

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY,  
HELD AT SCHOOL ON Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018 AT 6.15 P.M.**

**Present:** Lucy Walker (Chair), Zoe Thorn, Rosa Mottershead, Debora Lucarelli, Ricardo Herbane.  
Tony Davies (Head teacher)

Clerk: Zoe Thorn

**1. Apologies for absence:**

Apologies were received from Melissa Hatcher. Kevin Blencowe was also absent.

**2. Declaration of pecuniary interests:**

There were no declarations of additional pecuniary interest relating to items on the Agenda.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

**4. Matters arising and agreed actions update:**

- a) A letter about school funding, agreed by the members of the “Cambridgeshire Schools Forum working Group” is to be sent to education ministers. The Head is a member of the group and noted that, although the letter had asked for the lump sum funding to be increased for small schools and for inflation and wage inflation costs to be covered by increases in funding, it did not address the need for the existing national funding formula to be better funded and the AWP (age weighted pupil unit) to be increased.
- b) The “WorthLess” campaign letter agreed at the last meeting has been sent out to families. Governors asked if the head had received any responses – none so far, though the letter was not seeking responses and was for information only.
- c) The head mentioned that the Education Select committee has recently asked for an enquiry into school funding, but nothing may change until the comprehensive spending review in 2020. Governors noted from the proposed budget figures that funding needs to be increased before 2020 or the school risks falling into deficit or will have to undertake serious cuts to provision to balance the budget.
- d) Governors asked about second hand ICT equipment: what security governance of ICT does the school have in place? The head replied that an ICT technician, provided by the local authority (LA) ICT Service, spends one day per week in school. One of the technician’s roles is to monitor all equipment. The school is directly connected to the LA server, so any issues can be picked up quickly. Governors asked about the level of confidence the school has in the ICT security. The head answered that there is a high level of confidence in the system: only once in the last few years has inappropriate content appeared on screens; the firewall is secure; the equipment is maintained.
- e) The governor for child protection asked about security for children: the head replied that the school uses the browser Kidsrex in place of google which is more secure; their browsing history can easily be checked; and the curriculum covers online safety. Older children are quick to report if any of their peers are using age-inappropriate social media at home.

**5. Review of the March 2018 BCR**

Governors received the head teacher's report on the March BCR. At the end of the financial year, the budget was broadly where it was expected to be, with a carry forward of £24, 801 against expected £31, 686. The biggest increase in spending came from children requiring 1-1 support. Usually the school has 1 or 2, this year there were 5 additional children requiring this level of support. Of these, the school expects that 1 will leave, and for a further 2 the school is expecting that they will receive EHC plans. These plans will cost the school £6,000 each, but then the local authority will contribute the additional £13,000, however, this money is not backdated. The head noted that the school would not be able to cope financially with any more children requiring this level of support without going into deficit.

The head also noted that a recent visit from Val Palmer, the school's assigned inspector, reported that the SEN provision at St. Matthew's was excellent.

Governors also asked about the underspend on ICT resources, and the head answered that this was balanced by a slight overspend in learning resources.

Governors asked why the development and training budget was underspent at the end of the year. Was training not available? The head replied that training is sometimes free, and so the budget reflects this. Governors also asked was training constrained by money or time? The head replied that both were factors. Also, the training provided by the LA was familiar and staff knew which sessions would be productive. There is less knowledge about training provided by Teaching Schools, and so schools can feel less confident about sending staff on expensive training when they are unsure about the quality. Additionally, as well as the costs of the course, the cost of releasing staff is approximately £200 per teacher per day. After school training could be done but is less likely to be productive in 1.5 hours at the end of a day. Some training is done on the INSET days. St. Matthew's is involved in trialling a scheme from the NAHT (national association of headteachers) "Aspire" which means that staff can access training worth £5,000 – £10,000 with no cost to the school.

Governors asked about costs and wastage of school meals. Parents pay £2.10 per meal and the school pays the provider, Lunchtime (formerly Lunchtime UK), £2.00 day. The profit goes into maintaining the kitchen equipment and administration of meals. The headteacher noted that the contract will need to be renegotiated soon. In terms of wastage, that is the responsibility of Lunchtime. Governors asked if the good quality of food was being maintained: the Head noted that uptake was increasing and that he ate the food every day and it was generally as good as before! Governors noted that the school food must meet minimum legal nutritional standards.

