

Thomas Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter

Minutes of a remote meeting (via Zoom) of the governing body held on Monday, 7 December 2020 at 4.00pm.

Present:

Mr M Prescott (chair), Mr A Barton, Mr M Cruddas, Mrs P Curtis, Mrs B Davies, Mr C Forsyth, Mr T Fuller, Mr P Hudson, Mrs E Lund, Mr M Osborne-Town, Mrs L Perry, Mr R Pye, Mr P Taylor.

Mrs J Rudge (Headteacher)

Also in Attendance:

Mrs R Lindsay (Assistant Headteacher)

Mr J Mitchell (Assistant Headteacher)

Mr A Storer (Business Manager)

Mr S Slater (Chair of Trust Board)

Mr R Sheldon (Clerk to the Governing Body)

Apologies:

An apology for absence was received from Ms R Horry.

Apologies for late arrival were received from Mr A Barton, Mrs B Davies, Mrs L Perry.

New Governor Induction:

(Governors present for induction – Mr Prescott, Mr Forsyth, Mr Fuller, Mrs Lund, Mr Pye).

Prior to the start of the formal meeting, a short governor induction session was led by Mr Prescott, chair of governors, for the four recently appointed governors. Copies of the documents used to support the induction would be made available in Office 365 for the benefit of all governors.

Mr Prescott was thanked for delivering the induction session.

Chair's Welcome:

The chair welcomed new governors to their first meeting. He was also pleased to welcome Mr Slater, chair of the Trust Board, to the meeting. Mr Slater was attending both in his capacity as chair of trustees and as link trustee for the school.

258. Governing Body Matters:

a) Membership of Governing Body

The chair had previously welcomed new governors to their first meeting:

- Co-opted – Mr C Forsyth, Mr T Fuller
- Parent – Mr R Pye
- Staff – Mrs E Lund

Governors noted that they had each been appointed for a four-year period.

The chair also reported that he had spoken with Mrs Brown, co-opted governor, who had expressed a wish to continue as co-opted governor. (Her term of office finished on 4 December 2020). Governors were informed that she was currently experiencing difficulties in joining remote meetings due to weak signals where she lived.

The chair further reported that he had also discussed with Dr Jary (former governor) about her appointment as an associate governor to help support the headteacher

and governing body with specific issues from time to time. This was to make full use of her previous experience as a full governor. Dr Jary was willing to take on such a role.

Mr Slater recognised the value that Dr Jary would bring to the school and governing body but reported that he would raise this matter at the next meeting of trustees to seek their views regarding the appointment of associate governors on local governing boards.

It was resolved –

- i) That governors formally appoint the above named to the governing body for a four-year period, with effect from 7 December 2020.
- ii) That governors approve the appointment of Mrs S Brown as co-opted governor, for a further four-year period with effect from 5 December 2020.
- iii) That governors support the appointment of Dr Jary as associate governor, subject to Trust Board approval.

b) Register of Business Interests

The clerk reminded governors that he had asked them to complete the declaration of interest pro-forma so that the business register could be updated. Those governors still to return the form were asked to do so at the earliest opportunity.

c) Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest for items to be discussed at this meeting.

259. Chair – Report of Actions Taken:

That chair reported that he had taken the following actions since the last meeting:

- He remained in regular contact with the headteacher to support her with regard to the implications of Covid-19 and continued to thank her and the staff team, on behalf of the governing body, for all of the work that they were doing to ensure that the school remained open.
- Approval had been given for the appointment of additional temporary staffing to cover the absence of staff having to self-isolate.
- Approval for adjustments to the leadership team as necessary to cover absences.
- Approval for the purchase of marquees for use by students.

It was resolved –

That governors support the actions taken by the chair.

260. Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020 had been previously made available to governors in Office 365.

It was resolved –

That the minutes be received and approved.

