



THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the Local Governing Body (LGB) for the Thomas Alleyne Academy was held by videoconference on Thursday 9 February 2023 starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Hilary Clifford (Chair)
Robert Baldock
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton
Cate Ducati

David Gray (Vice-chair)
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Jo Mellett
Kerry Pritchett
Jenny White

IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)

Robert Dale (Governance Professional)

MEMBERSHIP

- The LGB noted that Robert Baldock and Jo Mellett had each accepted a second term of appointment to the LGB.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Lynsey Steadman.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- No additional interests were declared.

ITEM 1C: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

ITEM 1D: MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

- Actions had been followed-up as indicated below:
 - Provide diversity analysis for student and staff cohorts at TAA. **Action ongoing.** Data on student enrolments had been circulated to members on 9 December 2022 and staff data would follow.
 - Make arrangements for parent governor election. **Action complete.** Three expressions of interest had been received, including one from a person not eligible to serve as a parent governor, but who might be willing to be a co-opted governor. It was hoped to make an appointment shortly.
 - Issue reminder about returning 2022/23 Declarations of Interest. **Action under way.** The final few responses were expected shortly.

- Arrange visit to school with Business Manager to discuss how to improve the current position and to gain access to grant funding. **Action complete.** A report on subsequent action – including discussions with an external consultancy on improving access for individuals with mobility or other disability issues - was on the agenda at Items 7.
- Consider how to set and report on success measures in future SEND reporting. **Action complete.** Progress and achievement reporting would be presented by cohort to help inform consideration of the impact of actions.

ITEM 2: Y11 AND Y13 MOCK EXAM DATA ANALYSIS

- Mock examinations had taken place for GCSE (Y11) and A-level (Y13) cohorts in November 2022 under full examination conditions. It was helpful to provide students with this kind of experience to prepare them for summer 2023, and to help staff identify individuals who might need additional support. Students had conducted themselves very well and the outcomes of mocks had been shared with them. The paper offered a forecast of the school's progress 8 outcome (for GCSE) and the average grade and points score (for A-level).
- Forecasts for each student were made by teachers and based on mock exam data plus other supporting evidence but was just a prediction. Overall, however, the analysis was consistent with the trend, with more consistency across subjects and improvements in higher grades.
- At GCSE, a slightly larger number of Grade 9 outcomes was projected. Underperforming subjects were as previously identified and interventions in these areas were continuing. Senior leaders were working very closely with curriculum leads for these subjects.
- A significant finding was the large performance gap between Pupil Premium (PP) and non-PP learners. To help identify barriers to learning, meetings had taken place at the start of the term with students and families from which it had been identified that there was limited evidence of material deprivation, but other contributory factors included low aspirations. Levels of attendance among this cohort were lower than others and this correlated closely with progress and achievement. Individual students at risk of failing to attend all exam sessions were being identified.

Question: *The Ofsted 'trigger' for intervention was linked to a Progress 8 score of -0.5; several subjects were around that level currently. Should that be a concern?* Low performance in any subject was a matter of concern for the school, but individual subject underperformance would not reach the threshold for Ofsted to become concerned.

Question: *How confident was the school that its interventions would succeed?* The school was focussing effort on students with low attendance, on those whose forecast achievement was below expectations (and also on those expected to achieve high grades to help ensure that they did so). The team was confident that this was the right approach, but it was hard to link success or failure to a single intervention measure. Attendance at intervention sessions had been strong and the quality of sessions had always been Good.

Question: *How was the Grade 9 to 5 or 9 to 4 measure calculated for English?* The final score was the better of either English Language or English Literature GCSE results.

Question: *Would improving English Literature outcomes improve this score?* This would probably have only a marginal impact on overall English data. It would have more of an impact on the Open element of the Progress 8 measure.

Question: *What was the reason for the Physics data anomaly?* Several factors were thought to have affected mock examination performance: (a) students were not provided with an 'equations sheet' - meaning that they had to memorise key equations. It had now been clarified that an equations sheet WOULD be provided for summer exams; (b) in-school marking was thought to be more rigorous than required. The team was confident that actual achievements would be better than forecast in this subject.

Question: *What were the support sessions for students called and might this description deter some?* They were called Intervention or Revision sessions and the name did not appear to negatively impact participation.

