



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 and by videoconference on Tuesday 9 May 2023 starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Hilary Clifford (Chair)
Julia Cooke
Rachael Coulthart
Howard Crompton
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)

Kerry Pritchett (by videoconference)
Philip Rolt
Lynsey Steadman
Jenny White
Stephanie Williams

BY INVITATION

Maria Janes (Headteacher, Ashtree Primary School)

IN ATTENDANCE

Katie Bailey (Assistant Headteacher, Careers STEM and Pupil Premium) (Item 2 only)
Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)

Matthew Cox (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead) (Item 2 only)
Robert Dale (Governance Professional)

WELCOME

- The Chair welcomed three new local governors:
 - **Stephanie Williams** – Parent Governor. Stephanie has been a parent governor at a primary school for 3 years and works as a Local Authority child protection solicitor in a large London Borough, giving her a strong background in child protection and safeguarding and school governance.
 - **Rachael Coulthart** – Co-opted Governor. Rachael is a parent of a student at TAA and has been a Primary Teacher for many years in Stevenage, serving on several Governing Boards during this time.
 - **Phil Rolt** – Co-opted Governor. Phil is a parent of a student at TAA and a former student himself. He served for 15 years in the Royal Air Force as an Engineering Technician later moving into the Rail Industry, then sidestepping into Health & Safety. He is now employed within the Space Sector.
- The Chair also welcomed Maria Janes, the headteacher of Ashtree Primary School as an observer. Ashtree's governing body had passed a resolution asking to join the Hart Schools Trust and Maria had asked if she could see how the Trust's governance worked in practice.
- The LGB was delighted to have three new governors with such excellent skills and experience and to have Maria present for this meeting.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cate Ducati, David Gray (Vice-chair), and Jo Mellett.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- No additional interests were declared.

ITEM 1C: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 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:
 - Provide diversity analysis for student and staff cohorts at TAA. **Action complete** Data on student enrolments had been circulated to members on 9 December 2022 and staff data on 21 February 2023.
 - Issue reminder about returning 2022/23 Declarations of Interest. **Action under way**. There were two outstanding replies (one being a recent appointment).
 - Consider how to set and report on success measures in future SEND reporting. **Action complete**. This had been a topic at the recent Governor in School day session and would be reported on through the Headteacher's report and a Deep Dive in the coming academic year. It was important for governors to understand what the school was doing to support students on the SEND register, not least as they comprised a significant cohort at TAA.
 - Make amendments to the policies [Careers and CCTV] as suggested and arrange for publication. **Action complete**. The updated policies have been added to the website.
 - Identify and share schedule of future school events. **Action complete**. The newsletter includes forward information about events and is circulated regularly. Governors were encouraged to try to attend a couple of the Governor in School sessions each year and any social events they could manage.
 - Make contact with the Head of Drama at St Chris's in Letchworth. **Action complete**. Contact between the relevant staff had been made.

ITEM 2: PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CURRICULUM (PSHE)

- Matt Cox and Katie Bailey joined the meeting to present this item. They noted that the PSHE curriculum was designed to address statutory guidance applying to Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and to provide age-appropriate teaching and learning. The PSHE covered around 80% of the statutory guidance with the balance being covered by other parts of the timetable (such as RE, form time, assemblies etc).
- PSHE had one lesson a fortnight – so between 17 and 19 a year – with three broad themes: Relationships; Keeping Safe; and Health and Wellbeing. Examples of key lessons had been circulated with the meeting pack. These included presentations about pornography, respecting people as individuals, consent in relationships, contraception, vaccination. Governors asked:

Question: *Should teaching about online safety be introduced earlier than Y10?* It was also covered in the Y7 and Y8 PSHE curriculum and in the Character curriculum, which also included issues such as 'fake news'.

Question: *To what extent had the school considered the media interest in this issue?* It was not clear how sensationalised some of the media stories about how this curriculum was being delivered in other schools were. TAA's approach was to be sensitive and sensible about preparing children for experiences they might be - or have already been - exposed to. Teachers used peer review to check the teaching resources they planned to use for relevance and age-appropriateness.

