



THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the Local Governing Body for the Thomas Alleyne Academy was held in Room E4 at the school on Tuesday 13 July 2021 starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)
Robert Baldock
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton
Cate Ducati

David Gray
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Jo Mellett
Lynsey Steadman
Chloe Tayler

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)
Kate Prince (PA to the Managing Director)
(for Item 3 only).

Robert Dale (Clerk)

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Tara McGovern, Gary Phillips and Jenny White.
- As this would have been Gary Phillips' last meeting, governors recorded their appreciation for his contributions on the curriculum and quality matters in particular. His presence would be missed.

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 were currently two parent governors serving on the LGB (Robert Baldock, Jo Mellett) and one vacancy. An election should be considered in the autumn term.
 - 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 by curriculum leads during the coming year.

- 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 complete.** Several beneficial practices, such as staggering break and lunchtimes to separate Y7 from older year groups, online video promotional material for the school, retaining hand sanitiser and encouraging regular handwashing, and maintaining on-line lesson capability eg in case of snow closures would be retained in the autumn term and beyond.
- Set up Link Governor meeting [with Tara McGovern and Chloe Tayler]. **Action complete.** Chloe and Tara had met Mel Cook recently (see also Item 8).
- Circulate data about Freedom of Information requests. **Action complete.** In the academic year 2020/21, the Hart Schools Trust received three requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, one of which was subsequently withdrawn. The other two requests concerned the recording of racist incidents in Trust schools and information about any instances in which students viewed pornography in school or using school equipment (there were none). In these two cases, responses were made within the statutory deadline.
- Ensure the amended Policies [Substance Misuse, Accessibility and Freedom of Information] are added to the school website. **Action complete.** The updated Policies have been added to the school website.
- 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. **Action under way.** A meeting had been set up but had been deferred.

ITEM 2: APPOINTMENT OF NEW LGB CHAIR

- The LGB was advised that following an interview with several candidates for the role of Chair of the LGB conducted by LGB members and Trustees, a recommendation had been made to the HST Board in respect of a successor to Jonathan Ellam, to take over from the new academic year. Once the Trust Board had considered the recommendation (on 14 July 2021) a further announcement would be made.
- **Governors welcomed** the report.

ITEM 3: DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

- Kate Prince attended the meeting to present this report, which brought together a range of existing plans and documents to create a coherent approach to managing emergencies in the school. A range of risks and threats had been considered, and feedback from governors would be very welcome.
- As well as identifying what action would be taken in the event of a particular risk or threat occurring, the document identified who would be responsible for what, and described both evacuation and ‘invacuation’ (used if there was an external threat to lock down school buildings) procedures. Considering different risks meant that slightly different approaches would be required eg in the event of a bomb threat, when discreet evacuation to the far playing field would be undertaken and consideration as to how to communicate with parents about collecting children would be needed.
- Developing the plans involved considering practical questions such as who had access to building keys and how could blocks be secured quickly and safely; how would communication be undertaken; what signage was needed in classrooms and what

training should be given and how often. A 'grab bag' would be created to hold key emergency equipment and documents. Governors asked:

Question: *Would the leadership team have an electronic version of the 'grab bag' containing the emergency procedures?* That was an excellent suggestion and would be developed further during the summer.

Question: *How could communications be maintained with parents?* The website would be a key tool and a charged iPad and power pack would be included in the grab bag.

Question: *Should the plan be called 'school emergency plan' or 'disaster recovery plan'?* The terms suggested slightly different contexts. This point would be considered.

Question: *In the case of an 'invacuation' how would parents be contacted?* Advice from the emergency services would have to be taken about when such communications could take place. The email system and a pop-up message on the website would probably be used.

Question: *How would the school know about staff and visitors on site?* The Inentry system recorded visitors and late-arriving students. Staff attendance was also recorded separately.

Question: *Would the plan be incorporated into the staff handbook?* It would be linked to the handbook, but not repeated in detail.

Question: *As the plan included a lot of individual contact information, how could it be kept up to date?* The challenge was recognised; the plan would be reviewed at least half-termly.

- Governors expressed their appreciation for the hard work that had gone into producing such a thorough document and felt that this provided assurance that the school was thinking about how it would respond in cases of emergency.
- **Governors commended** the school's emergency response plan.

ITEM 4: PROPOSED 2021/22 BUDGET

- The proposed budget for 2021/22 was considered, with governors noting that it projected a small surplus of £55k, on what were considered prudent assumptions. This budget included provision for estates work, and the student number assumptions included a small increase in sixth form numbers which the school expected to achieve.
- The Trust was currently operating separate budgets for each school, consolidated within the overall Trust budget. The individual budgets included an 'intra-school debt' which TAA owed to Roebuck in connection with reclaimed VAT. This was paid into the TAA account and had been used to manage cashflow as TAA student numbers grew. The 'debt' could now be repaid over the forecast period. It was an accounting rather than a real transaction and was declared for the sake of transparency.
- Governors noted that the COVID-19 emergency had meant that some expenditure lines had been reduced in 2020/21, with the cash released being redeployed to cover the refurbishment of classrooms, which was being carried out based on a RAG-rated programme based on need.