## **6. DfE Financial Benchmarking Exercise**

Governors were invited to use the website to compare the funding and financial situation of St. Matthew's against other comparator schools.

Governors noted that St. Matthew's is not quite at but close to the bottom of the table for per pupil funding. St. Matthew's spends the average amount of money on teachers, but, as our budget is smaller, the percentage of our income spent on teachers is the greatest for all the schools. The head teacher noted that the spending on leadership and management was average, despite St. Matthew's having a head and three assistant heads. The in-year balance was average but the total revenue carry forward was low. One other point worth noting was that some schools of similar size have many more teaching assistants than St. Matthew's. One school had more than 40, another 37. St. Matthew's has 15 (full time equivalent). Governors asked how effective are teaching assistants in improving outcomes for children? The head replied that if teaching assistants are well trained and work in a very directed way then they do make a difference to outcomes (Sutton report). However, in addition to helping children, teaching assistants play a valuable role in reducing teacher workload and improving teacher mental health and work-life balance. The head noted some anecdotal reports of schools only employing teaching assistants in reception and with children with EHC plans, and in no other classes, due to budget constraints. Governors also noted that St. Matthew's had high costs for supply staff. The head explained that, if teachers are recruited through agencies, even for long term appointments, then they must continue to be employed through agencies. This is often not any more expensive than employing teachers directly, as agency staff are not paid for the holiday periods. The expense is transferred to a different budget line. Governors asked why the school needs to go through an agency to find staff, as the school would have approximately 6 months' notice of a maternity leave to advertise the rôle. The head replied that recruitment processes were not always successful, so agencies were a useful source of staff and that often the school has identified high quality staff who have worked for the school through an agency previously and who, if recruited, are then continued to be paid through the agency for contractual reasons.

## **7. “Costing our Curriculum” – outline of exercise carried out by staff on 16/4/18**

In response to the anticipated very tight budget, and also to staff reporting that had got used to “making do”, the school carried out a thorough survey of expenditure and identified key items they wished to buy. Each year group filled in a spreadsheet with their learning resources needs, and the curriculum leaders identified priorities 1 – 3 for each year group and subject. The result was that the learning resources budget is actually less than before, but with named items to purchase throughout the year.

Governors asked what happens to any carry forward from the learning resources budget, and the head replied that it goes into the main carry forward for the whole budget. Governors also asked about the whole class guitar teaching which has not happened for the last two years in year 5. The head reported that this was not happening this year. Previously Cambridgeshire Music had not been able to source a suitable teacher after one left, but now budget constraints mean that it is not financially viable. Governors reported that anecdotally parents had been willing to pay for the lessons – but the head noted that not all parents were in that position.

Finally, governors asked if the exercise had meant that staff were “making do” with what they had rather than buying new things, but the head reported that this was not the case now that priorities for spending had been clearly identified. This exercise was deemed to have been successful, and will be repeated annually.

## **8. Suggested Letting Rates for 2018 – 2019**

The head tabled a paper setting out a modest increase in letting rates for the school premises. These will be reviewed annually from now on, as it has been some years since lettings prices have been increased, and it was suggested that the rise could keep pace with inflation. Governors asked if the rates were too cheap, as anecdotally language teachers reported that elsewhere in the city premises were more expensive. The head replied that the school cannot raise letting rates too sharply, as this is likely to decrease lettings in the short term.

Governors asked about the insurance policies required for letters. The head replied that the letters can buy into the school insurance at extra cost, but most long term, business letters such as Cambridge Kung Fu have their own insurance. Governors asked if the school checks that letters have their own insurance: yes, it is a tick box on the form. Governors asked if the school had benchmarked lettings costs against other premises in the local area. The head reported that two members of office staff have recently taken over this job from the school business manager, and will be checking rates once they are up to speed with the job. Governors asked why are the classroom letting rates going up a smaller amount than the other rates? Governors suggested that there should be different rates for profit and non-profit making services. The head reported that these different rates are already in the policy.

