

THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the local governing body for the Thomas Alleyne Academy was held in the Conference Room, the Thomas Alleyne Academy, Stevenage, on Thursday 30 March 2017, starting at 18.30.

PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton
Carol Hayman
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)

Roger Luxton
Tara McGovern
Stuart Melbourne
Eirwen Palmer
Lynsey Steadman

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)
Helen Russell (Assistant Headteacher) –
Items 2 and 3 only.

Robert Dale (Clerk)

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Reverend Kirsty Ross to her first meeting. She is the College Chaplain at Trinity College Cambridge, a governor at a Cambridge Primary school and a qualified RE teacher.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cliff Canning.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- None.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- Agreed and signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

- Make HST Board and Audit Committee minutes available to members. **Action complete.** Minutes of Trust Board and Audit Committee meetings held in 2016 were circulated to members on 16 February 2017. The aim is to make minutes available via the Trust webpage in future.
- Confirm the number of exam markers on the staff. **Action in hand.** There are at least four markers; Mel Cook would confirm the exact number in due course.
- Place the updated policy on the TAA website. **Action complete.** The updated Sex and Relationship Education policy is on the TAA website.

ITEM 2: TEACHING AND LEARNING PRESENTATION

Helen Russell presented an outline of current actions and future plans to enhance teaching and learning at the Thomas Alleyne Academy. Highlights were:

- The programme of support for trainee teachers and NQTs had been active and successful in 2016/17, including five Science and Maths trainees from the Universities of Hertfordshire and Bedford. It was an excellent way to spot potential recruits and the plan was to try to take on an English trainee (probably via Schools Direct) in September. NQTs were making good progress with support from in-school mentors and training. Another group of NQTs would join in the new academic year.
- Considerable effort had been dedicated to this years' Y11 cohort ahead of GCSEs. This had included enhanced revision strategies which made more use of classroom time, training staff on new ideas to keep students motivated and engaged, assemblies and engagement with parents. A high proportion of students (85%) were attending after-school sessions – linked to a privilege of being allowed out of school during lunchtime. Lessons were being monitored and student reactions had been positive.
- Support had been given to all subjects, including time spent with one person teams, and links made across subjects to show where skills were relevant in multiple areas.
- Lesson observations and data analysis continued and there was support for consistent assessment standards. 82% of teaching was enabling good or better progress. Three staff were on informal targets and were receiving extra support. Two continued to give rise to concern, including one who was an experienced teacher on a higher pay grade.

Question: *In these cases, how much time should be allowed to evidence progress?* One teacher was clearly showing evidence of progress; in the other cases, the position was less clear as yet. Given the importance of delivering good student progress and attainment, performance matters could not be allowed to drag on.

- Staff development including action research projects was continuing. Links with Y6 teachers at Roebuck were also being made – which would enhance KS3 teacher understanding of higher standards and expectations in the primary phase.
- Attendance at NLP training had been excellent, with a good number of staff interested for personal and career development and using the tools in their teaching.
- Responding to parental feedback, activities to encourage students to debate issues was being used and sent home to stimulate discussion out of school too.

Question: *Did students take this kind of intervention seriously?* Yes, they appeared to engage well with. The intervention was supported by a website which provided teachers with articles, activities, discussion points etc which were used to encourage students to think about how to articulate and argue their points of view.

- Developing consistency in stretch and challenge was a further focus. All departments were considering this in a more robust and regular way, and suggestions included a 'staff mentor' for the highest achieving 5%, and offering a General Studies AS level. Members were cautious about introducing an additional exam.
- Consideration was being given to applying for an Artsmark; the draft application would be shared with governors. It would recognise work that was already happening in school and reflect the importance of Arts across the curriculum.

