



**Finance & Resources Committee Meeting**  
**Queen Emma School**  
**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024, 5.30 p.m.**  
**Minutes**

**Governors Present**

Fran Hughes  
 Hannah Lewis  
 Harriet Phillips (Committee Chair)  
 Nicole Wilson  
 Richard Wilson  
 Sarah Jarman (EHT)  
 Sean Lang (FGB Chair)

**Others Present**

Catherine Monument  
 Cath Stubbs  
 Julia Neal  
 Zoe Vassiliou (Clerk)

	Item	Supporting Paperwork	Notes	Action
1	Apologies for absence (Clerk)		Apologies were received and accepted from Stanley Wilson. The meeting is quorate.	
2	Declaration of Interest (Chair)		None declared.	
3	Agree Minutes of the last meeting (All)	Minutes 22.01.2024	<p><i>Amendment 6 (9)</i>            We currently have 33 x 1<sup>st</sup> choice, 48 x 2<sup>nd</sup> choice and 21 x 3<sup>rd</sup> choice for Reception year 2024 at Queen Emma and 48 x 1<sup>st</sup> choice, 30 x 2<sup>nd</sup> choice and 37 x 3<sup>rd</sup> choice at Queen Edith.</p> <p><i>Amendment 6 (10)</i>            The LA can introduce temporary caps under the right circumstances.</p> <p><i>Amendment 11</i>            We do use Twitter, but are going to look at other platforms that might be more likely to be accessed by our parents and the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes were agreed subject to the above changes.</li> </ul>	Clerk to

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once amendments are made and the minutes are signed these should be shared with George Hayes at the Local Authority.</li> </ul>	<u>action</u>
4	Matters Arising (All)		No matters discussed.	
5	Personnel Update (SJ)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ZV finishes working next Thursday, although she will remain as Clerk to the Governing Body. We have taken the decision not to replace the PA hours in order to save money. During the Summer term ZV has agreed to work 5 hours per week to cover essential work for the EHT.</li> <li>ZV's office manager hours have already been allocated to an existing member of the admin team. We had the JD and PS evaluated by EPM to ensure that they were given an appropriate salary for their new responsibilities.</li> <li>A permanent TA at Queen Emma has resigned and is not being replaced to make a cost saving.</li> <li>Rachel Butterworth has been on secondment with Queen Emma one day per week working as our SENDCo. We had hoped that Rachel would return after the Easter holidays and had agreed the financial commitment to this with Carley Holliman (Assistant Director) from the Local Authority, however Rebecca Doyle, who line manages Rachel, cannot release her during the Summer term as there she has informed the EHT that there is need in other Cambs schools and that Queen Emma have had 10 months of support. This will leave us with no qualified SENDCo, but does provide a cost saving. The Acting DHT will have a handover with the interim SENDCo at the end of the Spring term.</li> <li>Agency staff across both schools have been significantly reduced, which has led to Queen Emma not having enough MDS staff. The local authority agreed that we could recruit one MDS to ensure we have enough staff across the lunch times; we have recruited a MDS to start this Wednesday.</li> <li><b>The EHT reminded governors that all recruitment has to be run past the Local Authority.</b></li> </ol>	
6	Letter of Concern from Local Authority (SJ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter of concern</li> <li>Chair's response letter</li> <li>Letter from LA in response to Chair</li> <li><b>Analysis of the causes of the Federation's financial position – tabled at the meeting</b></li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We received a notice of concern relating to the Federation's financial position, on 21.02.2024, following a meeting we had with the Local Authority on 15.02.2024. The letter details the requirements of the governing body to support the turn-around of the financial position and to develop a recovery plan.</li> <li>A RIG (Rapid Improvement Group) will be set up and at the meeting on 15.02.2024 the EHT was asked if there were people she would like to be involved in the group; we had requested that a member of the place planning team, a member of the Statutory Assessment Team (SAT) and Ray Byford as our financial advisor. We have further requested that Rebecca Doyle attend the RIG to look at SENDCo support.</li> <li><b>Challenge: Have the local authority agreed to this?</b> Yes, they have agreed to our above suggestions. Martin Wade, Cath Stubbs, Julia Neal and Catherine Monument will also attend the RIG meetings.</li> <li>The Chair had contacted the Local Authority in response to their letter of 21.02.2024 to express our concern that</li> </ol>	

