



**WHINLESS DOWN
ACADEMY TRUST**

Whinless Down Academy Trust

FSARC Meeting

Thursday 13th November 2025

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

Held on Thursday 13th November 2025 at 3pm at the Trust Office, St Martin's School

Committee Members Present: Dean Jones (Chair of FSARC), Alison Mackintosh and Carol Rayfield (Vice Chair of FSARC)

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

Governance Professional: Katie Banes

1	<p><u>Welcome, Introduction, Resignations and Apologies</u> All committee members were welcomed to the meeting.</p> <p>Following the resignation of Anne Siggins at the last Trust Board meeting, and the earlier resignation of Tricia Sherling at the preceding meeting, an election for the Chair and Vice Chair of the FSARC was required.</p> <p>1.1 <u>Election of Chair and Vice Chair of FSARC</u></p> <p><u>Chair of FSARC</u> Dean Jones nominated himself for the position of Chair of the FSARC, and all committee members were in agreement. <i>Dean Jones was appointed as Chair of FSARC.</i></p> <p><u>Vice Chair of FSARC</u> Carol Rayfield nominated herself for the position of Vice Chair of the FSARC, and all committee members were in agreement. <i>Carol Rayfield was appointed as Vice Chair of FSARC.</i></p>
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1.2	<p><u>Apologies</u></p> <p>There were no apologies, all committee members are present.</p>
2	<p><u>Register of Business and Pecuniary Interest</u></p> <p>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>
3	<p><u>Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 1st July 2025</u></p> <p>Previous minutes were made available to the committee prior to the meeting. The minutes of the FSARC meeting held on Tuesday 1st July 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.</p> <p><i>All committee members agreed for minutes to be marked as signed on Governor Hub.</i></p> <p><u>Actions/Matters Arising</u></p> <p>There were no actions or matters arising from the previous meeting.</p>
4	<p><u>Terms of Reference for FSARC</u></p> <p>The draft Terms of Reference for FSARC were made available to committee members prior to the meeting. All committee members agreed the Terms of Reference.</p> <p><i>Governance Professional to update the Terms of Reference to reflect new committee membership.</i></p>
5	<p><u>Budget Monitoring – August 2025</u></p> <p>All budget monitoring and variance reports were made available to the committee prior to the meeting. The Bursar gave an overview of variance between July and August 2025 budgets.</p> <p>5.1 <u>St Martin’s School</u></p> <p>July 2025: £88,572 August 2025: £110,368 Variance: £21,796</p> <p>Main variances over £500:</p> <p>The buildings maintenance cost centre has gone over budget by two thousand two hundred and fifty-eight pounds (£2,258), due to the renovation of the staff room at St Martin’s and some additional purchases made in September 2025. The efficiency grant of three thousand two hundred and fifty pounds (£3,250) was used to pay towards the boiler works. The forecast for water had been increased due to the high balances on invoices received. It was later discovered that there was a leak. As a result of this, a water allowance of five thousand seven hundred and seventy-eight pounds (£5,778) was received. Gas and electricity figures were adjusted to show the actual figures. Energy and utility usage continues to be monitored by site and finance staff. Fire equipment and curriculum subscription cost centres were changed to actual figures; it was commented that these budgets did not require as much expenditure as originally anticipated. Credits were received for curriculum stationery due to incorrect books being ordered; new books were subsequently ordered but, fewer books were ordered than was originally anticipated.</p>

5.2 Vale View School

July 2025: £239,629

August 2025: £244,415

Variance: £4,786

Main variances over £500:

The forecast variance for support staff pay was due to unpaid leave and a member of staff reducing to half pay whilst off sick. There was an overall variance of one thousand two hundred and twenty-five pounds (£1,225). Other occupancy cost was adjusted to the actual figures; the school did not spend the budget that was originally set, resulting in a variance of one thousand five hundred and ninety pounds (£1,590). The water bills at Vale View were gradually increasing throughout year and therefore, the forecast was increased. Efficiency measures have been put in place to help save costs and the environment.

