



THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the local governing body for the Thomas Alleyn Academy was held in the Conference Room, the Thomas Alleyn Academy, Stevenage, on Tuesday 9 May 2019, starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)
Robert Baldock
Julia Cook
Howard Crompton
David Gray

Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Roger Luxton
Jo Mellett
Tara McGovern
Jenny White

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)
Kit Davies (CEO, Hart Learning Group)

Robert Dale (Clerk)

WELCOME AND MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

- The Chair welcomed Kit Davies to the meeting. Kit is CEO of the Hart Learning Group and Principal of North Hertfordshire College. He is also a Trustee of the Hart Schools Trust Ltd and would be presenting Item 4.
- Following Kirsty Ross's resignation because of her move to Australia, she had identified a possible new governor from Trinity College, Cambridge. Dr Cate Ducati was a Fellow of the college and Reader in nanomaterials at the University of Cambridge's Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy and would bring very strong STEM skills and experiences to the LGB, and maintain the college's historic link with the school. A meeting was being arranged with the Chair and Headteacher; it was hoped Dr Ducati might join for the last meeting of the academic year.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Gary Phillips.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- The Chair was serving as a governor for a local primary school outside the Trust.

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:
 - Add a discussion on the curriculum to the July agenda for the LGB. **Action complete.** A draft agenda for the July meeting has been prepared which includes this item.



- Include Emergency Planning on a future agenda. **Action complete.** A draft agenda for the July meeting has been prepared which includes this item. However, given the pressure of other work on the Headteacher, it might be necessary to defer consideration until after the summer.

Action: Review the timing of this forthcoming agenda item.

- Address the gaps in the school's website identified by this audit. **Action under way.** Work is under way to update the school website. A subsequent audit by Herts for Learning has not found any further gaps. The SLT has discussed the reports and allocated responsibility for closing the key gaps.

Action: Forward copy of HfL website audit report to governors.

- Pass on the audit results to those responsible for maintaining the HST web pages. **Action under way.** Work is under way on addressing the gaps.
- Put Robert Baldock and Jo Mellett in contact with Katie Bailey to arrange a meeting. **Action complete.** Contact has been made and meetings have taken place or are planned.
- Incorporate suggested amendments into the final [Child Protection] Policy document and publish on school website. **Action complete.** The updated policy is on the school website.
- Contact the local authority in respect of the sale of the White House. **Action under way.** There was no more information available yet about the so far unspecified issue relating to the legal title which had halted sale discussions.

ITEM 2: NEW GOVERNOR APPOINTMENT

- Governors noted the appointment of a new Trust Governor – Gary Phillips – who was unable to be present at this meeting. Gary had taken part in the Governors in School Day activity on 8 May, so had met a number of current governors. He had a background in curriculum and quality assurance and was currently Director of Quality, Curriculum and Organisational Development for the Hart Learning Group. He has been a Trustee for the Hart Learning Group for 3 years (but feels his skills can be of more use to TAA) and was also a governor for the Da Vinci Studio Schools. He might be linked with Helen Russell.
- Governors looked forward to welcoming Gary at the next meeting.

ITEM 3: GOVERNORS IN SCHOOL DAY REPORT

- The latest visit had taken place on 8 May. As well as observing Magic Breakfast in action, the visit had included a full estate walk, and monitoring of form time. Governors noted that in excess of 100 students took the breakfast bagels each morning, and that the provision was appreciated. Governors asked that their thanks be communicated to the staff volunteers and the Head Girl who were supporting this service each day. Herts Catering staff had also been extremely supportive.

Question: *Was there an opportunity to run a before school homework club?* Bagels were also provided in the library and several Y10 and Y11 students were taking the chance to study there, but it would be hard to find resources to run a regular breakfast homework club.



- Governors commented that Form time was much more structured than on their previous review, with students engaged and interested in what was being covered. This time was now regarded as an extension of the learning day and evidence of good rapport between staff and students was observed. There had also been excellent examples of older students supporting and setting an example to younger ones.
- The estates walk had confirmed for governors the challenges that existed across the whole of the school site – from the dog walkers on the detached fields on the other side of the dual carriageway, to the need for significant improvements to be carried out to buildings.
- **Governors noted** that the next Governors in School day would take place on 17 June. Matters to be reviewed on this event would include looked after children, Show My Homework (and homework generally) and there would be a student focus group.

