



## THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the Local Governing Body (LGB) for the Thomas Alleyn Academy was held in Room xxxxx and by videoconference on Tuesday 27 June 2023 starting at 18.00.

### PRESENT

Hilary Clifford (Chair)  
Robert Baldock  
Julia Cooke  
Rachael Coultart  
Mark Lewis (Headteacher)

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

### IN ATTENDANCE

Melanie Cook (Deputy Headteacher)

Robert Dale (Governance Professional)

### MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

- The Chair noted that this would be the last meeting for Kerry Pritchett, who would be stepping down because of pressure of work, and also noted the resignation of Cate Ducati, for similar reasons. Governors expressed their thanks to both Kerry and Cate for their contributions over a number of years.
- Efforts would be made to maintain the school's link with Trinity College, Cambridge, which was of long-standing.

### ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Howard Crompton, David Gray (Vice-chair), Jo Mellett and Phil Rolt.

### 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 May 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:
  - Issue reminder about returning 2022/23 Declarations of Interest. **Action complete.** All declarations had now been received.
  - Share the Attendance Policy and add attendance to the agenda for a forthcoming Governor in School session. **Action under way.** Dates and topics for Governor in School sessions were being considered at present.

- Fix dates and times for governor conversation calls. **Action complete.** Suggested dates and times for the remaining calls had been identified.

## ITEM 2: PROPOSED 2023/24 BUDGET

- The proposed 2023/24 budget produced a forecast surplus of c£100k, similar in percentage terms to that forecast for 2022/23. There was reasonable certainty around income and cost and inflation assumptions had been carefully reviewed. The latest advice around teacher pay awards had been incorporated, but this was an area of risk.
- The budget had been projected forward over the three years 2023/24 to 2025/26 with similar surpluses forecast across this period. Staff costs were relatively high as a percentage of income (c83% of all income) but this reflected the experienced staff team and included a proportion of central service team costs (for which the Service Level Agreement charge was reduced).
- A small increase in departmental allocations had been given and cashflow was forecast to remain positive and strong across the period. Interest on deposits had been forecast prudently.

**Question:** *If the central service team costs were disregarded, what proportion would staff costs be?* Around 75%. The LGB would welcome further information about how Central Service costs were worked out.

**Action:** Include paper on Central Services charges in relation to TAA on a future agenda.

**Question:** *Had the team modelled what different costs would be required to achieve a 3% surplus rather than the 1.6% forecast?* Not specifically. It would have been possible to project a 2% surplus but this would have required more caution over pay and non-pay costs.

**Question:** *Was the level of agency provision (ie no increase year-on-year) appropriate?* Yes, a new cover supervisor had been appointed so (absent a major incident) staff cover would be managed internally. This was considered an important element of the school's culture. The senior team was able and willing to provide cover where necessary as well.

- Governors recognised the strong positive position forecast in this budget, and acknowledged the risks to achievement (principally associated with pay costs and government funding levels).
- **The TAA LGB recommended** the draft budget for 2023/24 to the Board.

## ITEM 3: P9 (MAY 2023) MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS REPORT

- The latest YTD position was slightly better than budget, but the full year forecast was being maintained, with the additional surplus to be committed to summer works at the school. There is also a commitment of £44k to be made towards the successful capital improvement fund (CIF) bid in respect of fire safety work.
- There had been no more permanent exclusions since the previous report; an assumption had been made about the expected transfer of funds out of the school, budget as a result but final invoices had not yet been received.
- **The TAA LGB accepted** the report.

## ITEM 4: HEADTEACHER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT

- Headlines from the report included:
  - Numbers on roll remained close to capacity in Y7 – Y11; sixth form numbers were likely to be slightly over 100 in 2023/24.
  - The exam period had come to an end; attendance had been good.
  - Attendance overall was above the national average and as at 27 June in the 81<sup>st</sup> percentile reported by Arbor.
  - Pupil Premium attendance had improved since the previous report but was still only at the 43<sup>rd</sup> percentile.
  - No more permanent exclusions had arisen and no formal complaints have been raised since the previous report. One case remained active, after governor support, but the situation appeared to have eased somewhat.
  - The roofing work on A and B Blocks had started and would be completed during the autumn term.
  - Two further days of industrial action had been scheduled in July, which would be managed in the same way that previous days had been managed. There was a risk of this action continuing into the new academic year.
  - A proposal to develop alternative provision in school to help manage behaviour and the risk of permanent exclusion would come to the LGB in the autumn term.

