB; this would support widening diversity of age among the governors.

Action: Prepare draft appointment letter and invite Trust Board to approve appointment.

ITEM 2: Y11 PROGRESS

- The school was now using a data analysis tool from SISRA Analytics which meant that the school was less dependent upon individual skills and had access to benchmarking data from other schools using the tool which would help spot national trends across Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. Data of this kind was used to support timely interventions.
- Governors noted that the current Y11 cohort had experienced significant disruption in learning during Y10 and extending into Y11 – amounting to roughly 33 weeks overall up to the time of taking mock exams in November 2020. Outcome analysis for this cohort of 154 suggested a Progress 8 score of -0.7, with a range of individual subject scores from English (-0.29) to Maths (-1.23). Maths generally scores least well at mock date. The historic improvement trend between mock and exam data shows a c0.6 improvement, which would suggest a similar improvement would be reasonable and thus a summer P8 outcome of around -0.1 or zero. This should certainly be the goal. There were challenges in achieving this, not least the duration of the current disruption, the need to address individual learners' needs and the actual process to be adopted to assess learner outcomes this year – which was only in consultation now.

Question: *How were GCSE grades likely to be determined?* The process would be one of teacher assessment, but the emphasis would be on having evidence to show that a learner was actually working at a particular level, not on what grade the teacher forecast they would have achieved in an exam setting. There was an underlying assumption that learners would be back in classrooms before March – which at present was uncertain – and that evidence could be gathered between then and July which is when results would be announced. It would be important to continue to gather evidence – because later evidence would be regarded as more reliable and was likely to show improvement from November mock data.

Question: *What external accountability measures would there be?* School level data would not be used to provide public measures of performance but would be supplied to Ofsted.

Question: *Could the data analysis be used to inform individual student interventions?* Yes, and similar analysis would have been used in this way in the past. Question level analysis was being used to inform remote learning provision.

Question: *Was there a gap between Pupil Premium (PP) and non PP students?* Yes; this year, the gap was between a grade to half a grade. However, the ability to intervene one to one was limited at present and often affected by how readily the student could access on-line learning (ie tech and broadband availability, suitable study space etc). The school had provided equipment and other tech support to students needing this help.

Question: *What information was available about the summer examination process?* The Ofsted consultation had just been released and the school would be considering a submission. It was proposed that outcomes would be announced in July, but schools would

be expected to manage an appeals process during the summer, which would not be easy – this could make summer 2021 even harder than summer 2020.

Question: *Was the school proposing to ask students and parents to submit responses to the consultation?* Parents or students could do so individually on line.

Question: *How had parents responded to communications from school?* There had been many positive reactions and Y11 engagement had continued to be good – parents and students understood that it remained important to continue working towards improving grades over the rest of the year.

- **Governors welcomed** the clear briefing on performance data.
- Klaas Luchies left the meeting.

ITEM 3: CURRICULUM UPDATE

- Governors were advised about how the school was delivering teaching and learning remotely; they expressed their admiration of the whole staff team for the way in which they had adapted to the changing demands placed upon them often at very short notice. Live lessons were being provided every day and colleagues were being both flexible and collaborative. This was a real achievement given that staff had not used Google Classroom before this year. 92% of students had submitted work and there was strong usage data. The curriculum was broadly similar to what would have been delivered in school apart from PHSE, where lessons would focus on well-being. Governors recognised that there was a challenge to keep learners engaged as lockdown continued. It was not clear how long the present situation would continue.
- The school had managed to engage with almost all families since the start of term. More than 120 laptops had been issued to students in need and where other support was needed, papers and phone calls to families and students had been provided.
- The Y9 options process would be carried out remotely this year starting on Monday. Curriculum leaders had prepared options booklets and would hold an on-line assembly on choices. Y11 recruitment to the sixth form would also start soon. The target was 50 applicants, and bespoke personal conversations would take place with students. One change to the offer was being made; a BTEC rather than an A-level programme would be offered because analysis of A-level data suggested that the BTEC would be better for students.

Question: *How much coverage was there about on-line safety?* This had been a key topic last term and information had been sent home this term including tips on online safety. Any concerns were followed up. On-line safety was also covered in KS3 Computer Studies.

Question: *What was in place for staff well-being?* It was appreciated that staff isolation could be a concern and curriculum leaders were tasked with maintaining regular contact with their teams and sharing what was working and not working. Other interventions included newsletters and virtual staff meetings which provided opportunities for a listening ear. Mark Lewis was meeting the local Trades Union representative weekly to ensure that potential problems were identified early.

Question: *What happened if pupils failed to join lessons? When were parents notified?* Parents were notified on the same day by the pastoral team and often within a very short time. It tended to be the same families as struggled with engagement in school.

Question: *How was sharing best practice undertaken remotely?* Through virtual staff meetings each Monday and through other online team meetings. Staff also shared their resources online – Katie Bailey had set up a resources website to support this.

Question: *What interventions were in place for struggling students?* Lessons were arranged so as to provide for live teaching followed by student work on the lesson objectives. During this period, teachers would work with individual learners needing support. However, there were undoubtedly barriers to engagement. Students with EHCPs received bespoke interventions but there were limitations as to what could be provided.

