

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 25 May 2017, starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

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

Roger Luxton
Tara McGovern
Stuart Melbourne
Eirwen Palmer

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)

Robert Dale (Clerk)

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

- Several governors reached the end of their first terms of office at the end of August 2017. All were eligible to serve again. Eirwen Palmer indicated that as she was no longer eligible to be a parent governor, she did not intend to stand; a new Parent Governor would be sought. Three candidates for staff governor (including both current members) had been nominated and so an election would take place after half term.
- Cliff Canning had moved jobs and was now based in Hampshire; given the distance members were not surprised that he had not been able to attend meetings recently. Contact would be made to establish his intentions, but the assumption was that an additional Local Governor would be needed.

Action: Seek candidates for Parent and Local governor roles.

ITEM 1a: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cliff Canning, Howard Crompton, Rev Kirsty Ross and Lynsey Steadman.

ITEM 1b: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- None.

ITEM 1c: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- Agreed and signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

ITEM 1d: MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

- Confirm the number of exam markers on the staff. **Action Pending.** Mel Cook would check and report the number. The benefit of having exam markers on the staff was that it helped give insights into approaches adopted by different examination boards.
- Report on the ability banding arrangements to a future governing body meeting. **Action Pending.** On the agenda for July.

- Include a review of CLA provision on next agenda. **Action Complete.** On the agenda at Item 12.
- Place the updated policy on the TAA website. **Action Complete.** The 2017/18 Admissions Policy is on the School's website.

ITEM 12: SAFEGUARDING – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER REPORT

Eirwen Palmer reported on the inspection conducted by the local authority at the start of May. This was to check that provision was in place for this group of children and that they were progressing as expected.

- The visit had included discussion with Eirwen and Lesley Thompson (designated teacher for students classed as Children Looked After (CLA)) and with those students.
- Summary data showing progress made by the students (anonymised) had been circulated. Overall, this demonstrated that all were making at least expected progress, had good attendance and appeared enthusiastic about learning.
- Governors noted that the defined group of 'looked after children' was a small subset of a much larger group of students not living with their parents.
- The full report from the local authority had not yet been received, but feedback on the day had been positive and a Green RAG rating was expected (the same as in 2016). One comment about improving the neatness of students work. This could be a wider school target.

Question: *Was the designated teacher the same for each student?* Yes. This helped ensure there was stability and consistency of support.

Question: *Did Hertfordshire County Council inspect only on behalf of students resident in the County?* Yes. It was possible that Bedfordshire might ask to inspect provision on behalf of the single student resident in Bedfordshire, though they would be expected to take account of the report provided by Hertfordshire.

Governors welcomed the report.

ITEM 2: SLT GOVERNOR LINK REPORT

The report related to a visit conducted in February 2017, which had focussed on home learning. As a result of this visit, a number of actions had been put in hand and a new home learning policy was to be implemented in the next academic year. The visit and discussion had identified a number of issues with current home learning arrangements:

- Lack of a consistent approach in terms of frequency and quality of tasks set;
- A generally low completion rate;
- Inconsistent or low levels of marking
- Limited communication with parents about homework.

Discussion had also taken place at a parents forum meeting (a self-selecting group, so not necessarily representative) and with students. Feedback from these sources showed that:

- Students felt that they should complete homework, but knew that there were no sanctions for failure to do so.

- Not all of the homework tasks were engaging, and support and guidance on how to tackle or research tasks was not always sufficient to encourage completion.
- Overall, students would like some choice, more support and more engaging tasks

Staff also felt that homework was an important component, but were worried about the burden becoming unmanageable.

The staff working group reviewing the approach accordingly adopted three key elements for a new home learning policy.

- First, the school would introduce an online system for communicating about homework between home and school - Show My Home Work (SMHW). Other local schools used this system and student feedback was positive.
- Second, the school would adopt a 'takeaway' homework approach including a choice of tasks of varying difficulties for subjects other than Maths and English.
- Third, this approach would be applied to Years 7 and 8 only; Year 9 would be expected to adopt a home learning approach closer to that taken in GCSE years.

A presentation would be made to the parent forum in June supported by the staff working party. The aim would be to have the new approach in place in September. Governors commented that the 'takeaway' approach would be a useful framework for revising a topic.

Question: *Would sanctions be applied in homework was not completed?* No. The intention was to use rewards rather than sanctions.

Question: *Could the online system be used to hand in and mark homework?* Potentially, although this was not the initial aim and would not be possible with the 'takeaway' approach. However, the system could be used to monitor the consistency, regularity and quality of homework set. Reporting arrangements would be discussed with the working party.

Question: *Who would monitor the quality of homework set?* The curriculum leader would find it easier to monitor by using the online system.

Governors noted that Ofsted might be placing more emphasis on purposeful homework in future. They also noted some experience from the school that there had already been some peer pressure on students to complete home science experiments. Governors also noted that there had been an increase in the level of homework set in primary schools; it would be important that the level of homework at secondary school should not fall below that.

