



**Whitchurch Primary School and Nursery**  
**Finance Committee Meeting, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**Meeting Attendees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Caroline Rowley (CR)	Headteacher
Martin Thompson-Lawrie (MTL)	Deputy Headteacher / Contributor
Paul Smith (PS)	Governor
Rupen Shah (RS)	Governor and Chair
Seema Supeda (SS)	Governor
Peter Tenconi (PT)	Governor

Clerked by Deepti Bal, Clerk to Governors

## Meeting Record:

Governor Scrutiny/Governor Question (GQ)

Meeting Action

Decision

	Item	Action
1.	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b> CR welcomed Governors.	
2.	<b>Apologies</b> None.	
3.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> None	
4.	<b>Election of Chair</b>  RS elected as Chair.	
4.	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising</b>  Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true and accurate record. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amendment to Childcare Policy: CR to offer existing parents places on a first-come first-served basis.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Done</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Amendment to Childcare Policy: CR to amend to 7 days notice               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Done</li> </ul> </li> <li>● CR took an action to confirm dates for the Pay Committee (to accommodate SIP availability)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Done</li> </ul> </li> <li>● SS to circulate the reserve figure               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Carried over</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	SS to circulate the reserve figure
5.	<b>Headteacher's Report</b>	

	<p>CR explained that a pay rise of between five and eight percent will be awarded, nationally, to all teaching staff. However, this has not been adopted by Harrow LA. DataPlan will not trigger this increase unless formally adopted by Harrow. Teachers will receive their pay award this month and, at a later date, teachers will then also receive the relevant 5-8% increase. Support staff will also receive their payment. This is due to be approved by Harrow imminently. CR will confirm the final impact of this in the due course.</p> <p>SS has managed to reconcile the salaries (6/12ths as DataPlan has not shared October's data). This is very intensive as three or four entries per member of staff need to be checked.</p> <p>RS noted an excess budget in teacher pay. SS explained that at 6/12ths of the way through the year, the expectation is that 50% of the budget has been spent - actually 45% has been spent. This fund will go towards staff pay rises. RS asked what drove this. CR explained this was due to staff leaving and some requests for part time work.</p> <p>PS asked what the funding for schools in the Budget yesterday would mean. CR expected that this would be ring-fenced money, but there has not yet been an announcement.</p> <p>PS asked what the school did with money in the accounts (given that interest rates are higher than they used to be). CR took an action to look at interest rates available. SS confirmed that Harrow manages the bank accounts and the school does not have freedom to select its own. PS asked if interest is paid? SS explained that this was very minimal (c.£2k per year).</p> <p>In relation to finances, the school is in a healthy position but a cautious approach has been taken. There is still uncertainty with inflation and the increasing cost of energy and food.</p> <p><u>Approval of spend</u> Governors reviewed three quotes for movement detectors and extraction system replacement. The recommendation was to use Ardent Security (£7k). This is the cheapest quote. <b>Governors approved the recommendation.</b></p> <p><u>Virement</u> SS highlighted a few virements:</p>	<p>CR took an action to look at interest rates available</p>
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	<p>Supply budget – MTL highlighted the renewed impact of Covid-19 and the winter season. The staffing structure which was agreed includes HLTA who undertake sickness absence. Two have left and have not been replaced, and there are two HLTAs remaining. They also require dedicated management time to complete their new roles and this limits the options to use them for cover. MTL asked for a virement to provide more flexibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teaching supply, ad hoc - £1400</li> <li>- Teaching supply, fixed term - £2700</li> </ul> <p>A supply learning support assistant needs to be engaged to release a member of staff to provide one to one support. <b>The virement was approved.