

Thomas Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter

Minutes of a remote meeting (via Microsoft Teams) of the governing body held on Monday, 1 March 2021 at 4.00pm.

Present:

Mr M Prescott (chair), Mr A Barton, Mrs S Brown, Mr M Cruddas, Mrs P Curtis, Mrs B Davies, Mr C Forsyth, Mr T Fuller, Ms R Horry, 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 A Maingay (Deputy Headteacher)
Mr J Mitchell (Assistant Headteacher)
Mr A Storer (Business Manager)
Dr S Clark (CEO of the Trust)
Mr R Sheldon (Clerk to the Governing Body)

Apologies:

An apology for late arrival was received from Mrs B Davies.
Mr Hudson also apologised for having to leave the meeting at 5.00pm due to other commitments.

Chair's Welcome:

The chair welcomed Dr Clark, CEO of the Trust, to the meeting to give an update on the ULT later in the meeting.

Governor Training:

Prior to the start of the formal meeting, the headteacher and deputy headteacher gave an overview of the many different governor training courses available for governors including details of the training providers i.e. National Governor Association, Entrust. Details were also given on how to access the provider training sites.

Particular focus was given to the safeguarding courses available and governors were informed that Mrs Maingay was the lead for level 1 safeguarding training and that governors were encouraged to update this training every three years. PREVENT training was also highlighted and governors were strongly recommended to complete this recently updated on-line training course. Safer Recruitment training was currently provided by Insight HR and governors were advised to renew this training every three years. A request was made for consideration to be given to arranging a Safer Recruitment training session for the governing body. Mrs Maingay agreed to look into this and to also see if such a course could be undertaken on-line.

The headteacher reported that a number of courses had a cost associated with them but if any governor wished to access an appropriate course then they should contact Mrs Maingay who would make the necessary arrangements. The headteacher further reported that, in addition to advertised governor courses, some of the advertised courses for senior leaders may also be appropriate to attend.

Governors attending any training course, whether in person or on-line, were encouraged to inform Mrs Maingay, the school office or the clerk to the governing body, to ensure that the governor training record was kept updated.

Governors asked if consideration could be given for some joint training between trustees and governors and Dr Clark, CEO, confirmed that this was something that the Trust Board was encouraging and was looking to arrange appropriate courses at various times in the future.

Mrs Rudge and Mrs Maingay were thanked for providing the overview on governor training courses and how they could be accessed.

273. Governing Body Matters:

a) Membership of Governing Body

The chair was pleased to report that the Trust Board had approved the appointment of Dr M Jary as an associate governor. This role would enable her to support the governing body, and committees, as necessary.

It was resolved –

That governors welcome the appointment of Dr Jary as an associate governor.

b) Register of Business Interests

The clerk reported that the business register had been updated as necessary to reflect the information provided through the declaration of interest pro-formas that had been returned.

c) Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest for items to be discussed at this meeting. Mr Osborne-Town reported that he had recently been appointed as a director of The Key multi-academy trust, but that it was not necessary for him to declare any specific interests in relation to this meeting.

274. Chair – Report of Actions Taken:

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

- The school's updated risk assessment had been approved and a copy made available on the school's website. Governors were also informed that the risk assessment remained under ongoing review and that any views should be submitted to the headteacher.
- He had worked with the headteacher with regard to a number of staffing matters and appropriate decisions taken in the best interest of all concerned.

It was resolved –

That governors support the actions taken by the chair.

275. Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2020 had been previously made available to governors in Office 365.

It was resolved –

That the minutes be received and approved.

