



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 4 May 2021 starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

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

Tara McGovern (until Item 5)
Jo Mellett
Gary Phillips
Lynsey Steadman
Chloe Tayler
Jenny White (from Item 6)

IN ATTENDANCE

Simon Backhouse (SENDCo) (Items 2 and 3 only)

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)
Robert Dale (Clerk)

WELCOME

- The Chair welcomed Chloe Tayler to her first meeting and governors introduced themselves virtually. Chloe was a former TAA pupil currently working at GSK in analytical chemistry, having begun there as a degree apprentice. Members were delighted to welcome another former student to the governing body – Robert Baldock and Howard Crompton also having attended the school, albeit not so recently.
- Members welcomed Simon Backhouse to the meeting, who would be presenting Items 2 and 3. Governors were grateful that he had been able to give up some time to join the meeting.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- None.
- Jenny White would attend but expected to be late (she was participating in a parents evening at another school); Tara McGovern would need to leave the meeting before the end as she had a Finance Committee meeting for her school to participate in. The meeting would nonetheless remain quorate at all times.

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.** There are currently two parent governors (Robert Baldock, Jo Mellett) and one space. An election should be considered in the autumn term.
 - Several other governors had initial terms of office ending in 2021; confirmation of their intentions would be sought. Jonathan Ellam has already announced his intention to step down as Chair, and there will be another vacancy as Gary Phillips will also step down at the end of the academic year. A call for nominations for the role of Chair has been issued and external candidates are being sought at the same time to join the Trust Board. Skills and diversity are factors being considered in this process.
 - Prepare plan to attract a wider diversity of candidate to the local governing body. **Action under way.** See note above.
 - Consider examples of diversity good practice identified through this review and develop plan to incorporate ideas in the Thomas Alleyne website. **Action under way.** This will be picked up during the year.
 - Share updated re-opening risk assessment with LGB as soon as available. **Action complete.** This was circulated by email on 11 March 2021.
 - Circulate webinar notes. **Action complete.** These (“Remote Learning for Governors”) were circulated by email on 2 March 2021.
 - Make the amendments suggested by the LGB before publishing the Policies. **Action complete.** The Policies (Pay; Supporting Students with Medical Conditions; Anti-bullying and Child Protection) had now been updated and published on the school website.
 - Finalise meeting schedule for 2020/21 and issue meeting appointments to members. **Action complete.** Appointments had been circulated.
 - Report to the LGB on practices being retained after the end of COVID-19 restrictions, and on marking the end of the academic year. **Action under way.** The beneficial practices (such as some staggering of breaks to separate Y7 from older year groups) were being assessed by the SLT.

ITEM 2: SEND REVIEW

- The report described activity and progress during the year to date, noting that the reading ability of a significant number the current Y7 had been below expectations, possibly reflecting the disrupted schooling experienced in 2019/20 as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Actions and priorities for the remainder of the school year were summarised and preparations for 2021/22 outlined. Governors asked:

Question: *Was the LEXIA intervention a group or individual approach?* This was a computer based toolkit that was used to identify the individual needs of Y7-Y9 students. These learners would work individually on the tailored support, although this would often be part of a small group setting and the toolkit could also be used to support groups.

Question: *In respect of the Y7 cohorts with lower than expected reading ability, was this an unusually high number?* Yes. In 2019/20, 24 students had come to TAA with a reading age below 10 years; in 2020/21, that number had been 51. At present, it was unclear what the numbers would be for 2021/22 but the team was preparing for a similarly high number as the assumption was that this was linked to disrupted education as a result of lockdowns.

Question: *Was the Y7 reading issue restricted to TAA or more widespread?* There was no data to evidence this, but the assumption was that it was not confined to TAA.

Question: *Would this year's summer school programme aim to improve reading skills?* The programme was being developed separately. About 60 identified pupils from primary schools in need of support (one third of the new intake) would take part in a week long programme, and there would be a team-building day for all of the new intake.

Question: *Did the cost of additional LEXIA licences come from Pupil premium funding?* No, it was part of the SEND budget. 200 licences were held.

Question: *What were LEXIA, ESMA, ASDAN and Shield?* As explained, LEXIA was a computer-based toolkit to support individual learners develop reading and wider literacy skills. ASDAN was an alternative qualification option for learners unable to cope with a full set of GCSEs, which focussed on life skills. ESMA was a tuition scheme for learners who were currently unable to attend school for medical reasons. Shield was an in-school intervention for students with social, emotional or health needs and would often be applied in advance of a referral to ESMA; following identification of a pattern of non-attendance, a six week Shield programme would begin and the team would work with the learner to improve attendance. If this was not successful, the learner would be moved onto ESMA.

Question: *Would participation in the ASDAN programme preclude progression to college?* No. It would replace one GCSE and would develop life skills. Although some activities (visiting shops or travelling) had been restricted during lockdown, most of the programme could be delivered via work at home; good progress was being made by this year's cohort.

