

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 13 July 2017, starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton
Carol Hayman

Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Roger Luxton
Tara McGovern

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)
Helen Russell (Assistant Headteacher)
(Item 3)

Robert Dale (Clerk)

ITEM 1a: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Stuart Melbourne, Eirwen Palmer, 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 Complete.** Seven staff had experience of marking or moderating and five were doing so this year. This was c10% of the teaching staff. Subjects included English, Maths, Art, Russian and RE.
- Report on ability banding arrangements to a future governing body meeting. **Action Complete.** See Item 3.
- Indicate availability to support Interviews on 13 June. **Action complete.** Thanks were due to Roger Luxton who had assisted in making an appointment. The project to be undertaken by the successful candidate concerned primary to secondary transition.
- Ensure the updated policy is added to the school website. **Action complete.** The "Off-site Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom" Policy is on the school website.

ITEM 2: RESULTS OF ELECTIONS FOR STAFF GOVERNORS

- Tw staff governors reached the end of their terms of office on 31 August 2017. Three individuals put themselves forward to serve and as a result, an election had taken place. The successful candidates were Julia Cooke and Duncan Visser, who would be reappointed and appointed respectively from 1 September 2017 for four years.

ITEM 3: ARTSMARK BID

- Artsmark was a creative standard for schools and many criteria for the Gold award could already be met by the school. Roebuck Academy was seeking the Platinum award and had been a valuable source of advice. There was a good fit with the Trust's strategic direction and a chance to align with the curriculum development plan and implementation of the Bridge Programme.

Question: *How often did the school have to be reassessed?* The award was valid for two years and there was a two year period to gather and provide evidence – so in effect, renewal would be every four years. There was a £500 charge for the award.

Question: *Which other local schools also held the award?* Of secondaries, the Nobel School held the award. More primaries had achieved the award. It was regarded as a positive statement of commitment to the Arts curriculum.

Question: *Was the Gold award the limit of the school's ambition?* Not necessarily. Experience could be taken from the Roebuck experience in seeking Platinum.

Question: *Had the recent celebration of the school's art and music been prompted by thinking about the award?* Yes, it had been a conscious response to the submission. Governors also welcomed the suggestion that the tradition of school performances would be continued next year with School of Rock. Governors commented on the improved standards of the choir and orchestra.

- Governors endorsed the intention to seek the Gold Artsmark and suggested that this might be a whole Trust objective, given Roebuck's experience with this.

ITEM 4: SETTING AND BANDING ARRANGEMENTS 2017/18

- This agenda item had been prompted by feedback from a recent Governor in School day and a recognition that there was limited understanding about the principles the school followed in respect of banding and setting, including among new staff.
- The approach struck a balance between a preferred approach and what was practical from a timetabling perspective. This was a reflection of the historic size of year groups. The current position was that Years 7 and 8 were divided into three bands by ability (H,S and T) with H being the most able and T the least. Within these bands, there was some mixed ability teaching, and some setting by ability and a preference for an increased level of mixed ability teaching when this became possible.

Question: *How much differentiation was there within a mixed ability group?* A high level of differentiation and strong challenge for the most able cohort was expected.

Question: *Was this approach influenced by a desire for continuity with Year 6?* In part, although it was also intended to ensure that teacher expectations of the least able were not reduced. There were benefits as well as risks from this approach but the size of the year groups had been too small to provide enough flexibility hitherto.

- For Years 9 and 10, there were two bands (X and Y) not grouped on ability. Within these bands, English and Maths took the lead on setting by ability; humanities followed English and sciences followed Maths.
- The aim was to move two bands and to give subjects the choice of setting or teach in mixed ability groups. The intake was becoming more able and this would make this

approach easier to sustain, recognising the importance of ensuring the most able continued to be stretched and challenged.

Question: *When might this goal be achieved?* That would depend upon continued growth in the school.

Question: *What was the students' understanding of banding and setting arrangements?* Nothing was said about students' band/set, but they could often assess this themselves. It was important to ensure that all staff understood the approach and could explain it to parents. A suggested response would be provided for the next parents' evening.

Action: Develop brief statement on banding and setting arrangements for the next academic year which can be shared with parents.

ITEM 5: 2017/18 SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ITEM 6: PROPOSED BUDGET 2017/18

- The proposed budget was for a deficit in 2017/18 recovered in the following year. One of the key assumptions had been a 1% pay settlement for teaching staff and that had just been confirmed. Although this was a disappointment and would not help teacher retention or morale, a higher settlement would have been difficult to sustain without extra government funds. There was general support for the view that the resource position for schools was not being presented objectively by those in office.
- The budget had been scrutinised by the Audit Committee and by the Group SLT. It had been carefully constructed to ensure that student education was not materially compromised. The Trust Board had endorsed the proposed budget on Tuesday.

Question: *What proportion of the overall budget was the anticipated deficit?* At £141,000 for TAA, it was around 3.5% of the school budget. Governors felt that this level was acceptable given the recovery profile.

Question: *What was the Trust's plan for the projected surpluses in 2018/19 and 2019/20?* The Trust intended to see the surpluses reinvested, once the 2017/18 deficit had been recovered. It did not wish to build up significant levels of unspent funds. Governors recognised that there were potential areas for support such as the increased number of EHCP students, but also expressed support for the idea of creating a contingency reserve – to address unexpected costs such as the estates remedial work tackled this year.

- Governors endorsed the proposed 2017/18 budget for TAA.

