



## 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 23 November 2017, starting at 18.00.

### PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)  
Julia Cooke  
Howard Crompton  
David Gray  
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)  
Roger Luxton

Stuart Melbourne  
Kirsty Ross  
Claire Smeeton  
Lynsey Steadman  
Duncan Visser  
Jenny White

### IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)

Robert Dale (Clerk)

### WELCOME

- Members welcomed Claire Smeeton (newly elected parent governor) to the meeting.
- Members also welcomed David Gray (co-opted member). David had substantial experience as a parent governor and Chair of governors at a local primary schools, and brought strong project management skills to the local governing body.
- Members congratulated the Chair for having been one of the two Outstanding Hertfordshire Governors for 2017, announced at the recent governors' conference. It was a testament to his dedication and commitment to school leadership.
- Governors also congratulated North Hertfordshire College for a successful Ofsted inspection resulting in an overall judgement of Good with Outstanding elements. It was beneficial for the Trust to be linked to a good college, whose strategies, which were aligned with those of the Trust, had been validated by inspection.
- Governors thanked Arthur Campion for showing them around the site.

### ITEM 1a: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Tara McGovern.

### 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

Actions had been followed-up as indicated below:

- Develop brief statement on banding and setting arrangements for the next academic year which can be shared with parents. **Action postponed.** The SLT was concerned that doing so could prompt parental concerns and would discuss this later in the year.
- Make arrangements for the election of a new Parent Governor. **Action complete.** There were seven candidates for this role (see also Item 2).
- Discuss timing for submission of proposals with Devon Woolley. **Action complete.** Proposals to be presented in the New Year.
- Present recommendation on Admissions to the Trust Board. **Action complete.** Consultation on new criteria is under way.
- Publish the Freedom of Speech and SEND policies on the Academy website. **Action complete.** Policies have been added to the school website.

## ITEM 2: GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT UPDATE

- As noted above, two new governors had joined the LGB, Claire Smeeton as a result of election and David Gray by co-option, because of his previous experience of school governance. David Gray volunteered to take on the role of Safeguarding governor.
- In consideration of this role, David Gray and Kirsty Ross were linked to Devon Woolley and Claire Smeeton to Katie Bailey.

## ITEM 3: LINK GOVERNOR REPORT – HOME LEARNING

- A meeting had taken place on 13 November focussing on home learning. The introduction of an on-line system (ShowMyHomework) had gone well and participants had been shown how it worked. Initial data on usage indicated that teachers, parents and students were all more active than average and that usage had been sustained from September to November. The system showed that the volume of homework set rose from Years 7 to 11, as expected, and that most was set for Maths and English.
- Curriculum maps had been re-drafted over the summer, including opportunities for homework-setting, with the aim that this should help students continue to progress.
- New approaches to homework in years 7 and 8, and in year 9 had also been implemented. Parents were largely supportive (108 responses had been positive, 13 negative). Governors agreed that provided that the school's expectations were clear and transparent, this was acceptable.
- The intention was to continue to promote ShowMyHomework, and to extend its use so that feedback could be given via the system. Training would be provided in January 2018 to enable staff to do this. It was also intended to push completion rates up, with a range of sanctions strategies being worked. Support for disadvantaged students was important and enabled through the home learning club or by providing paper copies of material available from ShowMyHomework.
- Governors were satisfied that this was a sensible approach, but encouraged the school to continue to ensure parents had a clear understanding of expectations. Once the feedback and assessment functionality could be included, this would help ensure parents understood their child's progress and performance.

- The cost of the system (at c£1 per pupil per annum) was regarded as good value.

**Question:** *Was there any research showing the optimum volume of homework to be set?* Setting and completing homework was intended to help create good study habits and wider student skills (eg for research, self-criticism and ‘reading around’ a subject). What was shown to be effective in achieving learning was sustained focus on a particular issue and homework could assist this – though not deliver it on its own. Greater impact could also be expected if parents were involved.

**Question:** *Was any training on the system available for parents?* There was a user guide and a ShowMyHomework ‘clinic’ had been provided at the open evening, but the system was easy to use. Training and support for less confident parents would be considered.

**Question:** *Was the approach to grading student work clear and consistent?* This area needed more work, including consultation with students.

**Question:** *Had the school considered the evidence that over time, the setting and completion of homework widened achievement gaps between students?* Yes, this had been considered; it was essential to ensure that disadvantaged students received the support they needed to reinforce knowledge and understanding and to develop good study habits.

#### **ITEM 4: DRAFT SEF 2017/18**

Governors received a verbal update on the DfE visit that had taken place on the day of the meeting and thanked the Chair for representing them during the day. The visit had covered the full range of an Ofsted inspection, including checking safeguarding, discussing data with the SLT, undertaking lesson observations and speaking with middle leaders and students. The visit report would be shared with the Regional Schools Commissioner so would be a factor in considering whether the Trust had enough capacity to take on more schools. The feedback identified that there had been big improvements since 2015/16. The school’s self-assessment was soundly based and there were a range of strengths including good challenge from governors. Areas for improvement were:

- Improving the attendance of pupil premium students.
- Ensuring students with higher prior attainment are challenged more.
- Improve the consistency of approach to teaching, learning and assessment across the school – eg by relaunching non-negotiables in the New Year.
- Share current good practice more widely.
- Build on the recent curriculum development work and make use of the relationship with Roebuck and other primary schools to improve the quality of transition to secondary schools – eg by taking account of the specialist and technical language already being used with students in key stages 1 and 2.

