

Meeting of the Thomas Hardy Governing Body
Training Room, Thomas Hardy School – 24th March 2021 – 4.30pm

Present: Tony Moore (Chair), Mike Foley (Headteacher), Hugh Griffiths, David Grassby, Alan Trowbridge, Simon Conibear, Rachel Turberville-Smith (Parent Governor), Mike Faulkner (Support Staff Governor), Jo Stoker (Parent Governor), Rachel Glennie (Teaching Staff Governor), Hilary Over, Nick Thornley, Neil Johnston

In attendance: Linda Morrison (Assistant Headteacher), Richard Nicholls (Assistant Headteacher), Michelle Matthews (Finance Manager), Jon Dean (Assistant Headteacher), Laura Cheney (Assistant Headteacher), Tim Ennion (Assistant Headteacher), Claire Noble (Assistant Headteacher), Tom Hardinge (Assistant Headteacher), Garry Batt (Former Chair of Governors),

Apologies (Item 1): Tim Gallego – work commitments – accepted.

Late Arrivals/Early Leavers: Rachel Glennie - Approved

Item	Minutes	Action
20/38	<p>Presentation to Mike Foley Headteacher, on behalf of Governors Mr Batt gave a speech to Governors recognising Mr Foley’s many attributes and thanking him for his service and leadership of the school throughout his 10-year tenure. Mr Batt presented Mr Foley with a token of the Board’s esteem. Mr Foley thanked Mr Batt and the Governors. He thanked the SLT team, the wider team of Governors and all school staff for their support. Mr Moore also thanked Mr Foley for all his efforts throughout his time as Headteacher.</p>	
20/39	<p>Declaration of Business Interests (Item 2): None</p>	
20/40	<p>Minutes of the meeting 3rd February 21 (Item 3.1): were unanimously approved and signed as an accurate record. Proposed by David Grassby and seconded by Hilary Over.</p>	
20/40.1	<p>Matters arising (Item 3.2): 20/34.6 (Item 8): Liaise with Mrs Morrison re a date for a Governors data training session – Complete – 23/6/21 Time TBC</p>	
20/41	<p>Finance Report (Item 4) circulated in advance – Questions for Michelle Matthews</p>	
20/41.1	<p>Budget Monitoring – Ms Matthews began by explaining the columns on the sheet. She highlighted the £129k income and explained that c£108k is COVID catch up funding, c£12k is supplemental funding for Free School Meals, c£18k is funding for a 1-2-1 support for a pupil. Ms Matthews added that there is approx. £106.5k lost income, c£60k in lost canteen income and c£46.5k in lost lettings income. Overall the budget is still c£31k better than forecast at present.</p>	
20/41.2	<p>Staffing costs – little savings. The overspend on teaching has been covered by the COVID money. The overspend in premises team is in relation to overtime due to covering staff sickness. The c£18k cost is offset by the matching income for 1-2-1 pupil support.</p>	
20/41.3	<p>Educational expenditure – The extra £20k spend here is covered by the COVID funds. Ms Matthews noted the headings relating to the original budget, the forecast and the actual columns. She advised Governors that the expected budget spend at this time of the year is 42%. Those that are high are due to timing</p>	