Question: *How many students in the current Y9 were being invited to consider this option?* A similar number to that last year. Seven learners had started the programme in September 2020. Since then, some had left and some had joined.

Question: *Would TAA still receive information about the new Y7 cohort's predicted grades?* Yes, information would be provided by primary schools, but TAA would baseline in September.

Question: *How many learners with EHCPs would be joining the school in September?* Four. The team was developing relationships with the families of these young people to understand the support needed at school and how home could work with school on this. Individual needs (eg restricted mobility) were being identified and catered for.

■ **Governors welcomed the report.**

ITEM 3: CLA REVIEW

■ The report summarised support provided to looked after and previously looked after children (CLA and PLA) at TAA, in conjunction with the Virtual School that provided umbrella services across the county. Support for CLA/PLA learners had continued throughout lockdown. Many of this group had remained in school; where this was not possible, welfare and counselling support had been maintained through regular telephone calls and personal progress meetings. Some students in this group had coped well with lockdown; others had found it much harder. Governors asked:

Question: *Why had trauma training not been completed?* Devon Woolley was taking this on.

Question: *How many students at TAA had EHCPs?* There were 19 EHCPs across the school, with three more submissions being prepared and four more learners with EHCPs due to join in September. This was in line with the county average and slightly less than the national average. Within the CLA/PLA cohort, two learners had EHCPs both in respect social and emotional needs.

Question: *What was the reason for the increase in exclusions in 2020/21?* The exclusions were primarily for siblings who were exhibiting extremely challenging behaviour. The exclusions all occurred prior to the children being taken into care, but are recorded in the statistics presented. The school had been working in partnership with professionals throughout this period.

Question: *How would the monitoring system for post CLA students become more robust, as indicated in the action plan?* The school was introducing regular performance reviews for PLA learners using the same format as was mandated for CLA learners.

Question: *How would communication with Social Services be improved?* This was aspirational. Because there were relatively frequent changes of support workers, and these changes were rarely advised to the school in advance, it was difficult to maintain a consistent conversation with the social services team. The Virtual School might be able to help facilitate communication and this was being tried.

- **Governors accepted** the report.
- Governors thanked Simon Backhouse for his clear and positive reports and he left the meeting.

ITEM 4: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- The current year-end forecast showed a surplus ahead of forecast, but funds would need to be released to undertake estate repair and maintenance work. Fencing donated by North Hertfordshire College would probably be used to replace fencing around the tennis courts and new fencing used to limit public access to the playing fields off the Avenue. Potential costs for this work were identified in the paper.
- There was a dispute with an energy company about costs amounting to c£13k; authorisation for a change in supplier had inadvertently been given by a staff member not authorised to approve a change. The claim was being resisted.
- Consideration was being given to retaining some COVID-safe practices in the new academic year; staggering break times had helped Y7 students by restricting contact with older students and a similar practice might continue in the next academic year. The SLT was considering what other useful innovations could be retained.
- Staff had made huge efforts to prepare for the Teacher Assessed Grade process; this was creating a huge workload for staff – which the exam boards would avoid this year. Governors expressed their appreciation to staff for their dedication.

Question: *Did the quotes for The Avenue fencing include signage?* No. this would be additional. Signage would need to be very clear that the land was a school playing field and not for public access.

Question: *Were there any concerns over the quality of evidence supporting Teacher Assessed Grades?* The teams were certain that there would be strong supporting evidence. External moderation was in place to support smaller departments in particular, and for those teams where historic data suggested performance might be less good. Departments were also making sure that there were 'no surprises' in conversations with students and families; ie that students understood what the evidence suggested.

Question: *Was there a cap on the surplus that the school could carry forward?* No, but in any event, surplus funds would be deployed into repair/maintenance and capital improvements. Year end data needed to be submitted to ESFA annually, and large surpluses would make future capital bids less likely to succeed.

Question: *What was attendance data by year group?* This would be circulated. Y11 was an area of concern at present at c90%. It was felt that this arose from some student disengagement and assessment fatigue. Actions to mitigate this included an increased number of home visits, heightened awareness of mental health risks and clear messaging around expectations for the new year. Stronger support from some parents would help.

Question: *Would summer school arrangements be dependent upon DfE funding?* This funding was guaranteed, but needed to be cash flowed – ie it could be reclaimed against actual attendance. This left the risk with the school, and so a targeted approach to arrangements, rather than preparing for the whole intake, was thought to be prudent.

Question: *What further information could be provided about the current disciplinary cases?* They related to unacceptable behaviour towards colleagues. It was appreciated that the impact of the COVID-19 emergency created immense stress upon staff, but that could not excuse unacceptable conduct.

- The headteacher reported that he expected to be able to report on a Disaster Recovery Plan for the school at the next meeting. He added that the Teacher Assessed Grade Policy and the latest iteration of the School Development Plan had been attached to his report for reference.
- Mel Cook agreed to contact Tara McGovern and Chloe Tayler to arrange a link governor meeting.