Question: *Where did the 120 laptops come from and how were the recipients identified?* Most came from the DfE allocation, but some were from school. Those in need were identified in different ways including self report, and knowledge of family circumstances. It was not expected that many more laptops would be received from DfE now.

- **Governors accepted** the report.

ITEM 4: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE UPDATE

- The financial position remained tight but there had been some underspending and the forecast was slightly better than originally projected. Governors also noted the changing direction and late notice of government guidance on several matters including examinations, lateral flow testing, opening and closing of schools and free school meals, which had been extremely difficult to manage and resulted in some wasted effort. Recently, free school meal arrangements had switched from food parcels to vouchers, and there were regular lateral flow tests on staff and the small number of students on school. To date, 150 tests had been conducted, all valid and all negative. Governors who had volunteered to help with this had not been needed yet, but might be once schools fully re-opened. Governors asked:

Question: *In respect of the staff recruitment needs, was there any pattern to the resignations?* No; all of the resignations were for individual causes including maternity leave, retirement, and a part-time staff member moving to a full time role.

Question: *Would the old minibus be replaced?* Possibly, once the school was needing transport for organised competitive sport and trips. The intention was to lease a second minibus in addition to the other currently leased vehicle, if this was affordable.

Question: *What issues had arisen with Google classroom that gave rise to behavioural challenges?* A small minority of students had joined lessons they were not meant to be attending and created disruption. Ways to address this included controlling admission to on-line classrooms, turning off the chat function and using reminder language to students about behaviour expectations. Students could be removed from virtual classrooms if required.

Question: *What guarantee was there that the school would recover laptops issued to students?* There were no guarantees, but the school was assuming that student needs for IT support would be continuing for some time and could continue to be used for schoolwork even after lockdown ended. Equipment would be recovered if required.

Question: *What would happen in respect of claims for COVID-19 support funding?* The funding window had been re-opened, but the assumption was that little funding would be obtained; any receipt would be an unforecast benefit.

Question: *What was the position in respect of recruiting the Maths teacher from overseas?* This was not now happening.

- **Governors accepted** the report.

ITEM 5: UTILITIES COSTS REVIEW

- This report would now be produced annually, with a report in each autumn term covering the previous year plus comparatives. The present report indicated that the 2020 lockdown had had a positive impact on utilities costs, and that the final position for biomass fuel in 2019/20 was likely to be at least consistent with the previous year once an expected rebate was confirmed.
- The current lockdown had not yet seen all school buildings closed, but the position would be reviewed in coming weeks and access might be limited at that point. This would generate some further savings on heating and lighting.
- **Governors accepted** the report.

ITEM 6: IT AND CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

- Governors discussed the advice from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the responses to the suggested governor questions. Staff were kept aware of the importance of cyber security and the school had experienced over the summer sustained but unsuccessful efforts to penetrate school systems from abroad. Support services from Herts for Learning (HfL) in respect of IT provision and protection had been good and there was also support from the Hart Learning Group in respect of Data Protection. The in-school team was working on formalised procedures to support the existing policies. These would not only cover the risk of cyber attack but broader matters too. Discussions with our HfL consultant were helping to define risks and identify gaps and weaknesses. There was also guidance available from the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) - the government insurance offer which provided cover for insurance risks.
- One suggestion to emerge so far was that a governor might wish to act as a critical friend to the school in this area. As somebody responsible for cyber security until recently in his professional life, Howard Crompton had agreed to take this on.

Question: *What plans were there to deal with a ransomware attack?* There were two key points and a substantial mitigation. First, any successful ransomware attack should be reported to our provider (HfL) and to Action Fraud; and second, no response should be made to the attacker. Mitigations were daily back-ups and a weekly cumulative tape back-up from which systems and data could be recovered with relatively minimal risk of loss.

Question: *Several primary schools had been subject to phishing attacks resulting in payments being fraudulently obtained. What protections were in place against this?* There were several authorisation requirements for payments from the finance system; there were only a small number of school purchase cards from which purchases could be made, so the likelihood of a successful attack was low – but could not be excluded. It was important that there should not be a blame culture; such attacks could be very sophisticated and plausible.

Question: *How big was the data storage?* That information was not to hand but would be provided. Critical school data was that relating to the SIMS system for which there were multiple back-ups. Some schools were adopting different cloud based systems – and this would be considered. For secondary schools, SIMS remained the market leader.

Question: *Who were the cyber security champions?* Steve Parker, Julia Cooke and Kate Prince. Other staff had interests in specific systems (eg Katie Bailey: Google Classroom).

Question: *Where were back-up tapes stored?* Servers and back-ups were in different places.

Question: *How was access to sensitive or special category data controlled?* System permissions and password protection limited access to sensitive personal data.

- **Governors welcomed** the report.

