



THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the Local Governing Body (LGB) for the Thomas Alleyne Academy was held in the Sixth Form Centre, the Thomas Alleyne Academy, Stevenage and by videoconference on Tuesday 26 September 2023 starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Hilary Clifford (Chair)
Robert Baldock
Julia Cooke
Rachael Coultart
David Gray (Vice-chair)

Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Lynsey Steadman (by videoconference)
Stephanie Williams

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)

Robert Dale (Governance Professional)

INTRODUCTORY

- Following the recent sudden and unexpected death of a Y12 student, governors expressed their sadness and recorded their condolences to the student's family and friends.

Question: *How was the school community responding to this sad event?* The school had communicated directly with Y11, 12 and 13 students about the unexpected loss, and had written to families of children in the other years. Key students (including a younger sibling of the deceased) had been identified for additional support. Support had been signposted to both students and staff, and the school had otherwise sought to maintain a calm and purposeful atmosphere.

Question: *Had the staff team reviewed the circumstances and what was known by the school?* Yes, and the headteacher would be providing a witness statement for the inquest, in due course.

Question: *Had there been any indications of concern available to the school?* There had been no recent indications of concern; the student had obtained good GCSE results, joined the sixth form as planned at the start of September, and had a group friends in school. Only one minor matter (dating from 2020) was on CPOMS (the school's safeguarding system) which had apparently been resolved at the time.

Question: *What was the timeline for the inquest?* This was not yet known. The witness statement was due for submission within four weeks.

- The circumstances were distressing for all concerned and the school continued to communicate sensitively with the family (there was a sibling in Y11 who it was hoped would return to school shortly) but at present without response.
- Governors supported the actions being taken to respond to such a sad event.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Howard Crompton, Jo Mellett, Phil Rolt, and Jenny White.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- No additional interests were declared.

ITEM 1C: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings and signed accordingly.

ITEM 1D: MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

- Actions had been followed-up as indicated below:
 - Share the Attendance Policy and add attendance to the agenda for a forthcoming Governor in School session. **Action complete.** This matter was to be covered during the Governor in School session on 28 November.
 - Include paper on Central Services charges in relation to TAA on a future agenda. **Action complete.** This would be added to the draft agenda for May 2024 as this would coincide with the business planning process.
 - Add 'Draft School Development Plan 2023/24' to the LGB agenda plan. **Action complete.** This matter was on the agenda at Item 5.
 - Add 'Cyber Security – mitigating and managing risks' to a future LGB agenda. **Action complete.** This was on the draft agenda for the November meeting.
 - Update and publish the agreed Child Looked After, Bursary and Trans Policies. **Action complete.** These policies had been added to the school's website.

ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST 2023/24

- This paper was circulated annually so that governors could review their attendance records and declarations of interest and make any necessary updates, corrections or adjustments before publication on the school's website. Governors were asked to inform the Governance Professional of changes during the year as soon as they arose.
- At 77.05%, attendance in 2022/23 was better than in 2021/22 (71.43%), when one governor did not attend throughout the year and was thus removed from the LGB. In 2022/23 several governors had periods of unavoidable medical absence and one was undertaking a qualification which often coincided with meeting dates.
- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

ITEM 3: FEEDBACK FROM GOVERNOR CONVERSATIONS

- The Chair reported on her one to one conversations with governors that had taken place earlier in the year. Governors – especially the longer-serving ones – welcomed the improvements in school performance they had seen, both financially and academically, over time. They were pleased that TAA had a good local reputation and there was now a chance to grow the Trust, which was welcomed. Governors had been active, engaged, challenging and supportive and found governor in school mornings especially valuable in helping to bring to life the information shared at

meetings. They were keen to take on a more tangible and specific role beyond that of attending meetings and acting as a critical friend.

- As a result of the discussion, the 2023/24 programme of governor in school sessions had been planned and circulated and would be considered at Item 9. The link governor role had also been re-shaped and would be aligned with the five development priorities. Governors would be expected to participate in at least two Governor in School sessions (out of six) annually.

Question: *Should this minimum threshold be higher?* Governors were encouraged to attend as many sessions as they could but it was important not to discourage individuals from joining or remaining on the LGB if they could not commit to the greater amount of time required.