Overall, the report showed confidence in the school’s ability to sustain improvement, which would influence the Trust’s capacity to grow.

Governors noted that the SEF had been redrafted reflecting the Ofsted inspection framework and terminology. It was backed by evidence folders which governors would review during a future governor in school day. The new version of the SEF was clearer and easier to understand, but a question governors should ask themselves was whether the document properly reflected their understanding of the school.

**Action:** Agree a date and time for a governor in school session to review the evidence supporting the latest version of the SEF.

#### **ITEM 5: HEADTEACHER'S REPORT**

The report circulated before the meeting included a development plan tracker, enabling governors to monitor progress towards the school's 2017/18 objectives. Governors asked:

**Question:** *What 'non-negotiables' were given to teachers?* For example, all lessons must have a seating plan. Teachers must do all they can to get students in on time, and be positive and welcoming. A more consistent approach to structuring lessons was required.

**Question:** *What feedback had there been from the external adviser?* The main point to take away was that data packs did not always show information in the most helpful way. Better use of data analysis and reporting would help ensure better focus on student development.

**Question:** *Did the proposed change to the Admissions Policy for 2019/20 mean that some children from local primary schools might not get a place when children from more distant Trust schools did?* This was possible, although the distance rule was likely to mean the risk was low. On the other hand, the school wanted primary children who had experienced the Trust's ethos and approach to continue within the same kind of environment.

- The development plan tracker was thought to be a useful monitoring tool and governors welcomed its production.
- The financial position in 2018/19 remained very tight and cash-flow would be managed closely. Once lag funding was received in 2019/20 the position was expected to ease somewhat. The cash low point was likely to be in August 2018.

#### **ITEM 6: HST RISK REGISTER**

- The register showed the principal live risks for the school, the mitigating actions and the assessment post mitigation. Some of the current risks were expected to be downgraded in significance (for example, the kitchen development and student recruitment) but cashflow management might become more of a concern.

**Question:** *Was there a budget for tackling risks?* Not at present – at any material level. It would be a useful thing to reintroduce when finances permitted and should be considered when the Trust discussed a reserves policy at a future meeting.

**Governors accepted** the latest iteration of the Risk Register.

#### **ITEM 7: ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

- This report summarised the school's current position, including the regularity of training, maintenance of the single central record, the number of vulnerable children on roll and engagement with other agencies. The school had fully reviewed compliance in preparation for a visit from DfE and was confident that it met required standards.
- David Gray asked for further information about the relevant school policies, which would be sent to him as soon as possible.
- An anti-bullying review would be carried out during the next anti-bullying week.

**Action:** Provide David Gray with a list of relevant school policies.

**Governors accepted** the annual safeguarding report.

## ITEM 8: GOVERNOR IN SCHOOL DAYS

- A report on the most recent day had been circulated. It had been very well attended with six governors participating. The focus had been on how Y9 was supported in choosing GCSE options including how these might affect future pathways. Students had been very positive about their experiences, and believed that the advice they had received had been fair and balanced. Governors were struck with the widespread view from students that the implications of particular choices had been fairly and honestly communicated; they all felt that they had been well supported.
- One potential development was a request from a local school for support in offering triple science. There were some tricky timetabling issues to be addressed and a separate document would go to parents in due course concerning choices.
- The next visit was scheduled for 17 January 2018, and would concentrate on Ofsted preparation, including review of evidence folders. The next LGB meeting would receive a briefing on Progress 8 data from Klaas Luchies and Roger Luxton.
- Governor support for these events was very much appreciated.

**Action:** Add Progress 8 Briefing to January agenda.

## ITEM 9: ANNUAL GOVERNORS AWARD NOMINATION

- This item was postponed until the next meeting.

**Secretary's Note:** An award was made at the Annual Prizegiving event held before Christmas 2017.

## ITEM 10: TRUST BOARD FEEDBACK

- There were no material developments to report, although discussions continued with a number of local primary schools and one secondary. The Trust Board would meet next on 6 December 2017.

## ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- There would be an Ofsted briefing session on 11 January 2018 offered by Herts for Learning, which governors were encouraged to attend. Governors would need their governor ID number to book. A link to the event had been circulated on 6 November.

## ITEM 12: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next meeting would take place on Thursday 25 January 2018, starting at 18.00.
- The Chair thanked members for their contributions during the year and wished colleagues a restful Christmas break.

The meeting closed at 19.50.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

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Date

## LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who	When
23/11/17	4.	Agree a date and time for a governor in school session to review the evidence supporting the latest version of the SEF.	Mark Lewis	12/01/18
23/11/17	7.	Provide David Gray with a list of relevant school policies.	Robert Dale	12/01/18
23/11/17	8.	Add Progress 8 Briefing to January agenda.	Robert Dale	12/01/18