ITEM 7: GOVERNOR UPDATES

- Robert Baldock had reviewed the school website and expressed his appreciation for those governors who had done so before. The website continued to be accessible and information was generally very easy to find. The location of information about Special Educational Needs and Disability could be more clearly signposted.
- Policies were mostly up to date; there were some with recently passed review dates which was likely to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 emergency, including Whistleblowing, Data Protection and Management and Supporting Students with Medical Needs. There were a couple of Policies (eg Freedom of Information and Freedom of Speech) which were in urgent need of review.
- Having been asked to consider the website with a diversity perspective, imagery seemed consistent with most other local schools – although there was no objective standard against which to judge this and assessment by somebody from the majority community might not identify concerns felt by those from minority groups. There were some strong examples from primary schools that could be considered as providing more ambitious approaches to celebrating diversity which the school should consider.
- Another governor volunteer to undertake a review in the autumn term would be sought.

Action: Update Policies and add to the website as required.

Action: Consider examples of diversity good practice identified through this review and develop plan to incorporate ideas in the Thomas Alleyne website.

- Six responses to the governor self-review questionnaire had been received; those who had yet to complete the questionnaire were encouraged to do so.

Action: Re-issue questionnaire to governors yet to respond.

- Governors thanked Mark and the SLT for the excellent communications about how the school was handling the multifarious challenges that had been posed during the continuing COVID-19 emergency. Staff also felt extremely well-informed and appreciated the care and concern for staff (as well as student) well-being.
- A good Governor in School session had taken place before the end of 2020 on creating a learning culture within a department and a further virtual session would take place on 21 January 2021 on the reading fluency project.
- The Chair advised governors that it was his intention to stand down as Chair of the LGB at the end of this academic year. Having moved house, away from Stevenage, he felt it was important that the school should have a Chair who was closer to the school. He hoped nonetheless to continue to support the Trust Board and Audit Committee. Recruitment for a new Chair would start as soon as possible.

- Governors commented on the huge loss this would be to the school but appreciated the reasons for the decision.

Action: Inform the Trust board of the Chair's announcement and begin process of recruiting a replacement for September 2021.

ITEM 8: REVIEW OF POLICIES

- Three Policies were presented for review:
 - Remote Learning.
 - Relationships and Sex Education.
 - Admissions 2022/23.
- Governors asked:

Question: *In the Remote Learning policy, students at home were required to have their device cameras switched off; what was the reason for this?* One reason was a safeguarding concern and the other was the risk of distraction for other students. Worries included student anxiety over self-image, disclosure of student's home environment and the risk of others being seen. There were other tools to ensure student engagement - such as the chat function, hands up etc, but it was appreciated that this was a balanced judgement.

Question: *In respect of the same policy, were school uniforms required for students attending on-line lessons?* No. Uniforms were required for students in school but not for those accessing learning from home.

Question: *Was the Relationships and Sex Education Policy following an external template?* Yes. The school had generally adopted the Intent/Implementation/Impact structure for its Policies but this policy was taken from other exemplars. More detail about how the school intended to apply the policy could have been included, but this already existed in other documents. The policy updates related to the latest statutory guidance.

- Amendments to the Admissions Policy for 2022/23 requested by the local authority in their scrutiny letter had been made. There was no evidence at present to suggest that at present Rule 4 (giving priority to Roebuck pupils) would materially disadvantage other applicants to the school, but that this would continue to be kept under review. They agreed to recommend the updated Policy to the Trust Board for approval.
- **Governors approved** updated policies for Remote Learning and Relationships and Sex Education **and recommended** the 2022/23 Admissions Policy to the Trust Board.

Action: Ensure updated policies were added to the school's website.

ITEM 9: TAA RISK REGISTER

- The format for the risk register had been updated to include a description of the 'four lines of defence' which provided ongoing risk mitigation for individual risks, plus any Actions intended to reduce the gross risk of either likelihood or impact. This had been used to create a 'Corporate' register for the Trust Board to monitor and the same format would be applied to school level risk registers. It had been intended to share the revamped school risk register at this meeting, but other events had intervened and

it would now come forward to the March meeting. In the interim, governors reviewed and endorsed the new format which was felt to be clear and informative.

- **Governors welcomed** the planned development of the new school risk register.

ITEM 10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Double Yellow Lines

- An update would be provided at the next meeting; parking arrangements on the High Street had just started to change.

ITEM 11: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next scheduled meeting would take place on Tuesday 2 March 2021, starting at 18.00 by videoconference (Microsoft Teams).
- The meeting closed at 19.53.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who	When
15/09/20	2.	Consider the timing for an election of a parent governor at the next meeting.	Chair	10/11/20
10/11/20	4.	Prepare plan to attract a wider diversity of candidate to the local governing body.	Jonathan Ellam/Robert Dale	10/01/21
19/01/21	1d.	Prepare draft appointment letter and invite Trust Board to approve appointment.	Robert Dale	31/01/21
19/01/21	7.	Consider examples of diversity good practice identified through this review and develop plan to incorporate ideas in the Thomas Alleyne website.	Mark Lewis	31/07/21
19/01/21	7.	Re-issue questionnaire to governors yet to respond.	Robert Dale	31/01/21
19/01/21	7.	Inform the Trust board of the Chair's announcement and begin recruiting a replacement for September 2021.	Robert Dale	31/01/21
19/01/21	8.	Ensure updated policies were added to the school's website	Robert Dale	31/01/21