Question: *To what extent were teachers aware of the changed standards and expectations at primary level? Work was being done to improve awareness, but enhancing transition arrangements and schemes of work in Y7 (especially) needed more doing. Last year, a primary teacher had been invited to explain the new picture in KS2, and to help KS3 colleagues revisit the curriculum, but more was required – including more consistent use of language familiar at primary level (eg terms used in literacy teaching).*

ITEM 3: GOVERNOR VISIT REPORT

Governors had visited the school with the aim of looking particularly at how stretch and challenge was delivered across the school. Four governors had taken part, and their commitment of time was appreciated.

- In response to feedback and suggestions from the visit, a presentation to the SLT on the school's banding system would explore suggestions for changes and improvements, and would be discussed at a forthcoming governors meeting.

Question: *Although interventions had been identified and actioned, could their impact be measured? This was an area for development, but identifying the difference particular interventions made and being confident they could be repeated would be challenging.*

- Governors commented that their interactions with Y7 students had been good; they had largely remarked positively on the efforts made to ease transition to high school.

Action: Report on the ability banding arrangements to a future governing body meeting.

ITEM 4: PERFORMANCE

- The main issues related to Y11 outcomes at GCSE and the tight financial position. In both cases, the school was working hard to create a good platform for performance in the summer and most students had responded well to this. Predicting the outcome this year was more difficult than usual (as even Ofsted recognised).
- The school had been informed by Ofsted that a parent had made a complaint about the school (without using any of the school's own complaints procedures). This had been passed to the local authority which had investigated.
- It concluded that TAA had acted appropriately; the only recommendation was to repeat the school's past referral of the pupil and family to Social Services. It was noted that much time and effort had been diverted to providing evidence to this investigation.

ITEM 5: SAFEGUARDING

This would now be a standing agenda item.

- The next agenda would include a review of provision for looked-after children (CLA) carried out by Leslie Thompson. Governors noted that the school had made a referral to social services, including under the Prevent duty.
- The number of students with high needs under Education and Health Care Plans being referred to the school was rising substantially (as many in the present academic year as in the four previous years combined) but the school was not being resourced appropriately. The reason appeared to be the difficulty in accessing places at the Education Support Centre (ESC). Together with the other resource pressures, the school's ability to support young people was seriously reduced.

Action: Include a review of CLA provision on next agenda.

ITEM 6: BUDGET PROPOSALS 2017/18

The paper was supplemented by a tabled presentation. This described the business environment (reduction in funding per student and loss of support grants) the delay in receiving funding for a rising student roll, and increase in staff costs – some of which are government imposed. This meant that reserves had fallen by half between 2015/16 and 2016/17 and, without making changes to operating costs in 2017/18, led to an in-year deficit of £300,000. Against this background, a new budget for the Trust was proposed including the following key points:

- A reduction in senior leadership posts (made possible by the closure of the Da Vinci schools) from seven to four, with the creation of three posts (one teacher and two heads of year) to address loss of capacity.
- A reduction in sixth form support and technician support by one post in each case.
- Overall, this action would reduce the in-year deficit to c£160,000, which would be more than offset (resulting in an in year surplus of £230,000) once the lagged funding caught up with pupil numbers in 2018/19.

Cash flow forecasting and tight control during 2017/18 would be used to minimise the need to ask EFA for an advance against the 2018/19 income, but this remained a risk.

Question: *Was the forecast based on existing funding arrangements? And how would the position change under the new proposals?* Yes, it was based on current funding arrangements, and the latest estimate of the impact of new funding arrangements on TAA was a 0.05% benefit. No material change was expected.

Question: *Is the science technician support the only option for reduction?* Yes. Other support staff have already been cut and have no scope to take on more work. The librarian post was the only other option and the Head teacher believed that retaining this was important and in line with the Trust's values.

Governors expressed their appreciation for the care that had gone into the preparation of this budget. Howard Crompton had attended a number of finance meetings at which these issues had been discussed and confirmed that there had been a very thorough investigation of options. It was also noted that because staff sickness absence had been much reduced, there had been savings on supply costs this year – for which the staff should be congratulated. There was the potential of a modest saving on heating costs as a result of the Biomass installation and opportunities for benefits from a group procurement strategy.

