



THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the Local Governing Body for the Thomas Alleyne Academy was held in the Library (to be the new Sixth Form Centre) at the Thomas Alleyne Academy, Stevenage on Thursday 7 July 2021 starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Hilary Clifford (Chair)
Robert Baldock
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton

Cate Ducati
David Gray
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Lynsey Steadman

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)

Robert Dale (Governance Professional)

WELCOME

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Jamil Grant, Tara McGovern, Jo Mellett and Kerry Pritchett, and Jenny White.

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:
 - Provide demonstration of Arbor at the next Governor in School session. **Action not yet due.** To be considered as part of the plan for 2022/23.
 - Provide diversity analysis for student and staff cohorts at TAA. **Action Ongoing.** We have this data available at school and will share with governors once Matt Cox has had a chance to be more embedded in his role.
 - Add termly/six monthly SEND reporting to the outline agenda plan. **Action complete.** This has been added to the 2022/23 outline agenda schedule.
 - Propose new Link Governor arrangements for 2022/23 and beyond. **Action not yet due.** This would be on the agenda for the first meeting in the new academic year.
 - Issue meeting appointments for 2022/23. **Action complete.** All LGB meeting appointments had been circulated.

- Arrange for the updated Policy [Child Protection] to be published on the TAA website. **Action complete.** The revised Policy is on the school website.

ITEM 2: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- The 2021/22 examination season had come to an end – the first 'normal' season since 2019. The process had been well administered and students had conducted themselves well. One instance of malpractice had been identified and reported to the examination board; their decision would be announced with the exam results in August.
- It was more difficult than usual to forecast the outcomes for students because of the expressed intention to reduce 'grade inflation' perceived to have arisen during the COVID-19 emergency. Students had been generally positive about the exams themselves.

Question: *How had the Y13s felt?* These A-level exams were the first public examinations that this group of students had experienced, although the school had conducted formal mock examinations to provide some relevant experience. Current Y10s had also gone through similar formal mocks, data from which would be reported at the next meeting.

Question: *What impact was the new sixth form centre making?* The plan to transform the library building would be completed over the summer. The induction process for next year's Y12 intake had made use of the library area for the incoming students and gave a good sense of how the sixth form would be perceived as at the heart of the school. 63 students had attended the session – although not all were expected to join in September; an intake of c50 was expected. The new area would be the venue for future LGB meetings in school.

- Behaviour and attitudes had generally remained good during the year, although there had been an increase in the level of challenging behaviour. There had been two permanent exclusions in 2021/22, similar to past levels. Attendance was good compared to published national data and there had been a big effort to improve punctuality. Other ways to improve attendance would also be put in place including checking potential barriers for individual learners early in the new term. There would be a strong push for full attendance on day 1.

Question: *What proportion of absence could be classed as persistent?* The Persistent Absence rate was c19% with most pupils in this category being Pupil Premium. This was a key area to address to improve achievement for this cohort.

Question: *To what extent was COVID-19 contributing to the absence rate?* This was no longer being given a separate absence code so was being treated as just another illness – although there was evidence that the rate was rising.

Question: *Given that PP learners were disproportionately represented in school sanctions data, was there a higher proportion at TAA than in other Stevenage schools?* TAA's PP cohort, at 27%, was higher than the national average (24%) but broadly similar to other Stevenage schools. Support from the new Inclusion Manager and programmes such as MCR pathways were intended to support this group of learners in particular.

Question: *How was uniform affordability being addressed?* The school bought and provided uniform articles for those in need, seeking to reduce barriers to attendance.

- The school was fully staffed for the autumn term, with a new Sports apprentice joining and a cover supervisor appointment being made. Exam attendance support was also being out in place for next year on a cost-neutral basis. Although matters had been

successfully managed this year, recruitment was a future risk, with fewer applicants and a greater number of unfilled vacancies across the school sector. TAA had – so far – avoided too many difficulties and had several former students now among its teaching staff. However, recruitment challenges were likely to increase.

- Additional trend information about safeguarding in school, including trend information about looked after children, had been included with the headteacher's report. Governor feedback was welcome. The school provided strong and consistent support for this cohort of children, but governors also noted that the threshold for external agency action was very high; two referrals had been made in respect of one learner, the first of which had been refused as not being sufficiently serious, while a response to the second was awaited.
- Estates work was broadly on track. The successful bid for roofing repairs was unlikely to start before 2023, because of the listed building status of the property and the difficulty in finding materials and qualified contractors to undertake the work.

Question: *Was the reduction in PAN for Y11 permanent?* No, this was a short-term measure – which had worked its way through several year groups now, and was intended to limit disruption to exam years from in-year entry. The local authority was content with the agreed situation.

Question: *Was there any financial risk from the planned overseas trips?* No, they were required to break even, and there were waiting lists in case a student or students dropped out. Pupil Premium students or looked after children would be supported to participate if necessary. Payment plans were also offered for the higher cost visits and there was a small buffer built into trip prices. The position was always closely monitored and managed.

Question: *Had a health & safety audit taken place this term?* Yes; a report would be circulated as soon as it was available.