</b></p> <p>A101 – Teaching staff has £210k in the budget, which will cover teacher pay rises as well as performance management uplifts. There is a difference of c£130k from the projected performance management uplifts/projected pay rises when compared with actuals.</p> <p>The school are looking to vire £4100 from A101 to A201 to cover the cost of the supply. <b>The virement was approved.</b></p> <p><b>RS asked if supply staff costs were affected by inflation.</b> MTL confirmed that the costs had remained broadly the same.</p> <p><b>PS felt that better cover was advantageous.</b></p> <p><b>PS agreed with PT that it may be useful to consider raising the level of approval, to avoid Governors needing to be engaged with what was felt to be an operational matter.</b></p> <p><b>CR took an action to consider a review of the levels of financial approval.</b></p>	<p>CR to consider a review of the levels of financial approval.</p>
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6.	<p><b>Benchmarking</b></p> <p>CR explained that a full review of the CFR codes has been prepared to enable Governors to review the schools expenditure profile in comparison to other schools.</p> <p>SS presented a comparison of the lettings income.</p> <p><u>Agency staff</u></p> <p>Historically the school has spent less on agency staff compared with other schools. It is unclear why other schools spend so much more on staff. It is likely, however, that in the future, supply spending will increase. MTL felt that supply staff are not good value. The goal will be to build in-house staff to ensure good value and consistency of teaching. Staffing expenditure has declined slightly, given the requests from some to work only part time. Generally, requests to reduce hours have been accepted as recruitment is a challenge and the school wishes to retain staff. CR felt that recruitment, in general, needs to be considered. For all of Christmas, the school will be carrying vacancies. CR noted a timing issue with receipt of resignations on resignation day. Resignations received on resignation day mean that the school is unlikely to be successful in immediately appointing a replacement, as the resignation window has passed. The quality of candidates, therefore, tends to be poor. CR will cover classes in Spring term with long term supply and advertise in Spring 1 (for starters in Easter). MTL added that teachers generally resign at the end of the academic year. CR explained that the school advertises as early as possible to allow for the longest opportunity to secure good staff.</p> <p>PT asked if the school uses fixed term contracts. CR confirmed that the school does, on occasion. The majority of these staff are recruited through agencies, which includes a buy-in as a percentage of salary.</p> <p>SS explained that the school, historically, spent £10k more in comparison with other schools in relation to training. SS felt that a review should be undertaken on the effectiveness of training, therefore. CR felt that this may be driven by a historic commitment to coaching, adding that effectiveness could be measured through effectiveness, deep dives etc.</p> <p>MTL and CR took an action to review the impact of CPD.</p>	
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7.	<p><b>Audit Report</b></p> <p>There are only four points requiring action, each graded medium or low risk. CR and SS have reviewed the risks identified and have already implemented many of the actions.</p> <p>Of note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Headteacher's delegations do not reflect the separation of duties between the authorisation of orders and payments which is in place. This has been amended and approved by F&amp;R governors.</li> <li>• All purchase orders and quotes are being retained by the School Business Manager.</li> <li>• The Acceptable User Agreement will be revised and updated</li> <li>• The lettings policy will be revised to include daily /hourly rates</li> </ul> <p>PT asked how CR felt about the audit. SS felt that the audit process was robust and fair. It had been well investigated and was a lengthy process.</p> <p>The Gifts and Hospitality entries were reviewed and approved.</p> <p>The amended Financial Delegation was reviewed and approved.</p>	
	<p><b>Tenders</b></p> <p><u>Catering and Cleaning</u></p> <p>Governors reviewed the tender information for cleaning.</p> <p>CR is looking at bringing the catering service in-house. Schools Buying Club will be able to conduct a feasibility study around this (covering TUPE, contract arrangements, charging, etc).</p> <p>PT asked if they had done this before. CR confirmed that Schools Buying Club are experts and had assisted with Combes previously.</p>	