			<p>their letter stated that 'no appropriate management actions' had been taken. However at the meeting on 15.02.2024 Sarah had outlined a number of actions that had been put in place to mitigate the situation. He was also concerned that the issue of the delayed introduction of SBS hampering the governor's role of monitoring the budget had not been considered sufficiently.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Our response from the Local Authority did make clear that they are aware that steps to mitigate the financial position have been put in place and that management has made longer-term suggestions, however we remain concerned that the issue of SBS and impact of SEND costs have been dismissed too quickly.</li> <li>6. Last week SL and RW visited the Finance Manager to review the internal financial controls and to talk with the Business Manager about the implementation of SBS (Governor visit report will be shared at the FGB on 25.03.2024). The time-line of the implementation of SBS is detailed in the Chair's document 'Analysis of the causes of the Federation's financial problems' which was tabled at this meeting, and is attached to these minutes (Appendix 1).</li> <li>7. The Chair has consulted Chairs of other local schools and four have responded to share their concerns about SBS and SEND impact</li> <li>8. Whilst SL and RW concluded that some improvements can be made to the internal processes they also consider that in large part our financial position is due to unfunded pay rises, very costly sickness and maternity absence, higher SEND demand, length of time that it takes for EHCPs to be put in place, poor implementation of SBS and falling pupil numbers.</li> <li>9. <b>Challenge: Is there a set time-frame for how long the RIG is in place?</b> No; this will be when the Local Authority are satisfied that we are able to manage our financial position and an agreed recovery plan is in place and is being adhered to.</li> <li>10. <b>Challenge: How easy is it to quantify the additional cost of SEN?</b> We can consider that last year we had a carry forward of £214k and by November this had been spent. Now we have an overspend of approx. £500k.</li> <li>11. <b>Challenge: How will the Federation be able to meet its' statutory SEND duty if the budget doesn't allow us sufficient funding to support our most vulnerable children, particularly if they are still being assessed for an EHCP but need a TA?</b> It will be challenging which is why we have asked that someone from SAT sits on the RIG so they can best advise us. Their advice might be that we don't provide support to children with no EHCP.</li> <li>12. <b>Governor: Looking at spending it is clear that expenditure is to support children with a high level of need to learn and to be in school, and has not been spent on unrequired luxuries. How can we forecast what level of need we need to allow for in the future?</b> It is very difficult to predict as children join our schools throughout the year; some children with SEND join our schools from overseas and we have not been alerted to their needs</li> </ol>	
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			before they join us and the whole EHCP process has to be started to access funding, which is very lengthy.	
7	Draft budget 2024/25 (SJ)	Draft budget 2024/25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A draft budget has been prepared early this year so governors have a clear view of the Federation's financial position.</li> <li>2) In the CFR Revenue Report – initial budget 01 = Queen Edith School and 02 = Queen Emma School. Moving forward the business manager will run a report for each school and a report for the Federation. RB has set this up this month.</li> <li>3) The draft budget has a lot to do with staffing, which is not easy to predict.</li> <li>4) <b>Challenge: What can we structurally change with regard to staffing to cut costs, without impacting the education and safety of the children?</b> If you consider that c.£125k needs to be saved at each school we could suggest that we cut TAs by 5 at each school and have no agency staff, however this would negatively impact the pupils education.</li> <li>5) <b>Challenge: How do we plan for sickness and maternity leave given the impact these have had on the budget this year?</b> We base our budget on the average teacher absence which we have calculated is 6.5 days per year for last year. However, if you include the amount of long term sickness absence that has been excessive over the last financial year, this looks more like an average of 10 days per teacher. . It is difficult to budget for maternity leave unless we are aware of this in advance of budget setting. <b>A governor suggested that given the daily cost of a teacher from a supply agency it would be cheaper to recruit an extra member of teaching staff to cover sickness absence. The school may consider a cover supervisor in its cost saving proposals to the FGB.</b></li> <li>6) <b>Challenge: Do we have insurance for sickness?</b> Yes, we do but it is a token amount and does not cover the salary of a member of staff.</li> <li>7) <b>Challenge: How will the financial position be communicated to staff?</b> Staff are aware that changes have been made; and can already feel the effects of the cuts e.g. less support staff in classes. When teachers are absent, their classes are being separated into groups and allocated to other classrooms. There are very few supply TAs in either school, and only to work directly with children who have an EHCP, where this cannot be covered by the existing staff.</li> <li>8) <b>Challenge: How else can we chip away at the deficit?</b> The SLT has some scenarios in mind and these need to be fleshed out before being shared with governors; these include having NS come to QEM for 2 days per week as the DHT, employing an M6 SENCO who is out of class 3 days per week, having 1 R class at QEM due to low up-take of places, considering Nursery class structures and giving a class to a teacher who currently works providing cover at Queen Edith.</li> <li>9) <b>Challenge: Is it possible to move to a 1 class structure in reception at QEM?</b> This would have to be discussed</li> </ol>	