- **The LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 3: P9 (MAY) MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS REPORT

- The May management accounts report showed a better than forecast result for the year, before capital investment, with a summer works provision of £38k reducing but not entirely eliminating the operating reserves deficit (which will be c£18k at year end). The deficit would be converted into a reserves surplus in 2022/23 and the aim was to build modest reserves position thereafter.
- There was also a healthy cash position and cashflow forecast and the inter-company balance (between TAA and Roebuck) had been further reduced to c£35k and would be fully reduced in the new academic year.
- **The LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 4: PROPOSED TAA BUDGET – 2022/23

- The proposed budget forecast a surplus of £84k for 2022/23, with smaller surpluses for the following years (though forecasting revenue became progressively harder further ahead). Revenue projections for 2022/23 were reasonably certain, and cost assumptions included 15% increases in energy costs and 6% general non-pay inflation.

Question: *What assumptions were made about staff pay awards?* The recommendation was to provide for a 3% award and this had been done. There was a risk that a higher award was eventually announced, which the government would not fully fund. This would negatively impact the budget. An announcement on teacher pay awards was supposed to be imminent.

Question: *How predictable was the funding for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)?* This was hard to forecast; funding followed students, so when they left a school, the funding went with them. The assumption had been made that funding expected to leave TAA because three students were leaving would be offset by incoming funding from 8 learners who were joining. It was possible, however, that more or less funding could be received if the 8 EHCPs were not funded.

Question: *Could the Trust seek external sponsorship from local businesses?* Yes, although it was important that time and resources would need to be allocated to seeking and maintaining such sponsorship. TASA might be a better vehicle for sponsorship, and the focus should be on larger arrangements that brought in amounts over a longer period. There were other considerations associated with seeking sponsorship as well; were there types of business that would not be considered and if so, what should these be?

- **The TAA LGB agreed** to recommend the proposed 2022/23 budget to the Trust Board.

ITEM 5: PROPOSED TAA DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022/23

- The Development Plan was a living document, which ran across academic years because it was aligned to financial year. Governors asked:

Question: *Were there areas of responsibility for Helen Russell and Kate Prince within the plan?* Both made contributions to different areas (eg Trust Development) but were not responsible for a theme.

Question: *What progress was being made with the Trust's growth strategy?* Three strands were being pursued concurrently.

The first was addressing the points raised by ESFA during discussions around the Related Party Transaction. Thus, revised Articles in line with the latest government template were being presented for approval to the Trust Board on 13 July and work was also under way to revise the Trust's Master and Supplemental Funding Agreements in line with the latest version (the Trusts were from 2016). The appointment of Andrew McLeod as Chief Finance Officer, supported by Paul Harte's professional expertise was also being finalised. The main outstanding item related to approval of the Related Party Transaction which remained unapproved (but not prevented) at present. Advice from the auditors was being taken about this, as the current service level agreement with the Hart Learning Group covered three years (2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24).

The second was approaching local schools not current within Trusts to see if they would consider joining the Hart Schools Trust. With support from Lynsey Young (Roebuck headteacher) a speculative approach had been made to 13 local primaries and several positive responses received (at least in terms of being willing to hear what HST could offer). Initial presentations would be made in the autumn term. Conversations with another local secondary school were also continuing, though there was no immediate intention to convert.

The third was considering possible larger trusts as local partners; at present, some discussions were taking place with the Ivy Trust. This was proving interesting, but only as part of a wider comparison exercise. The other Trust was currently primary only including

several in Stevenage but was looking to convert a secondary school in North London. Conversations would continue but no urgent action was anticipated.

Question: *Was it worth also talking to secondary schools in North Hertfordshire?* At present, because they were in a different authority, they were not interested in working with schools in Stevenage.

- Governors welcomed the news that David Gray had agreed to investigate the latest position in relation to the Hertfordshire County Council owned 'White House' at the front of the school.
- Progress with the development plan would be reported to each meeting with actions RAG-rated.
- **The TAA LGB approved** the school development plan for 2022/23.

Action: Include progress reports on the school development plan on the future agenda plan.

ITEM 6: TAA RISK REGISTER

- Some adjustments had been proposed to be made by the Audit & Risk Committee at its recent meeting. The Estates risk for TAA had been considerably mitigated as a result of the recent repair and maintenance work, and the successful bid for roofing repairs (which would be completed in 2023) and so this risk would fall below the threshold for the corporate risk register.
- Similarly, the general safeguarding risk was considered to be very well mitigated (assured by the recent internal audit report and the ongoing monitoring by governors) and would also be archived. Consideration would be given to including more a specific safeguarding risk or risks (eg relating to student wellbeing). The cash risk – also proposed for archiving – was felt by the Audit & Risk Committee to be worthy of retention, although they also noted the strong cashflow forecasts and the monthly monitoring through the management accounts reports. Reasons for archiving risks would be annotated on the register.

Question: *Was there a central risk budget?* Not at present.

Question: *Was it also time to archive the Arbor (Management Information System (MIS)) risk?* More functionality was being introduced in the autumn term and the system had not yet gone through a change of school year. Once these had been successfully negotiated, it might be possible to remove the risk.

