



**WHINLESS DOWN
ACADEMY TRUST**

Whinless Down Academy Trust

FSARC Meeting

Tuesday 1st July 2025

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

Held on Tuesday 1st July 2025 at 10am at the Trust Office, St Martin's School

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

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

Governance Professional: Claudia Sawyers

1	<u>Welcome, Introduction, Resignations and Apologies</u> Chair welcomed all to the meeting. <u>Apologies</u> There were no apologies, all committee members are present.
2	<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.
3	<u>Minutes from the meeting held on 12th May 2025</u> Previous minutes were distributed to the committee prior to the meeting. Trustees agreed for minutes to be marked as signed on GovernorHub. <u>Actions/Matters Arising</u> Action Points from the last meeting: Item 4.7- Ad Hoc meeting to be organised- it was felt that a meeting was not necessary due to proximity of this meeting and the budget being in a better position than initially thought.

<p>4</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p><u>Budget Monitoring – May Management Accounts</u></p> <p>All budget monitoring and variance reports were sent to the committee prior to the meeting. It was requested by FSARC chair that, in future FSARC meetings, the figures and discussion be in reference to the previous FSARC meeting, rather than to the previous month. All agreed to this going forward from the next meeting.</p> <p>Bursar gave overview of variance to previous month budget.</p> <p><u>Priory Fields School</u> May: £182,128 Variance to previous month: increase of £8526</p> <p>Main variances: There has been an increase in the budget due to unpaid leave being taken and a midday supervisor has resigned. The water forecast has been reduced due to consumption being averaged lower than anticipated. Security costs have increased by £550, due to the replacement of batteries and a fault in the gate system. The residential trip expenditure has now moved to actuals and the school’s contribution was £377, which was considered positive. Swimming costs have also been moved to actuals, due to the pool closing, swimming was only possible up to Term 4. The total cost to the school was £3,425, with £2,548 received in payments. There are two additional children in receipt of high needs funding, resulting in an £8,000 increase in the forecast. The school is still awaiting confirmation regarding new reception pupils, some of whom are expected to have significant needs. Trustees commented that the carry forward is higher than initially expected which is positive.</p> <p><u>St Martin’s School</u> May: £79,235 Variance to previous month: increase of £3711 Main variances:</p> <p>There has been a decrease to staffing budget due to the new IT technician starting earlier than originally budgeted, which was required due to needs of the schools. There has been a significant increase to water bills and the forecast has approximately doubled. A trustee questioned the reason for this rise and whether it could be linked to the installation of new toilets. TBM explained that the site manager has continued to take monthly meter readings and has advised staff to check taps before leaving. Although these measures have not been entirely consistent, elevated readings are being noticed each month. Currently, water usage at StM is higher than at PF which is not usual due to the size of the schools. TBM is currently working through an investigation process. Recent CIF works and radiator flushing have also taken place, which could be contributing factors. There has also been a badger sett near the meter which has been suggested as a potential cause of pipe damage. It was suggested that the issue be raised with the water company. An update on this issue was requested for the next meeting. The gas forecast has been reduced to actuals. Curriculum trips, breakfast club, and after-school club have now all moved to actuals. It was noted that StM has received additional high needs funding due to a new child, resulting in an increase of £2,816.</p> <p><u>Vale View School</u> May: £176,525 Variance to previous month: decrease of £5943 Main Variances:</p>
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Teacher pay budget increased, with maths booster sessions taking place during the Easter holiday, resulting in overtime claims. The supply budget has been increased by £2,000 due to current needs within the school. The increase in ICT technician cost at VV is also due to the early start of the new technician. A trustee asked to seek clarification on the additional £2,000 allocated for supply and whether this related to sickness. CEO explained that both the Assistant Head and SENCO have a class commitment, and with only one cover supervisor available, staffing flexibility is limited. BW cannot be utilised as he has been needed at PF due to absence of AHTs. CEO is keeping an eye of overtime and supply usage and has asked headteachers to communicate overtime requests before authorising overtime or supply use. A log is now being maintained. Curriculum professional services costs have risen and are expected to increase further due to a writing review being carried out by an external advisor. The budget for Admin ICT needed to be increased as there have been server issues which required technical support. Nursery funding was received at £28,132, bringing the overall forecast up to £154,807. Despite this, the school is still projected to be in deficit for the nursery. The National Insurance contribution grant funding has not yet been confirmed, and the bursar is continuing to follow this up with KCC. The current estimated deficit stands at approximately £15,000, though there is some optimism that the position may improve slightly.

Trust

May: £151,733

Variance to previous month: increase of £1391

The increase is due to a recharge of clerking services to Coppice Primary Partnerships by Gov. Prof. and a refund of an overcharge by Lloyds bank.

Catering

May: £29,746

Variance to previous month: increase of £3456

The increase is due to one of the members of the catering team had requested to reduce their hours and this was accepted. A trustee asked whether the catering spend is as expected for this time of year, Bursar explained the spent is currently at 84% which is on track.