			<p>and negotiated with the Local Authority and is one of the reasons that we have requested a member of the place planning team attends our RIG.</p> <p>10) SJ and CM will endeavour to prepare different financial scenarios to be shared with the governing body at the FGB on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March. If longer is needed to prepare the scenarios the committee suggested a reserve date of Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April at 5.15pm – this can be online if necessary.</p> <p>11) Clerk to provisionally add draft budget and financial scenarios to the Agenda for 25.03.2024.</p> <p>12) <b>Challenge: Does this budget include the loan repayments to the Local Authority?</b> No; we have been advised to prepare a budget and then work out repayments over a three year period. The Local Authority would then have to agree that they were satisfied with the repayment plan.</p> <p>Sean Lang left the meeting. Committee remains quorate.</p>	<p><u>ZV share reserve date</u> <u>ZV to add to the FGB Agenda</u></p>
8	Governor monitoring of budget (HP)	<b>Revenue overspend – tabled at the meeting</b>	<p>1) EHT and FBM prepared a detailed document, which was tabled at this meeting, of the unplanned expenses which have most impacted our budget:</p> <p><u>Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DHT / SENDCO at QEM was absent for a full year; we internally promote our KS1 Phase Leader to take on this role on a temporary basis. We also had to second a SENDCo from the Local Authority for 1 day per week to cover statutory duties until the end of the Spring Term 2024. For the Summer term the Acting DHT will work alongside HB to cover SENDCO duties.</li> <li>• A temporary KS1 Phase Leader had to be put in place to cover the acting DHT.</li> <li>• AT QED a Y5 teacher (40%) was on sick leave for a full year (due to the severity of the illness). To cover this role the existing member of the job share extended her hours to 80% and we had to use an agency teacher for 1 day.</li> <li>• At QEM one Y4 teacher, who works 60%, had to take long-term sickness absence due to surgery; an agency staff was put in place to cover this post for 5 weeks.</li> <li>• At QED a Y3 teacher took 1 month of long-term sickness absence and this was covered by an internal supply teacher.</li> <li>• At QED a Y5 teacher who works 77% is on maternity leave and is being covered by a supply teacher 4 days per week and the existing job share partner on the remaining day.</li> <li>• At QEM our Reception teacher and our EYFS Phase Leader went on maternity leave; this post was advertised internally and a member of our existing staff appointed. The member of staff appointed fell pregnant and has been on long term sickness absence pre-maternity leave for more or less the duration</li> </ul>	

of her pregnancy. We therefore had to put cover in place for the Reception teaching role which was provided by a supply teacher. Essentially this means three teachers are having to be paid to cover one class in Reception due to the circumstances.

- At QEM a teacher who works 44% is on maternity leave.
- A 1:1 TA was on long-term sick at QEM but has now returned.
- At QED 2 members of our catering staff were suspended due to disciplinary and we had to cover them with agency staff.