ITEM 7: HST SERVICE CHARGE 2017/18

This paper benchmarked the HST offer against other MATs.

- At 5%, the charge was close to the average of all MATs (4%), but included an above average range of high quality professional services. There was added value in flexibility and the ability to influence the shape of provision directly. For example, TAA had received significant help with its restructure plans from HR at no extra cost. The team was also confident that, in the case of Roebuck Primary School, the quality of support on financial matters would considerably improve after conversion.
- Value for money would continue to be monitored using data from other Trusts.
- Governors welcomed the information and agreed that this was a rational approach to providing evidence that the central services represented value for money.

ITEM 8: HST RISK REGISTER

After a review by the Group estates team of property compliance across five areas – Fire, Legionella, Asbestos, Gas and Electrical – some risks had been identified at TAA. Remedying them could not be met from current reserves. As a result, a priority list was being developed and all options for sourcing capital were being explored.

The main points of weakness were:

- **Legionella:** closed pipe spurs and old water tanks meant that conditions for legionella bacteria to grow were present. The existence of some lead piping was undesirable.
- **Gas:** Ventilation in the canteen was not adequate and the positioning of the gas cut-off switch (which could be accessed only by leaning over a cooker) was not appropriate.
- **Electrical:** where buildings had been updated, emergency lighting was present and compliant. Where buildings had not received recent attention, emergency lighting was not always present or compliant with current standards.

The cost of remedial work was estimated to be £250,000. Although there was an opportunity (should capital bids be successful this year) to address some of the works, alternatives were being explored and a priority order developed.

Question: *What was the likelihood of capital bids succeeding?* They had been close to success on the previous submission, but the amount of funding available was limited and the quality and number of bids growing.

ITEM 9: TRUST BOARD FEEDBACK

- The recent meeting had focussed on due diligence in respect of Roebuck Primary School and Nursery; there were some issues to be explored further but no major worries. The governing body Chair (Stephen Marshman) would attend the next meeting of the Hart Schools Trust Board and would join as a director on conversion.
- The Audit Committee had considered an internal audit plan for the year and progress with audit recommendations from 2015/16, as well as discussing benchmarking value for money in central service provision.
- Conversations with several other local schools were ongoing; a decision from a secondary school was expected in May. There was the potential for the Trust to experience significant growth (and better sustainability) in the next couple of years.

Question: *Was the other secondary school in a sound financial position?* Its reserves were healthier than those at TAA, but it was currently experiencing a falling roll. The schools would complement each other and there would be room for some efficiency savings.

ITEM 10: POLICY REVIEW – ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS

- The Trust had decided to make no changes to admission arrangements for its schools in 2018/19, and so did not need to consult with parents and stakeholders. However, the potential to make changes for 2019/20 was being considered which would mean conducting consultation in the next academic year.
- Governors welcomed the Trust's approach including the prospective review of arrangements which would aim to strengthen links between Trust schools.

Action: Place the updated policy on the TAA website.

TAA LGB Minutes, 2 February 2017

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- None.

ITEM 12: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next meeting would take place on Thursday 25 May 2017, starting at 18.00.
- The meeting would be preceded by a site tour for those who could make it, from 17.00.

The meeting closed at 20.10.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

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Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

| Meeting | Item | What | Who/when |
|----------|------|--|-------------------------|
| 02/02/17 | 1d. | Confirm the number of exam markers on the staff. | Mark Lewis 28/04/17 |
| 30/03/17 | 3. | Report on the ability banding arrangements to a future governing body meeting. | Mark Lewis 31/10/17 |
| 30/03/17 | 5. | Include a review of CLA provision on next agenda. | Robert Dale 07/04/17 |
| 30/03/17 | 7. | Place the updated policy on the TAA website. | Robert Dale 10/02/17 |