



## The Thomas Alleynes Academy

### THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY

Minutes of the meeting of the Local Governing Body of the Academy held on Thursday 26 November 2015 at the Thomas Alleynes Academy, High Street, Stevenage, starting at 18.00.

#### PRESENT

##### Governors

Alan Euinton (Chair) – AE

Jonathan Ellam (Vice-Chair) – JE

Dame Pat Collarbone – PC

Julia Cooke – JC

Julia Flanagan (Principal) – JF

Stuart Melbourne - SM

Eirwen Palmer – EP

Dr Rod Pullen – RP

Lynsey Steadman – LS

##### In Attendance

Robert Dale (Clerk Designate) - RD

Helen Russell – HR (left at 18.48 after Item 3)

#### APOLOGIES

Howard Crompton (Local Governor)

Mark Lewis (Managing Director)

Carol Hayman (Staff Governor)

#### ACTIONS SUMMARY

Item	Action	Person Responsible	Deadline
3, para 8	Governor visits to use assessment practice as a focus.	Governors	Governor visits during current academic year
5, para 11	Share analysis of the Governors Skills Survey at the next meeting.	ML	14/01/16
5, para 12	Circulate policy review calendar.	ML	18/12/15
5, para 13	Raise question about level of financial reporting provided to the Governing Body with MD or at the Trust.	AE	08/12/15
6, para 18	Complete notifications regarding the Vice Chair appointment	Clerk	18/12/15
7, para 19	Circulate notes from last two Quality walks	JF	18/12/15
7, para 20	Discuss level of detail in financial reporting and seek clarification of terms used.	AE	08/12/15
10, para 34	Advise Trust Board of proposals to apply the schools charitable funds	AE	08/12/15
11, para 36	Policies review calendar – see action 3 above	ML	18/12/15
12, para 38	Seek clarification over business continuity planning.	AE	14/01/16



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## ACTION

### ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies were received and accepted from Howard Crompton, Carol Hayman, and Mark Lewis and Andrew McCleod.

### ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. **AE** asked members to declare interests not already recorded. There were none.

### ITEM 3: ASSESSMENT WITHOUT LEVELS

3. **HR** briefed governors on the school's approach to undertaking assessment without levels, following national changes to assessment at Key Stage 3 (KS3). The Academy wanted to retain a coherent and consistent approach to assessing pupil progress and attainment, aligned with GCSE outcomes. Levelled success criteria existed and staff had reflected on how these could best support students and staff. For student use, there was a matrix of classifications with three headings: **Developing**, **Securing** and **Advanced**. Within each classification were four states: **Emerging**, **Competent**, **Confident** and **Accomplished** (with overlaps between classifications so that there were nine stages in all) and clear success criteria to place students within each. Feedback sheets were used to give responses to work; these were valued by students and parents. They could be self- or peer-completed, as well as by the teacher. Students knew if they were Developing, Securing or Advanced and what stage they had reached within these headings. Teachers used the 1 to 9 numbering in data tracking.

4. Though this approach was still developing, students had picked it up quickly, and examples of its use in exercise books were tabled. Assessment development meetings involved all staff so consistency between departments was maintained and there was common terminology. Practical subjects used an adapted but similar approach.

5. Governors were impressed with the work undertaken. Recognising that good quality feedback to students was essential, they asked if all departments applied the same standards. While use of Gold Feedback sheets had become more consistent, the quality of completion varied between departments; some teachers, for example, needed to be more specific about how students could improve (what does a comment like "needs more detail" actually mean?). Training and other support was in place to improve performance.

6. It was important that students could be ambitious for themselves; this approach allowed them to try higher level challenges rather than wait for a teacher to set one.

7. An example of a report page using this approach showed whether the student was making expected progress or not overall, and if he or she had made better than expected progress in the most recent term. Parent governors liked the simple format and felt it would be informative and easy to use. Publishing assessment



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criteria could help parents understand how judgements were made, but might seem complex.

8. The team proposed to review the approach at the end of the academic year and it was agreed that governor in school days could also take this as a focus. **All Governors**

### ITEM 4: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2015

9. Having been corrected as requested at the previous meeting, the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2015 were signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

10. There were no comments on the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2015, which were signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

### ITEM 5: MATTERS ARISING

#### 25 June, Item 7 (ii)

11. Analysis of the Governors Skills Survey would be shared at the next meeting. ML

#### 25 June, Item 12 (ii)

12. The Policy review calendar would be circulated by email. ML

#### 8 October Item 4 (ii) e

13. **AE** had discussed the points about detail in reporting with **ML**. The most recent reports had not included the kind of information that the governing body had been accustomed to receive and felt that it continued to need. He would raise this with **ML** and/or at the forthcoming Trust meeting. **AE**

#### 8 October Item 4 (ii) I

14. The revised budget was not required to be submitted to the EFA.

#### 8 October Item 6 (ii) I

15. **AE** had expressed the views of the Governing Body in respect of a fresh Service Level Agreement to **ML** and Matt Hamnett.

#### 8 October Item 3

16. The requested corrections to the minutes had been made.

#### 8 October Item 5 (ii) a

17. Caretaking arrangements were being handled on a rotational basis and this appeared to have addressed the shortfall in service.