276. Matters Arising:

- a) Composition of Governing Body (Minute 261(a) refers)
The headteacher was requested to provide a report for the next meeting to show the number of ethnic students in school. This report would enable governors to ensure that any future changes to the composition of the governing body reflected those numbers. The headteacher agreed to provide a report as requested.
- b) Ebacc (Minute 263 (refers)
At the request of governors, the headteacher confirmed that the number of students studying English for Ebacc requirements related to either Language or Literature, and not both.
- c) Trust Review of Governance (Minute 264(a) refers
The CEO reported that the Trust Board was still looking to undertake a review of governance but this had been put on hold due to other priorities around Covid-19. However, they hoped to shortly re-visit the tendering process and governors would be updated at the appropriate time.
- d) Subject Support and Interventions (Minute 264(c) refers)
The headteacher reported that mock exams had been held during February but had been conducted remotely. The headteacher further reported that, following the return of students to school, an assessment week was planned to be held during April but that the details around this remained under consideration pending further DfE guidance. In response to governor questions the headteacher confirmed that assessment would be conducted in the classroom, but under exam conditions as much as possible, with students having an idea in advance of the topics to be included in the assessment papers. As such, students would not be given as much notice of planned assessments as they would in normal circumstances. The headteacher also gave an assurance that a robust assessment process would be followed.

Discussion followed and governors asked to be provided with further information regarding results in the different subject areas, and particularly for English and Maths.

It was resolved –

That the headteacher be requested to provide for the next meeting a report giving a breakdown of English and Maths results, and other subjects if available.

- e) Richard Clarke First School (Minute 267 refers)
Governors were pleased to note that Richard Clarke First School would very shortly be joining as a full member school of the ULT. Governors asked if it would be appropriate for them to write to the governing body to formally welcome them. The CEO reported that the Trust Board would be sending a formal letter of welcome but that she would liaise with the headteacher regarding a similar letter being sent from this governing body.
- f) Lateral Flow Tests (Minute 268 refers)
The headteacher reported that 18 staff were now employed in the Centre, including some members of school staff and training for the lateral flow tests was currently being given. The headteacher further reported that the Government was to fund up

to £19K for the tests but it was unlikely that this amount would be sufficient to cover the likely testing period. The financial situation was therefore being kept under review.

277. Headteacher's Report:

A copy of the headteacher's report had been previously made available in Office 365 and governors had been asked to read the report in advance of the meeting and submit questions to then be discussed at this meeting. The chair thanked Mr Fuller and Mr Taylor for submitting a number of challenging questions. The headteacher took governors through the detail of her report, responding to those questions, and all others asked, whilst also highlighting a number of other key issues.

a) Leadership Score Card

The headteacher reported that, despite the challenges around Covid-19, the school's systems continued to work well and it therefore remained as a 'good' judgment. The judgment around senior staff had been moved to 'excellent' in recognition of the strengths being shown by the leadership team in response to the many current challenges to the school. The pandemic was having an impact on the school's finances but they were being managed. The headteacher reported that current additional expenditure was in the region of £150K and this was eating into school reserves. However, budget management would help to ensure that there was an in-year surplus of around £40K. Governors questioned the likely impact on the overall level of reserves and the headteacher confirmed that this was in the region of £500k. Much of it though was earmarked for necessary future capital projects.

Discussion followed and governors questioned if school judgments and outcomes were benchmarked against other similar schools. The headteacher stated that it was difficult to compare how the school was responding to the pandemic against other schools but was pleased to report that Thomas Alleyne's was one of the first schools to offer live remote lessons. Parental response to this had also been well received. The CEO further reported that the parental support had been recognised and was testament to the work of the leadership team and other staff colleagues.

It was resolved –

That governors place on record their thanks to the leadership team for their work to ensure that school systems remained strong.

b) Student Outcomes

Before going through this section of the report in detail, and at the request of governors, the headteacher explained what each of the columns were demonstrating with regard to the various performance levels. Governors questioned in particular what was being done to correct the issue of attainment/progress in ICT.

Mrs Maingay reported that the senior team continued to work closely with the ICT department to help bring about improvement. Course work had not yet been completed but, once it had, an increase in the likely grades was anticipated.

c) Intervention Strategies

The headteacher again reported that teaching on line had initially been a challenge for teachers but after school intervention strategies were now in place to support students where necessary.

d) Y13 Outcomes

Governors questioned the Y12/Y13 data which showed that girls were performing significantly better than boys and questioned the strategies being put in place to bring about improvement in the boys' performance. The headteacher reported that boys' entry level in Y12 was higher than girls but that it was the opposite in Y13. However, there wasn't a significant difference in Y13 but staff were aware of the issues and looking at possible reasons. Heads of department had been asked to look at the gender differences and governors were assured that there would be a focus on possible intervention strategies once students had returned to school. Governors noted, however, that the gender difference at Thomas Alleyne's reflected the national picture.

