

The Viridis Schools Federation of Orchard, Southwold and Hoxton Garden Schools

**Resources Governing Body Sub-committee
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

On Thursday 23rd February at 4.30pm

Committee Attendees

Sara Walsingham (SW)
Laura Theobald (LT)
Giuseppa Colella-Mare (GCM)
Clerk: Sandra Rodrigues

James Gowland (JG)
Hanna Lownsborough (HL)
Rachel Davie (RD)

1. Apologies/Consent for Absence

Laura Theobald not present

2. Governing Body Organisation

No changes.
SW - Chair
HL - Vice Chair

a. Membership

No changes have been made or noted.

b. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda & Register of pecuniary interests for 2022/2023

No new interests

c. Acknowledgement of TOR

No changes have been made or noted.

d. Code of Conduct

No changes have been made or noted.

e. Governing Body Annual Calendar

Confirmed No changes; (HL) reminder to all Governors to check the calendar

3. Agreements of the minutes from the last meeting

All in agreement.

4. 3/4 Year Budget Review & Forecast, Current Status

a) Current status of budgets & changes

This is the 9 months budget up to 31/12/2022

GCM confirmed that the schools have now received the extra supplementary grant to the sum of £223,000 and a slight extra funding was received for additional PPG children.

SEN budgeted is less than originally predicted due to a number of children awaiting funding for their EHCPs and the year 6 children who have left have been taken off.

Important to note: IO8 has a higher prediction of £50k due to increased bank interest which was not foreseen when the budget was prepared. It is approximately £6/£7K interest per month. Hackney Finance confirmed this is correct and it is shared interest across all schools and will continue for the foreseeable future. Up to Dec was £35k, Jan and Feb was £12/13K and Mar £6/7K in interest received.

Tutoring funds £81K more than expected due to recovery funds from Covid and National Tutoring programme via the DfE, some of these money may have to be clawed back by the DfE as not all funds have been used up; the amount runs into approximately £40/50K.

Therefore we are currently predicted to have £362,000 more income than predicted due to the above mentioned Supplementary Grant, Tutoring Fund & Bank interest.

There has been an increase in the teaching staff salaries from September 2022, however it is predicted a saving of £55k due to staff leavers and maternity, also with the educational support staff budget there is a slight decrease as a couple of TA's left.

Premises & Admin staff will see a slight budget increase due to the increase to the salary increase for support staff as of the 1st April 2022.

Indirect employer expenses, £28K more due to agency fees on recruitment.

CPD costs have decreased due to free online training still available from Covid

Building & Maintenance predicted to be more than originally budgeted.

Cleaning there is a slight decrease in costs due to change of needs to buy specific cleaning products such as sanitary gel etc.

Energy prices have increased but the schools are still not spending as much as we had expected. Hackney have put a cap on the price.

PGL residential trip is paid in advance thus the overspent in this area of the budget.

IT software licenses costs show an increase, this is due to a number licenses being bought for a three year period in advance, this in turn will mean that the next years will be less expensive years.

Catering costs have decreased as fewer children are taking up meals. The new company is being tracked with the hope that more children will uptake up lunches.

On E26 - Agency Supply Teaches £293 have been spent so far but a total of £390/£400K are predicted to be spent on teaching staff. The prediction has been calculated multiplying the number of long term supply teachers by the daily fee for the remainder of the budget period

E27 – Budget for Agency Supply teaching assistants quite heavily overspent due to recruitment difficulties and the requirement needs for 1:1 support for SEN children.

Professional Fees budget had decreased as Hackney have joined some services together thus resulting in a cost reduction.

The caretaker house refurbishment at Hoxton has not started yet, therefore the £400k money set aside have been put back into the balance. The works will start in the new financial year and thus the funds have been carried forward

Capital Budget received so far is of £27K for the three schools.

£62K has been invested in Information Technology as a number of SEN iPads and trolleys have been purchased.

December budgeted carry forward prediction stands at just over £1,000,000 which is lower than last year.

(SW) queried if the additional devolved capital for Energy funding had been received and confirmed, originally this fund was intended to be used for Energy increases, but this has not been the case and the extra capital money does not have to be spent solely on Energy.

GCM confirmed that Hackney are progressing with façade programme works. HG has already been completed and the windows there are double glazed sash windows; which were completed some years ago. Orchard was totally refurbished in 2010 and LBH are about to set a date for the façade works there as well quite soon. SW windows are the major issue; the façade works are due to start in around 18 months time with the hope that the works will include the refurbishment of the windows too.

(SW) advised she would send GCM the link for the Energy funding - **SW to send link.**

(JG) queried the balance to be clawed back for the Tutoring Programme.

(RD) confirmed the National Tutoring Programme fund was allocated in the last two years. However there are very specific criteria which need to be met in order for the funds to be spent such as; employing tutors, using own staff or outsourcing tutors for specific children or support children who are underperforming and as Federation we have part met the criteria.