- The A-level cohort this year was relatively small (30 students) compared with 2021/22 and with 2023/24, so the forecast data should be treated with some caution; one or two students made a big impact on percentages. However, the average grade forecast (C+) was the same as last year and the forecast average point score slightly higher. Students had settled well into Y13 despite the disruption caused by the move of the Sixth Form centre to its new location. Some subjects were being monitored very closely, but there were experienced leaders in place.
- Two-thirds of the cohort had made applications through UCAS and one-third (nine) were looking at alternatives to Higher Education. Six members of the latter group had made positive choices to opt for Apprenticeships (three in accountancy/finance), and conversations were in hand with the remainder about their choices. There had been much more interest this year in higher level apprenticeships and these learners were getting plenty of support with their applications, as well as the support already given to those following the route to universities through UCAS.

Question: *How did the forecast score of -0.2 compare with 2021/22?* Last year's equivalent score had been -0.32 (this forecast improvement was consistent with the small increase in the forecast average points score).

Question: *What plans were there for a smooth transition following the resignation of the Head of Sixth Form?* The individual had been working through a phased return to work, following a bereavement and was resigning from the appointment but not (at this stage) as a teacher. Two other members of the senior and middle leadership team had been covering the role during the period of absence. The role was being advertised internally – and it was expected that successful recruitment would add leadership capacity in the sixth form, compared with the current position.

- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report and looked forward to a positive outcome in the summer.

ITEM 3: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- The school roll had grown slightly since the previous report as a result of in-year movement; demand for support for students whose first language was not English (ESOL) had also increased with seven students in Y11. It was a real challenge to support these learners, from a range of nationalities whose data would affect reported school performance. Across Hertfordshire, there were a large number of young people from Afghanistan and Ukraine.
- The Y10/Y11 curriculum for 2023/24 was being adjusted slightly, following consideration of approaches taken by other schools to improve the Open element of the Progress 8 measure. Some courses would be withdrawn and some new vocational programmes (BTECs) would be added. It was recognised that post-16, T-

levels were replacing BTECs for a number of subjects, but this was not an issue at Key Stage 4; the approach was considered to be sustainable into at least the medium term.

- Behaviour and attendance continued to be good overall, with attendance above the Arbor national average - although PP learners had a lower attendance rate. Suspensions were higher than at the same date in 2021/22 – although with more students on roll, the frequency was similar. A second permanent exclusion had been made in the year.
- A parent survey was being re-introduced.
- The recent industrial action had meant that the school was closed for all year groups except years 11 to 13; vulnerable learners were also offered the opportunity to come into school. A similar approach was likely to be adopted on 1 March and on 15 and 16 March. There were now 44 National Education Union (NEU) members at the school, and there was a strong union representative, with whom a constructive dialogue was being maintained. The additional but unavoidable school closures were regrettable; communications with families had provided a balanced picture.
- Discussions with the lighting company were making progress, and the Biomass company was visiting the school to help address the current issues affecting the system. An energy efficiency grant of £27k would cover part of the cost of the replacement gas back-up boiler.
- Governors noted that a link to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, had been established and students were linking up with current undergraduates to learn about university life.

Question: *Did the change in Y10/Y11 curriculum mean that new teachers would be needed?* No, the subjects could be delivered by existing staff. There would be some adjustment of responsibility but no new staff would be required.

Question: *Had there been any feedback from parents about the impact of industrial action?* None had been received. The communications to families had set out the context, and there had also been assembly presentations aiming to create an understanding of the position among the student body. For Years 7 to 10, the closure would not affect school attendance data – but non-attendance by Y1-Y13 would). It was sincerely to be hoped that the dispute could be resolved as soon as possible as any loss of attendance was unfortunate.

Question: *Had the parent surveys indicating that some families were concerned about the school's response to bullying been a surprise?* This question always generated some strong responses, especially if a parent felt that their child had been affected. The school could perhaps improve the way in which it communicated actions taken to address bullying allegations, though it was also important to approach this in a balanced way. Because the responses were anonymous, it was not possible to establish whether they related to the same alleged incident/incidents or to a wider issue.