PTFA Balances

Trustees reviewed the PTFA balances for all three schools and noted good income at the summer fairs. A trustee asked whether parents are made aware of how the funds are spent. CEO explained that, when advertising events, the schools will often state what they are hoping to buy or save for, such as playground equipment at St Martin's and Priory Fields have been saving for Forest School resources.

Bank balances, cash flow and fixed asset register were reviewed and there were no comments or questions.

KPIs

Trustees reviewed KPIs and commented that Vale View and St Martin's are now within their staffing KPI and Priory Fields is slightly above, however it was acknowledged that the schools all feel short of support.

5	<p><u>Proposed Budgets</u></p> <p>The committee were provided the proposed budgets for the forthcoming year and the three year budget, and a breakdown of staffing numbers in each year. Bursar and TBM commented that a cautious approach is being taken in years 2 and 3. Concern was expressed regarding the carry forward in year 2 although agreed it is better to be aware of this now and that a cautious stance is necessary and appropriate. A trustee asked what the biggest concern was for CEO, who said that there is no realistic possibility of further staff reductions without significantly impacting operations.</p> <p>FSARC recommended the budget for approval.</p>
6	<p><u>Policies</u></p> <p><u>Business Continuity Plan</u></p> <p>The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was reviewed in Autumn 2024 however it has since been noticed that the last page of the plan had been deleted accidentally. This has been added back in and updated in reference to the Cyber Recovery Plan, which is a new document produced by the Cyber team and is a more in-depth document related to cyber attacks and security.</p> <p>The committee approved the BCP.</p>
	<p><u>Trust Business Manager Update</u></p> <p>TBM reported that the health and safety audit has required significant time to work through the identified action points but progress is being made. The chair of Trustees visited to review the audit alongside TBM and discuss the actions. It was noted that in the audit report scoring, some points were deducted incorrectly, such as not having a lightning certificate, however at two school it does not apply as there is no lightning rod. Photo evidence is being provided to support the review of these points.</p> <p>Water damage was sustained at two schools during a recent storm. As the storm occurred on a weekend, industrial dehumidifiers were brought in at St Martin’s on the Monday and were in place for a week in several rooms due to flooding. Dips in the carpet and damage to the parquet flooring led to the entire floor being dug up and replaced. At Priory Fields it was the ceiling that sustained water damage and 173 ceiling tiles were affected. Portakabin was contacted to resolve the issue, an engineer has mapped the water ingress to the sites where the building modules connect.</p> <p>Planned summer projects include the refurbishment of four sets of toilets at Vale View and the replacement of high-level windows at Vale View. At St Martin’s, flooring is being replaced following the flood damage and the staff room is being refurbished. At Priory Fields, TBM remains in negotiation with the DfE and Portakabin to secure sign-off for the structural works on the banks.</p> <p>Catering</p> <p>Further to the discussion at the last meeting regarding catering costs, TBM has done some further work on the cost per meal to include other costs above just the food and staffing and has come to a more accurate figure of £3.05 per meal. Funding from Universal Infant Free</p>

	School Meals is received at £2.63 and the cost charge to parents for paid meals is £2.50. Some further work is going to be done in the new academic year to economise, which may include measures such as meat-free day which many schools now do and is included in new Early Years standards.
Audit and Risk Committee <i>CEO is present for the Audit and Risk Committee for advisory purposes and not in the capacity of trustee.</i>	
8	<u>Internal Audit Report</u> The internal audit took place on 18 th and 19 th June 2025 by SBM Services. Risk Management and Income & Debtors were the focus of the audit. Only one item was raised as a recommendation rated 'light green' under a rag rating. The item was 'Are there at least two people involved in the process of receiving, counting, documenting and completing bank paying-in slips for all income received to ensure an adequate separation of duties?' and TBM fed back that it is not always documented that there are two people and banking does not always happen within one week of receipt, however the schools are largely cashless and there is only cash on occasions such as fairs and charity events. The Finance regulations will be updated to state: 'Banking of monies should be carried out on a monthly basis or more if monies exceed £500. Bank paying in slips to separate monies received and not just total and to be signed by both parties checking.'
9	<u>Pensions Audit</u> TBM confirmed that the pensions audit has taken place and came back clean.
10	<u>Risk Register</u> The risk register has been reviewed by CEO and was sent to Trustees prior to the meeting. There were no updates required to the register at this time and the committee did not propose any updates. A trustee asked whether many children from the toddler group have enrolled in the EYFS this September, CEO explained that the group commenced during the time that applications were being made so an impact would not necessarily be expected this September and many of the children who attend are not school age, so it is hoped that in the future there will be an impact and the group is still well attended.
11	<u>AOB</u> Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) It has been suggested by auditors that the RPA should be agreed annually by Trustees. The committee considered that the RPA is essential and should continue. Lettings Fees The lettings fees are annually reviewed and agreed, the committee discussed that the fee was increased heavily last year (from £10 per hour to £20 per hour) and agreed that it should not be increased again this year but would consider increasing next year.
12	<u>Confidentiality of Proceeding</u> None
13	<u>Date of Next Meeting</u> Dates for 2025-2026 will be shared and agreed at the next Trust Board Meeting.