	SS will be providing the specification to Schools Buying Club. Ultimately, they will provide a recommendation based on the specification. RS asked if the school must go with the recommendation? SS felt that the school should adopt their recommendation.	
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>SFVS</b></p> <p>SS explained that the SFVS is a Governor tool which supports in audit the school finances and financial practices. SS has completed section 1 and 2 which Governors reviewed.</p> <p>SS asked regarding question one - in the view of governors, whether they have adequate financial skills</p> <p><b>CR took an action to circulate a financial skills audit so that this can be considered.</b></p> <p>SS added that there are a few new questions and the wording has been amended slightly from last year.</p>	CR to circulate a financial skills audit so that this can be considered.
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>Extended Services</b></p> <p>CR anticipates that Early Birds and Night Owls will be operating at capacity. The policy has been updated and circulated to parents.</p> <p>The school is offering LAMDA lessons on Mondays and Thursdays. There are 24 slots available for purchase by parents. It is a very popular offering and taken up very quickly. The average London price is between £27 and £32, so this is cost effective. It has been costed to cover administration costs.</p>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Personnel</b></p> <p>All teachers' performance management assessments have been completed, and pay recommendations have been made.</p> <p>The Capability, Disciplinary, Grievance and Whistleblowing policies were each approved.</p>	



	<p>Governors reviewed the sickness absence information for staff. This is distorted by Covid-19 and one staff member who was sick for an extended period of time.</p> <p>CR is working hard to reduce the exceptional leave days – there is a cultural shift taking place but this is managed sensitively.</p> <p>Two resignations from Night Owls staff have been received.</p> <p>Occasionally, where staff request to take time off for appointments etc, they are requested to spend the equivalent time supporting night owls.</p>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Staff Wellbeing</b></p> <p>CR noted that Autumn term was challenging. There has been a period of increased illness. Wellbeing meetings are offered.</p> <p>CR continues to operate an open door policy and felt that it was as good as it can be at this time of year. A staff Christmas party has been organised. A World Cup sweepstake is being run.</p> <p>CPD is run every Tuesday, based on issues emerging from deep dives, performance management and feedback.</p>	
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Capital Works</b></p> <p>The capital works plan was reviewed by Governors.</p> <p>There has been some illness amongst the site team and work has had to be deferred. CR is meeting Andrew to review the plan. The snagging work for the summer is not yet complete, for example.</p> <p>SS and CR have been working with the architects for the nursery – current costs are projected at £1.6m, significantly over the original budget of £500k. A 'Plan B' is being explored.</p>	

	<p><b>Health and Safety</b></p> <p>MTL explained that the Health and Safety checks have taken place.</p> <p>The Health and Safety advisor is visiting on 8th December and Harrow LA Health and Safety audit will take place in February 2023. There are no health and safety concerns.</p> <p>Discussion of the Health and Safety Link role is to be tabled at the FGB.</p> <p>RS asked why the chromebook trolley is £1k.</p> <p>MT confirmed that this is standard pricing.</p>	<p>Discussion of the Health and Safety Link role is to be tabled at the FGB.</p>
13.	<p><b>Lettings</b></p> <p>The projected income this year is £77k, with an expected expenditure of £19k on site services coverage. A final position of £58k is projected.</p> <p>The Romanian Church still has lower numbers attending than expected. Therefore, they are only using one part of the hall. The predicted income from the Romanian Church is not likely to be met.</p> <p>Other lettings continue as expected.</p>	
14.	<p><b>GDPR</b></p> <p>There have been no GDPR breaches.</p>	
15.	<p><b>Visits</b></p> <p>CR invited Governors to come and visit.</p> <p>RS was invited to meet with SS to review the SFVS.</p>	

**Post Meeting Action Log:**

No	Item
1.	SS to circulate the reserve figure
2.	CR took an action to look at interest rates available
3.	CR to consider a review of the levels of financial approval.
4.	MTL and CR took an action to review the impact of CPD.
5.	Energy expenditure to be reviewed at the next meeting.
6.	SS to organise an energy review.
7.	CR to circulate a financial skills audit so that this can be considered.
8.	Discussion of the Health and Safety Link role is to be tabled at the FGB.

Accepted as a true and accurate record by the Chair \_\_\_\_\_