

Governors' Annual Report 2015-16

This Governors' Report and Impact Statement has been written to provide information about the role and responsibilities undertaken by the Governing Body of Thomas Adams School over the last year (Sept 2015 to Aug 2016). As governors we are accountable to parents and the wider school and local community. Governors are all unpaid volunteers who give of their time to oversee that the school carries out its statutory duties.

The Governing Body has three further core functions :- a) to set the vision and strategic direction of the school b) to ensure the accountability of the Headteacher and monitor the school's progress c) to ensure financial probity by setting the budget and monitoring its implementation.

The school is a Voluntary Controlled School and during 2015 / 16 the governing body was made up of 18 governors. The Headteacher, one LEA, one staff, four parents, seven co-opted from the community and four foundation governors. (The school is unusual in having foundation governors appointed by the Drapers Guild; this originates from when the school was first established and was supported financially by the Drapers Guild).

The full governing body meets termly to oversee the work of the school and has sub committees to scrutinise particular aspects; these comprise :-

- Finance, Personnel and Premises
- Standards, Curriculum and Adams House
- Monitoring
- Boarding House

These committees meet at least once a term with the Finance, Personnel and Premises meeting more frequently. There is also a further set of committees related to staff and pupils which meet as required :-

- Staff Discipline / Dismissal
- Staff Discipline / Dismissal Appeals
- Salaries Committee
- Pupil Discipline
- Complaints Committee
- Appeals Committee

The level of commitment shown by governors is very positive. Any absences from meetings have been explained, accepted and approved by the governing body.

The School's Vision

'That all students, whatever their story, achieve their potential and are ready to contribute to their families, community and society.' This opening sentence encapsulates the essence of the school's aims (a full copy of the aims can be found on the school web site). The School's Vision and Aims agreed by governors ensure that the needs of students and the legal requirements demanded by legislation are all addressed. These aims are achieved through the implementation of the School Improvement Plan which has been developed by staff and governors. The plan for 2016/17 has five main priorities :-

1. Improving the achievement of all the students in all key stages
2. Improving teaching so all teaching is at least good

3. Design and enhancement of a suitable curriculum for all students
4. Raising the students' aspirations
5. Remove barriers to achievement

The Curriculum and Standards

The committees regularly monitor the progress towards the targets set in the School Improvement Plan and the specific actions which have been taken to achieve these priorities. They monitor the range of subjects across years 7 – 9 and the options in years 10 – 11 and A level subjects to ensure that an appropriate breadth of choice is provided for all students. Governors have been aware and supported the development of new schemes of work to prepare for the introduction of the new examinations in 2016.

The governors are active in ensuring that there is high quality teaching and that the students are positively engaged in their learning. As part of the process of monitoring the work of the school, governors have not only reviewed examination results but also visited the school to observe the students and staff at work. Governors have sat in lessons across all age groups and subject areas. They have watched the students move round the school at 'change of lessons' and while they had their lunch. Governors have been impressed by the quality of lessons seen and by the excellent behaviour of the students throughout the day. Governors have also scrutinized student work books and met to discuss with students in years 7 – 11 and sixth formers. In these discussions the students were very positive about all aspects of school life, from the transfer from primary school to the quality of school meals! The experience of observing the school at work has helped governors to be better informed and therefore more able to contribute to discussion and decision making at governor meetings.

A further part of the process of monitoring and ensuring accountability has been to invite subject leaders to review the teaching of their subject and results at governor meetings. During the last year governors have evaluated Maths, English, Science, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Geography, Art and Drama.

Governors maintain a close scrutiny of students' progress through the school's testing regime and through the public examination results. Governors appreciate that each year group can be different in the range of ability and talent within the cohort; they are however keen to ensure that every student makes good progress each year. The progress made by students is monitored, as are the GCSE and A level results. The Leadership Team and staff are held accountable for the progress made by the students. Ambitious targets are set by staff and the school is constantly striving to improve and develop its students' academic performance. (Ofsted 2014 Report 'The Governing Body is well informed. It challenges school leaders and holds them to account for students' achievement.') Further information relating to detailed examination results may be found on the school website.