SEND Provision

- At QED we presently have 17 pupils with an EHCP and at QEM we have 14 pupils with an EHCP. For each EHCP child we fund the first £6k. This leaves approximately £10k of funding for each child (if fully funded), however the average cost of a full-time TA (30.4hpw) is £23775, so each costs the school £8K or significantly more if the child is only receiving half funding.
- We have children at each school who are awaiting the outcome from the Statutory Assessment Team (SAT) – 4 at QED and 8 at QEM. These children are being supported without funding.
- We are covering the cost of alternative provision for 1 child at QED from the funding allocated as part of this child's EHCP.
- We have requested EHCNAs for 2 pupils at QED and 1 pupil at QEM; these children are being supported without funding.
- 4 pupils in the Early Years at QEM are in receipt of SENIF funding but the funding does not cover the cost of supporting these children.
- The speed at which additional funding requests are being processed at the Local Authority is painfully slow. We have applied for additional funding for a number of children at Queen Emma in the Autumn term and still don't know the outcome. In the meantime, these children have required full time support at cost to the schools.

Pupil numbers

- Pupil numbers for Reception 2023 were lower than usual, particularly at QEM which will impact our funding. The numbers for Reception 2024 are lower, again, particularly at QEM.

			<p>2) HP asked the committee what they collectively thought could be done differently to ensure we are never in this deficit position again.</p> <p>3) It has been very hard to monitor the budget due to the problems we have encountered with SBS, although the business manager has always worked hard to provide us with data and we have discussed the overspend in supply staff at all meetings since June 2023.</p> <p>4) Moving forward CM has developed a spreadsheet for senior leaders to use to check whether there is any money remaining in the supply staff budget. If there is no money, or not sufficient money, then you cannot have supply staff and an alternative arrangement will have to be found. The EHT will have to be consulted before any bookings are made. This has all been detailed in a paper 'controls for agency staff' which was going to be discussed at item 11, but can be discussed now.</p> <p>5) Supply staff will be an absolute last resort and alternative means of providing cover will have to be considered first; trainees can be released to provide cover, part-time teachers could be approached to ask if they can provide cover, PPA time might have to be re-scheduled, find out what cover L2 TAs can provide.</p> <p>6) <b>Challenge: What happens if you've considered exhausted all these options and there is no money?</b> We will have to find a way as we cannot start overspending and have to demonstrate to the Local Authority that we can keep to the plan for the years ahead. It will mean that we may only be able to give support to children who have an EHCP and not to those who are currently in the process of applying for an EHCP, or who have significant needs but don't meet the threshold for an EHCP.</p> <p>7) In school we have stepped up our staff absence management procedures and initial meetings are taking place with staff who are absent regularly.</p> <p><b>F&amp;R Committee agreed that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>They will increase their spot checks on the internal financial procedures</b></li> <li>• <b>Now that reporting is easier, governors will take care to challenge where budgets look to be overspent.</b></li> <li>• <b>Requested that the business manager provides a commentary on the year to date at each meeting.</b></li> <li>• <b>Requested that they have feedback on the positive and negative impacts of savings on the teaching environment.</b></li> <li>• <b>Requested that the BMR is run monthly for the Chair of Finance and Resources and the Chair of the FGB.</b></li> <li>• <b>Consider staff well-being and the impact of budget savings on staff and pupils.</b></li> </ul>	
9	SFVS (HP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SFVS Queen Edith</li> <li>• SFVS Queen Emma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks to Harriet Phillips who has completed the SFVS for each school.</li> <li>• Skills matrix was shared for governors to complete. For those governors who didn't have the opportunity to</li> </ul>	ZV to