It was resolved –

That governors would continue to review the issues around gender difference and the impact of any improvement strategies put in place.

e) Sixth Form Recruitment

Governors had noted the recruitment process currently underway for entry to the 6th form and that 40 Y11 students who had not yet applied were being interviewed. Governors asked for an update on the outcome of those interviews and also asked if the pandemic had been a factor in students not opting to join the 6th form. The headteacher reported that the school worked with all students to encourage them to join the 6th form and was pleased to report that the target of 55% had been reached. The headteacher further reported that there was no evidence to suggest that the pandemic impacted on recruitment and that for many of the students not seeking entry to the school's 6th form the issue had been around seeking an alternative college placement that could offer the courses they were wishing to follow. This was particularly so for technical courses and, in particular computing courses.

Mr Osborne-Town reported that, as link governor for the 6th form, he had met with Mrs Dodd (head of 6th form) to discuss the issues in detail. He further reported that there was no evidence to show a leakage of students in any particular area and that students were seeking a place at a college that could offer their chosen course and which was not available at Thomas Alleyne's. Mr Osborne-Town asked governors to recognise the importance of the school being able to offer the best courses possible for students rather than just looking at numbers.

It was resolved –

That the update on 6th form recruitment be noted, with particular thanks to Mr Osborne-Town.

f) Teaching and Learning

The headteacher reported that an audit of the on-line learning provision had been completed and the outcomes of the audit had been included in the report. Appropriate actions were being taken to address specific issues and the headteacher was pleased to confirm that identified best practices were being shared between staff. This was particularly helpful for the newer members of staff.

Discussion followed and governors questioned concerns that had been raised at the recent meeting of the Managing & Resourcing committee regarding possible data breaches due to the recording of live lessons. The headteacher confirmed that

guidance continued to be followed for the recording of live lessons and that the necessary safeguarding measures were being followed.

g) Student Voice Survey

The headteacher reported that a student voice survey had been undertaken in February and outcomes were made available. Governors questioned the number of responses received and how the information would be used in moving forward. They also asked if there was a gender breakdown for responses and if a further survey was being considered for the summer term after students had returned to school so that a comparison could be made.

Mrs Maingay went through the detail of the survey but acknowledged that it didn't offer a gender balance for the different responses. She was pleased to confirm though that the survey had proved helpful for staff to share best practice for what was working well for students. Similar surveys would be undertaken in the future and changes made to it to show a gender balance in responses received.

It was resolved –

That the feedback from the student voice survey be noted and that governors look forward to receiving feedback from future surveys being undertaken.

h) Student Numbers

The headteacher gave an update on projected student numbers based on the middle school October census. The numbers had been adjusted as appropriate to take account of students moving out of the area or choosing to study elsewhere. Governors questioned the potential future numbers from the planned housing development over the next few years and the likely impact on Y5 numbers upwards. The headteacher confirmed that student numbers remained under review, with account taken of data received from the local authority and in particular the October census. Governors would be kept updated on increased student numbers as the housing developments continued.

The headteacher also reported on projected class sizes and governors questioned how this would be managed to ensure that class sizes remained appropriate to meet the needs of both the lower and higher ability groups. The headteacher assured governors that the average class size remained under constant review but also reminded them that any reduction would have financial implications for the school. Governors would be kept updated on proposed class sizes for September 2022.

i) Careers Fair 2021

The headteacher reported that, due to Covid-19, the careers fair this year had been held remotely and all year groups from Thomas Alleyne's had been invited to attend together with Y7 and Y8 middle school pupils. In response to a question from governors, the headteacher confirmed that the evening had been very positive as demonstrated by the number of students attending.

j) Fire Safety

The headteacher reported that a full refurbishment of all aspects of the fire reform including replacement of the fire alarm system and upgrade of the site's fire doors had been submitted as a CIF bid. In preparation of the bid an assessment had been undertaken by an independent fire specialist and the subsequent report had shown that the school did not meet the minimum statutory requirements as set out in the 2005 Fire

Reform. The cost of the work would be in the region of £883K and if the CIF bid was successful the school would have to contribute around £83K.

