

Thomas Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter

Minutes of a meeting of the Learning and Standards committee held in the school on Tuesday, 15 January 2019 at 5.00pm.

Present:

Dr M Jary (chair), Mrs B Davies, Mrs K Fisher, Mr I Johnstone, Mr M Prescott, Mr D Thomas.

Mrs J Rudge (Headteacher)

Also in Attendance:

Mrs A Maingay (Deputy Headteacher)

Mrs C Catterall (Assistant Headteacher)

Mr D Godwin (Assistant Headteacher)

Mrs K Goodwin (Assistant Headteacher)

Mrs T Harris (Assistant Headteacher)

Mrs R Lindsay (Assistant Headteacher)

Mr R Sheldon (Clerk to the Governing Body)

Apologies:

No apologies for absence were received but the absence of Mr Alcock, and his failure to attend any recent meetings, was again noted. The chair of governors undertook to contact him to ask if he wished to continue as a governor.

90. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

91. Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Standards committee held on 6 November 2018 had been previously made available to governors in Office 365.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting be received and approved as presented.

92. Matter Arising:

Departmental Reviews (Minute 80(bii) refers)

The headteacher confirmed that a review of three subject areas (Psychology, Biology, English), with a focus on improved outcomes, had been included on the agenda for this meeting. See Minute 93 below).

93. Curriculum Area Action Plans:

As previously reported, the headteacher confirmed that members of staff were to attend the meeting to inform governors of action plans that had been put in place to bring about improvement in student performance and outcomes. Copies of each of the action plans had been previously made available in Office 365.

a) Psychology A Level

Ms Louise George, head of Social and Health Studies, was present for this item to report on the Psychology action plan and took governors through the detail of it. Governors were informed that not all areas of the Psychology programme were a cause for concern and that a particular focus was on improving students' evaluation skills. Other actions highlighted included a change of examination board more in line with other schools which would help students network better; students to use exercise books rather than folders which would help staff better in monitoring progress; more robust monitoring and setting of homework; better use of sixth form 7 time and encouraging more independent learning; intervention support groups established for individual students including those to be better stretched and challenged; external networking and links with examiners to help students better prepare for exams.

Full discussion took place between governors and Ms George both during and after the presentation, with governors seeking evidence of improved performance through the impact of the many different strategies that had been put in place. Ms George reported that, whilst the mock exam results had again identified a spread of outcomes, there were signs that student performance was improving and would hopefully be reflected in the A level results later in the year.

It was resolved –

- i) That Ms George be thanked for attending the meeting and taking governors through the detail of the Psychology action plan which was received and noted.
- ii) That governors would continue to monitor student performance in Psychology and seek evidence of the impact of the various improvement strategies.

b) Biology A Level

Mr Adam Millard, head of Biology, was present for this item to report on the Biology action plan. A copy of the action plan was circulated and Mr Millard took governors through the detail of it. An analysis was given of the previous year's results, including a comparison with targets that had been set. Governors were informed that there was a need to improve on student outcomes and noted that the action plan to bring about improvement had been written in response to the results analysis. Key actions included the setting and monitoring of suitable homework tasks; one example exam question to be set as homework each week; all students being made more aware of next steps; weekly intervention sessions for identified students and communication with parents; improved assessment; sixth form 7 to focus on particular skills and criteria; more challenging targets for students of achieving A* grades; data driven work scrutiny to identify students requiring further support; all Y12 students to use exercise books rather than folders.

Full discussion took place between governors and Mr Millard both during and after the presentation, with governors seeking evidence of improved performance through the impact of the many different strategies that had been put in place. Governors were assured that students would be better prepared in the future for exams and that mock exams were being used to identify underperforming students to enable further support as appropriate.

It was resolved –

- i) That Mr Millard be thanked for attending the meeting and taking governors through the detail of the Biology action plan which was received and noted.

- ii) That governors would continue to monitor student performance in Biology and seek evidence of the impact of the various improvement strategies.

c) English

Mrs T Harris, assistant headteacher and head of English, was present for this item to report on the English action plan. Governors were reminded that the English data had been presented and discussed at previous meetings and that the action plan had been put in place to bring about required improvements in student performance and outcomes. Key actions included new schemes of work in place before the end of the autumn term with work scrutiny already undertaken; closer working with the middle schools to better prepare students from Y9 onwards; develop the quality and consistency of written feedback to students; the setting and monitoring of consistent homework; mock exams for Y11 students with more robust moderation of assessment; half termly exam practice for Y11 students; closer working with all other departments to improve performance; the closer tracking of students to identify where improvement is required and intervention strategies put in place as appropriate.

Full discussion took place between governors and Mrs Harris both during and after the presentation, with governors seeking evidence of improved performance through the impact of the many different strategies that had been put in place. Governors noted that the support strategies had helped Y11 students achieve their progress 8 predicted grades and that the gap had closed between disadvantaged and other students. The headteacher also wished to place on record her thanks to Mrs Karen Fisher for the work she was doing to improve performance in English.