Budgets for curriculum subscriptions and curriculum stationery were not spent in full. Admin subscriptions went over the forecasted budget however, it is suspected this could be due to mis-posting on the finance system between curriculum and admin subscriptions. Savings of eight hundred and seventy-three pounds (£873) were made due to changing telephone supplier and not having to pay the exit fee. It was commented that expenditure for the photocopier is hard to predict and therefore this year, there has been a saving of four thousand six hundred and forty-eight pounds (£4,648). Nursery funded has increased due to additional funding received. The direct revenue transfer was less than originally planned for due to not spending as much as was initially assumed to replace windows in the building. There was also an amendment made for brought forward devolved figure. However, it was confirmed that this does not change the overall financial position of the school. An accrual of one thousand seven hundred and thirty-two pounds (£1,732) has been brought forward as unspent funds for children in receipt of pupil premium plus funds (allocated for looked after children). Six hundred and sixty pounds (£660) was received from Canterbury Christ Church University for supporting one of their students.

The nursery was forecasted to be in a deficit of approximately twenty thousand pounds (£20,000), but the actual figure is just over nine thousand pounds (£9,000), which is much more positive than initially thought.

5.3

Priory Fields School

July 2025: £202,915

August 2025: £256,252

Variance: £53,337

Main variances over £500:

There was an underspend in the following cost centres: cleaning materials, other occupancy cost, grounds maintenance, water, electricity and gas. There was a significant underspend of seven thousand five hundred and fifty-two pounds (£7,552) for gas. It was confirmed to committee members that gas expenditure for Priory Fields accounts for the whole building and includes both the main school and

kitchen; they are not billed for separately. Electricity and gas budgets were set based on the previous year. Some savings made will be due to extra vigilance and efficiency measures in place.

Health and well-being, core curriculum and early years were unspent. Curriculum stationery is unspent by three thousand two hundred and twenty-two pounds (£3,222) however, it was commented that this would change as stationery items have been received in September 2025. There was a variance of one thousand two hundred and two pounds (£1,202) as assessments were not purchased last year. It was stated that assessments have been purchased for this academic year. IT curriculum purchases were underspent by six thousand five hundred and five pounds (£6,505), with no large purchases being made in the last academic year. However, committee members were informed that a large purchase has been made this year to purchase a whole class set of laptops for key stage two. An accrual of four thousand four hundred and twenty-one pounds (£4,421) has been made for pupil premium plus (looked after children); these funds have been planned for and will be spent.

The CEO made the FSARC aware that the Headteachers have been very aware of the risky financial situation the trust has been in and therefore, have been making a considered conscious effort to make any savings where they can. However, this has not been to the detriment of the children. It was also commented that Headteachers now attend the finance monitoring with the CEO, Trust Business Manager and Bursar, which has had a positive impact on Headteachers and their understanding of the school finances.

5.4 Trust

July 2025: £151,732

August 2025: £151,754

Variance: £22

Main variances over £500:

The twenty-two pounds (£22) variance was due to interest received on the account.

There was a variance of nine hundred and ninety-seven pounds (£997) due a member of support staff taking authorised unpaid leave and therefore a saving made.

The forecast for professional fees was increased to cover costs as required.

The following cost centres were unused: staff advertising, staff development, building maintenance, cleaning, admin purchases, admin subscriptions and bank fees.

5.5 Catering

July 2025: £35,339

August 2025: £34,212

Variance: -£1,127

There is a variance within catering staff pay, primarily due to additional hours claimed for extra hours worked for training and covering staff absences.