ITEM 6: PERFORMANCE UPDATE

- The year-end outturn was very close to forecast, with a £6,000 surplus expected. This had been achieved despite having to provide for a redundancy programme. Some funds had been recovered from NPower (a few thousand pounds related to unexpectedly high charges for power).
- Roebuck data indicated that it could have been at risk of a 'coasting school' judgment if it had not converted; action was needed to address the issue before the next Ofsted visit and the new Headteacher had this as a key focus.

- Discussions about the reporting of Da Vinci data continued; there was some appreciation that the numbers of students involved made the inclusion of the Trust as a three school MAT in national reporting a potential distortion.
- Discussion also continued about the reasonableness of including one TAA student who had left prior to GCSEs to join the RAF. Given that the school had done all it could to persuade him to complete his exams at school, and that he had been expected to get good results, seeking to have him taken out of the school's calculation was worth pursuing.
- A new homework system would be launched in the new academic year. This had partly been prompted by discussions at parent forum meetings which were proving extremely constructive and a real source of strength.
- At 94.3%, attendance at TAA this year was up across all year groups. The aim remained to hit 95% in the coming academic year.

Question: *What was the level of authorised vs unauthorised absence?* The figures would be reported when minutes were circulated. However, there had been an increase in the number of term time holidays when Isle of White Council v Platt was going through the legal system.

- Staffing at TAA was complete – but there were potentially a couple of staff considering a move. The most recent appointment had been an unqualified Maths teacher – a graduate in a related discipline, who might be interested in becoming qualified. This was a short term appointment to keep the school's options open.
- The Estates team had addressed (or would address over the summer) the identified non-compliances in respect of water (legionella testing), gas safety and emergency lighting. The last was being addressed through a 13 year agreement with a supplier which was expected to deliver cost savings of c£50k over the lifetime of the agreement (through lower energy consumption).

Question: *Were there any security issues on site at present?* There were no material concerns about trespass or vandalism.

- Conversations continued with a number of schools about their joining the Trust, but no more decisions were expected to be made until September. Ashtree Primary school had opted for another Trust; this was not unexpected.

ITEM 8: GCSE PRESS RELEASES – STEVENAGE WIDE APPROACH

- All Stevenage secondary schools had agreed a common approach to reporting exam results in view of the changed GCSE arrangements this year. This was the approach recommended by professional bodies in the sector. The emphasis would be on individual good news stories.

ITEM 9: GOVERNOR IN SCHOOL DAYS

- Dates for Governor in School days in the next academic year would be:
 - Monday 6 November
 - Wednesday 17 January
 - Friday 2 March

- Monday 30 April
- Wednesday 27 June
- All would take place between 09.00 and 12.00. Diary appointments would be circulated to members.
- The focus for the November event would be on Year 10 career pathways and options advice. It might be interesting to follow up the same year-group later in the year.
- Other topics would be decided as the year progressed.

Action: Send diary appointments to governors.

ITEM 10: CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

- As Eirwen Palmer was unable to be present, and as a comprehensive report had been presented to the previous meeting, members agreed not to take this item.

ITEM 11: REVIEW OF POLICIES – PREVENT STRATEGY

- This Policy was a new one for the school as the policy had previously been incorporated in the Child Protection policy.

Question: How were groups seeking to book the school's premises screened? First, people booking were asked to describe the purpose of the letting. Second, a member of the Estates team met people booking and monitoring was carried out during the booking itself.

Question: *Had any issues been raised to the Channel panel?* Yes, a handful, which had prompted a serious and immediate response including the attendance of other partners (such as the Police) at school.

- Staff would be receiving refresher training at a forthcoming inset day. The online training link would be recirculated to governors to encourage them to undertake refresher training where necessary.

The local governing body adopted the new Prevent Policy.

Action: Circulate link to on-line training to governors.

Action: Publish the new policy on the school website.

ITEM 12: RISK REGISTER

- Several risks would be removed as remedial work and mitigation measures were completed over the summer. Three which would remain included the financial risk for the Trust – an issue for schools across England – together with growing risks associated with elderly computer equipment and the new requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which would come into force in May 2018.

ITEM 13: TRUST BOARD FEEDBACK

- The Trust Board had met at Roebuck Primary School and Nursery on 7 June and been given a site tour. The school had excellent facilities. It had met again on 11 July, and amongst other matters discussed the presentation to new schools, the proposed Trust budget and the updated Health and Safety policy – with an annual report on Health and Safety incidents to be made to the Board and LGBs.

- The Audit Committee had considered the value for money of the service charge made and the context of other MAT offers. Internal Audit activity had taken place with initial verbal feedback indicating an improved position from the previous year.

ITEM 14: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Outstanding Governor nomination

- Jonathan Ellam had been shortlisted for this award; Governors would be asked to meet the judging panel later in the autumn before a final decision was reached.

ITEM 15: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next meeting would take place on Thursday 21 September 2017, starting at 18.00.

VALEDICTORY

- The Chair thanked governors for their support during a busy and successful year for the school. He asked colleagues to join him in thanking Carol Hayman for her unstinting service over 16 years; her contribution had been considerable and members were delighted that she would continue to support the school through the Thomas Alleyne Supporters Association. She had seen the school go through many changes over that period but was confident that it had an excellent future.
- Eiwyn Palmer had also given considerable support to the school and had made a big contribution as safeguarding governor. She would be greatly missed.

The meeting closed at 20.05.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

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Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who/when	When
13/07/17	4.	Develop brief statement on banding and setting arrangements for the next academic year which can be shared with parents.	Mark Lewis	31/08/17
13/07/17	9.	Send diary appointments to governors.	Robert Dale	31/07/17
13/07/17	11.	Circulate link to on-line training to governors.	Robert Dale	31/07/17
13/07/17	11.	Publish the new policy on the school website.	Robert Dale	31/07/17