ITEM 4: TAA ESTATE (CONFIDENTIAL)

- Governors received a briefing about the legal structure of the Hart Schools Trust and its relationship with the Hart Learning Group. The Trust was a company limited by guarantee, registered at Companies House, and an exempt charity, whose regulator was the Secretary of State for Education. The Trust had Members (analogous to the shareholders for a plc) who appointed the Trustees/Directors who composed the Trust Board, and to whom the local governing body reported.
- The Trust's Sponsor was North Hertfordshire College Further Education Corporation, a statutory corporation and exempt charity. The sponsor was entitled to appoint the Members, whose duties were to appoint the Trustees/Directors, keep the Trust's governing document (Articles of Association) under review and appoint the Auditors. However, the Trust and the College were separate and independent legal entities.
- Governors then discussed how the long term future of the estate could be addressed. The Trust Board was aware of the challenges and actively engaged in seeking solutions, though there was no immediate chance of capital funds becoming available.
- Governors agreed to keep the position under review.

ITEM 5: DRAFT 2019/20 BUDGET

- The headteacher presented an outline draft budget for 2019/20. Key challenges for this year were:
 - Increased staff costs; while retaining experienced staff supported the delivery of quality teaching and learning, it also increased staff costs over time.
 - The repair and maintenance challenges associated with an ageing estate.
 - An ageing IT infrastructure including nearly 300 PCs at the end of their lives and needing urgent replacement.
 - Limited reserves.
- Income was forecast to grow slightly between 2018/19 and 2019/20 (from £5m to £5.25m, but payroll and non-payroll costs were also up slightly. The proposed budget resulted in a surplus of £24k, albeit this was smaller than in 2018/19.



Question: *Was this a three year rolling or an annual budget?* An annual budget. Unlike maintained schools, academies were responsible for managing in-year deficits or surpluses and there was no carry-forward.

Question: *Would slower growth in pupil numbers as the school reached capacity (180 in each year group) mean slower income growth in future?* Yes, there was still some room for growth, but most year groups were nearing capacity as defined by the PAN of 180.

- Governors discussed the key assumptions included in the draft budget and agreed that these were reasonable. They noted that some staff turnover was taking place – though this was largely restricted to those on fixed term contracts. Recruiting replacement staff would be tough in the current climate.
- Forecasts for utilities costs had been set at £130k, on the basis that actions taken this year would generate savings, but the position would need to be kept under review. The cost of the lighting lease (£22k) had also been included in the draft budget.
- Replacing two specialist IT suites had been built in at a cost of £10k for a three year lease agreement. Funds had also been included to extend the refresh programme for staff PCs (30 refurbished second-hand PCs costing c£200 each had been provided for out of the IT maintenance budget.
- Other marginal reductions in cost were considered.

Question: *Might consideration be given to appointing a member of staff to seek out and bid for external funds?* There was no money available in the budget to do this. It was recognised that small bids could add up, but also took time and effort to pursue. Charitable donations from supermarkets were relatively easy to access. The Chair agreed to consider how this might be followed-up.

Question: *How was the pupil premium allocation spent?* A proportion of these funds were linked to staffing and other spending that supported pupil premium students as a group. There was a specific allocation for bespoke personalised support and this was separately identified in the draft budget.

Question: *What was the reason for higher 'Music – Extra' costs?* This money part-funded musical instrument tuition (or for Pupil Premium students fully-funded) for students taking a music GCSE. There had been more Music GCSE candidates and the cost had risen.

Question: *What was the overall proportion of staff costs vs income?* Currently, c74%. This was around the historic benchmark, but governors noted that government was now suggesting that a lower benchmark (c65%) was better.

Question: *Could governors receive a copy of the presentation used by the Headteacher for reference?* Yes. This would be circulated after the meeting.

- **Governors endorsed** the draft budget for presentation to the Trust Board on 22 May 2019.

Action: Circulate a copy of the budget presentation to governors for their reference.



ITEM 6: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- Attendance was now (94%) higher than it had been at the same period in 2017/18 – when the school had finished above the county average – which demonstrated that the actions taken to improve attendance since the autumn (when it had been behind the level achieved in the previous year) were working. Governors also noted the number of students joining Y8. There were some issues with this year group which was being monitored closely. Where students needed alternative provision, the school worked hard to find it. Governors reviewed the performance report and asked:

Question: *Of the 23 cases of exclusion this year, alternative provision had been arranged for seven. What was happening with the remaining 16?* In most cases, reintegration was expected to be successful.

Question: *What was happening to improve the performance of the Grounds and Cleaning contractors?* Meetings had taken place and both organisations were aware of the school's dissatisfaction. New management was in place and the situation would be watched closely.

Question: *What was the anticipated sixth-form intake for 2019/20?* There had been around 50 applicants for Y12, but staff needed to be certain that an A-level programme was right for all of them. There was a prospect of growing this number over the next couple of years which would improve the sustainability of the sixth-form offer.