Question: *Were Reading Tests included in the budget?* A different arrangement was now in place in that tests were conducted in-house and used to inform the development of bespoke learner support. This was an old budget line no longer used.

Question: *What was the position in respect of the Herts Music Service?* This now charged families directly rather than requiring the school to collect monies and pass it on. This simply meant that balancing transactions no longer appeared in the school's accounts.

Question: *What about money for lettings in 2021/22?* The COVID-19 emergency had had little effect on TAA as it only had a small amount of lettings income and in 2020/21, only a term of Starlets lettings (girls' football) had been lost.

Question: *What assumptions had been made about teacher pay awards?* Provision had been included in the budget, but the national position might be a pay freeze.

Question: *What was the position in respect of pay awards for support staff?* The budget included sufficient to match a modest national award.

- **Governors welcomed the proposed budget for 2020/21 and agreed to recommend it to the Board.**

ITEM 5: FINANCE UPDATE

- This would be a standing item at most future meetings and was intended to enhance governor understanding of school finances. Governors appreciated that the Trust Board was accountable for financial matters but welcomed the transparency.
- There was an aspirational target for the school to have cash in hand for one month's payroll costs (c£350k). The cashflow forecast showed that progress would be made towards this over the forecast period.
- The summer works programme (fencing for the Avenue playing field and the tennis courts, classroom refurbishment; repair of the delivery area used by the Biomass fuel provider) was noted, as was the successful capital bid to improve fire safety on the premises. This would not be an obvious improvement, but was essential nevertheless.
- **Governors accepted the report.**

ITEM 6: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- Governors considered the circulated paper noting that Y10 and Y12 assessment data suggested that results in 2021/22 might be weaker than in 2020/21. Using SISRA as the school's data package meant that benchmarking could be carried out against other schools using the same application. This showed where conversations might need to take place with department heads. A key underachieving group were Pupil Premium (PP) students, where less than expected progress had been made overall. Re-engaging these learners who had found lockdown hardest would be vital in improving matters. Participation in a national tutoring programme was being considered. Of the 63 students making less than expected progress, 50 were PP learners.

Question: *Had the introduction of mixed ability teaching contributed to this reduced progress?* No; Y10 learners were not in mixed ability groups. More generally, there was no evidence that mixed ability teaching negatively affected student progress. Professional discussions about how teaching in such classes should be carried out emphasised the importance of providing 'scaffolding' for lower ability learners.

- The school would be supporting a number of 'early career' teachers (the new term for 'newly qualified teachers' (NQTs) in 2021/22. It was suggested that a Governor in School session delivered by Helen Russell be arranged to brief governors on this commitment – which involved more experienced staff giving their time.

Question: *How many incoming Y7 students attended the one-to-one inductions in the summer term?* Almost all; only around 10 more sessions remained to be completed. Governors congratulated the school on managing this process so effectively.

Question: *Was the school disappointed with the number of Y11's considering moving into the sixth form?* Work would continue to encourage the right students to consider staying on. The school (as was right) tried to help learners find the right progression route for them, whether that was another school or college, or employment, but how the school's offer was promoted would benefit from review.

Question: *How much progress had been made to fill school vacancies?* A new caretaker had been appointed and other interviews for staff would take place later in the week.

Question: *What was 'Great Representation'?* This was a diversity development programme which provided speakers and resources and which would be written-up for the benefit of other staff. Governors also noted that TAA was part of a pilot mentoring programme for Children Looked After in England funded by the Virtual School and based on a successful programme in Scotland. Without the funding, the school would have been faced with a difficult choice as it was a costly programme.

Question: *How was the school proposing to approach 'mass testing' in September?* Guidance was that schools 'should' do this rather than that they were obliged to. Unless this changed, the intention was to ask students to test at home; mass testing in school had been hugely disruptive in 2020 and was an unattractive introduction to new Y7s.

Question: *Had there been many positive test results at the school during the year?* Very few; it was recognised that this was good fortune and might not last forever.

Question: *Was the intention still to proceed with restricting mobile phone use from the autumn term?* Yes. It was clearly understood that this had to be rigorously enforced and that staff needed to set an example too. Messages about this change in policy had been issued and there was parental support. All staff would be expected to challenge students if they observed mobile phones being used.

Question: *How would learners manage their timetables without mobile devices?* On paper initially and then via Google Classroom. There would be a transition in the autumn term.

Question: *Could some of the features of ShowMyHomework be replicated in Google Classroom?* Giving parents access to learner accounts was not possible, but it was hoped that some form of notification could be replicated. One of the goals had been, however, to help students become more self-reliant. Further communications with parents were intended on this change.

- **Governors welcomed** the report.

ITEM 7: VISION STATEMENT AND CORE VALUES

- Governors noted that the school's Vision Statement and Values would be re-launched in September with a new strap line "Achieving Excellence through Personal Growth". The six strands of the Aim High agenda were to be maintained. Governors supported the approach which they regarded as easy to internalise and thought the supporting graphics were very striking.
- **Governors endorsed** the new Vision Statement and Core Values.