Question: *How were parents informed and had any exercised the right to withdraw?* Curriculum information was posted on Google Classroom as with all other subjects. No withdrawals had taken place.

Question: *Did staff have access to different resources for each year group?* Yes, and teachers worked hard not to duplicate subjects in different years – although they might cover similar subjects from a different angle, and aspects might appear in other curriculum areas (such as science or character).

Question: *Did students engage with the PSHE curriculum?* Most did. Lessons about financial matters were popular with a lot of discussion and questions.

Question: *Did students of different sexes feel comfortable about speaking in front of each other?* They appeared to be happy to do so and this was thought to be better than creating separation; it was also helpful to see things from another's perspective; peer feedback could be especially impactful.

Question: *Were Y7 aware of pornography?* Published data suggested that nationally, 50% of Y7 students would already have been exposed to pornography - and for 60% of this group, the experience had been unintentional. The school's perception was not inconsistent with these data and it was important to be aware of the impact of the online world on childhood experiences.

Question: *How were issues of gender identity considered within this curriculum?* It was difficult (and inappropriate) to have significant discussions with individual learners about this in lessons. If the question came up, a separate pastoral conversation might be suggested. Staff were being asked to log these kinds of issues on CPOMS as they arose.

Question: *How comfortable was the school with the impact of this curriculum and was outcome data available?* The school kept the curriculum under regular review and sought to ensure that other provision (such as the Character curriculum) complemented PSHE – for example, covering social media and anti-racism content. The school was also part of Operation Educa-8 (a Stevenage based multi-agency programme) which was currently focussing on vaping as this was a key current issue.

Question: *How confident was the school about the feedback loop for parents?* It was recognised that not enough was currently being done to collect feedback and communicate on issues that would help parents engage meaningfully in discussion outside school, but this was being considered by the staff team. Parent Forums were an existing route but were not always as well attended as would be wished.

- **The TAA LGB welcomed** the thorough report and supported the approach being taken by the school to meet its statutory responsibilities and prepare students for adult life.

ITEM 3: MARCH MOCK EXAM RESULTS

- Mock examinations had been conducted in March under full exam conditions. For Y11 these had been in the core subjects only; for Y13, they were in all subjects. Performance forecasts for the year-end were informed by the results of these examinations plus evidence from classroom assessments, homework, and the teachers' judgements.
- For Y11, a Progress 8 score is estimated for the school. This measures whether the students have achieved at the level indicated by their assessed position at Y7 – so a score of zero is good, a positive score is better and a negative score less good. The calculation is also influenced by the scores of other schools, so forecasts have to rely on historic data. TAA works with SISRA, a service provider working with hundreds of schools across the country. Their data covers about one-third of the national cohort, but may not be completely representative of the final national position.
- Based on this data, and subject to these caveats, the Progress 8 forecast for summer 2023 is -0.01 within a range of -0.2 to +0.2. This is a reasonable outcome and compares well against 2022. There is expected to be downward pressure on grades this year as results are set back to 2019 outcomes.
- For Maths and English, better outcomes than forecast in December 2022 and achieved in summer 2022 are anticipated.
- Subjects where performance appears weaker are those previously identified to the LGB, though actions seem to have had a positive impact: eg, there are improved forecasts in Business Studies. Creative Imedia, English Literature and Physics.
- The main area of concern remains the achievement gap for disadvantaged (Pupil Premium) students where the cohort appears to be around a grade lower than the year group as a whole. A large number of actions have been implemented to address this and there has been a slight improvement in the forecast P8 score from -1.18 in December 2022 to -1.11 now. SEND learners have a slightly lower forecast outcome than the cohort as a whole but the difference was less significant (except for two students with EHCPs, who would not sit exams in the summer).
- Actions to address the achievement gap centre on (a) Quality First teaching; and (b) the identification and reduction of barriers to learning.

Question: *What was the level of attendance by PP learners?* PP learners tended to have lower attendance which was likely to have a material impact on progress and achievement, particularly when linked with other deprivation indicators. This would be a useful topic for a future Governor in School session.

Action: Share the Attendance Policy and add attendance to the agenda for a forthcoming Governor in School session.