- A local primary school had expressed a wish to join the Trust and due diligence activity was being undertaken to assess whether this would be a good fit for the Trust before seeking the support of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). There were quality issues (the school had received two consecutive Requires Improvement judgements from Ofsted) and some concerns over finances, over which support from the local authority was being sought. Conversations with staff, governors and families were under way. Careful leadership time management was necessary to minimise the impact on TAA (and Roebuck); the team was conscious of the risk of overstretching

leadership capacity. The RSC and local authority were generally supportive of the Trust's ability to deliver school improvement.

Question: *Were other local Trusts also seeking to expand?* Yes, and it had been particularly pleasing that HST's pitch had succeeded against others. There were also some other local schools with which similar conversations were taking place.

Question: *What would happen to the Admissions Policy for TAA?* The Rule 4 preference for pupils from Trust primaries would have to be reviewed.

- **The LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 4: PUPIL PREMIUM STRATEGY STATEMENT 2022/23

- The Governor in School Morning had examined the school's activity in support of its disadvantaged students, and governors were aware of the gaps between the Pupil Premium cohort and the rest of the school in terms of attendance, engagement, progress and achievement. The school was also working with Liz Shapland to develop its approach further and the strategy was expected to look different next year. Governors asked:

Question: *How effective was encouragement to PP learners to take part in enrichment activity?* It was a key part of the support provided; it was important to get Y7 involved in as much activity – including lunchtime and after school activities and clubs – as possible. However, family pressures and expectations could make this harder. Getting to know the individual learners as soon as possible was beneficial.

Question: *Was the increased gap between PP and non PP cohorts a local or a national trend?* Attendance, engagement, progress and achievement gaps were national issues at both primary and secondary levels, but some schools made more impact than others and the existence of a national challenge should not lead to acceptance of the gaps.

Question: *To what extent was this related to past COVID-19 lockdowns?* School attendance was undoubtedly affected by lockdowns – but it had been an issue before that, and other factors (such as the current cost of living crisis) also affect family well-being and create anxiety. A number of factors have negatively affected perceptions of the need to attend school, and lower aspirations are relevant too.

- Governors noted that the senior team was considering whether the School Development Plan for 2023/24 should have a very strong focus on the PP cohort; there was a risk that this was perceived as not paying sufficient attention to the remaining three-quarters of the school. Governors encouraged the school to continue to explore and apply creative solutions to the challenges of reducing achievement gaps.
- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

ITEM 5: P4 (DECEMBER 2022) MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS REPORT

- The management accounts report was once again positive, with the year-to-date (YTD) position better than budget, but the year-end forecast being held at the original target. This reflected the view that much of the YTD difference related to the timing of some income and expenditure. In addition, capital plans cannot be finalised because the outcomes of three capital improvement fund (CIF) bids have yet to be confirmed. It is unlikely that all three will succeed, but if they do, there is sufficient to cover the funding contribution expected of the school.

Question: *Were energy costs higher than forecast?* The paper showed that they were higher than the previous year, as expected. The increases – nearly 100% year-on-year – had been provided for and could be covered in 2022/23.

Question: *Was there an opportunity to extend the sixth-form consortium?* This was not a reliable option although it provided useful support for the regular sixth form offer.

- **The LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 6: SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022/23 – PROGRESS REPORT

- A number of actions had seen an improvement in their RAG rating and there had been no deteriorations since the previous report. A workshop for families with students with low attendance (including school refusers and those on reduced timetables) aimed at supporting them with anxiety, mental health and attendance concerns had been well attended and well received. There had been a positive impact, albeit one that in some cases had been short-lived. Similar support activities would be targeted at this cohort again in future.
- **The LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 7: SITE ACCESSIBILITY – UPDATE

- Following the concerns over accessibility to parts of the school site raised via the Vice-chair after an Open Evening, the Business Manager and Head of Estates had engaged with an independent adviser on disability access (invis-Ability) representatives from which had visited the site in November 2022. The visit had been positive with eight recommendations arising. One (concerning better provision for disabled parking) was not practical at present, given the existing pressure on parking spaces, but more information about how to go about reserving spaces could be provided shortly.
- Recommendations relating to access to Reception and to the Dining Hall were also recognised to be difficult but changes could be considered as part of future projects in these areas. Otherwise, the provision of ramps and the creation of some dropped kerbs, plus better information about accessing buildings (including improved signage) and training for staff on offering assistance would be implemented during the remainder of the academic year.
- Better communication in advance of events and raising awareness among staff about accessibility needs would go some way to improving the situation.
- Governors thanked the Vice-chair for picking up the issue and responding to the initial feedback; it was good to see that there had been prompt action.
- **The TAA LGB was satisfied** that good progress was being made.