261. Matters Arising:

- a) Composition of Governing Body (Minute 243(b) refers)
The headteacher was pleased to confirm that the newly appointed co-opted governors had the necessary skills and expertise to support the work of the governing body. The need for gender and ethnicity equality, including BAME, would be key to the appointment of new governors in the future, although the importance of adding value to the work of the governing body would remain a central requirement.
- b) School Transport (Minute 247(a) refers)
The headteacher reported that the local authority had not changed its policy regarding school transport but confirmed that all students had found alternative ways of getting to school. Governors noted, however, that school transport remained a challenge due to the need to adhere to Covid-19 guidance.
- c) New Staff (Minute 249(k) refers)
In response to a governor question, the headteacher reported that all newly appointed staff had settled well into school. Those new staff new to teaching, however, were receiving most support. The support would continue as long as it was necessary for the benefit of staff.
- d) Support Staff (Minute 253 refers)
The business manager reported that trustees had approved for support staff to receive a pay increase in line with national guidance and confirmed that all necessary actions had been taken.

262. School Improvement Plan – Teaching and Learning:

Mrs Lindsay was present for this item and took governors through the details of a report that had been previously made available in Office 365 to show the actions taken by the school in response to Government directives for remote teaching programmes. An outline was given of the strategies put in place to ensure that students continued to receive a planned curriculum through remote learning. Governors were pleased to note that most staff were becoming more comfortable with the delivery of remote lessons.

The headteacher reported that her expectation was for staff to deliver remote lessons to a class, or year group, having to self-isolate. For sixth form students, either in school or at home, the expectation was for staff to deliver a live lesson. This was not the same expectation for KS3 and KS4 students due to the needs of managing the class. However, the headteacher informed governors that this was something she was keeping under review.

It was resolved –

That Mrs Lindsay be thanked for attending the meeting and outlining the details of the school strategy for remote learning, which was noted.

263 Curriculum – Ebacc:

Mr Mitchell was present for this item and took governors through the details of a report that had been previously made available in Office 365 to show DfE expectations for Ebacc entries in schools. Governors noted that the Ebacc is English (language and literature), maths, the sciences, geography and history, and a language. Mr Mitchell reported that

schools were measured on the number of students that take GCSE's in these core subjects and that the Government's ambition was for 75% of students studying the Ebacc subject combination at GCSE by 2022 and 90% by 2025.

The headteacher reported that strategies were in place to actively encourage students to opt for French. However, the option to make French compulsory in order to meet Government ambition was not being recommended to governors for this academic year. The implications of this would be that the school would continue to not meet Ebacc expectations. This would, however, be reviewed for the following year. The headteacher further reported that if French was made compulsory then it would have implications for some staff teaching other subjects. Governors views were therefore sought.

Full discussion followed and governors recognised that if students were required to study French it would impact on the other subject options available to them. They also recognised that not all parents and students in the school community supported the value of studying for a modern foreign language, particularly if it was at the expense of studying for a different preferred option. Governors noted, however, the DfE expectations for Ebacc entries and the possible impact on the school if they were not met.

The support from middle schools in helping to strengthen the teaching of modern foreign languages across the Trust was also seen as critical and the headteacher confirmed that one member of staff was currently seconded to work with the schools.

Mr Slater further reported that the Trust was shortly to submit a Trust Capacity Fund bid and that criteria for such a bid included meeting Ebacc expectations. He further reported, however, that an issue for all schools regarding this matter was the ability to recruit sufficient modern languages teachers to help meet the initial target of 75%.

It was resolved –

- i) That Mr Mitchell be thanked for attending the meeting and for presenting the Ebacc report.
- ii) That governors approve the continuation of the current study options for this year and which would not include making it compulsory for students to study French.
- iii) That the headteacher and the senior leadership be requested to develop a strategy to support the school in making the studying of French compulsory for the next school year.
- iv) That the headteacher and business manager, in helping governors make an informed decision, be requested to model a school staffing establishment based on 50% of students studying French and also based on 75% of students for comparison.

264. Headteacher's Report:

(Mrs Lindsay and Mr Mitchell left the meeting at this point).

