



Whinless Down Academy Trust

FSARC Meeting

Monday 12th May 2025

Minutes of the Finance, Strategy, Risk and Audit Committee Meeting

Held on Monday 12th May 2025 at 2pm at the Trust Office, St Martin’s School

Committee Members Present: Anne Siggins (chair of FSARC), Tricia Sherling (vice chair)

Others Present: Michelle Noden (Trust Business Manager), Kelly Brown (CEO), Michelle Hards

Governance Professional: Claudia Sawyers

<p>1</p>	<p><u>Welcome, Introduction, Resignations and Apologies</u> Chair welcomed all to the meeting.</p> <p><u>Apologies</u> Apologies were received and accepted from Alison Mackintosh.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p><u>Register of Business and Pecuniary Interest</u> All committee members were given the opportunity to declare any new business interests. No new business interests were declared. There were no interests declared against this agenda.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p><u>Minutes from the meeting held on 25th February 2025</u> Previous minutes were distributed to the committee prior to the meeting. Trustees commented that a slight amendment was needed to the wording on item 4.6, Gov. Prof will make correction and upload to GovernorHub. Trustees agreed the minutes with correction as accurate record of the meeting and agreed for minutes to be marked as signed on GovernorHub.</p> <p><u>Actions/Matters Arising</u> Action Points from the last meeting: Item 4.7- Ad Hoc meeting to be organised once GAG released – This has not taken place due to the need to wait for the resignation deadline as there were several potential and confirmed resignations and flexible working requests, it would not have been worthwhile to hold a meeting prior to the deadline. Headteachers will be reviewing the preference forms and will be able to make staffing decisions once the resignation deadline has passed.</p>

4	<p><u>Budget Monitoring – December Management Accounts</u></p> <p>All budget monitoring and variance reports were sent to the committee prior to the meeting. Bursar gave overview of variance to previous month budget.</p>
	<p>Trust</p>
4.1	<p>March: £150,342</p>
	<p>Variance to previous month: None</p>
	<p>There were two changes for -£500 and £500 that have cancelled each other out, with staff development costs at £500 and a reduction to the admin purchases forecast of £500 as not needed.</p>
	<p><u>Catering</u></p>
	<p>March: £26,013</p>
	<p>Variance to previous month: increase of £4,869</p>
	<p>Main Variances: The variance is due to a catering assistant resigning who has not been replaced and some unpaid leave.</p>
	<p>Following the last meeting discussion, MN has worked out the estimated cost per school meal is currently £2.42. MN is still reviewing invoices and working on cost-saving measures, including a revised spring-summer menu and the removal of expensive items such as brought-in cookies. It was noted that some costs, such as electricity and other kitchen running expenses, are not be included in the meal cost estimate, so it is likely that the per-meal cost is more than the £2.50 charged. Other cost saving</p>
4.2	<p>measures were discussed, such as having meat-free days which many schools across the country now do. However, this should be considered against the work that has been put in to ensuring a reduction in food waste and implementing nutritious meals that the children enjoy.</p>
	<p>At this point, food costs are tracking as expected for the year, and no adjustments to the forecast are considered necessary.</p>
	<p><u>Priory Fields School</u></p>
	<p>March: 172,266</p>
	<p>Variance to previous month: increase of £35,860</p>
4.3	<p>Main variances: There was a decrease in the budget of teachers pay of £2967 due to overtime claims. The budget for support staff pay increase by £12,961 due to a TA leaving and another TA had been put in the budget but has not yet started. Pupil premium increased by £13,900 due to an increase in eligible children. High Needs Funding increased by £14,087. The concerns with the new system for SEND within Kent are still present, there has been some more information on the allocation of the ‘communities’ but it is still relatively unknown how funding will be shared.</p>
	<p><u>Vale View School</u></p>
4.4	<p>March: £186,123</p>
	<p>Variance to previous month: decrease of £61,270</p>
	<p>Main Variances: The decrease is largely due to direct revenue contributions of £63,144 to pay for the children’s toilets refurbishment and replacements windows. There has been an increases in Pupil Premium funding of £7,731. The forecast for supply teachers had to increase by £1000 due to the</p>
4.5	<p>unavoidable need for supply.</p>