Question: *Now that the Great Expectations programme had completed, could the final cast studies be shared with governors?* There would be a presentation at the next meeting.

Question: *What indication had been given for the failure of recent capital bids?* The recent bid (for repairing/renewing the roofs of listed buildings had just failed to reach the threshold; apparently, the forecast costs were regarded as too high.

Question: *Had the minibus student pick-up arrangements in the morning been recently risk-assessed?* These arrangements were extremely effective in ensuring vulnerable students attended school, but there were safeguarding and duty of care risks to be managed. Balancing these against the benefits to students was a matter of judgement.

Action: Review the safeguarding risks associated with the minibus pick-up provision.

- **Governors endorsed** the report.

ITEM 7: GOVERNOR FUNDS

- The Chair proposed that governors use a proportion (£10,000 of c£37,000 currently held) to match fund the money allocated by the school in the budget for replacing 50 staff PCs with refurbished models. This would also enable the redeployment of PCs in the specialist suite no longer suitable for A-level work to other student support.

Question: Could spending more from the Governor Funds bring additional benefits? Replacing all IT equipment at the same time created a future replacement problem; a rolling programme would be more sensible. However, governors agreed to consider another proposal at the next meeting.

- **Governors agreed** to use £10k of Governor Funds to match fund the school's budget allocation for replacing obsolete staff PCs with refurbished second-hand equipment.



ITEM 8: PROPOSED MEETING CALENDAR

- A calendar of meetings for 2019/20 was proposed and agreed as follows:
 - Monday 16 September 2019
 - Tuesday 12 November 2019
 - Thursday 23 January 2020
 - Thursday 5 March 2020
 - Tuesday 5 May 2020
 - Thursday 9 July 2020
- Diary appointments would be issued shortly.

Action: Issue diary appointments for 2019/20 local governing body meetings.

ITEM 9: POLICIES REVIEW – OFF-SITE VISITS AND PREVENT

- Governors reviewed the proposed changes. There were no comments on the Offsite Visits policy revisions and this was approved.
- References more relevant to FE should be replaced with school-specific points where needed. References to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) should refer to the September 2018 edition. Governors also agreed that it was sensible to amalgamate Child Protection and Prevent Policies in due course, but felt that this should be done under the general heading of Child Protection.
- Checking the Other Policies identified in the revised draft on the website indicated that Attendance also needed to be updated. The Student Code of Conduct was in Student Planners, but not on the website.
- Subject to making these changes, the revised Policy was approved.

Action: Incorporate suggested amendments into the final Prevent Policy document and publish this and the Off-site Visits Policy on the school website.

ITEM 10: RISK REGISTER

- Discussion had covered the key risks (including estates costs and IT equipment). Decisions taken (eg in respect of the budget and governor funds) would enable the IT risk to be reduced somewhat.
- **Governors endorsed** the risk register and identified mitigations.

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Parking

- Finding enough parking during the day was a problem. This might be exacerbated if double yellow lines were added to The Grange (the road leading to the school's



vehicular entrance). There were no easy or immediate solutions; as many staff cars as could be brought safely onto the site were parked there rather than on the car park.

Changing Rooms makeover

- The Chair proposed to look into the possibility of organising a volunteer working party over the summer holiday period to redecorate the changing rooms and weed/tidy up the pond area. If enough parent helpers could be involved, this could make for a focussed couple of days work. It was difficult to involve college students because their courses were not operating when convenient from a school point of view.

Thanks

- The Chair thanked Rob Baldock and Jo Mellett for completing induction training promptly.

ITEM 12: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next Governors in School day would take place on Monday 17 June.
- The next LGB meeting would take place on Thursday 4 July 2019, starting at 18.00.

ITEM 13: INFORMATION PAPERS

- None.

The meeting closed at 20.20.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who	When
09/05/19	1d.	Review the timing of this forthcoming agenda item [Emergency Planning].	Mark Lewis	27/05/19
09/05/19	1d.	Forward copy of HfL website audit report to governors.	Robert Dale	20/05/19
09/05/19	5.	Circulate a copy of the budget presentation to governors for reference.	Robert Dale	20/05/19
09/05/19	6.	Review the safeguarding risks associated with the minibus pick-up provision.	Mark Lewis	31/07/19
09/05/19	8.	Issue diary appointments for 2019/20 local governing body meetings.	Robert Dale	20/05/19
09/05/19	9.	Incorporate suggested amendments into the final Prevent Policy document and	Mark Lewis/Kate Prince	27/05/19



		publish this and the Off-site Visits Policy on the school website.		
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