It was resolved –

- i) That Mrs Harris be thanked for attending the meeting and taking governors through the detail of the English action plan which was received and noted.
- ii) That governors would continue to monitor student performance in English and seek evidence of the impact of the various improvement strategies.

94. SEND Information Update:

Copies of the updated SEND Accessibility Plan and SEND Information Report had been previously made available in office 365 and Mr Godwin, assistant headteacher, was present to take governors through the detail of both documents. With regard to the Accessibility Plan he reported that much of the work was still in progress but that, once completed, there would be better access throughout the school for students with a disability.

With regard to the Information Report Mr Godwin was pleased to report that the school had strong relationships with parents and regular meetings held with them as necessary to help ensure that they had a good understanding of how Thomas Alleyne's could help their child whilst at school. The school also had strong relationships with the middle schools and other external agencies. Governors also noted that the excellent support provided to the school by the welfare officer helped to ensure a good attendance by SEND students.

Full discussion took place regarding both documents and a couple of minor amendments to the Information Report were identified – the spelling of 'manual' and the spelling of Dr Jary.

It was resolved –

That the SEND Accessibility Plan and the SEND Information Report be received and approved as presented, subject to the amendments identified above.

95. Pupil Progress Report and Secondary Inspection Data Dashboard:

A copy of the Secondary Inspection Data Dashboard had been previously made available in Office 365 and the headteacher took governors through the detail of it. Governors were reminded of the importance of this document in helping them to better understand the performance of the school shown as a three year trend and noted that Ofsted would look for evidence of their understanding at the time of a school inspection. Much of the data contained in the Dashboard had been discussed in detail at previous meetings of the full governing body and Learning and Standards committee. In taking governors through the Data Dashboard the headteacher focussed in particular on the following issues:

- a) Ebacc – the ambitious national target of 75% of students studying the full Ebacc subjects, including a foreign language, by 2022 was not realistic for the school. The reason for this was the decision taken by the headteacher and leadership team to allow students to choose their subject options rather than following the identified pathway. Students were, however, encouraged to take a foreign language.

Full discussion took place regarding the provision of foreign languages in school and governors noted that concerns around this had been previously identified. Mrs Lindsay, assistant headteacher, outlined the different strategies that had been put in place to bring about improvement which included the appointment of new staff to the department; intervention groups to work with individual students; the commissioning of a special lead in education (SLE) for modern foreign languages to help identify new schemes of work and success criteria; improved assessment. The headteacher also confirmed that many of the departmental staffing issues that had previously been identified as a cause for concern had now been resolved.

- b) Performance trends – the headteacher outlined the three year trend for overall student performance and governors noted in particular the declining trend in English. Governors had previously challenged the headteacher on this earlier in the meeting and had discussed the action plan in place to bring about improvement. It was also noted that an appointment had recently been made to provide 1:1 English support for students and already proving to be effective.
- c) Exclusions – governors noted that the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions were above the national average, although not significantly. The headteacher confirmed that strategies were in place to address this but confirmed that the priority for the school was to support students wherever possible rather than to exclude.

It was resolved –

- i) That the Secondary Inspection Data Dashboard be received and noted.
- ii) That governors fully support the headteacher and leadership team regarding the school's agreed curriculum and for students able to choose their own subject options, whilst recognising the impact of this on Ebacc subjects.
- iii) That governors support 1:1 English tuition for the more challenging students.

- iv) That governors request a copy of the SLE's report following the review of the Modern Foreign Languages department and that the head of that department be requested to attend the next meeting of the full governing body (4 March 2019) to discuss the actions taken in response to the review, with evidence of its impact in bringing about improvement.

96. Performance Management - Teaching Staff and Relation to School Budget:

A document to outline appraisal objectives had been previously made available in office 365 and Mrs Maingay, deputy headteacher, took governors through the detail of it. Governors were informed how the document had been developed to demonstrate how staff performance was being managed and the implications of this on the school budget given that a significant proportion of staff were on UPS3.

Discussion took place and governors welcomed the training that was being put in place for staff around performance management and noted that the appraisal objectives would provide greater consistency in the setting of appropriate staff targets. They also noted that staff objectives were set in September with interim reviews undertaken during February/March.

It was resolved –

That the document outlining staff appraisal objectives be received and noted with thanks to Mrs Maingay for the work undertaken.

97. Behaviour Action Plan and Update on Behaviour Policy:

Mrs Maingay, deputy headteacher, and Mrs Catterall, assistant headteacher, provided an update on the school's Behaviour Action Plan and Policy and governors were reminded that student behaviour was a focus for them both as part of their work to gain the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH). As such, governor approval was given for this section of the meeting to be filmed as part of the evidence required to be submitted by both Mrs Maingay and Mrs Catterall.

Copies of the Behaviour Action Plan and Policy had been previously made available in Office 365.

a) Behaviour Action Plan

Mrs Maingay took governors through the detail of the Behaviour for Learning action plan and reported that this had already been shared with the whole staff, with a whole school CPD programme now in place to support staff. Particular mention was made of the focus on progress 8 students and the strategies that had been put in place to provide appropriate support. Work had started towards the end of the autumn term and students now had their own improvement plan which had been well received by them. Mrs Maingay was pleased to confirm that there were early signs of impact as a result of the support measures put in place.

