



THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the local governing body for the Thomas Alleynes Academy was held in the Conference Room, the Thomas Alleynes Academy, Stevenage, on Thursday 13 October 2016, starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)
Cliff Canning
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton
Carol Hayman

Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Roger Luxton
Stuart Melbourne
Eirwen Palmer
Lynsey Steadman

IN ATTENDANCE

Andrew Simmons (Chair, Hart Schools Trust)

Robert Dale (Clerk)

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Tara McGovern.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- None.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- Agreed and signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

Actions agreed at the last meeting had been completed or were being followed up.

- *Governor Skills Audit. **Action complete.*** A skills audit questionnaire was issued in July and completed by six LGB members. Results are shared in Item 11.
- *Submit proposal to HST Board for replacement of heating system. **Action complete.*** The proposal was duly submitted; the Trust initially asked that alternative quotes from other providers be sought, but has since agreed that the decision on this can be taken by the LGB. **The LGB agreed** that further investigation of the Biomass option be undertaken and a report provided before action was taken.
- *Governor engagement. **Action complete.*** See Item 7.
- *Propose school budget to the HST Board. **Action complete.*** Budget agreed.
- *Invite Adrian Hawkins and/or Matt Hamnett to future meeting. **Action complete.*** Andrew Simmons is attending this meeting.
- *Develop draft Governor training plan. **Action complete.*** See Item 11.

ITEM 2: ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

- Howard Crompton was nominated and agreed to take the role. He was unanimously elected Vice-chair.

ITEM 3: CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – THE BARCLAY SCHOOL

- The LGB understood that this discussion was strictly confidential. Mark Lewis outlined the background to the request made by DfE for the Trust to submit an expression of interest in running the neighbouring school, which it was understood had received an unsatisfactory Ofsted report (though this was not yet published).

- Governors discussed the rationale for doing so on a merger basis, under the Thomas Alleyne name and using the Barclay site mainly for KS3 and the Thomas Alleyne site mainly for KS4/5. There had as yet been no opportunity to undertake proper due diligence and this would be necessary before any final decision was taken.

Governors asked:

- *What support could the Trust expect from DfE?* Andrew Simmons commented from his experience that each case was different, but that, broadly, the local authority would take on the school's debt, and that some central government support should be provided by central government, though the exact nature and amount would be for Mark and his team to negotiate; finances remained very tight across the sector. Some estate rationalisation could provide capital funding for site improvements.
- *How would the risk that senior staff at Thomas Alleyne would be distracted be managed?* It was inevitable that taking on a new school would put pressure on staff in the short term. In the longer term, however, a larger institution would be more sustainable and could support a broader offer to students. Short-term pressure could be eased with support from central or local government, and there were temporary structural options that could mitigate the effect on performance.
- *Was TAA strong enough at present to take on the Barclay School?* Performance measures suggested that TAA was decisively better than the Barclay School, though governors noted that there would be examples of good performance (as well as the opposite) there.
- *How would TAA staff be affected by the move?* There was no wish to create undue instability in TAA – as difficulties could be expected with the Barclay team. The benefits of a more sustainable institution should not be disregarded in the longer term, and the quality and effort of TAA staff was widely recognised.
- *Was there a risk from doing nothing?* Yes, not planning for such a merger could allow stronger future competition, with questions over sustainability arising in the longer term for two schools in such close proximity.
- *Would the combined institution be the largest school in the area?* Not by some way. This might be an issue by 2022 when an expansion in secondary places is a possibility. 14 forms of entry would be expected in time (though not immediately) and these would make a sustainable sixth form more possible.

- *How could timetabling movement across a big combined site be managed?* This challenge was recognised. Zoning the sites such that most KS3 activity happened in one area and most KS4/5 in another was one way of reducing the difficulty. A footbridge (or subway) across the footpath running between the sites would help.
- *Was DfE's position and that of the local authority known?* At this point, the Trust had been asked to submit an expression of interest, nothing more. There were other options, including Herts for Learning (though it had not yet been approved as a provider) or national chains. There were advantages and disadvantages with each option.
- *How would communication with parents and students be managed?* At present, there was nothing to say, but the need for this to be handled with sensitivity – if the Trust was asked to take on the school – was appreciated. Much would depend on what the Ofsted report said and how DfE wished to handle the situation. Once the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Headteacher Panel became involved, matters might move quickly. If so, the Trust and the LGB would be called together for further discussions.
- *What was happening with the federated Primary School?* Almond Hill was defederating from the Barclay School.

■ Governors welcomed the commitment to keep them informed of developments and to call an additional meeting to discuss any feedback from the Regional Schools Commissioner should this be necessary.

ITEM 4: PERFORMANCE REPORT

■ The Head tabled a paper which examined the impact of 'in-year' admissions on progress and achievement outcomes. It was clear from this that a proportion of students accepted as in year admissions had significant attendance issues and disproportionately poor progress and achievement.

■ Actions to address this issue included early identification of intervention needed, ongoing tracking of this category of student, consideration of qualifications that could support students with poor attendance, and aiming to recruit to capacity at the start of the year to limit the possibility of in-year admissions.

■ Other issues considered included the Progress 8 score – which had suffered a slight fall this year (in common with other local schools) as performance nationally had got better. The school recognised that more work needed to be done to improve performance, closing the gap, for example, between Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium students. Developing and empowering middle leaders in a range of subject areas would also help, particularly to enhance the quality and rigour of forecasting.

