



TOWER HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL
Fowler Road, Farnborough, Hampshire. GU14 0BW

Minutes of Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting

held online on **Thursday 7th March 2024** at 6:30 pm

Present: Nick Brown (NB), Kieran Collins (KC), Emma Dinsdale (ED), Laura Ovenden (LO, **Headteacher** (HT)), Agnieszka Sasiela (AS), Nicola Ward (NW, Deputy HT), Mark Whitehead (**Committee Chair**, MW)

Apologies: Jane Fitzpatrick (JF, Business Manager)

Absent: Camilla Collins (CC)

In attendance: Rachael Purvis (Clerk)

Meeting started at: 6:34 pm

		Action
1.	Welcome The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and checked everyone could hear and be heard.	
2.	Apologies for Absence, Declaration of Pecuniary Interests / Conflicts of Interest	
2.1	There were apologies for absence from JF and CC was absent. The meeting was quorate.	
2.2	No pecuniary interests or conflicts of interest were declared in any of the agenda items.	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting	
3.1	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 rd November 2023 were agreed and the minutes would be electronically signed as a true and accurate record by the Committee Chair and stored electronically on Governor Hub.	
3.2	Actions arising from the previous meeting were reviewed and recorded on the summary table of Outstanding Actions at the end of these minutes.	
3.3	There were no matters arising from the actions and minutes.	
4.	Staffing	
4.1	Staffing update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NW and the HT were currently teaching in Year 5. Beth Johnstone had been appointed as an Early Career Teacher (ECT) to take over the class from September 2024. However, she would be starting after Easter as an unqualified teacher, working alongside NW and the HT as an introduction to taking on the role in full. • It was now the period when staff turnover might take place as the window for moves opened up. No resignations had been received so far, but there might be some in the next couple of months. • The HT and KC were interviewing for a new Lunchtime Supervisor (LTS) as an LTS was on long term sick absence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Q: Will the new LTS replace the person who is off sick? No this would be an additional person. They would fill another LTS role that had not been vacant in the staff structure. ○ Q: Does this mean the new LTS is in the budget? Yes, and the person off sick would also continue to be paid. ○ Q: How is managing teaching going for NW and the HT? It was busy and there was a degree of juggling required. However, both were loving being in the classroom. ○ MW volunteered that if ever they needed LTS support he would be happy to help out. 	
4.2	Staff training NW had circulated a review of the staff training conducted over 2023/24 prior to the meeting. The HT	

