



Whinless Down Academy Trust

FSARC Meeting

Tuesday 25th February 2025

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

Held on Tuesday 25th February 2025 at 10am 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

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</u> Previous minutes were distributed to the committee prior to the meeting. Trustees agreed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting and minutes were signed by the chair.</p> <p><u>Actions/Matters Arising</u> Action Points from the last meeting: Item 17 – <i>Review risk management policy</i> – This has been reviewed and is on the agenda for discussion at this meeting. Item 18 – <i>CEO to share Business Continuity Plan with relevant people</i> – This action is complete. Item 19 – <i>ESFA Letters Gov. Prof. to email to Trustees</i> – This action is complete.</p>
<p>4</p>	<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 prepared a written breakdown for each school of the main variances over £500 in her absence.</p>
4.1	<p><u>Catering</u> December: £21,227 Variance to previous month: increase of £1,036 Main Variances: The increase is due to a member of staff who has opted out of the pension scheme. A trustee asked whether food costs are being monitored and whether any progress has been made following previous discussions of looking in to spending. TBM explained that the budget stands at 39% spent at week 15 of 38, which is on track spending for this point in the year. It is a big undertaking to break down the cost per meal or cost per menu week and there has not been capacity to look at this yet. TBM has been reviewing invoices to look out for any areas to improve efficient spending and to look out for any anomalies. Suppliers have been reviewed and it is believed that best value is being obtained currently; a local fruit and vegetable supplier is used and a local butcher supplies meat which is good quality. It was agreed that a basic analysis of the three week menu costs should be achievable prior to the next meeting.</p>
4.2	<p><u>Priory Fields School</u> December: £106,691 Variance to previous month: increase of £7,613 Main variances: There was a decrease in the budget of teachers pay of £5,290 due to a correction in the BPS after TSA was applied, there was additional overtime hours claimed. High Needs Funding has been received for three additional children at £5,586 and Other DFE Grant Funding at £5,542 for Early Careers Framework Mentoring. An additional £1,610 was received from Kent Teaching Hub.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Vale View School</u> December: 224,173 Variance to previous month: increase of £26,144 Main Variances: The variance is mainly contributed by the receipt of Nursery Funding at £26,661, High Needs Funding at £11,939, however Mid Day Supervisors have now been appointed which is a decrease to the budget of a projected £11,494 for the year. Vale View's budget is in a healthy position currently, however there is need for refurbishment of children's toilets which it is felt cannot wait any longer. TBM is currently getting quotes for this.</p>
4.4	<p><u>St Martin's School</u> December: £57,173 Variance to previous month: increase of £5,294 Main variances: This variance is mainly contributed by Other DFE Grant Funding for the Early Careers Framework Mentoring.</p>
4.5	<p><u>Bank Balances and Cash Flow</u> Bank balances and cash flow look stable and no concerns were raised.</p>
4.6	<p>See confidential minutes.</p>

4.7	<p><u>Budget Revisited - Forward Financial Planning</u></p> <p>Bursar has prepared a revisited 3 year budget based on December 2024 monitoring figures for forward financial planning purposes. It was suggested that the committee could arrange an ad hoc meeting when GAG funding is released for 2025-2026 to carefully look at budget implications.</p> <p>See confidential minutes.</p> <p>It was agreed that the forward financial planning will be reviewed regularly (three times a year) and this will be added to the FSARC meeting planner.</p>
5	<p><u>Pupil Premium Review and Strategy</u></p> <p>The strategies for each school were shared with the committee prior to the meeting.</p> <p>It was noticed that the Priory Fields plan does not include figures in each area, this needs to be added. The headteachers have worked together to look at the finances and now have a clearer understanding of how the PP budget is allocated and what provisions are in place. A trustee asked whether there is a concern about PP funding being used to benefit all children. CEO explained that due to high levels of Pupil Premium in two of the schools especially, improving outcomes for all will benefit PP children. Determining the direct impact of PP spending is difficult and the presence of multiple vulnerabilities makes tracking impact more challenging.</p>
6	<p><u>Trust Business Manager Update</u></p> <p>The written TBM report was shared with the committee prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The report provides an update on progress of CIF-funded building works at St Martin’s and Vale View, detailing completed and upcoming projects across the schools.</p> <p>There are upcoming changes to the Kent Pay Strategy, set to take effect in April 2025, and there will be an impact on staff due to change in the way staff members move up the pay scale. The scale has not yet been shared by KCC.</p> <p>There is due to be Health & Safety audits from an external provider taking place in Term 5.</p>
	<p><u>Estates Management Strategy and Estates Action Plans</u></p> <p>The Estates Management Strategy remains largely unchanged, though the upcoming Health & Safety audit may feed in to updates of the strategy if identified.</p> <p>The focus of the action plans is on urgent priorities due to budget constraints. Updates include a plan for refurbishing the St Martin’s staffroom with new decor, furniture, and kitchen facilities and replacement of children’s toilets at Vale View is now urgent. At Priory Fields, external façade of the building is looking poor, cleaning and painting will be scheduled after the roof work is completed.</p>
7	<p><u>Subscriptions – GovernorHub / NGA</u></p> <p>Gov. Prof. has proposed a change in subscriptions for all levels of governance. The NGA have been in touch regarding the renewal of the Trust membership going up in price which has prompted a reflection in whether it would be value for money or whether alternative subscriptions would be more worthwhile, such as GovernorHub Knowledge.</p> <p>The price is within delegated limits to CEO (approx. £1500) so does not require approval. A committee member present has access to GovernorHub at another organisation and does believe it to be useful, as it provides a platform for sharing documents as well as Knowledge.</p>

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 Management Policy</u></p> <p>The Risk Management Policy has been update in line with DfE guidance and to better reflect the risk register and use of IOSH risk rating.</p> <p>The committee agreed the policy.</p>
9	<p><u>Internal Audit</u></p> <p>The internal audit took place in February with another very successful outcome, with only two 'light green' recommendations for best practice. They are as follows:</p> <p><i>Does the trust have an up to date forward financial plan which is regularly reviewed and updated? Does the forward financial plan Include clear narrative and assumptions? - It is recommended the academy trust review the forward financial plan and consider what actions can be taken to address the predicted deficits, the forward financial plan should be monitored and updated regularly going forward.</i></p> <p>Response: This has been taken on board and forward financial planning was reviewed earlier at this meeting and will be monitored at FSARC meetings three times per year going forward.</p> <p><i>Does the academy trust have a development plan that considers the financial resource implications and is linked to the academy trust budget projections? - The trust may wish to consider updating the academy development plans to cover a rolling 3 year period.</i></p> <p>Response: This suggests that School Improvement Plans should be a 3 year document and in practice this is not the suitable place to include 3 year budget projections. This is included in the MAT Development Plan.</p>
10	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <p>None</p>
11	<p><u>Confidentiality of Proceeding</u></p> <p>Item 4.6 and 4.7.</p>
12	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 10am</p>

Item	Action
4.6	CEO to contact Solicitors
4.7	Ad Hoc meeting to be organised once GAG released
5	Pupil Premium – PF to include figures on website version

Minutes taken by Governance Professional, Claudia Sawyers

Signed by Chair of FSARC Committee: Marked as Signed on GovernorHub 12th May 2025