A copy of the headteacher's report had been previously made available in Office 365 and the headteacher took governors through the detail of it, highlighting a number of key issues. Governors were reminded that all matters included in the report were discussed in more detail at Teaching and Learning and Managing and Resourcing committee meetings.

a) Leadership Score Card

The headteacher reported that this section was more difficult than usual to update given the implications of Covid-19 around staff absences and finance. Governors were informed that the additional costs to the school were currently in the region of £110K.

Discussion took place regarding the effectiveness of governance and the chair asked Mr Slater if it was possible for the Trust Board to undertake a review. Mr Slater reported that trustees had already given approval for two external reviews to be undertaken during the following year – safeguarding and governance. Mr Slater was confident that an external review of governance would be more robust than if undertaken by the Trust Board.

It was resolved –

That governors support an external review of governance and look forward to this being undertaken during the course of next year.

b) Predicted Student Outcomes (Y11)

An outline was given of the predicted student grades for 2021, together with comparative data for 2019 and 2020. The headteacher reported that it was not possible to provide predictions for progress 8 as no national data was available for outcomes in 2020.

The headteacher further reported that Maths 5+ had been identified as a concern and that she was currently looking into the reasons for this. A further report would be given at the next meeting. A further breakdown of results for the different ability groups would be given in future reports as this would help identify appropriate support strategies to bring about improvement where necessary.

Governors were informed of those departments that continued to be a challenge, including in particular French and Computer Science. Other departments were being tracked as necessary to ensure that appropriate support could be given if necessary. Discussion took place and governors requested the headteacher to invite the heads of departments causing particular concern to a future meeting so they could outline to governors the work being undertaken to bring about improvement. The headteacher suggested that the head of Maths and the head of Modern Languages be invited to a future meeting.

It was resolved –

That the heads of the Maths and Foreign Languages departments be invited to attend the next meeting of the Learning and Standards committee.

c) Subject Support and Interventions

The headteacher gave an update on the various support strategies being put in place by various departments to support students, although some of the identified strategies were not possible to undertake due to Covid-19 restrictions. The support strategies included assessment weeks, after school classes, remote revision sessions and one to one support. The headteacher also confirmed that mock exams would be held during February 2021, but requested approval from governors for them to be held classrooms rather than the usual larger areas ie. sports hall. Government guidance was still awaited for details around next year's exams but the headteacher gave an assurance that the school would follow the advice given.

Discussion followed and an issue was raised around the use of classrooms for mock exams given that students would not gain any experience in helping to prepare for sitting exams in the usual setting of a larger venue. The headteacher reported that she was aware of this and, as a result, further mock exams would be held towards the end of March next year and would be held in the larger venues.

In addition to the support strategies already in place, the headteacher reported that students would benefit from the use of revision guides and therefore requested governors to approve the purchase of the guides for all Y11 students.

It was resolved –

- i) That governors give approval for the February mock exams to be held in classrooms.
 - ii) That governors approve the purchase of revision guides (at a cost of around £20K) for all Y11 students.
 - iii) That governors be informed of the outcomes of mock exams to help them identify which support strategies were proving successful and to identify others which may be of more benefit.
- d) 6th Form Performance
Data was made available to show how 6th form students were performing and the headteacher was pleased to report that the intervention strategies that had previously been agreed had proved successful and that outcomes had been positive.

The headteacher was also pleased to report that all Y11 students were having 1:1 interviews with Heads of House and senior leaders to discuss 6th form options and careers advice. The headteacher also wished to record her thanks to Mrs Justine North for conducting interviews with students applying for Oxbridge and medicine.

In response to a governor question, the headteacher acknowledged that the code of conduct for 6th form students to sign had been sent out later than usual due to Covid-19 disruptions. They would usually be sent earlier in the school year.

It was resolved –

That governors also place on record their thanks to Mrs North for the support she was giving to students applying for Oxbridge and medicine.