**Question:** *Were home visits to encourage/support attendance perceived as a threat?* They were not presented as such; they were designed to ensure help, advice and support was available to families and often did lead to better attendance.

**Question:** *How much of an issue were term-time holidays?* These were a major issue and more applications had not been authorised than before COVID. The full range of sanctions would be deployed where appropriate up to and including fines.

**Question:** *Were many Y7 children missing school?* One or two. The aim was to create good habits early in a student's school career, and Klaas and his team put a great deal of dedicated effort into encouraging this. Governors asked that their thanks be recorded and passed onto the team.

- Responses to a recent parent survey – the first carried out by the school since the COVID-019 emergency - had been strong, with positive data on feeling safe and being happy at school. Parents of SEND children noted effective communications. The team was disappointed with responses to the questions about careers advice and guidance as this was an area where strong results had been hoped for, given the range and quality of activities provided. This probably needed stronger and clear communication to families.

**Question:** *What form would better communication around careers advice take?* The approach had changed since parents had experienced this during their school days so they might not recognise how work experience and careers advice were provided by the school.

**Question:** *How effective was the school at dealing with bullying?* This was almost always a question of managing conflicting perspectives on student conduct and attempting to manage

family expectations. Sanctions were applied fairly, consistently and proportionately. However, there was a declining trend across most year groups. Issues could become more complex and harder to manage in the older year groups. The school was keen to promote a culture of kindness and inclusion as well as resilience.

**Question:** *What staff movement risks were there for the coming year?* There would always be some risk, but the current team was stable and relationships with the staff body were good.

- The roofing works had begun and the other successful Capital Improvement Fund (CIF) bid for further fire protection work was also being tendered; there was a contingency within the bid costing.
- A new telephone system (Clarion) based on a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) system with links to Arbor was expected to help staff make calls themselves directly outside teaching time.

**Question:** *What was the back up should there be issues with the internet infrastructure?* Mobile phones were the first emergency back-up. This risk was recognised and mitigations were being considered.

- Governors noted that members of the TAA senior team had been supporting the Ashtree senior team and were developing good relationships. Disappointingly, the Regional Director was expected to issue a directed Academy Order, which would allow other Trusts to submit an expression of interest to take the school on, and HST had not been named as the preferred Trust, despite that being the school's preference.
- **The TAA LGB thanked the headteacher for the school's good progress during the year and accepted the report.**

#### **ITEM 5: SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-23**

- Good progress had been achieved against the actions identified in the 2022/23 development plan with most actions rated Green (and none rated Red). Amber actions where progress had been slower (such as the Reading strategy) had been raised with the LGB during the year. In that instance, a new Reading scheme had been introduced and there was a fresh focus on disadvantaged children and those with lower attendance.

**Question:** *Would Amber-rated actions be carried forward into the 2023/24 Development Plan?* Yes, though in some cases with different actions.

**Question:** *Did the rewards scheme cost the school £3,000?* Yes. The scheme involved badges (a lot of which were handed out) and there were 'awards lunches' for those achieving higher levels.

- **The LGB welcomed** the good progress made with the 2022/23 School Development Plan.

#### **ITEM 6: SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023/24**

- The priorities identified in the plan had been discussed and agreed with the SMT and leaders were now completing the 'actions' section. The final version would come back to the LGB meeting in the autumn term. The aim was to keep the plan simple, clear and coherent.

- There would be a different approach to providing support for disadvantaged learners next year.
- **The LGB supported** the draft report and looked forward to receiving the final version.

**Action:** Add 'Draft School Development Plan 2023/24' to the LGB agenda plan.

### **ITEM 7: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION REVIEW REPORT JUNE 2023**

- The LGB was pleased to receive an internal scrutiny report that identified a range of strengths in the school's approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). A number of improvement actions were observed as being in progress and some recommendations were made for further development, covering the use of equality impact assessments, further training and efforts to widen diversity in school leadership and governance.

**Question:** *Would the report's recommendations be added to the development plan actions?* Possibly; the recommendations mainly referred to process improvements. Discussions with the HFL EDI leads about ongoing actions were continuing.

**Question:** *Was it possible to confirm that there were no issues with the deployment of sports resources?* Girls' sport and participation in fixtures and competitions was very strong, and it was planned to add more capacity for 2023/24. There was no data available on (for example) the use of school transport for male/female teams or events.