ITEM 8: GOVERNORS IN SCHOOL DAY AND LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS

- Thanks were due to Jo Mellett and David Gray for their governor reports circulated with the meeting papers. Governors commented on the recent Governor in School session, which had focussed on mental health and wellbeing and had included briefings from Devon Woolley and Carol Hayman. Jo Mellett's meeting with Kate Prince had also considered staff wellbeing; she would continue to follow this up each term. 'Thank You' Boards were well used and appreciated, but a well-being group was being re-established. The wellbeing newsletter had continued to develop under the direction of Kate Prince.
- Student Voice topics were currently being picked up during form time. Identifiable mental health champions are able to have good conversations about students about their anxieties and concerns.
- Governors noted that they had observed that the school's values were integrated into teaching and learning, including support for SEND.
- Chloe Tayler reported that she had carried out a visit with Mel Cook and had viewed the refurbished Science block. There had also been a useful discussion about the curriculum, including how student voice should be considered and the importance of professional development through engagement with subject experts.
- On the White House, David Gray confirmed that he had contacted several heritage companies to discuss access to funding – eg from the National Lottery. It would be desirable to get funds in place in principle before approaching the local authority.
- Governors noted that a new Academy Trust Handbook (replacing the previous Academies Financial Handbook) had just been published and was worth reading.
- **Governors welcomed** the reports.

ITEM 9: HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

- Governors were please to see the much improved position identified in the latest report; the school was now fully compliant in all areas. The position would continue to be kept under review.
- **Governors accepted** the report.

ITEM 10: TAA RISK REGISTER

- Current risks had been discussed in previous items. No new risks had been added since the last LGB meeting.
- Governors were satisfied with the risks and mitigations identified.
- **Governors accepted** the report.

ITEM 11: REVIEW OF POLICIES

- Three policies were presented for review:
 - Wellbeing
 - Provider Access

■ Online Safety

- The first of these was a new policy; the other two were updates. It was noted that governors had a duty to ensure the well-being of staff, including the senior team, and this policy would help support that.

Question: *What mechanisms were there to check that staff experienced a proper work-life balance?* Staff survey responses indicated general satisfaction with arrangement and the school had regard to union guidelines about timetable loadings. There were also routes for staff members to approach the LGB Chair if they were unhappy.

Question: *Was there any tension between staff well-being and the pursuit of excellence?* The school rightly expected high standards from staff; it was essential to encourage pupil aspiration and high performance was a key part of this. At the same time, individual staff needs and challenges had to be considered. There were sufficient support mechanisms in school to ensure that these needs could be addressed, including supportive colleagues and a caring/nurturing culture. Ambitions for excellence could not, however, be compromised.

Action: Report on how workload was considered within the timetabling process.

- Governors noted that the Online Safety Policy should refer to the 2021 edition of Keeping Children Safe in Education. The mobile phone section needed some further updating to reflect the change in school policy towards mobile phones.

Action: Ensure the amended Policies, incorporating suggestions made by the LGB, are added to the school website.

ITEM 12: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cyber Incident Plan

- The way in which the school would address a cyber security incident had been set out in an Information paper. Thanks were given to Howard Crompton who had reviewed the plans. He had been satisfied that they were reasonable and proportionate. The rolling programme of IT replacement that had been ongoing for a couple of years had supported enhanced cyber security measures.

VALEDICTORY

- As this was the Chair's last meeting (though he would continue to serve as a Trustee) Mark Lewis reflected on his substantial contribution to the leadership of the school since he had joined the local authority governing body in 2009. He had provided great challenge and support to the headteacher, helping deliver a real improvement in standards, aspiration and reputation. The Ofsted inspection in 2019 recognised the progress made by the school and noted the strong and engaged governing body that it was fortunate to have. As Vice-chair, David Gray expressed the governors' appreciation for the hard work Jonathan Ellam had put in and for his firm and generous leadership of the LGB.
- The Chair thanked the governors for their support over the years. He thanked Mark Lewis for his dedication and inspired leadership of TAA and for allowing such a close working relationship with the Chair. He was proud of the contributions all the governors had made to school leadership which was reflected in the good reputation it now enjoyed in the town. He himself had great affection for the school – which both his daughters had attended – and was delighted that the historic link with Trinity College had been maintained and strengthened. There had been many challenges

over the years, but the Chair was confident that future challenges would be met and overcome with the excellent staff and governors now in place. He would continue to take a keen interest in the school's progress and wished the whole school community well for the future.

ITEM 13: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next scheduled meeting would take place on Wednesday 8 September 2021, starting at 18.00 in the Conference Room at school.
- The meeting closed at 19.50.

.....
 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	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
13/07/21	11.	Report on how workload was considered within the timetabling process.	Mark Lewis	30/09/21
13/07/21	11.	Ensure the amended Policies, incorporating suggestions made by the LGB, are added to the school website.	Robert Dale	31/08/21