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<p>20/41.4</p> <p>20/41.5</p> <p>20/41.6</p>	<p>differences between expenditure and income. There are no areas of concern at this time. Ms Matthews confirmed that budgets have been reduced down due to the reduction in income and this will be monitored moving forwards. Ms Matthews highlighted the voluntary accounts and explained that these relate to things such as trips, where the income matches the expenditure. There has been little activity here this year due to the pandemic. The school is still estimating a £104k surplus this year with a £970k carry forward which is a good position to be in considering. Some of these funds are committed to capital works such as the windows.</p> <p>KPI's – Ms Matthews informed Governors that the staffing to income ratio should not be any higher than it is now.</p> <p>Capital Projects – Ms Matthews stated that the balance sheet gives a good overall picture of where the school is in terms of assets and liabilities.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked for detail respecting the school's contribution to the MAT and what it is used for. Mr Foley explained that it is a mixture of things including central services such as site support, finance, HR, central staffing costs for example, the CEO's salary, the CFO's salary, the Company Secretary's salary and Health and Safety Manager salary. He agreed to produce a more detailed breakdown of that for MAT schools.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked where the MAT is based. Mr Foley confirmed it has been based at THS thus far but it is an issue going forward as to where these services and staff will run from. He explained that the MAT is trying to keep costs as low as possible to maximise the amount of funds that can be reinvested into the schools via central services and specialist support.</p> <p>Q: The Governor opined that the MAT needed to pay its share of overheads wherever it is based. Mr Foley agreed that this either needed to be reflected in a school's contribution if it is based on a school site or be a fee the MAT pays.</p> <p>Neil Johnson – Highlights from Link Governor Visit – Mr Johnson referred to his report circulated in advance and thanked Ms Matthews for facilitating a useful and interesting meeting. He directed Governors to some advice from the NGA about the roles and responsibilities of Governors that he had included in his report. He noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs McKie is key to the school finances, many of the systems and procedures were set up by Mrs McKie and there is a lot Ms Matthews still needs to learn. He opined it is essential that Ms Matthews is given a full handover in order for her to undertake her role. • Mr Johnson referred to the surplus and noted that it is very easy to lose these funds if not carefully managed. He highlighted the potential lower sixth form numbers and suggested Governors keep this in mind for monitoring purposes • Mr Johnson added that Governors should be mindful that there may be less income in future years from 22/23 onwards when considering investment into the buildings • Mr Johnson suggested Governors should find out what happens to any surplus MAT contributions and whether these get refunded to the schools • Mr Johnson suggested looking at how THS fares financially in comparison to other schools in the MAT • Business planning was also highlighted and the need to look ahead • Mr Johnson referred to the ESFA guidance on a 70-80% ratio spend on 	<p>MF</p>
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staffing and that THS is at the upper limit of this. He suggested Governors consider whether this is sustainable

- The frequency of reporting to the Governing Board and the changes in report styles were noted. Mr Johnson stated that he was aware of the reasons for this such as vacancies, changing finance systems and staff sickness but that this should be monitored by Governors moving forwards
- Capital planning, such as the need for replacement boilers was also highlighted as an area for Governor scrutiny
- Regular monitoring of the asset and risk registers was highlighted as an area for Governors to look at.

Mr Johnson concluded by thanking Ms Matthews again for a valuable meeting during which he learnt a huge amount.

Q: A Governor queried whether the board could have a report on the declining sixth form numbers and the impact of this on the budget. Mr Foley explained that sixth form numbers are volatile and urged that Governors exercise caution. He opined that there is a danger that students may have chosen to remain at existing schools rather than move to another sixth form due to COVID uncertainty. He stated that numbers do fluctuate and there is no immediate need to make changes. He added that it is important to watch the trends. The number of applications are down but this may not translate to the number that start in September. Even if it does, it is likely to be a short-term blip. Mr Foley referred to the annual external audit process and highlighted the reports have been incredible over the last 3 years. He noted the % ratio of staff to income costs and that 80% is the right figure for a school THS's size. He reminded Governors that income is lower due to the reasons given. Mr Foley also reminded Governors that the school has an incredible financial record and that it is important not to be complacent but also to focus on trends and the amazing strengths and expertise the school has in budget monitoring.

Q: A Governor asked if the same people will return when lettings is allowed to resume and when this might be. Mr Foley confirmed that lettings will resume in September and that he is confident the same people will return. He added that the school should be looking at expanding in this area.

Q: Another Governor asked Mr Foley to remind the Board why they did not have access to the furlough scheme. Mr Foley explained that the taxpayers money had already been issued to schools and therefore the government had asked the schools to use this money rather than access more taxpayers money to pay for furlough.

Q: The Governor asked if any redundancies have been made in other schools locally. Mr Foley confirmed that THS haven't made any, and neither have any local schools as far as he is aware. Most schools have used funds for things such as meal hampers for families.