Discussion took place regarding the action plan and governors noted that the wearing of appropriate school uniform was a key feature of the plan. The headteacher further reported that there were several ongoing concerns around the approved school uniform and that it remained under review.

b) Behaviour Policy

Mrs Catterall took governors through the detail of the Behaviour policy and circulated a brief report to demonstrate how the different types of behaviour and guidelines for sanctions had been incorporated into the policy, which also made clear Thomas Alleyne's values – respectful; safe; ready to learn.

Mrs Catterall further reported on the role of Dove House and governors noted that it had recently been re-branded as a 'return to learning centre' to supporting students as, necessary, to return to learning. The recent appointment of Simon Wright as isolation supervisor would also further develop the role of Dove House in supporting students.

Discussion took place regarding the Behaviour policy and Mrs Catterall confirmed that a staff working group had been set up to develop the policy further.

It was resolved –

- i) That the Behaviour for Learning action plan and Behaviour policy update be received and noted with thanks to Mrs Maingay and Mrs Catterall.
- ii) That arson should also be included as a serious incident that could result in the exclusion of a student from school.

98. Pastoral Update:

A report providing a pastoral update had been previously made available in Office 365 and a copy was also circulated at the meeting. Mrs Catterall went through the detail of it, including in particular:

- Attendance – whole school attendance was currently below 95%, with Y10 attendance of particular concern.
- Behaviour/Exclusions – governors noted the number of fixed term exclusions and in particular the higher percentage of boys being excluded. As previously reported, governors noted that Simon Wright had recently been appointed as isolation supervisor and would further develop the role of Dove House in supporting students with behavioural issues.
- Persistent Absence – the number of persistent absences of disadvantaged and pupil premium students had fallen and Mrs Catterall was pleased to report that a key reason for this was the support given by the school's welfare officer.

It was resolved –

- i) Mrs Catterall be thanked for presenting her pastoral report and that it be received and noted.
- ii) That governors request that a report be made available for the next L&S committee meeting with regard to student attendance, including in particular Y10 students, and actions to be taken by the school to improve attendance figures.
- iii) That governors request that a report be made available for the next L&S committee meeting on Mr Wright's role as isolation supervisor and the impact of this on student behaviour.

99. Policy Review:

A number of policies were to be reviewed by governors and all had been previously made available in Office 365.

a) Curriculum Policy

The headteacher reported that the updated curriculum policy reflected much of the discussion earlier in the meeting when looking at the Secondary Inspection Data Dashboard and highlighted the changes made.

It was resolved –

That the updated Curriculum policy be received and approved as presented.

b) Equality Policy

The headteacher went through the detail of the updated policy and confirmed that there had been no significant changes to the previous policy.

It was resolved –

That the Equality policy be received and approved as presented.

c) Taking Images Policy

Mrs Maingay went through the detail of the updated policy and outlined in particular the changes that had been made to the previous policy. She confirmed that the policy remained consistent with Staffordshire guidance.

Discussion followed with particular reference to compliancy around the use of photographs with images of students and whether parents had to 'opt in' or 'opt out' in giving permission for photographs to be used.

It was resolved –

That the Taking Images policy be received and approved as presented, subject to clarification around parental permission for the publication of photographs.

d) Performance Management Policies

The headteacher reported that a number of significant changes had been made to the Performance Management policy for teaching staff and that consideration of this should be deferred to the next meeting. She further reported, however, that there had been no significant changes to the Performance Management policy for support staff.

It was resolved –

- i) That the updated Performance Management policy for teaching staff be received but deferred for consideration and subsequent approval at the next meeting of the L&S committee.
- ii) That the updated Performance Management policy for support staff be received and approved as presented.

e) Anti-Bullying Policy

Mrs Catterall went through the detail of the updated Anti-Bullying policy and confirmed that no significant changes had been made to the previous policy and that it remained consistent with Staffordshire guidance.

It was resolved –

That the updated Anti-Bullying policy be received and approved as presented.

100. Confidentiality:

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

101. Consideration Given to KPIs:

KPI 4 – Governors provide challenge and hold the headteacher and other senior leaders to account for the improving quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour and safety

Covered through discussions relating to the curriculum area action plans and challenging staff to provide evidence of the impact of improvement strategies (minute 93); understanding of data dashboard and requesting a report to provide evidence of the impact of improvement strategies for MfL and a request for the head of department to attend the next meeting of the full governing body (minute 95); review of the school's behaviour plan and policy with a request also for a report to provide evidence of the impact of the support role of the recently appointed isolation supervisor (minute 98).

KPI 5 – Governors use Performance Management systems, including the performance management of the headteacher to improve teaching, leadership and management

Covered through discussions around the appraisal objectives with a view to seeking consistent staff targets (minute 96).

102. Date of Next Meeting:

Governors were reminded that the next meeting of the Learning and Standards committee would be held in the school on Tuesday, 14 May 2019 at 5.00pm.

M. Jary
Signed.....

14 May 2019
Date.....