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

### **ITEM 8: TAA RISK REGISTER**

- Governors agreed that Risks 1 ("That student progress and attainment is negatively affected by previous covid-19 school closures and absence. Disadvantaged students perform less well than their peers) and 6 ("failure to recruit and retain exceptional staff impacts on TAA's ability to meet targets in its development plan. That remaining staff capacity is stretched and results in further absences and resignations".) were 'endemic'. These could usefully be reviewed and potentially nuanced; there were no immediate staff recruitment gaps and retention was generally good.
- There was a long term demographic risk as the number of secondary age students was projected to decline in the medium term, but this would not become a material concern for four or five years.
- Cyber security remained a substantial risk and should be explored in more detail at a future LGB meeting, considering how the risk was mitigated and managed.

**Action:** Add 'Cyber Security – mitigating and managing risks' to a future LGB agenda.

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

### **ITEM 9: GOVERNOR/SLT LINK REPORTS**

- The most recent governor in school morning had taken place on 14 June. The Chair thanked all governors who were able to participate. The session had been valuable and a written report would be made in due course.
- **The TAA LGB noted** the report.

## ITEM 10: POLICIES REVIEW

- Three policies had been presented for review at this meeting; one an existing policy for regular review and two new ones.
- The existing Policy related to looked-after and previously looked-after children and the minor changes had been highlighted in yellow in the circulated paper.
- The two new policies related to:
  - Student Bursaries; and
  - Transgender.
- The first had been prepared to codify current processes, to record bursary payment thresholds, clarify which students could apply and set out how they did so.
- The second had been created to ensure that the school had a consistent and clear approach with students who expressed their desire to change their gender identity and/ or name. In this area, the school took the view that parents and families should be involved in such issues and would provide a calm constructive framework.

**Question:** *What would happen if students or families did not react positively to this approach?* The Behaviour Policy would be applied as necessary in respect of students; parents could use the Complaints Policy if they were unhappy with the school's approach. Governors understood that the school would use the principle of 'Gillick competence' to defend the approach being taken. It was important to balance different individual rights in these situations and to support continuing relationships.

**Question:** *Had the pastoral team received sufficient training to support and challenge students?* Yes, the core team which would be responsible for managing the application of the policy had already received specialist training, and wider training would be provided for the rest of the staff body. As things stood currently, a very small group of learners were seriously questioning their gender identity (about half a dozen).

- Colleagues at North Hertfordshire College would be happy to provide assistance and advice if required. Governors agreed that schools could offer a level of rigorous challenge to student questions about gender identity that parents/families were often not equipped to provide; the school could take a more objective role in such cases.
- The Policy would be reviewed once guidance from the government had been received and would continue to reflect on the application of the policy in the light of individual cases. An incomplete sentence was noted in the bullet point on the fourth page of the policy document referring to a Transgender Support Lead. This needed to be corrected.
- Governors noted that there were a small number of students recorded as experiencing eating disorders.
- **The TAA LGB approved** the revised Child Looked After Policy and the proposed Bursary and (subject to the identified correction) Trans Policies.

**Action:** Update and publish the agreed Child Looked After, Bursary and Trans Policies.

## ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### *Sports Day*

- This would take place on 14 July 2023 at the Ridland Sports Stadium. Governors were very welcome to attend for all or part of the day.

## ITEM 12: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Tuesday 26 September 2023, 18.00, in the Sixth Form Centre, TAA, Stevenage and by videoconference (Microsoft Teams).
- The meeting closed at 19.45.

## THANKS

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Signed – Chair of Governors

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Date

## LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

| Meeting  | Item | What   | Who         | When     |
|----------|------|--|-------------|----------|
| 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 |
| 27/06/23 | 2.   | Include paper on Central Services charges in relation to TAA on a future agenda.                           | Robert Dale | 31/07/23 |
| 27/06/23 | 6.   | Add 'Draft School Development Plan 2023/24' to the LGB agenda plan.  | Robert Dale | 31/07/23 |
| 27/06/23 | 8.   | Add 'Cyber Security – mitigating and managing risks' to a future LGB agenda.                               | Robert Dale | 31/07/23 |
| 27/06/23 | 10.  | Update and publish the agreed Child Looked After, Bursary and Trans Policies.                              | Kate Prince | 31/07/23 |