### ITEM 6: APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

18. **JE** had indicated that he was willing to stand as Vice Chair. No other nominations were received, and the Governing Body unanimously elected him. Clerk

### ITEM 7: ACADEMY PERFORMANCE – PRINCIPAL'S REPORT



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19. **JF** presented her Principal's Report, which also contributed to ML's regular report to the Trust Board. Quality walks inform its development of the Report and JF agreed to share notes from the last two such walks with the Governing Body. **JF**

20. In terms of school finances, the variances against plan related to the omission of 3.6 FTE paid on a supply contract and an additional contribution to caretaking costs. The cost of the additional cover supervision was being kept under review, and the SMT was providing cover if required. Overall, there had been marginally better performance than the budget projection, but Governors felt that the financial summary was not sufficiently detailed to enable them to be assured of good financial performance. They asked for more information about the terminology used. **AE** would discuss these points with **ML** and **AM**. **AE**

21. Governors discussed the temporary reduction in the PAN, given that student numbers were close to the maximum capacity; exceeding the current number of teaching classes was not affordable. Capital improvements were considered; governors asked about the provision of new showers for sports, and were advised that a wet room had been included in the Capital Improvement Fund bid – but might need to be sacrificed to keep costs within the budget.

22. Teaching and Learning performance was improving, with 92% of lessons Good or Outstanding (up from 84%). Plans were in place for all staff causing concern.

23. Data on progress and attainment was currently being analysed. Aspirational targets had been set, and the current cohort had been below the national average on entry, so achieving the targets would be challenging; the current expectation was that the outcome at GCSE would be around the 50% mark.

24. Recruitment to replace two colleagues who had left had been successful. No issues were raised by either resignation; their successors would strengthen the skills base for business studies and geography. Governors asked about performance management and were advised that two staff members were being held back from a pay increment. Weaknesses in assessment practice needed to be addressed.

25. Governors asked how the reported safeguarding incident had been identified and were advised that it had been reported by a pupil. The volunteer involved was no longer involved with the Academy.

26. On Estates, Governors understood that Fire Protection improvements had been retendered, with cosmetic (eg burying cable) sacrificed to cut costs. Car parking was becoming more of an issue and JF suggested that the Capital Fund could be used to address this. Governors were willing to consider a proposal.

27. On Corporate Services, Governors would like to see a proper Service Level Agreement in place as without this, it was difficult to evaluate service and value for money – as the National Audit Office and EFA expected. Comments were made about performance over the past academic year as follows:



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- **Finance** – this service had been much improved, but more recent reporting lacked detail and was leaving the Governing Body dissatisfied that they were receiving adequate assurance.
- **Marketing** – there had been initial disappointment at the quality of service but recent performance was much better.
- **IT** – provided by Hertfordshire; no material comments.
- **HR** – had delivered well during the year.
- **Clerking** - had been unsatisfactory but had been addressed by the appointment of a new Clerk.

28. Governors noted that the school was likely to be oversubscribed for Y7 entry and that an appeals system was in place.

### ITEM 8: ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT

29. Governors received the annual report, and agreed that there was a good safeguarding culture within the Academy. **AE** confirmed that he had observed this in practice during his visits.

### ITEM 9: TRUST REPORT

30. Governors' comments on the previous draft had been taken on board by the Trust and it had been modified to reflect the broader educational responsibilities across the different institutions included. There were some proofreading corrections to be picked up.

### ITEM 10: THOMAS ALLEYNE TRUST FUND

31. **JE** reported back on two charitable funds associated with the former school, but unused for some years. Contact had been made with the Charity Commission which had advised that there were no concerns over historic reporting.

32. There were two Funds. The first (the Lockhart money) resulted from a bequest made in the 1930s, the interest only on which could be used to support the school cricket club. The second (substantially deriving from Trinity College Cambridge (TCC)) could see the principal and interest applied for the benefit of the school. Although there seemed to be two or three annual payments outstanding from TCC this fund including interest stood currently at £37,280.

33. Some further historical background would be provided to the next meeting, and some advice might be needed over whether the restrictions on the Lockhart money had to be strictly applied (the school no longer had a cricket club) or whether the interest could be used to support sports more generally.

34. The Governing Body proposed to act as the Trustees of the funds and to apply them in support of the school; proposals for doing so would be developed in partnership with the student body. **AE** would raise these outline plans with the Trust Board at its next meeting. **AE**



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35. On behalf of TCC, **RP** commented that, should there be any suggestion that the funds did not belong exclusively to the school, the college would prefer to see them used to support the TAA, rather than being applied across the Trust group.

### **ITEM 11: POLICIES UPDATE**

36. A schedule and proposed review calendar would be emailed to governors. Some policies were likely to need amendment to ensure they remained up to date. **ML**

### **ITEM 12: RISK MANAGEMENT**

37. The high level risk register was reviewed and seen as relevant, although there were worries that lower level risks were not picked up. **ML** included lower level reporting at his Performance Board meetings, which **AE** suggested would be of value to the Governing Body. Governors agreed that assurance that such risks were being properly managed and mitigated would be welcome. Governors asked how risks were identified; at Trust Board level the focus was rightly on the larger more strategic risks. More detail on operational risks should come via performance reporting. Governors would welcome assurance about the effectiveness of the process for identifying, prioritising and mitigating risks below the strategic level.

38. **RP** asked if there was a Business Continuity Plan in place for the school. **AE** **AE** had not seen one but would encourage one to be developed.

### **ITEM 13: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **Governor participation in Disciplinary meetings**

39. Governors checked expectations of those participating in such meetings. These were intended to give students a chance to modify unsatisfactory behaviours or attitudes before other sanctions were applied. Governors were expected to contribute objectivity and independence to the process.

### **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE**

40. **JF** advised that she had tendered her resignation with effect from the end of the current academic year. An announcement would be made to staff on Monday 7 December. The timely notice was welcomed as it gave the school the maximum opportunity to recruit a successor who could maintain the progress **JF** had made. Governors expressed their good wishes for the future.

### **ITEM 14: DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

41. The next meeting would be held on Thursday 28 January 2016 starting at 18.00.

42. There being no further business, **AE** wished colleagues and their families a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



**The Thomas Alleyne Academy**

30 November 2015