Question: *Could there be a presentation to governors demonstrating the Arbor system's functionality?* There would be data protection issues with showing the system to governors live, which would need careful consideration. It was a very visual platform, so would be difficult to present in abstract. This issue would be considered for the first Governor in School session in the new year.

- **The TAA LGB endorsed** the latest iteration of the risk register, subject to the proposed changes being made.

Action: Update the Risk Register as proposed.

ITEM 7: GOVERNOR UPDATES

- David Gray had prepared a draft written report from the recent Governor in School session and had also visited Devon Woolley to review safeguarding. These reported would be circulated to the LGB once finalised. Hilary Clifford and Jo Mellett had seen different aspects of the school during the recent Governor in School session; an excellent assembly and very engaged students had been observed during lessons.
- SLT members were delighted to welcome governors into school at any time; most link governors had managed to undertake two meetings during the school year and Howard Crompton was meeting monthly to discuss financial matters (which was covered by the Management Accounts report. For the record, future such reports would state the date of the review meeting and governor participation, so a separate report was not expected.
- One observation from the recent visit was that while students were well-behaved and engaged, they were often rather quiet. This contrasted with an approach observed in one lesson where learners were not being allowed to 'opt out' of learning by encouraging learners to 'have a go' and work outside their comfort zones. There was a balance between maintaining good behaviour and securing participation in learning.
- Tara McGovern would visit TAA in w/c 11 July 2022. Governors were welcome to join the inset day on 1 September (09.00 to 10.30) and Open Evening on 15 September.
- **The TAA LGB noted** the reports.

ITEM 8: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Well-Being Programme

- The school remained mindful of the stresses on teaching and non-teaching staff and continued to offer support. This did not just cover softer elements, but extended to consideration of workload, planning calendar pinch points better (in future!) to minimise cover pinchpoints. It was also important to remind staff of the actions that had been taken to support them. For example, feedback to staff about breaking the link this year between lesson observations and performance review had been well received. The school would continue to be very careful about managing directed time. The headteacher's PA was also acting as Cover Manager and was aware of
- Student wellbeing continued to be monitored closely and well-being support was in placed for example through the pastoral team.

Annual Health & Safety Report

- This was on the agenda plan for October 2022.

Trainee CAMHS Worker: would this arrangement continue?

- This arrangement was continuing for now, but was not guaranteed.

List of Policies and their Due date

- Kate Prince maintained a list and policies were brought forward for review as necessary. The list would be reviewed by governors at a future meeting.

Action: Include the Policy list on a future agenda.

Parent Governor

- Mr Grant had been advised by email that failure to attend this meeting or to otherwise communicate with the Chair/Governance Professional/Headteacher would be considered as a resignation. An election would be arranged in the autumn term and the opportunity promoted at the Y7 Parent induction meeting as well as more widely to the parent body.
- The Governance Professional undertook to approach Armin Salvatore (who had attended the previous meeting as an observer) to see if he was interested in joining the local governing body.

Action: Make arrangements for parent governor election.

Action: Contact Armin Salvatore to establish whether he wished to join the LGB.

Signage

- A number of faded and/or inaccurate building signs had been noted around the school. These would be considered for replacement or repainting.

Action: Make arrangements for replacement or repainting of relevant building signs.

ITEM 9: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next meeting would take place on Thursday 6 October 2022, 18.00, starting at 18.00 in school. For those governors who could come slightly earlier, a site walk would start at 17.00.
- The meeting closed at 19.55.

ITEMS 10: INFORMATION PAPERS

- An example school benchmarking report (from the Roebuck Academy) had been shared for information. A similar report for TAA should be available but had not been located yet.

THANKS

- The headteacher thanked governors for their continuing support and commitment during another challenging year. Overall, the school had come out of the pandemic disruption in a strong position and was well-placed for the new academic year – though in common with other schools, there was nervousness about the summer results and the policy decision to publish secondary ‘league tables’ in such a disrupted learning context.
- Governors asked that their thanks for the professionalism and dedication of the staff team be communicated to them; the hard work of teaching and non-teaching staff alike was making a real difference to the lives of the children at the school.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

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Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who	When
05/05/22	2.	Provide diversity analysis for student and staff cohorts at TAA.	Mark Lewis	27/05/22
05/05/22	6.	Propose new Link Governor arrangements for 2022/23 and beyond.	Mark Lewis	30/06/22
07/07/22	1d.	Provide demonstration of Arbor at the next Governor in School session.	Mark Lewis	31/12/22
07/07/22	5.	Include progress reports on the school development plan on the future agenda plan.	Robert Dale	31/07/22
07/07/22	6.	Update the Risk Register as proposed.	Mark Lewis	31/08/22
07/07/22	8.	Include the Policy list on a future agenda.	Robert Dale	31/07/22
07/07/22	8.	Make arrangements for parent governor election.	Mark Lewis	30/09/22
07/07/22	8.	Contact Armin Salvatore to establish whether he wished to join the LGB.	Robert Dale	31/07/22
07/07/22	8.	Make arrangements for replacement or repainting of relevant building signs.	Mark Lewis	31/08/22