■ Performance was especially hard to predict this year, given changes to examination grading arrangements, but the school was confident it could target the right students for support and challenge. The new Progress 8 measures encouraged schools and the LGB to consider outcomes for all students, and this was a good thing. The LGB asked for information about targets for this year; these would be discussed at the next meeting. Arrangements to support students in receipt of Pupil Premium funding would also be discussed.

■ Staff had responded positively to the self-development programme, and there was enthusiasm for the school aiming to become a 'research-led' entity. Links with the

Institute for Education should be considered, and the outcomes from the individual action research projects could be shared via an annual teaching and learning journal. The school intended to host a TeachMeet event in future.

- The school was in a good position with first choice applications for 2017/18 up, improved student behaviour and reduced staff absence (and lower agency spending). Governors appreciated the weekly bulletin being circulated and asked that thanks be recorded to Mark and Arthur for getting real value from the electrical and decorating contractors over the summer. There was real improvement to the school environment.

Action: Update agenda for 8 December meeting to include behaviour and data analysis presentations.

ITEM 5: ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- The structure shown in the paper would be used as the basis for future reporting; individual members of the SLT were responsible for particular areas and the thematic approach was driving productive discussions at SLT meetings. The structure would also be used to engage governors (see Item 7).

ITEM 6: BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY OVERVIEW

- The new behaviour strategy would have a more comprehensive presentation at the next meeting. Based on the principles of Neuro-linguistic programming, it had been developed by a joint working party involving the SLT, staff and students and had been well-received so far. The year had started well with a very low level of unacceptable behaviour and just one fixed term exclusion so far.

- Some development and refinement was needed, but the approach encouraged self-reflection and the reward system appeared to be attractive.

Action: Ensure next agenda includes presentation on the Behaviour strategy.

ITEM 7: GOVERNOR/SLT LINKS

- Governors endorsed a proposal whereby each would be paired with a member of the school's SLT and participate in termly review meetings, in addition to Governor in School day learning walks. The following links were agreed:

- Eirwen Palmer: link to Caroline Tyrwhitt
- Cliff Canning: link to Helen Russell
- Roger Luxton: link to Klaas Luchies
- Stuart Melbourne and Tara McGovern: link to Melanie Cook
- Trinity Governor (when appointed): link to Julie Lewis
- Jonathan Ellam and Howard Crompton: link to Mark Lewis

- Mark Lewis would report back to his SLT on these arrangements and ask them to make contact with governors after half term. Reports would be invited from governors with the first (from Eirwen Palmer) on 8 December. The agenda plan would be updated to include the proposed sequence.

Action: Notify SLT members of the proposed links.

Action: Update the agenda plan to show the reporting arrangements.

ITEM 8: GOVERNOR FUNDS – APPLICATION AND PROCESS

■ Following the Trust’s agreement to the LGB’s proposals, the new arrangements had been launched at the recent student parliament meeting. Proposals were to be received by the end of October, and would be reviewed by a small panel (including governor volunteers) in November. Projects were expected to deliver outcomes within the academic year. At least one successful bid would need to have a sports theme (to confirm to the general requirements of the Lockhart bequest.

■ The Head had been in touch with an individual considering making a bequest to the school and legal arrangements were being made.

Action: Invite governors to participate in the bid review process.

ITEM 9: RISK MANAGEMENT

■ Members discussed the current risk register, noting that the risk relating to Multi-academy Trust status had been increased from Green to Amber, reflecting the fact that no other schools had yet definitely committed to joining (although that was likely to change shortly). This would remain under review.

ITEM 10: TRUST UPDATE

■ The Chair reported on the Trust meeting held on 5 October. This had addressed the matters discussed in Item 3 above, received a report on Trust growth and considered a paper on the basis for the funding top-slice taken by the Hart Learning Group (to address a request from the Trust’s Audit Committee) including the service level agreement in place. Admission arrangements for 2017/18 had been reviewed and no change to the Count policies thought necessary.

ITEM 11: GOVERNING BODY SELF-EVALUATION AND TRAINING PLAN

■ The Skills Audit (completed in the summer by most of the governing body) showed that the group had a broad range of relevant skills and experience and was confident in its role. The survey questionnaire would be sent to the new governors.

■ The LGB agreed that training on the deployment and impact of Pupil Premium funding would be useful. Options for individual training would be circulated. Klaas Luchies would be invited to present on data analysis to a future LGB meeting.

Action: Circulate information about Governor training from Herts for Learning.

Action: Invite Klaas Luchies to present at future meeting.

ITEM 12: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

■ Governors commented favourably on the Alleyne’s Reader initiative.

ITEM 13: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

■ The next meeting would take place on Thursday 8 December, starting at 18.00. The meeting closed at 20.00.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who/when
13/10/16	1d	Make contact with RAW Biomass and come back to a forthcoming LGB to discuss options.	Mark Lewis 28/10/16
13/10/16	4	Update agenda for 8 December meeting to include behaviour and data analysis presentations	Robert Dale 28/10/16
13/10/16	6	Ensure next agenda includes presentation on the Behaviour strategy.	Robert Dale 28/10/16
13/10/16	7	Notify SLT members of the proposed links.	Mark Lewis 28/10/16
13/10/16	7	Update the agenda plan to show the reporting arrangements.	Robert Dale 28/10/16
13/10/16	8	Invite governors to participate in the bid review process.	Mark Lewis 28/10/16
13/10/16	11	Circulate information about Governor training from Herts for Learning.	Robert Dale 28/10/16
13/10/16	11	Invite Klaas Luchies to present at future meeting.	Robert Dale 28/10/16