Governors accepted the lettings rate rises but suggested that the school should look into raising the classroom letting rates more.

## **9. Draft Budget 2018 – 2019**

The head teacher guided the committee through his report on the draft budget. The budget for the next financial year broadly maintains the school’s structure as it has been in past years. However, the current structure is unsustainable in future years unless the funding position changes. Because of the carry forward into the financial year, the proposed budget maintains a modest carry forward into the following financial year, but represents an *in year* revenue balance of -£13,566 (deficit).

Governors asked if other schools would be working with deficit budgets this financial year as has been reported in the press, and the head reported that the Local Authority will be collating data on school finances, particularly in terms of deficit budgets or large cuts in provision.

The head noted that Ray Byford (LA financial adviser) has approved the budget in principle.

The head outlined the two areas in which cuts are being made:

1. The teaching of French in Key stage 2. The national curriculum states that a modern foreign language must be taught in KS2, but does not specify for how many years. The school has decided to cut the numbers of years French is taught from 4 to 2. After many years of employing teachers from Parkside to teach KS2 French, teaching was brought in-house this academic year, but the member of staff delivering the French as now left. The school will be advertising for a French teacher (or HLTA) for 2 afternoons per week, to teach either years 4 and 5 or 5 and 6. This will improve outcomes for children by concentrating their French studies into two years rather than 4.

The school will also be reducing the amount of time that the emotional and behavioural (EB) support worker is currently doing EB support 1:1 with children, as the school needs to target resources at children with more severe EB issues than has been the case before. Governors asked for an example of the work the EB worker would be doing. The head responded that it might be a child who had significant difficulties building relationships in the playground. They would work with a TA or the EB worker over the course of several weeks, going through a course designed to help them. Governors asked if some of the work done would be picked up by character education, which is being introduced in the school, the head responded that the character education curriculum would cover themes relevant to this work. Governors also asked if some EB support could be delivered by the breakfast and after school clubs. The replied that the school i share information with Kids R Us with parental consent. The money invested in the 1:1 work by this member of staff will be reduced from £17,000 to £4,000. The member of staff will remain in school and be given other responsibilities. The school is pleased that its investment in counselling support via Cambridge Academic Performance has seen rapid improvement made by some children and will continue to invest in this service.

Governors then asked a more general question about when the school should start planning for potentially making cuts in the budget in the future, and whether the head would consider cuts to provision or a deficit budget. The head reported that it would depend how much deficit was planned, and how long for. If a school budget is planned to go into deficit, the school must also have a plan to get out of deficit. The head said that he would want to have a plan that would see the school out of deficit within within 2 years – if budget forecasts demonstrated that this was possible, then allowing for a small deficit to maintain current structures would be a pragmatic decision. However, if no additional funding appears on the horizon, then the school will need to start considering cuts in about 6 months' time. This will be reviewed at the resources committee in November 2018.

The head gave some examples of areas where it would not be possible to make cuts (e.g. teachers,) and those where it may be possible to make cuts without failing to maintain statutory duties (learning resources, teaching assistants). Provided structures are maintained, the head predicted that academic outcomes for children would be better in 3 years' time, but this progress could be eroded if cuts result in loss of staff or resources.

Governors asked if the proposed budget includes the proposed salary rise for teaching assistants negotiated by teaching unions nationally. The head replied that it does.

Governors commented that the budget for photocopying has increased. The head responded that this is because the school no longer buys the abacus workbooks for maths, and makes more in-house resources which need to be copied. Governors also commented that parents do not need to have paper communications, and the head replied that most communications are now electronic, with paper copies available in the office for parents who are not online.

The draft budget for 2018 – 2019 was approved unanimously by the committee.

## **10. AOB**

There was no other business.

## **11. Dates for future meeting**

Dates for the next year will be set at the FGB in July

## **12. Key outcomes from this meeting**

- a) Draft budget for 2018 – 2019 agreed.
- b) New letting rates for 2018 – 2019 agreed.
- c) March BCR reviewed.
- d) DfE financial benchmarking completed.

### **Agreed Actions:**

- Chair of governors still to complete online safer recruitment update course. Other governors to do this course or the one offered by governor services.
- From March 2018 meeting: Governors to set up working party on pollution.