- Papers for LGB meetings would aim to be no more than four pages in length, with acronyms and jargon avoided as far as possible
- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

ITEM 4: EXAMINATION RESULTS

- Summer results at GCSE level were the strongest recorded, with a provisional Progress 8 measure (based on SISRA data) of 0. This was a good result and a big improvement against 2019 (the best comparator because it was the last exam season unaffected by the COVID-19 emergency) when the equivalent score had been -0.58. The outcome was provisional and could change once national data was available, but SISRA data was generally representative so any variation was expected to be small. The number of grade 9s achieved across subjects increased to 40, from 38 in 2022 and from 16 in 2019.
- A number of subjects performed particularly well with students achieving more positive outcomes than other schools nationally in: Business Enterprise, Chemistry, Combined Science, Computer Science, Design Technology, Geography, Maths, Physics. The proportion of top grades in some STEM subjects was nearly five percentage points better than the national average (25.9% vs 21%). Geography was a good example of a previously under-performing area now doing much better.
- However, there were stubborn areas of underperformance in Drama, English Literature, History, IMedia, RE and Spanish. While there were some common factors – such as the need for excellent written communication skills and a requirement for writing stamina, each of these areas also had individual challenges and action plans needed to take account of this. External support had been sought from another Trust (the Chiltern Learning Trust) to work with department heads on improvements.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged students continued to be significantly lower, with a P8 score of -1.08 compared to 0, a similar gap to that seen in 2019. The school was working with the county advisor (Rachel Macfarlane) on getting this down, and the development plan had a clear focus on ‘under-served’ learners.

Question: *Could the success in Geography be replicated in other humanities subjects?* Some of the same actions had already been taken, but later than in that subject. More time might be needed to see the impact. However, fresh eyes also needed to be brought to bear and there were some practices applied in Geography that had not yet taken hold in English, for example, such as testing how well students can recall what they have been taught.

Question: *Given the challenges, was Creative iMedia a GCSE worth continuing with?* It was a popular course, and one where further management action might be needed. It was part of a wider IT offer encompassing a Computer Science strand and a Digital IT strand.

Question: *Had there been enough effort put into promoting Arts and Humanities subjects as valuable and worthwhile study programmes?* There was a proper emphasis on STEM subjects, not least because of the strong Life Science and Technology employer presence in the Stevenage area; however, it was also right to recognise that employers valued 'employability' skills such as strong written and verbal communication at least as much as technical skills. The school could do more to highlight the importance of humanities subjects and encourage the English team to be more ambitious in developing careers links. The wider national context in which humanities subjects were set was unhelpful.

Question: *These were longstanding issues; what more could be done to secure rapid improvement?* There was a range of contributory factors, but some schools continued to succeed; that was the reason for bringing external support in. It would be interesting to see the impact of the Reading Recovery and Reading Culture programmes, but it should be appreciated that both would take time.

- For A-levels, 30 students achieved an average of a C grade compared with C+ in 2022 (for a larger cohort) and D+ in 2019 for a similar sized cohort and the A level average point score by entry was 30.33, compared to 33.19 in 2022 and 21.39 in 2019.

Question: *Which were the exception subjects averaging lower than C this year?* Sociology and Media – although both had very small groups of two or three students which potentially distorted the picture. There had also been some stronger performing qualifications, such as BTEC Psychology.

- All Year 13 students were able to move on to a positive destination, most into higher education with all except one student achieving their first choice. Two students secured higher level apprenticeships; one student would complete a management training scheme and five were entering employment.
- A new head of sixth form was now in post and both Y12 and Y13 were around 60 strong – twice the size of the previous cohort. There were also three new subjects launched this year, so progress and performance would be carefully monitored during the year, but it had begun very well.
- **The TAA LGB was pleased with** the overall exam performance at GCSE and A-level in 2022/23 **and accepted** the report.

ITEM 5: DRAFT SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-24

- This year's development plan was more focussed on addressing the achievement gap for under-served learners (those entitled to Pupil Premium support). There were five key areas of emphasis:
 - Curriculum outcomes
 - Teaching
 - Reading
 - SEND
 - Mission 44

- Leaders had used data analysis to highlight areas for development and each member of the SLT would have responsibility for delivery. A link would be made with governors too who could report directly to the LGB on their interactions with the plan.
- The school's values would continue to be foundations for the development plan.

Question: *Was there a budget associated with the plan?* Not yet; it was being worked on.

Question: *Had the programme of clubs started?* Yes, and there had been lots of interest and engagement from the students. This was one route for developing cultural capital and supporting a broader base for education.

- **The LGB endorsed** the 2023/24 School Development Plan.

ITEM 6: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- Governors were delighted that the school had more than 1,000 learners on roll for the first time, with a sixth form of c120 students. Open evening for entrance into Y7 in 2024/25 had been well attended and good feedback received from families.