Governors welcomed the report and felt that the proposed development of a new approach to home learning to be implemented from September 2017, prompted by feedback from governors, students, parents and staff was sensible.

ITEM 3: FEEDBACK FROM SITE WALK

Governors thanked Arthur Campion for conducting the site walk. There were two main points of feedback.

- The first was the very positive experience staff reported in relation to the Biomass installation and the excellent working relationship with the team on site; minimal disruption had been experienced and the students had been interested but had not given the installers any problems.

- The second related to proposals for clearing the pond of trees and bushes that had established themselves. Governors had concerns about any work involving chainsaws being undertaken by volunteers but noted that the Site Manager would not permit individuals to carry out work for which they were not trained and equipped.

ITEM 4: GOVERNOR VISIT REPORT

- Governors agreed that the focus of the next visit should be on years 9 and 10 and should look at choosing options, careers guidance and potential destinations. Different students should be offered for discussions with governors.
- An appeal relating to the bid for capital support for the toilet block was being prepared; the submission was only fractionally below the threshold and aspects of the bid appeared to have been misunderstood.
- It was pleasing that student feedback on good teachers included several new appointments.
- The next visit would take place on 26 June 2017.

ITEM 5: PERFORMANCE REPORT

Governors discussed the report that had been circulated.

- The financial position was extremely tight. This year's forecast outturn was in line with the plan once the redundancy costs for the restructure were excluded. Savings next year and thereafter from this restructure made the position sustainable, and funding for the additional pupils already in school would appear in the income line from 2017/18.
- Cashflow would need careful monitoring, although it was still expected that this could be managed without going to the ESFA for an advance. However, capital works identified as a result of the work of the Estates team (eg draining and disinfecting the water system to prevent the risk of Legionella contamination) were urgent and would cost c£64,000. If the appeal in respect of capital funding for the toilet block were successful, this would address the matter.
- An interest-free loan had been offered by Herts Catering to help address capital deficiencies in the kitchen. This would be reviewed by the Hart Learning Group senior team, but seemed to offer a fair solution.
- In a similar manner, a potential arrangement whereby a provider would carry the capital cost of renewing lighting throughout the school in return for a long term contract would be considered by the Group SLT to assess value for money.

Question: What proportion of the school's overall budget did the deficit represent? The forecast deficit (which would be recovered after April 2018) would be c3.5%. This was seen as regrettable but manageable.

- Devon Woolley would lead the pastoral team from the new academic year. The current postholder had done a good job, but he would bring a new leadership style.
- In terms of student performance, projections for English and Maths results were strong – though heavily caveated because the examinations were new this year. Forecasts for other subjects were less strong, putting the Progress 8 measure at risk.

Question: Why had work on the 16-19 consortium with Barnwell seemed to stall? The original aim – for there to be a real joint approach to providing a strong curriculum offer to TAA LGB Minutes, 25 May 2017

which both schools would contribute – had now been reinforced and development was moving forward.

- A development opportunity is being created for an experienced middle leader to join the senior team for a year as an associate senior leader. This would help staff with leadership ambitions to prepare for the next step inside – or perhaps outside – the Academy Trust. The intention was to bring individuals into the SLT to work on a specific project, and be part of the general discussions about school direction. Governor support for interviews for this on 13 June at 15.30 would be appreciated.

Action: Indicate availability to support interviews on 13 June.

Question: *How well was the enrichment programme working?* Governors commented that the range of after school activities and level of participation seemed very strong and asked that their thanks to all those involved be recorded.

ITEM 6: RESTRUCTURE - OUTCOMES

- Governors recorded thanks to Mark Lewis for managing the restructure process in a highly professional manner which minimised the impact on morale.

ITEM 7: HST RISK REGISTER

The key risks (around capital works) had been discussed in the previous item.

ITEM 8: POLICY REVIEW

The updated Offsite Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom Policy had been circulated. It was adapted from the Hertfordshire County Council model policy.

- Governors approved the revised policy to be added to the school's website.

Action: Ensure the updated policy is added to the school website.

ITEM 9: TRUST BOARD FEEDBACK

- The immediate concern was concluding business with the Council to permit the Roebuck conversion to proceed on 1 July. There was some risk to this date, as neither the draft lease nor the commercial transfer agreement were yet signed. The Council had been extremely slow in providing these drafts and had included a number of points with which the Trust had some issue.

ITEM 10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- None.

ITEM 11: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next meeting would take place on Thursday 13 July 2017, starting at 18.00.

The meeting closed at 19.45.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

TAA LGB Minutes, 25 May 2017

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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.	Mel Cook 28/04/17
30/03/17	1d.	Report on the ability banding arrangements to a future governing body meeting.	Mark Lewis 30/06/17
23/05/17	5.	Indicate availability to support Interviews on 13 June.	Governors 12/06/17
23/05/17	8.	Ensure the updated policy is added to the school website.	Robert Dale 30/06/17