			<p>complete them please scan them to ZV as quickly as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will be shared with the FGB for their approval on 25.03.2024.</li> </ul>	<u>collate</u>
10	Credit limits on F&R terms of reference	Terms of reference 2023 – CM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Items 5 and 6 under finance detail that the EHT will have delegated powers to authorise non-budgeted expenditure not in excess of £5k and to authorise virement of an amount of money not in excess of £5k. The FRC will have delegated powers to authorise non-budgeted expenditure not in excess of £10k and to authorise virement of an amount of money not in excess of £10k.</li> <li>All other procedures are detailed in the QF internal financial procedures and this should be detailed in the terms of reference under No.1 'General points' as a third bullet point - "Governors will follow procedures set out in the Queens' Federation's internal financial procedures."</li> </ul>	<u>Clerk to action</u>
11	Internal controls for managing agency staff bookings (SJ)	Controls for agency staff management	Discussed at item 8 (3).	
12	Policy for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anti-fraud and corruption policy</li> <li>QF financial procedures</li> <li>Scheme of financial delegation</li> <li>Use of mobile phones and other smart devices</li> </ul>	<p><i>Anti-fraud and corruption Policy – Local Authority</i>  <b>The finance and resources committee adopted the anti-fraud and corruption policy issued by the Local Authority.</b></p> <p><i>QF internal financial procedures – Local Authority model policy adapted by FBM</i>  The business manager will cross-reference these procedures with our Lettings Policy with regard to debt collection and talk to the members of office staff who chase-up school meal debts and nursery fees debts to be sure that everyone is working to the same time frames.  <b>The internal financial procedures were ratified by the finance and resources committee.</b></p> <p><i>Scheme of financial delegation – Local Authority model policy adapted by FBM</i>  <b>The scheme of financial delegation was ratified by the finance and resources committee.</b></p> <p><i>Use of mobile phones and other smart devices</i>  This policy was revised in light of DfE guidance around the use of mobile phones in schools. Although the policy already reflected the guidance, we have made it clearer that mobile phones and smart devices are prohibited for use during the school day and our policy has been amended to reflect this.  <b>The finance and resources committee ratified the use of mobile phones and other smart devices policy.</b></p>	



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menopause Policy</li> </ul>	<p><i>Menopause Policy</i></p> <p>This policy was adopted from EPM model policy.</p> <p><b>The finance and resources committee ratified the menopause policy.</b></p>	
13	Premises (CM)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The guttering needs replacing around the QED swimming pool, however when checking the guttering it was noted that the roof needs replacement before the guttering can be completed. On 2<sup>nd</sup> April the roof will be checked for asbestos and we will then have a clearer picture of how the works will proceed. Unfortunately it does mean that children will be unable to use the swimming pool this Summer term. Once the roof and guttering are replaced we will need to re-tile the swimming pool in readiness for Spring 2025.</li> <li>The Local Authority will provide pupils in Y6 who are unable to swim 25m with a voucher for 10 swimming lessons to support them to improve their swimming.</li> <li>The roof of the mobile classrooms at QED is leaking and the local authority are coming in to look.</li> <li>The heating at QEM was not working for two weeks whilst waiting for a replacement part. It is now functioning again.</li> <li>The fire alarm at QED has stopped working; alternative emergency evacuation procedures have been put in place and the insurance company have been informed We are expecting this to be fixed within a week.</li> <li>A ramp has been fitted at QED to provide disabled access.</li> </ul>	
14	Health and Safety Report (CM)		Health and Safety visits have taken place at both schools in the past week and minutes will be presented for each school at the F&R committee meeting on Monday 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2024.	
15	Safeguarding	Pre-Ofsted Governance Check – Governor Development Plan	The pre-Ofsted governance check from June 2023 was again shared with the committee, so they could review their actions. This will be on the FGB agenda on 25.03.2024. ZV has completed a RAG rating so governors can consider what actions still need to be worked upon and use this to complete their Governor Development Plan (GDP).	
16	What is the impact of decisions made during this meeting upon the standards and improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Looked at the impact of how our response to the financial situation might impact the pupils, particularly those with SEND.</li> <li>Looked at the impact of how our response to the financial situation might impact the well-being of staff.</li> <li>Tightened procedures for monitoring the budget.</li> </ul>	

	of the Federation?			
17	Correspondence Circulated	LA statement of SEND funding	This had been received by governors.	
18	Items to be reported to parents		EHT will write to the parents about the swimming pool.	<u>EHT to prepare letter</u>
19	Any other business	Lettings increase proposal		
20	<b>Date of next meeting:</b>	<b>Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024, 5.30pm</b>		
21	<b>Confidential Item</b>	ZV to leave the meeting	Discuss hours and pay for Clerk to the Governing Body (recorded separately).	



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024  
 (Harriet Phillips, Chair, Finance & Resources Committee)