Q: The Governor also referred to the Cuba trip in the last Chair's update and asked if there was any financial risk, either to the school or parents. Mr Foley confirmed that parents have paid approximately 50% of the cost of the trip. The government have not cancelled trips in July and the camp does not want to cancel either and so will not refund the money paid thus far. The insurers do not want to pay out in these circumstances. Mr Foley explained that he has consulted with HKLaw to try and trigger the cancellation clause with the camp but there has been no response thus far. He has asked parents not to make

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	<p>any more payments and the liability remains with the camps. Finally, the Governor commented that the school is financially stronger than when they first became a Governor and that it is nice to progress some capital projects. Governors thanked Ms Matthews for her report.</p>	
<p>20/42 20/42.1</p>	<p>Headteachers Report (Item 5) – Mike Foley: Return to school and attendance – Return to school and attendance has been positive, smooth and seamless. The main area for improvement is uniform. The biggest issue for staff was testing. He expressed his thanks to the team of staff for the smooth logistical process and informed Governors that between 90-96% of pupils took part in testing, depending on the year group. There was only one positive which was followed by a negative PCR test. However, the first test takes precedence and they isolated in accordance with government guidance. Q: One Governor queried communications with parents on home lateral flow testing kits. Ms Cheney explained that students will get self-testing kits this week. Ms Morrison will then do a letter for parents explaining where they can order or collect kits for other family members. Q: A Governor asked for more detail about the issue with uniform. Mr Foley explained that the school wouldn't usually allow coats in school but windows and doors have been kept open throughout winter to increase airflow and reduce the risk of COVID transmission so this exception was made. Other pupils have outgrown their uniform during lockdown. He will be writing to parents to ask them to check their children's uniform and remind them that coats cannot be worn in school. Q: The Governor commented that this is a tricky letter to write, particularly, asking parents to spend money they may not have on uniform. Mr Foley agreed, adding that part of the issue has been the closure of shops. He added that he had not communicated with parents thus far as he hadn't wanted to put anyone off returning to school and had been exercising a light touch. He will be requesting full uniform after Easter.</p>	
<p>20/42.2</p>	<p>Online learning – Governors were informed that Dr Ennion will survey parents again. He is focussing now on picking up the learning from lockdown and identifying what the school can take from this experience and continue to develop and use for example, homework setting and parents evenings.</p>	
<p>20/42.3</p>	<p>Results – Mr Foley advised Governors that the school is taking a measured approach with Centre Assessed Grades and decided early not to do high stakes testing. The reasons for this are: 1) that teachers know their students well enough and 2) to protect the mental health of the students and reduce stress</p>	

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<p>20/42.4</p> <p>20/42.5</p>	<p>on them where possible. Mr Foley advised Governors that the unknowns around the appeals process are a great concern. He added that teachers need to know how it will work so they know what evidence they need to collect and retain now. There is a possibility the school could be engulfed by appeals. Governors should monitor this in the summer term.</p> <p>Q: One Governor noted there will be moderation across the school and asked if there will be moderation across schools. Mr Foley confirmed that THS has been supporting other schools with moderation but due to its size and the deadlines, it is not feasible for THS to be moderated by another school. The grades will go through internal moderation. He added that it is lucky the school is of this size as there is always more than one teacher for each subject which means colleagues can seek support from each other.</p> <p>Q: Another Governor asked what guidance has been received from the exam boards. Mr Foley confirmed that none has been received thus far but it has been promised by the end of the month. He explained that THS have not waited for it and will look at it and use it if it is useful.</p> <p>Q: The Governor asked if grades are likely to change as result of the guidance. Mr Foley opined that the exam boards are likely to publish expectations of grades; laying out the criteria and giving an example. He added that THS has this as a school and the staff have enough experience of grading. He added that there will be grade inflation but this will not be deliberate 'bumping up'. Teachers can accurately predict the number of students in a class that will achieve grades but when it comes to individuals, it is harder. They may know that two students could achieve a particular grade but that only one of the two will. Which one it is impossible to say, so staff will give the benefit of the doubt and award the grade to both. With exams, it can be if the right questions come up for a pupil on the day.</p> <p>Q: The Governor also asked what position universities are taking. Mr Foley explained that many are not guaranteeing offers. He added that foreign student numbers are lower so he is hoping universities will take more UK students and this will prevent any offers being reneged upon.</p> <p>Staffing – Mr Foley noted there had been quite a high turnover of staff last year and he is hoping for a stable year going in to September. The school is well-staffed and he is pleased with the appointments made.</p> <p>Culture of School – Mr Foley referred to the school's culture of relentless optimism. He thanked Governors and remarked on the importance of their role, for new Governors. He commented on the teaching school and the school-to-school support it has facilitated. He added that Ms Cheney and Dr Ennion have an unbelievable partnership and that the teaching school is a driving force for school improvement and teacher development both at THS and in other schools. It will also be key for the MAT.</p>	<p>GOVs</p>
<p>20/43 20/43.1</p>	<p>School Improvement Plan (Item 6): Progress report incl impact of partial lockdown – Tom Hardinge: Governors gave thanks to Mr Hardinge for an amazing summary of where the school is. Mr Hardinge stated that he is pleased at how much has still been going on in the school whilst it has been in survival mode for the last 6-12 months. Quality assurance is ongoing with observations taking place in the summer term. The Chair commented on the amount of information contained within the report and asked if Governors had any questions. He confirmed that Governors can email Mr Hardinge should questions arise. Mr Hardinge</p>	