ITEM 8: TAA RISK REGISTER

- Since the previous meeting, one new risk had been added (concerning the recruitment and retention of staff). As had been widely reported, teacher recruitment was a major issue, particularly for some subjects, and relying upon supply cover created quality risks as well as increasing workload on the permanent team. This risk therefore had two aspects – teaching and learning quality and capacity/workload on permanent staff.
- It was suggested that the number of Early Career Teachers was increasing which might begin to mitigate this risk.

Question: Was there a senior leadership capacity risk associated with Trust development? There was certainly a risk, which was being monitored very carefully, and the current assessment was that the situation was manageable; taking on Ashtree Primary School – should that be the decision – would require some work and commitment of time, but both schools had leadership strength in depth.

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

ITEM 9: GOVERNOR/SLT LINK REPORTS

- .The Chair thanked governors for their excellent reports on governor visits and Governor in School sessions which were clear evidence of governor engagement with and understanding of school issues, challenges and responses. Governors found the sessions valuable and informative; chances to speak directly to students and staff.
- Jenny White apologised but had to leave the meeting temporarily.
- **The TAA LGB noted** the report.

ITEM 10: POLICIES REVIEW

- Four policies had been presented at this meeting. Two were for review and approval and two for information. The first two (for approval) were Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Careers.
- The RSE Policy had been revised by Matt Cox, who was now responsible for this area. The proposed amendments were not material but reflected current language.
- Governors suggested some minor amendments to the Careers Policy:
 - to move reference to the school following the Gatsby benchmarks from the section headed 'Aims and Objectives' into the section headed 'Rationale';
 - to incorporate more references to and information about apprenticeships, given the increased level of interest in this option – and the schools active support of it as a quality post-16 destination.
- Governors welcomed the CCTV and Provider Access Policies. In respect of the former, they suggested that an addition be made to the section headed 'Operation and Access' confirming that the Trust would "take reasonable steps to avoid collateral intrusion" when deploying CCTV. Questions about what parts of the school would be "reasonably expected to be private" and what "exceptional circumstances" would warrant the deployment of CCTV in classrooms were explored; making it clear that the headteacher would make those decisions would also be a useful addition.
- **The TAA LGB approved** the RSE and the Careers Policy, subject to making the suggested amendments to the latter.
- **The TAA LGB noted** the Provider Access Policy **and suggested that the CCTV Policy be amended** to emphasise that 'collateral intrusion' would be minimised.

Action: Make amendments to the policies as suggested and arrange for publication.

- Jenny White returned to the meeting.

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Future school events

- Dates for future school events (music, arts, drama sports) would be circulated to governors.

Action: Identify and share schedule of future school events.

- Jenny White had been impressed by the enthusiastic production of Little Shop of Horrors she had seen at TAA in December and said that the Head of Drama at St Chris's would be happy to discuss future co-operation (eg access to costume store, possible access to school theatre).

Action: Make contact with the Head of Drama at St Chris's in Letchworth.

ITEM 12: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Thursday 9 May 2023, 18.00, in the Sixth Form Centre, TAA, Stevenage and by videoconference (Microsoft Teams).
- The meeting closed at 19.35.

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Signed – Chair of Governors

Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who	When
05/05/22	2.	Provide diversity analysis for student and staff cohorts at TAA.	Mark Lewis	27/05/22
13/10/22	2.	Issue reminder about returning 2022/23 Declarations of Interest.	Robert Dale	31/10/22
01/12/22	4.	Consider how to set and report on success measures in future SEND reporting.	Mark Lewis	31/01/23
09/02/23	10	Make amendments to the policies [Careers and CCTV] as suggested and arrange for publication.	Robert Dale	28/02/23
09/02/23	11.	Identify and share schedule of future school events.	Mark Lewis	28/02/23
09/02/23	11.	Make contact with the Head of Drama at St Chris's in Letchworth.	Mark Lewis	28/02/23