Question: *When would new national average data be published?* The data from SISRA related to 2019 and 'clean' data would not be available for a while; the impact of COVID-19 on comparative data would take time to work through the system. The present Y9 cohort, for example, had not taken SATs so there was no national baseline available.

Question: *How was teaching being made as inspirational as possible? While removing barriers was necessary, it was not sufficient for excellent progress to be achieved.* The school's Character curriculum, scaffolding to support students learning and an emphasis on

aspiration was part of the answer, as was encouraging staff teams to share good practice and raise expectations.

Question: *Were students conscious of being part of 'intervention groups' and if so, how did they perceive this?* They were conscious of receiving extra teaching, but the term was not used to describe these programmes. The school was starting to ask PP learners about their individual perceptions and INSET based on challenges in the classroom had been given.

Question: *Were PP students on the school council?* All students were encouraged to participate.

Question: *Was there sufficient outreach to PP parents/carers?* There was a good level of communication with families.

- This year's Y13 was a smaller cohort than last year, but the forecast was broadly similar. Most students had identified positive destinations now – only four were yet to be confirmed. It was interesting to note that a higher proportion were considering progression other than via Higher Education; two-thirds of the cohort had chosen UCAS. Actions taken earlier in the year to improve the forecast had made a positive impact on Business Studies and Film Studies. Computer Science, English Language and Literature, and Sociology were still projecting low value-added scores. There would be a substantially larger Y13 cohort in 2023/24 and a similar size Y12.

Question: *What was the reason for the smaller Y13 cohort?* That year's intake was consistent with the pre-COVID level of recruitment; since then, more effort had been put into a more active recruitment policy, albeit one that still sought to produce the right outcome for the learner.

Question: *Were sixth form students given information about the financial impact of destination choices?* Yes, there was plenty of information about higher education, degree apprenticeships, other kinds of vocational qualification as well as employment, and this included the financial implications.

- **The TAA LGB thanked Mel Cook for her analysis and accepted the report.**

ITEM 4: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- Headlines from the report included:
 - The school roll had fallen slightly with a mix of gains and losses across Y7 to Y11. The forecast intake in September 2023 was 180 – up to the school's PAN.
 - Overall attendance was good – in the top 1/3 of schools - but there was a marked gap for Pupil Premium students, for which the school was in the bottom 40%.
 - There had been an increase in the number of behavioural incidents this academic year and the level of exclusions (five to date) is the highest in the last decade. Two of the five excluded students were in-year admissions from other schools in the area.
 - A new intervention programme (Thinking Reading) had been purchased costing c£11,500 over the first two years.
 - Enrichment activities have included the ongoing Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme programmes, foreign visits to Barcelona and New York and a range of

other events. The school had been asked to run a Life Sciences Academy programme supported by Mission 44 in the next academic year with a cohort of students being identified from current year 8. The programme would initially focus on non-white British and disadvantaged students.

- The school had managed the National Education Union's ongoing industrial action by closing for year groups other than Y11 to Y13. Staffing recruitment and retention a risk across the education sector although the school was currently fully staffed with no vacancies.

Question: *How much influence did the school have over in-year admissions?* Parental choice is decisive factor and was a determining element in one of the admissions. The other exclusion case resulted from a drug-related incident which was a school red-line. Had this not occurred, the school believed it could have supported the student. Governors also noted that there were increased instances of extreme behaviour and that anecdotally this was also being experienced in other local schools.

Question: *How was the industrial action being handled?* Staff were being helpful in keeping leaders informed of their intentions (they were under no obligation to do so) and relationships remained good.

Question: *Was industrial action likely to take place during exam periods?* It was not expected to do so.

- Governors noted that the long-scheduled roofing works would start in June and continue over 18 weeks. The scope had been reduced from the original plan because of rising costs but the works would be disruptive to car parking and because of the scaffolding required.
- One complaint (concerning alleged bullying) had been escalated to governors although the headteacher had also responded.
- Governors welcomed the news that Ashtree Primary school was hoping to join the Trust and that a successful recruitment for the headteacher's role at Roebuck had been completed.
- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

ITEM 5: P7 (MARCH 2023) MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS REPORT

- The year-to-date (YTD) position was better than budget but the full year forecast (FYF) anticipated that the targeted outturn would be achieved – any surplus funds would go towards small capital works in year. A carry forward surplus of £143k (before any match funding for Capital Improvement Fund (CIF) bids was taken into account) was likely to be achieved.
- Preparation of the 2023/24 budget was well under way. The first iteration showed a surplus of £73k, but there were still risks, including whether a pay award for teachers would be funded by government; the current pay award was also still in dispute.