Action: Set up Link Governor meeting.

- **Governors accepted** the report.
- Tara McGovern left the meeting.

ITEM 5: TAA RISK REGISTER

- No new risks had been added since the previous meeting that are relevant to TAA. The main areas of concern remained managing the impact of the COVID-19 emergency on pupil progress and achievement, maintaining the estate, and limited school finances – though this risk was currently less acute.
- Governors were satisfied with the risks and mitigations identified.
- **Governors accepted** the report.
- Jenny White joined the meeting.

ITEM 6: GOVERNOR UPDATES

- The next Governor in School event would be held on 23 June, when governors would be able to see the impact of the double yellow lines on The Grange. Thanks were due to David Gray for pursuing this doggedly with the local authority.

Question: Had there been any negative feedback? There had been some initial 'teething troubles' but having visible traffic cones had assisted. It had certainly addressed the 'all-day parking' issue.

- Link Governors reported on their most recent interactions. Cate Ducati and Lynsey Steadman fed back on a presentation Cate had given to Y12 STEM students. This had made a real impact and several girls had signed up for summer schools encouraged by the event; more such events would really help to raise confidence and aspiration. The link with Trinity College was something to nurture – once lockdown restrictions were removed it would be possible to organise a visit to the university - possibly in the next academic year.
- Jenny White reported on a meeting with Klaas Luchies at which the arrangements to support TAGs (discussed in Item 4) were considered. Data collection was proceeding well, and it was considered that some of the school assessments had been more rigorous than some of the standard assessment material provided by examination boards. Where there were concerns about particular groups of learners (eg those with SEND, Pupil Premium students) teachers were identifying what more was needed to have a sound evidence base for assessment. The school had developed clear procedures and protocols that were being properly applied. This would help in an appeal situation. Standard letters had been prepared to support the administration of any appeal cases received in the summer.

Question: *Would there be a data update at the next LGB meeting?* Yes – though perhaps not including Y10 who will have recently completed mock examinations.

- The previous Governors in School event had included an excellent presentation on character education and developing the school values. There would be a full discussion at the LGB in July but at present, the focus was on Courage, Determination and Empathy.

Question: *Could governors come into school for monitoring visits now?* Yes, governors were welcome to do so.

- **Governors welcomed** the reports.

ITEM 7: REVIEW OF POLICIES

- Three policies were presented for review:
 - Substance Misuse.
 - Accessibility
 - Freedom of Information.

Question: *How many Freedom of Information requests were received by the Trust?* The data had been reported recently to the Audit & Risk Committee and would be shared with the LGB after the meeting.

Action: Circulate data about Freedom of Information requests.

- **The LGB approved** the Substance Abuse, Accessibility and Freedom of Information Policies.

Action: Ensure the amended Policies are added to the school website.

ITEM 8: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The White House

- Members were reminded that this property at the front of the school was not actually part of the school's land and remained in the ownership of Hertfordshire County Council. It was formerly part of the school estate but had not been transferred when the Academy was set up in 2013. It needed considerable repair and refurbishment; external redecoration had been carried out a couple of years ago but the local authority had been trying to dispose of it.
- There were significant complications about this, as the premises were landlocked by the school property and was physically connected to school buildings. There was a scheduled ancient monument in the yard to the rear of the property.
- One option would be to reconsider whether the school should seek to acquire the premises. There was a need to identify what such a space could be used for and there would be a need for a substantial financial contribution before the school could accept it simply to put the property in a fit state to be used.
- **Governors agreed** to convene a small discussion group to consider the issues and challenges of pursuing the question.

Action: Set up a meeting with a couple of volunteer governors to discuss options, issues and challenges associated with the potential acquisition of the White House.

Post lockdown events

- Stevenage schools had agreed a date for an open evening and were planning for this to be in person rather than virtual but would keep this under review. Transition activity from Y6 to Y7 was being planned.

ITEM 9: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next scheduled meeting would take place on Tuesday 13 July 2021, 18.00., starting at 18.00 in the Conference Room at school).
- The meeting closed at 19.50.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

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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	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
02/03/21	9.	Report to the LGB on practices being retained after the end of COVID-19 restrictions, and on marking the end of the academic year.	Mark Lewis	30/04/21
04/05/21	4.	Set up Link Governor meeting [with Tara McGovern and Chloe Tayler].	Mel Cook	31/05/21
04/05/21	7.	Circulate data about Freedom of Information requests.	Robert Dale	31/05/21
04/05/21	7.	Ensure the amended Policies are added to the school website.	Robert Dale	31/05/21
04/05/21	8.	Set up a meeting with a couple of volunteer governors to discuss options, issues and challenges associated with the potential acquisition of the White House.	Mark Lewis	31/05/21