Question: *Did the school have enough physical and staff capacity for the large roll?* Yes, although the sixth form space was busy and would be monitored. Having staggered breaks and lunchtimes had been vital in supporting space management. The school's overall capacity based on floorspace was c1,100 and there was very little room for further growth in the roll except at sixth form.

Question: *Did demand for sixth-form classroom space impact KS3 and 4 classrooms?* Not significantly; sometimes, teachers were away from their rooms, but this was relatively infrequent. The additional student numbers did put more pressure on the timeline for replacing G Block (essentially a rather elderly mobile classroom block). The intention was to secure funds through a Capital Improvement Fund (CIF) bid, but alternatively, Trust reserves might need to be called on.

- Attendance remained high (albeit slightly below the figure reported in the paper) and the school was currently on the 74th percentile against all other Arbor schools nationally. On one day, Y7 had achieved 100% attendance. However, an attendance gap remained for pupil premium students, with the school around the 44th percentile.

Question: *What was the relationship of the Thinking Reading initiative to the Reading Recovery and Reading Culture development strands?* Thinking Reading was the organisation supporting the Reading Recovery programme. Diagnostic testing of students was in progress and interventions would follow.

- Behaviour had been positive with students working with staff effectively in lessons and an extensive extra-curricular offer had been shared with parents, who could register Y7 students for clubs on Arbor (helping the monitoring of participation and attendance). The aim was for all pupil premium students in Y7 to join at least one club. There had been a lot of interest from Y9 and 10 students in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Y9 students would also be applying to take part in the Life Sciences Academy supported by Sir Lewis Hamilton's charity, Mission 44, and delivered through a partnership with North Hertfordshire College, where the students had access to state-of-the-art teaching laboratory facilities.
- There were 221 students on the SEND register, including 37 students with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Question: *Was there sufficient funding to support the 37 students with EHCPs?* Schools always had to find the first £6,000 of funding themselves, but additional funding came with these learners. The staff were managing well, although the need for TAs to play a key role in the Thinking Reading programme meant that they might not be in classrooms all day. The school was developing the SENCo role this year and expected to participate in a SEND review with Herts County Council later in the year.

Question: *Who would be the Link Governor for SEND?* This would be addressed at Item 9.

- The roofing project to replace A and B block roofs had continued over the summer. The project was originally due to complete at October half term but was c6 weeks behind schedule. The fire safety project had been completed over summer with work to ceiling compartments and fire doors in several areas.
- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

ITEM 7: P12 (AUGUST 2023) MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS REPORT

- The provisional year-end outturn was better than the budget surplus of c£85k, and there was an increased level of reserves. Cashflow forecasts were strong and the school was in a secure financial position.
- The budget and forecasting process was being reviewed to ensure that accuracy and prudence were properly balanced.
- **The TAA LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 8: ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2022/23

- This paper provided assurance that the school remains in compliance with its statutory and regulatory obligations. The format is a standard one and covers all the expected reporting elements including training, policies, the number of incidents reported during the year etc.
- David Gray reported that he had discussed the report with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Devon Woolley) and confirmed that it reflected the good outcome of the Safeguarding audit in 2022/23.

Question: *Was there any significance for the school of the large increase in domestic violence notifications?* These were recorded on the school's safeguarding record system (CPOMS) and would be available to relevant staff so that they could monitor and provide support if required. The notifications provided little detail of the alleged incident.

- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

ITEM 9: GOVERNORS IN SCHOOL MORNINGS/LINK GOVERNORS 2023/24

- A schedule of governor in school meetings had been prepared and Outlook appointments circulated. Each morning would be structured around the five development themes, with additional focusses on Safeguarding and Attendance. Sessions would otherwise operate in similar ways to those that had taken place in 2022/23 including visiting lessons, talking to students and staff, reviewing books etc.
- Changes to Link governor roles were proposed this year, following feedback from governor conversations (reported at Item 3). The plan was to link governors to the senior staff leading on each of the five development themes. Ideally, governors would

be paired up to spread knowledge and experience and provide mutual support. Senior leaders were expected to make contact with governors to arrange the termly meetings.