<p>6</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p>	<p><u>Estates Update</u> The Trust Business Manager (TBM) gave a brief update on the estates across the trust, with the following points highlighted:</p> <p><u>St Martin’s School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EYFS and Year One flooring has been fully replaced through insurance following the flooding in recent months. - The staff room renovation has been completed by the Estates and Site teams, which has resulted in positive feedback from staff. - Ongoing drainage issues in the library area continue to be monitored. Recent remedial works have helped, though freak heavy downpours still cause problems. - Drainage clearance has identified significant silt (cement and sand) in the pipework, likely linked to recent rendering works. Two pipes had to be abandoned as part of the works due to the extent of the blockage. A report has been sent to the consultant who managed the CIF bid, requesting that Inspire fund the remedial works. - Water supply issues persist, resulting in a six thousand pound (£6,000) bill. The main supply pipe from the nineteen hundreds (1900s) has been compromised by tree roots. CIF funding was not secured, so a quote is being obtained for the removal of three tall trees (not protected) to prevent further damage. - Further boiler issues: last year’s heat exchanger repair required the installation of a magnetic filter on the inlet, which cost one hundred and twenty thousand pounds (£120,000). A second heat exchanger has since failed; the quote to repair is four thousand pounds (£4,000). <p><u>Priory Fields School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings between Portakabin and the DfE are ongoing; over six thousand pounds (£6,000) has already been recovered as a result of the TBM’s dedicated and persistent approach. - Areas of plasterboard in the hall show high moisture levels; further testing is planned. - Repairs to the banks are still going through the approval process with DfE. - The bank and walkway at the back of the school building have deteriorated, creating crevices and safety concerns. Two staff members have had injuries in these areas. Quotes are being sought for fencing, financial support from the DfE will be sought to support this project. - The sports field remains in poor condition; turfing is planned (weather permitting). - A fallen tree requires removal following a KCC Highways enforcement notice. A further 30 dead elm trees also require removal; a quote for these works has been received and plans are in place to address these concerns. Tree audits had not included this area due to an error regarding boundary identification. <p><u>Vale View School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four sets of toilets have been fully refurbished. - High-level window units in the top corridor have been replaced, with further aluminium windows to be replaced scheduled within the programme. <p>The Health and Safety audit from April 2025 has been re-evaluated, improving to 72% compliance, now approximately 10% away from achieving the safety mark.</p>
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7	<p><u>Policies</u> <u>Debt Management Policy</u></p> <p>The Debt Management Policy was made available to committee members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>A committee member asked if the Trust has any concerns or issues with regards to debt recovery. It was confirmed that the schools manage small amounts of debt.</p> <p><i>The Debt Management Policy was agreed and approved by all members of the committee.</i></p>
<p>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></p>	
8	<p><u>Internal Audit – Schedule of Works</u></p> <p>Committee members were informed the schedule of audit works had been previously agreed for the following years - 2024-2025 and 2026-2027. FSARC requested a copy of the plan to be uploaded to Governor Hub for the committee’s reference.</p> <p>The last internal audit identified one item as a ‘best practice’ recommendation.</p> <p>The external audit is in process and has not yet been finalised. Outcomes from the external audit will be shared in the AGM/Trust Board meeting in December when the end of year accounts will be presented by the accountants.</p>
9	<p><u>Risk Register</u></p> <p>Committee members had access to the Risk Register prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The CEO informed the FSARC that the risk register requires a few amendments to be made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - St Martin’s building continues to be an ongoing risk. - Outcomes were good this year, with all three schools improving their outcomes. However, outcomes will remain on the risk register for future years. - Risks surrounding the new Ofsted framework and upcoming Ofsted inspections. - Safeguarding - Reputational risks <p>The Risk Register will be updated as necessary by the CEO.</p>
10	<p><u>Asset Disposal</u></p> <p>A log of assets requiring disposal for St Martin’s School, Vale View and Priory Fields school were made available to committee members prior to the meeting.</p> <p><i>The FSARC approved the presented assets disposal logs and agreed for the items to be disposed of appropriately by the three schools.</i></p>
11	<p><u>Approved Suppliers</u></p> <p>The Approved Suppliers List was made available to committee members prior to the meeting. The list consists of suppliers who would usually go over the agreed financial limit, or would require three quotes, within the financial regulations.</p> <p>No questions or comments were raised relating to the Approved Suppliers List.</p>

12	<u>Any Other Business</u> The Chair of the Trust raised an item of any other business to be addressed under performance review. See confidential minute.
13	<u>Confidentiality of Proceeding</u> Items raised under agenda item number 12 were identified as a confidential minute.
14	<u>Date of Next Meeting</u> The next FSARC was agreed to take place on Thursday 12 th February 2026 at 3pm.
<u>Actions</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Governance Professional to update the Terms of Reference to reflect new committee membership.</i> - <i>TBM to upload the audit schedule of works.</i> 	

Minutes taken by Governance Professional, Katie Banes