All teaching staff, including the Headteacher have to undertake Performance Management Reviews which focus on the quality and delivery of their teaching. The outcome of these reviews impacts on the salaries of staff. Governors are involved in the final stages of this process and ensure that system is rigorous, robust and fair.

Pastoral Care and Behaviour

The school prides itself on the positive relationships between students and between students and staff. Governors have observed at first hand the way students behave in school. They are well aware of the excellent work of the pastoral team and all the staff. In the rare cases of poor student behaviour the chair of governors is informed of all students who are excluded for any period of time. The very small number of incidents of poor student behaviour is very much an indicator of the care and dedication of staff who work tirelessly to encourage and motivate the students. The Governors' Discipline Committee has to meet if there is a need to permanently exclude any student. It hasn't met for four years.

Considerable care and effort is taken with students who have Special Needs and they are frequently provided with small group or individual support. The Pupil Premium fund also supports disadvantaged students and these are also monitored carefully by governors to ensure that it is targeted to meet the needs of these students. This year funds have been used to support the following initiatives – Literacy and Numeracy intervention, SEN and Pastoral engagement, Education trips, Alternative provision, IT provision, Music support, Disadvantaged Initiatives and Learning resources. Care is always taken to see that students with particular learning or physical needs are an integrated part of the whole school. (Ofsted 2014 Report – 'Governors check carefully on the use of additional funds from the Pupil Premium in improving the achievement of eligible students.')

Boarding House

A unique feature of Thomas Adams School is the Boarding House, which provides for both boys and girls aged from 11 to 18. Students come from across the UK, Europe and other countries and this adds a variety and multi-cultural dimension to the school. The governors take a particular interest in the organization of this facility and the care of the students who live and work there. The Governors' Boarding Committee meets regularly to ensure the smooth running of the house and to hear from the students and staff who live in it. A variety of issues are discussed and action taken to improve the quality of provision.

Finance

Governors primarily see their role as supporting the school staff and students, in providing a secure and encouraging educational environment that works to achieve the school's aims and vision. As a very large secondary school the budget is considerable with an annual budget approaching £7 million pounds. Expenditure for the school is equally as large, and we are the largest employer in the town! (This year increases in the National Insurance contribution added in excess of £100,000 expenditure.) The Finance Committee meets regularly to set and monitor the budget. This committee ensures that the budget is managed effectively and improvements are effective, continuous and sustainable. There has been imaginative use of all funding sources and all spending has been in line with the 'best value' ethos. The committee is supported by our Local Authority Finance Officer and the budget for 2016/17 has been set in line with identified priorities. The school's Financial Values Standard ensures that our budget is spent wisely and properly, allowing the school to optimise resources and so raise standards and the attainment of all our students. (Ofsted 2014 Report – 'The Governing Body oversees the management of finance and resources expertly.')

Impact Statement

- The governing body has managed a difficult budget situation by putting in place a clear budget plan which the school is implementing and which the governors are monitoring closely to ensure a positive outcome.
- The governors are actively involved in ensuring that there is high quality teaching and learning and that all students are positively engaged.
- Governors monitor closely the progress of all cohorts across the school in all subjects and GCSE and A level results.
- The governors are involved in the selection of teaching and non-teaching staff and use this process to ensure that high quality staff are appointed to ensure good and outstanding teaching.
- Following the Government's announcement in parliament that all schools were to become academies by 2020 the governors established a working party to prepare for this initiative. (November 2016 the Government rescinded this proposal!)

Diana Lloyd-Brown Chair : Standards and Curriculum Committee

Roger Drummond Chair : Finance, Personnel and Premises Committee

Richard Bray
Chair of Governors – Thomas Adams School
Autumn 2016