- e) Teaching and Learning
A summary report was given of the training programmes available to staff during the period 1 September to 23 October. Governors were pleased to note the wide variety of training courses made available to staff.
- f) Teaching School
The headteacher reported that the Teaching School had successfully met two of its three KPIs (initial teacher training and professional/leadership development) but the third KPI (school to school support) had not been met due to Covid-19 restrictions. Governors were reminded that national funding for teaching schools was to cease at the end of the school year and that, as a result, the school was currently being aligned with a local Teaching School hub.

g) School Curriculum

Details were given of the school's curriculum offer to students and the number of students within each of the core curriculum groups. This remained under review by the leadership team.

h) School Site

The headteacher was pleased to report that work on the school roof had now been completed. 2021/22 CIF bids were to be submitted for the replacement of fire alarms/fire doors throughout the site and replacement windows in some parts of the school building.

i) Health and Safety

Details were given of the structure in place for the management Covid-19 issues and a focus on care control commitment. Governors noted the specific responsibilities given to each member of the management team.

It was resolved –

That governors place on record their thanks to the management team for all of the work they were undertaking on behalf of the school.

j) Succession Plan

Details were given of the agreed succession plan in place to cover the leadership team and other key posts in school, in the event of absences due to Covid-19. Discussion followed and governors recognised the burden placed on the headteacher to ensure the health and well-being of staff and students. Governors also expressed their thanks to Mrs Maingay for stepping up as acting headteacher whilst Mrs Rudge was not in school due to having to self-isolate.

Mr Slater further reported that trustees continued to monitor all of the work being undertaken in schools to respond to the implications of Covid-19. A letter of thanks was to be sent to all schools, from the Trust Board, to thank staff for all of the work they were doing.

k) Staffing Update

The headteacher reported that 5 additional day-time cleaners had been appointed to ensure the regular cleaning of classrooms and other areas of the school. The headteacher further reported that her biggest concern currently was for IT technician support due to the demands being placed on the team by other ULT schools. The team was being stretched and, due to the recent resignation of the ULT IT technician, the CEO had been informed that support to schools would have to cease until alternative arrangements were put in place.

Mr Slater reported that trustees were aware of this issue and had identified it as a priority to resolve. IT support across the Trust would be included in the Trust capacity Fund bid and governors were also advised that a review of IT provision and support across the ULT was to be undertaken early in the new year.

Governors were also informed of the number of absences by both teaching staff and support staff due to having to self-isolate. All staff continued to be paid during their absence.

It was resolved –

That governors fully support the decision taken by the headteacher to ensure that staff were paid as normal although absent from school.

l) Behaviour and Attendance

The headteacher reported that student attendance from the start of the new school year had been very good although it had fallen very recently due to various year groups having to self-isolate due to positive Covid-19 cases stemming from the community. The school's EWO was working with the school to support students at home as necessary.

The number of fixed-term exclusions were higher than usual but the headteacher reported that this was reflected in many other schools across the country. However, there were currently no permanent exclusions.

Governors thanked the headteacher for her detailed report and the chair further reported that the format of the report was for them to agree with the headteacher to ensure that they received the necessary information to help them support, and challenge if necessary, the operation of the school. The chair invited governors to submit any views to him so that they could then be shared with the headteacher.

265. Managing and Resourcing Committee:

Minutes of meetings of the Managing and Resourcing committee, held on 23 June and 13 October 2020, had been previously made available in Office 365.

It was resolved –

That minutes of the meetings of the Managing and Resourcing committee be received and noted.

266. Learning and Standards Committee:

Minutes of meetings of the Learning and Standards committee, held on 15 September and 3 November 2020, had been previously made available in Office 365.

It was resolved –

That minutes of the meetings of the Learning and Standards committee be received and noted.

267. ULT Update:

Mr Slater gave a brief update on the ULT and, as reported earlier in the meeting, a review of IT provision and support was to be undertaken. He also confirmed that discussions were taking place between the headteacher and the CEO regarding the dual role undertaken by Mr Storer as the school's business manager and the ULT's chief finance officer.

Mr Slater was also pleased to report that growth of the ULT remained a key priority and that Richard Clarke First School was to join the Trust as an official member early in the new year. Work on the new school also continued and was due to open in September 2022.

It was resolved –

That the ULT update be received and noted, with thanks to Mr Slater.