Discussion followed and the chair of the Managing and Resourcing committee wished to place on record his concerns that this matter hadn't been brought to the attention of governors sooner. The headteacher reported that most schools were in a similar position but gave an assurance that fire safety remained a key priority and that improvements were undertaken within funding available. The headteacher further reported that if the CIF bid was unsuccessful a bid would be made for emergency CIF funds. If both were unsuccessful then £42K would be made available from reserve funds to cover the replacement of floor doors. Other fire precaution work would be prioritised against any funding available.

It was resolved –

That the fire safety report be noted and that this matter be discussed further at the next meeting of the Managing and Resourcing committee.

k) ULT External Audit

The headteacher reported that the external ULT audit had been completed and the subsequent report had been submitted to the ESFA. Mr Taylor questioned why the accounts and confirmation statement had not yet been filed at Companies House. There was a requirement for the confirmation statement to be filed by 14 February 2021 and was therefore showing as overdue. The business manager confirmed that the audit report and financial statements had been submitted to the ESFA, and accepted, but that they did not need to be filed at Companies House until May and that the auditors, Mazars, had this matter in hand. He further reported that he would contact Mazars regarding the confirmation statement.

It was resolved –

That the business manager (in his role as chief finance officer for the ULT) be requested to discuss this matter further with the CEO to ensure that the report of the external audit was compliant with Company's House requirements.

l) Internal Audit

The headteacher reported that the internal audit had been completed and the opinion of adequate assurance had been awarded. Many strengths had been recognised but there were a number of areas for improvement, including a need for the school's debt recovery policy to align with the ULT policy. In response to a governor's question the headteacher confirmed that both policies were now aligned.

m) Student Behaviour

The headteacher gave an update on student behaviour and safety, including attendance/absence and the number of fixed term exclusions. An outline was given of the various strategies in place to improve attendance rates and to improve behaviour. Discussion followed and governors questioned why behavioural problems appeared to be increasing and asked if the increase was on-line related or physical. The headteacher reported that the impact of Covid-19 was having an unsettling effect on students but that the number of behavioural issues wasn't of particular concern. Governors were assured that various strategies were in place to support students in improving their behaviour.

Mrs Maingay further reported that whilst the fixed term exclusion data was showing an increase this was due to the number of incidents relating to one student rather than an increase in the number of students receiving a fixed term exclusion.

It was resolved –

That the behaviour and attendance report be noted and that governors would keep this under review to monitor the impact of the various improvement strategies.

278. Safeguarding and Health & Safety (including Covid-19 update):

The headteacher reported that most issues had been discussed earlier in the meeting and current priority was being given to ensuring that the school was ready to open for students on 8 March. The plan for this had been previously made available in Office 365. Governors noted that there would be staggered return for students and the headteacher explained that this was necessary to allow for students to be tested for coronavirus in line with Government requirements. The plan gave details of how the tests would be undertaken, both in school and at home, and arrangements for the different year groups attending school. Where appropriate live remote lessons would continue for those students not attending school. The headteacher confirmed, however, that the plan would allow for all students to return to school within two weeks and which was in line with Government expectations. The headteacher also reported that putting the plan in place had been challenging for all concerned but that she was confident that a robust system was in place.

Discussion followed and governors recognised the unprecedented expectations placed on schools to have plans in place to reopen on 8 March and asked if there was any specific help that they could give to the school as its governing body. The headteacher thanked governors for their continued support and requested that they continued to read any reports and guidance in relation to schools and Covid-19 to help them question and challenge where necessary.