Minutes signed by (PRINT): MARK WHITEHEAD

Signature: *Mark Whitehead*

Position: CHAIR OF F&P COMMITTEE

Date: 10th May 2024

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	<p>asked governors if they had found the report useful and whether there was other information that they would like to see. Governors thanked NW for her report which they found interesting. The following summarises their discussion and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that the descriptors were difficult to understand from a non-teaching point of view, but the governors’ role was not to review the specifics of the courses and to focus on costs. • Q: Are we investing enough in the staff, especially ECTs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ From a financial perspective it would appear from the report that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had a higher proportion of training. However, this also included subject leader training in maths and english. ○ The SLT do a large amount of in-house training for the staff’s Continuous Professional Development (CPD). ○ ECTs get a large amount of CPD; weekly mentoring and working through a set programme for development. ○ The internal training was not shown on the report; only external courses were shown. ○ Q: Could a statement be added to reference the in-house training that takes place as it is not captured in the report? NW had impact statements for all the training conducted and therefore had the evidence recorded elsewhere of the in-house training. • It was suggested that governors could ask staff about what they thought of the in-house CPD. In addition, it would be helpful to review what training individual staff received. • Looking back over the last three years the HT reported the following spend on staff training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2021/22 just under £30k, ○ 2022/23 £32.5k, ○ 2023/24 just under £29k. • Moving forward the HT felt that external training may have to be cut back due to budget constraints. The HT also reflected that external training was often very good but not always. In-house training would always be highly tailored. • It would be interesting to talk to Beth Johnstone after the summer term to hear her reflection on the training she receives. 	
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>Budget Review</p> <p>Spend for year-to-date for 2023/24</p> <p>JF had circulated the Variance Report and YDev Report to governors prior to the meeting. Governors commented that they did not have questions due to the excellent level of detail in JF’s reporting. In addition, the budget appeared to be in a very good place.</p> <p>The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income had increased as compared to the budgeted amount. • Governors were looking forward to seeing the end of year closing budget. • The HT and JF were starting to work on the budget for next year. The HT was looking strategically at staffing and what could be cut back and would bring this for review at the next F&P meeting. • High Needs Top-Up funding of approximately £24k was expected before the end of the financial year. • The HT hoped that there may be a slight reduction in the Teaching budget line as she and NW were in the classroom till the end of the academic year. <p>Devolved Capital Budget</p> <p>The Capital Spend Report had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting by JF.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q: Please would you expand column I for rows 12-34 as the description provided is incomplete. Why do all the figures have the same date? The HT apologised for the format of the sheet and explained that the lines related to the £18,944 spend on energy saving lighting. Each line related to an invoice e.g. Hall Lighting. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The remainder of the spend had been on computer equipment or IT. • The devolved Capital Funds stood at £31,934. A top up would be received in the next financial year to bring the total to approximately £40k. • Quotes for renovating the quad area had been received for £14k and £20k. A third quote was awaited. The final cost would depend on the choice of a 'car port' or a 'sail' to provide shade in the quad. • A donation of £11k had been received from a parent which would remain in the main school budget. The capital funding could only be spent on specific types of projects, and this would be the primary source of funding for work on the quad. 	
6.	<p>Benchmarking</p> <p>CC, MW and KC had prepared a benchmarking comparison report for governors to review prior to the meeting. The comparison had been conducted using the Department for Education (DfE) online tool and was based on 2022/23 data. Special thanks were made to KC for retrieving progress and attainment data from other sources as the portal information was very out of date.</p> <p>The following points were discussed in reviewing the data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress and attainment data placed Tower Hill (TH) at the top of the comparison. The data highlighted that some schools were in much more difficult situations. It was noted that writing and reading nationally had been badly affected by the Covid pandemic and would take time to return to pre-Covid levels. • Most of the indicators showed that TH sat where governors would expect it to be in the comparison tables. • It was noted that SLT expenditure was again incorrect; something that was known from previous years, but which it seemed was not possible to correct. • The spend on premises at TH was high, reflecting the fact that a number of projects had been undertaken last year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Q: Does this include staff costs? Yes. • Q: Why is the in-year balance negative? Last year there was a deficit of £40k, not £65k as shown. The figures used in the tool were somewhat crude and did not take account of carry forward offsetting a deficit bottom line. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The majority of schools were in a similar position. ○ The Brunswick School had a very high in year balance but it was noted that their Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) attainment was not as healthy as some others. • It was noted that two schools had very high reserve levels which it was presumed were savings for building projects. • It was emphasised that the selection of schools used in the comparison were from around the country but with similar demographics to TH. • The spend on Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) at TH was high in comparison to others. However, this was as expected; TH intentionally had more LSAs to support the children and get better results. • It was noted that the Brunswick School not only had a high in year balance, but also a high reserve and a lower spend on teachers (3.5 less than TH). This again was felt to point to their lower RWM achievement. TH's policy was to spend in a way to maximise outcomes for the children. • TH had a high level of needs in the school which also drove their spending to support the children. The school was committed to being inclusive, giving children places in school with support for their individual needs. Despite the inevitable impact on the school's overall results and finances, governors felt strongly that this was why the school was there. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The school received some additional funding for supporting Social Mental and Emotional Health (SMEH) issues, but this did not fully cover the costs. TH provided a range of different types of support for these children such as play therapists, an Emotional Learning Support Assistant (ELSA) and external placements. These needs were growing and had a financial impact but the support provided was very worthwhile. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was a need to maintain an on-going review of the support needed for these children. <p>Feedback to all governors on the benchmarking comparison would be given at the next FGB meeting and all governors had access to the comparison report on Governor Hub.</p>	
<p>7. Control Checks</p> <p>7.1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the control checks had taken place except the credit card check due to JF being away. The table at the end of these minutes for gives a summary of the checks. • MW commented that the template provided for the checks was very out of date, focusing on cash and cheque payments when online payments were now most common. JF and MW had therefore decided that they would adapt the template to add this in, plus other missing elements, for future checks. • It was noted that cash did get used at the Summer and Christmas Fairs. JF and MW had discussed the need to provide additional verification that cash counting was done correctly with a witness and a countersignature in future. This would ensure that JF was protected and that the process could be held accountable. • Q: Where do the audit check forms come from? It was not clear and KC offered to work with JF and MW to review the templates used and see if more up to date ones could be found for next time. <p>Action: Find out if there are more up to date finance control check templates and develop existing ones where needed.</p>	KC and MW
<p>7.2</p>	<p>School Financial Value Standard (SFVS)</p> <p>The SFVS had been completed by MW, JF and the HT. There were no substantial changes to the previous year. It was confirmed that all the relevant procedures were being followed.</p> <p>Two minor updates were required before the SFVS was taken to FGB for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The date of approval should be the 21st March 2024. • The date for the benchmarking exercise needed to be updated to 7th March 2024. <p>DECISION: Governors recommended the SFVS to the FGB for approval, subject to the two minor amendments listed above.</p>	
8.	<p>Any Notified Business</p> <p>The Clerk noted that if governors wished to keep Governor Hub going forward, instead of switching to the new Hampshire Services for Schools (HSS) system, it would cost approximately £400 per year. A decision on this would be taken at the FGB meeting on 21st March 2024.</p>	
8.	<p>Date of next meeting: 9th May 2024, 6:30pm, online.</p>	