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<p>20/43.2</p>	<p>expressed his thanks to middle leaders for the information they provided for his report. He commented on the enthusiasm to be relentless in trying to improve the learning for children.</p> <p>Governors Visit Form (Item 6.1): The Chair asked if Governors are happy with the format of the Governors Visits Form Draft. Governors agreed that they are and it was approved unanimously for use.</p>	
<p>20/43.3 20/43.3.1</p>	<p>Governors Visits (Item 6.2): SEND Report – Jo Stoker – Ms Stoker informed Governors that the focus for interventions will be on raising comprehension skills including the use of online reading packages. The CERTs programme will be used to monitor the impact of SENS. Claire Noble is doing a fantastic job and is new to the role. The council have removed the panel process that involved THS in the decision making of place allocation in its specialist bases. The school is challenging the removal of this process as there were good reasons for it being there. An update is needed on the capping of pupils with the potential that the school may be oversubscribed. The school will look at the legal reasons again; nothing has been found in the code thus far. The funding was going to be cut for the bases on a technicality; this has been withdrawn for this year due to the prospect of a major review in the future.</p>	
<p>20/43.3.2</p>	<p>Summertime nursery – Jo Stoker – Mrs Smyth declared an interest in this item as a Member of the nursery committee. Ms Stoker explained that the biggest issue is the lack of a Service Level Agreement between the school and the nursery. There is no legal need to chase this up but there are queries over health and safety and who is responsible for what for the buildings, for example. A draft agreement has been produced and Mrs Smyth, as a committee member, is also involved. The nursery is not exclusive to staff but staff do use it and the school includes it in its recruitment material. Staff do not have priority over places; staff pay the full amount and have to pay a 50% retainer during the holidays the same as any other parent. One Governor noted that Summertime Nursery is a small setting that does provide enormous benefits to staff; local childcare whilst you are at work. Q: Another Governor asked if the rent paid covers the costs. Mrs Smyth confirmed that it is unlikely. The nursery pays an annual sum of £100 peppercorn rent. When the funding was sought for a new school building, the Trustees and Governors at the time decided they would like to incorporate a nursery and put the space out to tender to local pre-schools. Summertime won the bid and the sum was agreed at that time. There is only summary mention in the minutes and a letter from the then Clerk at the time to confirm this; no SLA. The sum covers rent, electric, water, heating, alarm systems and PAT testing. This is clearly not enough, however, these things do not operate in isolation from the main school building so it would be difficult to get an accurate cost. A Governor had briefly looked at this before and found it difficult to value due to its lack of ability to be used for anything else commercially.</p>	
<p>20/43.3.3</p>	<p>Teaching First – Jo Stoker - The focus has been on upskilling particularly the remote learning and live lessons. There are 11 CPD groups looking at high impact strategies to improve teaching and learning</p>	
<p>20/43.4</p>	<p>Governors' Action Plan (Item 6.4) – One Governor commented that it is a good plan and helpful to have a plan such as this. Another Governor</p>	