It was resolved –

- i) That the plans for the reopening of the school on 8 March be received and noted.
- ii) That governors place on record their thanks to the headteacher and all members of staff for their work to ensure that a robust system was in place to support the students return to school on 8 March.

279. Catch-up Fund:

A Covid catch-up premium report had been previously made available in office 365. Mrs Maingay informed governors that the purpose of the report was to make governors aware of the funding that was available and the various strategies in place to support students to catch-up for lost teaching over the previous few months.

It was resolved –

- i) That the report be received and noted.
- ii) That governors will continue to monitor and review progress of the report for evidence of impact of the support strategies.

280. Length/Times of School Day 2021/2022:

Mr Mitchell, assistant headteacher, was present for this item to inform governors of the consideration being given to the length and times of the school day 2021/2022 and the various options that were being considered. A copy of the report had been previously made available in Office 365 and Mr Mitchell went through the detail of it, with a particular focus on the options for the number and length of lessons. Governors were reminded that currently the school was offering 5 x 60-minute lessons each day but consideration was being given to moving to 4 x 80-minute lessons. The benefits of such a change were outlined together with likely financial implications due to an increased staffing need. Governors were also informed that a move to 4 lessons a day would necessitate a 30-minute lunch-break for students. Views of staff were currently being sought on the preferred option.

Discussion followed and governors considered the possible advantages and disadvantages of moving to 4 lessons a day. They welcomed the benefit of students being taught for a longer period of time and that a reduction time in some subject areas could be advantageous. In particular, the proposal to reduce MfL teaching time from 6 hours a week to 4 hours a week, in line with other subjects, could help improve the number of students choosing this subject option. The headteacher confirmed that the preferred option would align better with future plans for the school to comply with Ebacc requirements. However, governors questioned the 30-minute lunch break for students and whether this would be long enough. Mrs Lund reported that she had experience of teaching in each of the options being considered and recognised the benefits of the 80-minute lesson. She suggested though that consideration be given to having two lessons back-to-back in the morning session.

The headteacher reported that views of staff would be important before any final decisions were taken but that it was hoped to reach a decision by May before then seeking governor approval.

It was resolved –

- i) That Mr Mitchell be thanked for attending the meeting and taking governors through the various options for the length/times of the school day for 2021/2022.
- ii) That the headteacher be requested to explore further the possible implications of a 30-minute only lunch-break being allocated for students.
- iii) That the Learning and Standards committee should consider this matter further at its next meeting.

281. Managing and Resourcing Committee:

Minutes of a meeting of the Managing and Resourcing committee held on 27 January 2021 had been previously made available in Office 365.

It was resolved –

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

282. Learning and Standards Committee:

Minutes of a meeting of the Learning and Standards committee held on 19 January 2021 had been previously made available in Office 365.

It was resolved –

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

283. ULT Update:

Dr Clark, CEO of the Trust, gave a brief update on things happening within the ULT. They included the following:

a) Covid-19

The CEO was pleased to acknowledge everything being done by all schools to respond to the impact of Covid. All had arrangements in place to support the re-opening of schools on 8 March and plans were also in place for those schools required to conduct lateral flow tests. Thanks were given to Thomas Alleyne's for its support with this.

b) Remote Learning Survey

There had been a very positive response from parents following the recent remote learning survey. Full details of the survey would be given to schools once available.

c) Catch-up Premium Funding

All schools continued to monitor and review their plans for the use of catch-up funds made available and pupils would also be re-assessed following their return to school.

d) Trust Development

The ULT has been given the opportunity to participate as a mentee in the Trust-to-Trust Development Programme organised by the RSC and has been matched with ARK Schools as the mentor trust which currently has 38 schools. This will help support the future growth of the ULT.

e) Richard Clarke First School

Arrangements continued to be made for Richard Clarke First School to formally join the Trust but, due to the need to resolve complex land ownership issues, it was now likely to be with effect from 1 May rather than 1 April 2021.

f) IT Review

The CEO reported that the IT review continued and that the deadline for completion of the review was Easter 2021. A number of possible options for moving forward were being considered but the preferred option was to develop a hybrid model which would retain the use of key Trust employees and also secure a service level agreement with a Managed Service Provider offering a wider resource and expertise. Trustees were considering the details of this before reaching a decision. As part of the review, consideration was also being to consistency of broadband/phone provision at schools across the Trust, including looking at cyber security. Governors would be informed of the final outcomes of the IT review as soon as possible.