Question: *Did exclusion decisions mean that funding was clawed back from TAA?* Yes, although in some cases this year, funding had never been received for the student in the first place – and so clawback would be resisted. Exclusions required careful administration and some complex financial process management.

- **The LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 6: CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER/PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER REVIEW

- Currently there were six looked after children (CLA) on the school's roll, from several different local authorities, and six previously looked after (PLA) children. Three would be joining Y7 in September and one Y11 would attend a different sixth form because their placement is being moved.
- Attendance for all CLA and PLA learners was good and all were achieving well in nearly all subjects. After school support was being provided where this was needed. A mentoring programme (MCR Pathways) was offered to all CLA and PLA students and feedback was very positive. The plan was to get more students onto the programme in 2023/24 – possibly as many as 16.

Question: *Were mentors finding liaising with school difficult?* Not as far as was known. The school, was working very closely with mentors and there were joint meetings involving students, parents/carers and mentors, including discussions around exam choices and arrangements. It was a challenge for the Pathways Co-ordinator to manage contact arrangements but they appeared to be successful.

Question: *Were there lessons from this cohort that could be applied to the wider PP cohort?* The high level of contact with families and engagement with external agencies were beneficial; these arrangements could not be replicated with a much larger cohort, and there was not the same kind of external agency support. The key lesson was that working with engaged and co-operative families could make a big difference to attendance and achievement.

- **The LGB welcomed** the report.

ITEM 7: TAA RISK REGISTER

- One new (**Risk 7:** “That the incorporation of a ‘Requires Improvement’ (RI) school into the Trust requires a level of support by the senior staff of TAA which impacts on their ability to meet their targets and support staff at TAA”) had been added to the register since the previous meeting. This related to the possibility of the Trust taking on another Primary school which had a Requires Improvement Ofsted assessment. It was expected that some leadership time would need to be given to the new school before and after the academisation, and plans to manage the needs of the Trust's other schools – especially TAA – would be carefully prepared.
- **The TAA LGB endorsed** the latest iteration of the risk register.

ITEM 8: GOVERNOR/SLT LINK REPORTS

- Written reports had been included in the meeting pack which covered the Governor in School session on 14 March 2023, and meetings between David Gray and Helen Russell, discussing how the curriculum and changes to it were communicated to students and families. Governor engagement and reporting was greatly appreciated.
- **The TAA LGB noted** the reports.

ITEM 9: POLICIES REVIEW

- The policy intended for review at this meeting (on support for Early Career Teachers (ECTs)) had been delayed and would come forward to the next meeting.
- **The TAA LGB noted** the report.

ITEM 10: PROPOSED CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2023/24

- A programme of LGB meetings similar to that for 2022/23 was proposed for 2023/24 including a mix of in-person and on-line meetings. Dates for governor in school sessions were to be finalised.
- The proposed programme included an outline agenda plan showing regular and standing items. Other items would be added as required or requested.
- **The TAA LGB approved** the proposed calendar of meetings for 2023/24.

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Governor Conversations

- A few of these were to be finalised and governors would be contacted shortly to find some convenient dates and times.

Action: Fix dates and times for governor conversation calls.

ITEM 12: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Tuesday 27 June 2023, 18.00, in the Sixth Form Centre, TAA, Stevenage and by videoconference (Microsoft Teams).
- The meeting closed at 19.50.

.....
Signed – Chair of Governors

.....
Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who	When
13/10/22	2.	Issue reminder about returning 2022/23 Declarations of Interest.	Robert Dale	31/10/22
09/05/23	3.	Share the Attendance Policy and add attendance to the agenda for a forthcoming Governor in School session.	Robert Dale	31/05/23
09/05/23	11.	Fix dates and times for governor conversation calls.	Robert Dale	31/05/23