268. Safeguarding/Health and Safety – Including Covid-19 Update:

The headteacher reported that since the start of the school year there had been 20 positive cases (16 students and 4 staff) stemming from the community. On average 30 students were self-isolating each week but, at the end of last week, this figure was 66. During the same period 48 members of staff had self-isolated at different times. Most had returned to work at the end of the isolation period but one member of staff that had tested positive remained absent from school. The headteacher informed governors of the support and guidance given by local authority officers to help support her with each case identified.

The headteacher further reported on everything that was being done in school to ensure that it could remain open but governors were informed of the additional financial implications due to increased costs to cover staff absences in particular. Other necessary health and safety measures to comply with Covid-19 guidance were impacting on the school's finances. The headteacher was appreciative of donations, around £36K, made to the school to help support the increased costs and was also pleased to report that the school also continued to support their vulnerable families through the provision of food boxes. This support would continue.

The headteacher was also pleased to report the regular communication with parents to keep them fully up-dated with what was happening in school and their support in return was positive.

It was resolved –

- i) That the Covid-19 update be noted and governors also place on record their thanks to the local authority for the advice and support being given to the headteacher.
- ii) That the chair, on behalf of the governing body, would write a report for inclusion in the final school newsletter to parents at the end of this term, to highlight all of the work that the school was doing in response to the pandemic.

269. Policies:

Copies of the following policies had been previously made available to governors in Office 365:

- TAHS Exams Contingency Plan 2020
- TAHS Internal Appeals Procedure 2020
- TAHS Word Processor (exams) Policy 2020
- ULT Allowances Policy (Autumn 2020)
- ULT Complaints Procedure (Autumn 2020)
- ULT Safer Recruitment Policy (Autumn 2020)

The headteacher reported that there had been no significant changes to the TAHS policies but that the Exam Contingency Plan had been updated to reflect DfE guidance due to the implications of Covid-19.

The headteacher also reminded governors that the ULT policies were to be received and adopted by governors.

It was resolved –

- i) That TAHS policies be received and approved.
- ii) That ULT policies be received and adopted.

270. Evidence for KPIs:

As previously reported, the chair confirmed that a review of KPIs for the previous school year had been undertaken. The review had shown that the highest achieving KPI had been around governor challenge but that more had to be done to link this with the governors' vision.

The matters considered at this meeting met the following key performance indicators:

- KPI 1 – governors ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
Evidenced through discussions around Ebacc and request for headteacher to develop a strategy to enable the school to work towards Ebacc expectations. (Minute 263)

Evidenced through a request to the Trust Board to undertake a review of governance to assess the governing body's effectiveness. (Minute 264)

- KPI 4 – governors provide challenge and hold the headteacher and other senior leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour and safety
Evidenced through discussions around departmental strengths and weaknesses and a request for Heads of Maths and Modern Languages to meet with governors to outline actions to improve departmental outcomes. (Minute 264)

Evidenced through the discussion around mock exams and a request to the headteacher to report on outcomes to enable governors to assess the effectiveness of the various improvement strategies to support student outcomes. (Minute 264)

- KPI 8 – governors engage with stakeholders, including staff and parents
Evidenced through continued discussions throughout the meeting and governor recognition of all the work being undertaken by members of staff to ensure that the school remained open and safe for both staff and students.

Evidenced through the decision of the governing body to support the headteacher in paying all members of staff absent from school due to having to self-isolate. (Minute 264)

Evidenced through the chair including a section in the next school newsletter to parents to inform them of everything that the school was doing to minimise the effects of the pandemic and to in keeping the school open. (Minute 268)

271. Confidentiality:

Governors were reminded of the need for confidentiality with regard to a number of issues discussed, and documents received during the meeting, but it was agreed that there was no need for any of the issues to be recorded in a confidential appendix of the minutes.

272. Date of Next Meeting:

It was resolved –

That the next meeting of the full governing body be held, as previously agreed, on Monday, 1 March 2021 at 4.00pm. (The meeting would, as usual, be preceded by a training session at 3.30pm). The meeting would again also be held through Zoom.

M. Prescott

Signed.....

1 March 2021

Date.....