It was resolved –

- i) That the CEO be thanks for attending the meeting and for the update on ULT matters.
- ii) That governors look forward to receiving details of the outcome of the IT review.

284. Safeguarding Policy (to include the coronavirus addendum):

Mrs Maingay reported that the Safeguarding policy had been updated to include a necessary coronavirus addendum and that it had been reviewed at the recent meeting of the Learning and Standards committee and recommended for approval. A copy of the updated policy had been previously made available in Office 365.

It was resolved –

That the updated Safeguarding policy (to include the coronavirus addendum) be received and approved.

285. Other Business:

Coronavirus Vaccination

Governors asked the position that the school would take should any member of staff refuse to accept the coronavirus vaccination. The headteacher reported that 34 members of staff had already accepted a vaccination. No action would be taken against a member of staff refusing the vaccination but that there would be discussion in line with the usual school policy for any member of staff with a high absence rate. The CEO confirmed that staff could not be forced to have the vaccination but that all staff would be strongly encouraged to do so.

286. 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 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 various discussions throughout the meeting and governor challenge to the headteacher to provide up-dated reports to demonstrate progress and impact of improvement strategies. In particular:
 - Request for breakdown of student results, particularly in Maths and English (Minute 276)
 - Whilst noting the strengths of the leadership scorecard, governors challenged how the judgments compared with similar schools (Minute 276)
 - Questions to the headteacher to demonstrate the impact of improvement strategies in ICT (Minute 276)

- Request to headteacher to provide a future report to identify strategies to improve the performance of boys against that of the girls and to also provide evidence of the impact of those strategies (Minute 276)
 - Questions to headteacher regarding student behaviour and governors to keep under review the impact of improvement strategies (Minute 277)
 - Challenge to the headteacher regarding the school's fire safety report and to keep governors informed of prioritised work to ensure that the school remained safe for staff and students (Minute 277)
 - Discussions around the length/times of the school day and request for the headteacher to take into account governor views before reaching a final decision (Minute 280)
- KPI6 – governors ensure solvency and probity, and that financial resources are made available to the school and managed effectively
 - Challenge to the CEO of the Trust to ensure that the filing of ULT accounts with Companies House is compliant with legal requirements (Minute 277)
 - Challenge to headteacher to keep governors updated on the impact of improvement strategies to improve student outcomes through the use of the catch-up fund (Minute 279)
 - KPI7 – governors operate in such a way that statutory duties are met and priorities are approved
 - Training session held prior to the formal meeting to help governors access training courses and encouraged in particular to undertake safeguarding courses so as to understand their responsibilities.
 - KPI8 – governors engage with stakeholders, including staff and parents
 - Request that a letter is sent on behalf of the governing body to formally welcome Richard Clarke First School to the ULT (Minute 276)
 - Headteacher requested to revise the student voice survey to better demonstrate the gender balance in responses received and request to also consider sending a further survey to demonstrate any difference in views of students following their return to school (Minute 277)
 - KPI10 – governors are taking appropriate action to ensure their responsibilities towards staff well-being are being met
 - Evidenced throughout the meeting and all discussions regarding the coronavirus with assurances being sought from the headteacher that all agreed actions to support the reopening of school would ensure the safety and well-being of staff.
 - Questions around the take-up of staff regarding the Covid vaccination and a request to the headteacher to encourage all staff to take the vaccination when offered (Minute 285)

287. 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.

288. Date of Next Meeting:

It was resolved –

That the next meeting of the full governing body be held, as previously agreed, on Monday, 14 June 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 Microsoft Teams.

M. Prescott

Signed.....

14 June 2021

Date.....