<p>4.6</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.8</p>	<p><u>St Martin's School</u></p> <p>March: £66,841</p> <p>Variance to previous month: decrease of £7,400</p> <p>Main variances: This variance is mainly contributed by a decrease in Pupil Premium of £1950, a change in breakfast club income to actuals which meant a decrease of £2371 and the purchase of necessary boiler pumps at £1550. It was agreed that an advertising push on breakfast club would be beneficial to maximise the income in order to break even.</p> <p>A trustee asked whether any CIF applications were made this year. TBM explained there has not been any eligibility at this time. There is potential at St Martin's due to damp issues but this may be rectified by the work done on the roof which needs time to see whether it has resolved.</p> <p>PTFA balanced were reviewed. All schools have intentions to save for bigger projects, such as playground shelter at St Martin's and forest school at Priory Fields.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p><u>Indicative Budgets – GAG Funding</u></p> <p>Trustees were provided with the GAG funding and comparison to previous years. This will be looked at in depth once the resignation deadline has passed, as discussed earlier in the meeting.</p> <p>A trustee asked whether there has been any indication on teacher pay rises for September 2025. Usually this is announced in August/September but external sources are expecting a 4.8% rise. Bursar will be cautious with the budgets to ensure there are no unexpected increases.</p> <p>A trustee asked whether roll numbers remain low for September 2025. CEO explained it is expected that the numbers will remain low and a reduction in classes from 14 to 13 is being explored at Priory Fields. It will be carefully considered how selection will take place and the plan for moving the children through the school.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p><u>Policies</u></p> <p><u>Investment and Reserves Policy</u></p> <p>The policy has been reviewed and there are no proposed changes. The idea of looking in to investment opportunities was discussed, as more Trusts are starting to explore options to improve the financial position. Trustees agreed that seeking advice and recommendations would be beneficial as the first step. This may lead to the policy needing to be reviewed further, however it was agreed in it's current state.</p>
	<p><u>Benchmarking</u></p> <p>Trustees were provided with Kreston Reeves benchmarking to review prior to the meeting. The DfE benchmarking site was viewed on screen and key areas explored, such as comparison of staffing expenses. The site highlighted seven 'high priority' areas that were discussed and the numbers in brackets denotes the 7 priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Administrative Costs at Priory Fields and St Martin's (1 and 2) – This is showing as higher than expected however it is not clear what is included within this. This is an area that could include many different costs that other schools/trusts could have coded elsewhere. -Teaching and Teaching Support Staff at Vale View and St Martin's (3 and 4) – cost per pupil is at the lower end. -Premises Staff and Services at Vale View (5)– there is additional cleaning due to the nursery.

	<p>-Educational ICT at Vale View (6)– cost per pupil was low. This is due to cyclical nature of ICT expenditure, there were no requirements for new ICT.</p> <p>-Non Educational Support Staff at Vale View (7) – cost per pupil is high, again this relates to additional staff due to the nursery.</p> <p>Kreston Reeves benchmarking shows WDAT to be generally in line with averages or where the trust would be expected to fall. Staff cost ratio to pupil is higher than average, however this is due to low roll numbers therefore that is expected.</p>
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Audit and Risk Committee

CEO is present for the Audit and Risk Committee for advisory purposes and not in the capacity of trustee.

8	<p><u>Risk Register</u></p> <p>The risk register has been reviewed by CEO and was sent to Trustees prior to the meeting, the format of the document has been revised on to a word document and some updates made to the columns and colour coding of risks.</p> <p>The comments have been updated where necessary and one risk has been retired; which is the Vale View nursery which has been successfully replaced. The roof at St Martin’s should be able to be retired once snagging is complete.</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the register and requested that the ‘post mitigation’ risk score is also colour coded.</p>
10	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <p>TBM gave update for information purposes that external Health and Safety audits have recently taken place, it was found to be a very useful and worthwhile process with actions to be complete. This will be discussed in detail at the Trust Board meeting.</p>
11	<p><u>Confidentiality of Proceeding</u></p> <p>None</p>
12	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>Tuesday 1st July at 10am.</p>

Item	Action
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Minutes taken by Governance Professional, Claudia Sawyers

Signed by Chair of FSARC Committee: _____ Date: _____