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20/43.5	commented that it is a positive plan. Governors unanimously agreed the plan. The Chair agreed to speak to Mr Rutherford about it. Ms Smyth explained the Training Modules on Learning Link. Ms Morrison agreed to deliver Governors Data Training (Item 6.3) - Data training after 18th June when the CAG work has reduced. The 23rd June has been selected as the date and a time is to be agreed.	TM
20/44	<p>Admissions (Item 7) - Mr Foley informed Governors that the school is heavily oversubscribed. The school is popular with parents and the numbers are healthy. Mr Foley proposed that the school retain its PAN; he added that he wanted Governors to understand why the PAN was reduced from 475 initially. Mr Foley opined that it was never feasible for the school to operate at 475 per year group and that there is a tipping point in every school. THS has the largest intake in the country. He suggested a slight increase to 465 might be possible.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked if the school ever got to 465 on appeals. Mr Foley confirmed it didn't due to the way the appeals are managed. However, the school could be vulnerable should the appeal panel change and allow more children in. More than 25 pupils per tutor group is tricky – the layout and room sizes are restrictive. The extra numbers are because of parental choice. He added that the studio school will be having a big expansion over the next 2 years and the Weymouth schools will improve, both of which will have an impact. Even if the school wanted to change its PAN, it would not take effect immediately.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked if any of the middle school pupils have been refused a place. Mr Foley confirmed that this is the case and he has spoken to the Local Authority to seek a resolution. He opined it is unfair to those children that have been in the local system since the age of 5 but live out of catchment to not have a place at THS, above those that live in catchment but have attended other schools.</p> <p>Rachel Glennie left the meeting at 6.15pm</p>	
20/45	<p>Annual Equalities Objectives Report (Item 8) – Tom Hardinge</p> <p>Mr Hardinge informed Governors that Ms Ullah previously led these. The school is at the end of a 4-year cycle and so it made sense to start afresh.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Black Lives Matters movement has driven a lot of the work here. This prompted students and ex-students to get in touch and share their views and experiences. This objective is not just about BAME students but also giving students with disabilities a voice. 2) This objective is linked to the first one. Staff will be looking at the curriculum here to see if diversity can be expanded upon. 3) Boys achievement is linked to the SIP. Boys are more likely to not achieve their potential than a girl. <p>Progression on all of these objectives has been limited by the circumstances. The school has signed up to a global equality collective which has tools to assess where the school is, in terms of diversity and inclusion. Vicky Needham has a particular interest in this and will take on some of the work. The Chair requested that Ms Needham attend a summer term meeting to provide a progress update, alongside an update of the SIP by Mr Hardinge.</p> <p>Q: A Governor suggested the diversity of the LGB also needed improving. They added that they are the role models to the school and suggested this be added to the Governors Action Plan. Governors unanimously agreed.</p>	VS VS

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20/46	Training Feedback (Item 9)	
20/46.1	Key Functions of the Governing Board – One Governor attended this and found it to be useful and positive	
20/46.2	Arts and Culture – One Governor completed this and found it thought provoking. It asks you to reflect on whether the SIP includes arts and culture and brings about the desired outcomes. The Governor did consider whether the SIP could be more explicit in this area and added that the SEF gives a detailed description. The most recent update from Mr Hardinge is particularly helpful. The Governor stated that they were particularly struck by the boys attainment and the drama department trying boys only performances. Another Governor also completed the course and agreed with these thoughts. They also completed the safeguarding course and found this to be accessible.	
20/46.3	Another Governor informed the Board they had attended a Managing Allegations course with the LADO.	
20/46.4	The Safeguarding Governor informed the Board of the MAT Safeguarding Training they had attended. Mr Foley added that the next stage is peer-to-peer review and the trainers will be providing a tool to use when checking through practice. The Safeguarding Governor confirmed they would be meeting with Jon Dean next term to look at My Concern.	
20/47	Policies (Item 10):	
20/47.1	SEND – Unanimously approved	
20/47.2	Whistleblowing - Adopted	
20/48	Any other business (Item 11) Other safeguarding policies e.g. Anti-Bullying and Behaviour – Mr Dean is currently reviewing these. Meeting closed: 6.40pm	

Action Log

Person	Action	Timing	Outcome/Update
Mike Foley	20/41.5 (Item 4): Capital Projects – Produce a breakdown as to what the MAT levy is spent on	ASAP	
Governors	20/42.3 (Item 5): Headteachers' Report – Monitor plans for CAG appeals process in summer term	May/July	
Tony Moore	20/43.4 (Item 6.4): Governors Action Plan – Share and discuss with Mr Rutherford	ASAP	
Vicky Smyth	20/45 (Item 8): Equalities Objectives – Add LGB Diversity to the plan	May	Complete
Vicky Smyth	20/45 (Item 8): Equalities Objectives – Invite Vicky Needham and Tom Hardinge to speak at a meeting in the summer term	July	Complete

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