The meeting closed at 7:25 pm.

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Action	By Whom	By When	Status
23/11/2023	5.1	Send out background information on funding for SEND support.	HT	ASAP	CLOSED
23/11/2023	6.1	Add an item to the FGB agenda for the meeting on 30 th November 2023 to invite governors to prepare benchmarking information.	Clerk	ASAP	COMPLETE
7/3/2024	7.1	Find out if there are more up to date finance control check templates and develop existing ones where needed.	KC & MW	April 2024	

2023/24 WATCHLIST

Leadership structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative leadership structures to reduce costs and minimise impact on children.
School Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of subsidy Number of trips Parents' ability to pay for trips
PP Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correction to the number of PP children from 122 to 103 Impact on income
High Needs Top-Up Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of the additional funding awarded in 2023/24.
Staffing assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing assumptions for years 2 and 3 should be reviewed and monitored.

F&P STANDING AGENDA ITEMS / CONTROL CHECKS 2023/24

Item	Autumn	Spring	Summer	By whom
	*Date set	Date set	Date set	
Adoption of Manual of Financial Practice & Procedure (annually)	COMPLETED Sept 23			FGB
Payroll check (annually)		Feb 24		MW & NB
Purchase Card check (3 checks per year / termly reports to F&P committee)	COMPLETED Nov 23	Mar 24	Jun 24	MW & AS
Petty Cash (annually)		Feb 24		MW & NB
Benchmarking (annually)		Feb 24		
Income (annually)		Feb 24		MW & NB
IT asset register (annually)			Jun 24	OG
Single Central Register	COMPLETED Oct 23	Feb 24	Jun 24	NW
Performance Management Process (Bi-annual check – next due Jun 24)			Jun 24	

*Control checks – date of actual check included in table. Report on control check to be added to agenda of F&P for relevant month / term.

	No Check due this term
	Check completed
	Check due this term