- Following discussion, the proposed link governor arrangements for 2023/24 were agreed as follows:

Key Area	Staff Member	Link Governor 2023/24
Whole school overview	Mark Lewis	Hilary Clifford
Business Management	Kate Prince	Howard Crompton
Safeguarding/Children Looked After	Devon Woolley	David Gray Stephanie Williams
DP: Under-served students year 7-10	Devon Woolley	David Gray Stephanie Williams
Attendance	Klaas Luchies	Stephanie Williams
DP1 – Curriculum outcomes	Mel Cook / Katie Bailey	Hilary Clifford Rachael Coultart
DP: Under-served students Years 11-13	Mel Cook / Katie Bailey	Hilary Clifford Rachael Coultart
DP2 – Teaching	Lynsey Steadman	Robert Baldock Jenny White
DP3 – Reading	Mel Cook/Simon Backhouse	David Gray Howard Crompton
DP4 – SEND	Mel Cook/Simon Backhouse	David Gray Howard Crompton
DP5 – Mission 44	Katie Bailey	Rachael Coultart Julia Cooke

- Jo Mellett and Phil Rolt would be invited to opt for one or more of these link areas.

Action: Circulate the draft link governor allocation and seek input from absent governors.

- The expectation was that each senior leader and link governors would hold one termly meeting, with the aim of monitoring progress with the development plan and discussing any issues and challenges
- **The TAA LGB noted** the report.

ITEM 10: TAA RISK REGISTER

- No risks had been closed and two risks had been added to the register since the previous report:
 - Risk 9: *“That SEND students and students with an EHCP are not adequately supported in school to achieve in line with their potential. That the SEND strategy is not fully developed to cope with increased demand”*. The Gross risk has been scored as 6 (Impact =4; Probability=2) and the Net risk as 4 (Impact =4; Probability = 1)
 - Risk 10: *“That under-served (Pupil premium and disadvantaged) students perform less well than their peers.”* The Gross risk has been scored as 6 (Impact =4; Probability=2) and the Net risk as 4 (Impact =4; Probability = 1)

- Two risk scores had been reduced:
 - **Risk 2:** “*That TAA Sixth Form reduces in size due to low student enrolment numbers*”. Successful recruitment to the sixth form this year and a proven strategy of recruitment in the past two academic years indicates the net probability score should be reduced to 4 (Impact =2; Probability =2).
 - **Risk 4:** “*Disruption to learning following industrial action by teaching unions*”. Although the teachers’ pay award has not been confirmed, the understanding is that the government’s offer of 6.5% pay increase will be accepted by unions. The net risk score is now 2 (Impact =2; probability =1).
- It was possible that both could be closed in the near future.
- Governors asked that the risk relating to support for Ashtree discussed at a previous be added to the register.

Action: Include a new risk on the register relating to senior leadership support for Ashtree Primary School.

- **The TAA LGB accepted** the latest iteration of the risk register.

ITEM 11: GOVERNOR/SLT LINK REPORTS

- There were no reports given at this meeting; a report of the Governor in School morning and about a Safeguarding visit would be circulated with the minutes.

Action: Circulate the reports from visits that had taken place earlier in the summer.

- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

ITEM 12: POLICIES REVIEW

- Three revised or new policies were presented for review by the LGB (a revised Child Protection Policy for 2023/24; a new Early Career Teacher (ECT) Induction Policy and a revised Behaviour for Learning Policy). Governors noted that the Designated Senior Person (DSP) was now known as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and this terminology needed updating in the Child Protection Policy.

Action: Ensure that references to the DSP be updated before publication of the Child Protection Policy.

- Approval of the new ECT Induction and revised Behaviour for Learning policies was delegated to the school’s SLT and governors had no observations on them.
- Governors agreed that there should be consultation on a change to the Admissions Policy for 2025/26 managed for the school by the local authority. The change would be the removal of the current oversubscription criterion (Rule 4) giving priority in awarding places to pupils of the Roebuck Academy. While in the past, this had affected only a small number of children, the 2023/24 Y7 intake included about 24 former Roebuck pupils. Awarding this proportion of places to children who lived some distance from the school was likely to be considered unfair on children living closer.

- **The TAA LGB:**
 - **approved** (subject to the amendment suggested) the revised Child Protection Policy for 2023/24;
 - **noted** that there was a new ECT Induction Policy and a revised Behaviour for Learning Policy;
 - **agreed** that consultation on changing the Admissions Policy for 2025/26 should go ahead as proposed.

ITEM 13: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- None.

ITEM 14: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Thursday 23 November 2023, 18.00, by videoconference (Microsoft Teams).
- The meeting closed at 20.00.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

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Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who	When
26/09/23	9.	Circulate the draft link governor allocation and seek input from absent governors.	Robert Dale	30/09/23
26/09/23	10.	Include a new risk on the register relating to senior leadership support for Ashtree Primary School.	Mark Lewis	31/10/23
26/09/23	11.	Circulate the reports from visits that had taken place earlier in the summer.	Robert Dale	30/09/23
26/09/23	12.	Ensure that references to the DSP be updated before publication of the Child Protection Policy.	Mark Lewis	31/10/23