(JG) noted the total revenue carry forward has gone from £1.5m to £1.2m and now it is forecasted around £1million and questioned the high agency amounts - **to be discussed in point 5.**

(SW) noted that £1million is very healthy for the 3 schools and understands this figure will decrease once the house is complete.

b) Indicative Budget 2023 / 2024

Forecast budget for next year: GCM explained there is a new format and the bold figures are just for I01 which is the delegated Hackney budget only and does not include PPG or SEN funding. GCM has worked it out herself according to the numbers currently in school for SEN/PPG.

(SW) once again queried if these figures included the supplement grant.

(GCM) advised that Hackney Education have not been responsive in giving out information due to internal changes and therefore there are missing information at the moment. 2023-24 Budget is around £10, 800,000 million - £255K more than last year. Although the carry forward balance is down and PPG is down, the level of funding has gone up slightly and the figures overall look good for next year.

(SW) **offered to send a link for the extra supplementary grant** and concluded that the figures are still reassuring in the current climate.

5. Staffing Update (including risks to recruitment and retention)

- Leadership Update

There is an Acting HT at SW - recruitment to be held during the Summer term.

A 3rd DHT has been appointed at Orchard School within the Inclusion team, this was an internal appointment.

Wider DHT recruitment is now in its 3rd round and as yet not filled. This is due to below level of applications and low level of skills' set. It is a similar situation to the Headship at SW. It is a concern and the EHT is worried about the applications and the quality. Structures and systems are in place to manage and adjustments are being made where needed to ensure there are no gaps, however the succession planning in the longer term is compromised by that.

The CPD programme is still in place for Senior Leadership team to access, in the form of external coaching & internal succession of roles.

Annual recruitment for teachers has been successful for the last three years however there is a below average of applications, there are concerns in regards to the quality of candidates and there has been an increased number of outside the country applications which implicates issues with interviewing in the UK.

- Staffing update

Staff preference survey took place in January which was extremely positive. There are no confirmed leavers across the three sites although 6/7 undecided. This is the most positive situation since the EHT took over leadership. Three new teachers have already been recruited for September, therefore staffing is moving in the right direction.

- Teaching Apprenticeship Update

Apprentice Teachers (AT) have all passed end point assessments from the last academic year. Four AT are employed this academic year and they are all on track; there are 39 applications for the AT course starting in September and a bridge structure has been put in place to manage the high number of applications; however the quality and experience is still questionable and therefore still waiting for the right candidate.

- Finance and Administrative Update

Orchard Office Manager moved back into Finance due to a change within the Finance team last summer. This has been a successful move and the School Manager is now overseeing the Southwold and Orchard offices in an interim structure. A campaign for two Senior Admin recruitment has not been productive, again the number of applications and quality of the applications have been poor. The Interim situation is working well but not sustainable and the recruitment process continues.

The IT technician moved back to Italy at Christmas; an interim structure has been put in place by using an Agency IT candidate overseen by GCM. The school is in round two of recruiting an IT manager. Confident but waiting for the correct person to come along.

Admin/Finance/Communication structures & responsibilities are being reviewed and succession planning is being put in place with GCM's upcoming retirement next year with the hope of a slow transition to full retirement.

Support staff: there have been TA's who have not returned from maternity or have retired. Again difficulty in recruiting good calibre teaching assistants. Using Agency candidates is proving to work better as they are contracted per term and then permanently contracting some of the support staff. It is a fluid market. Understandably it is a lot of money and the agencies have the upper mark in the current climate. Also due to the number of SEN children agency staff works better due to experience/skills.

(HL) queried what strategies are in place due to the lack of recruitment.

(RD) confirmed that it is a national situation and not an isolated case. The impact of Covid and the lack of level of strong leadership, it is the sign of the times. The Federation has updated its recruitment packs to make them more appealing and fresher. Collating the information; advertising more prominently and the use of social media; weekly teacher tours and having the Communication Manager dealing with applications has helped significantly.

6. Financial Standards

a) Financial Value Standards Review

(GCM) confirmed the SFVS has been reviewed it is the same as last year with only one item to note: *Q.3 The Governing meetings*

The advice is to have six Resources Governing meetings, the Federation only has three meetings and the governors are happy with this and therefore this will stay the same. Therefore we, in part meet these point. **James G – all agreed to sign off.**

b) Benchmarking

Hackney this year has not produced their own benchmarking report. Schools are encouraged to use the National DfE Benchmarking website.

(SW) queried if the benchmarking site is used for anything else.

(GCM) confirmed that as a comparison tool for schools it is useful however, as a Federation Business Manager she does not use it much as the Federation does not have many leases and the school's contracts are bought outright.

(RD) confirmed that as EHT she is still navigating its uses. The Government website enables deeper analysis and interestingly Rachel carried out a national search to find other Federations similar to the Viridis Federation. The only comparable in the entire country is "New Wave" in Hackney if SEN/Free School Meals are included. Yet if the SEN/FSM is removed there were more schools to compare but the information does not match.

In-year balance the narrative can highlight if a school is at a greater risk or not. For the Viridis Schools it is at a medium risk as the overall intake in the annual income in comparison to New Wave does not affect the overall budget

Spending break down Viridis Federation is similar with other schools with the only area of increase being admin/clerical this compares salaries/wages for BM/admin/IT. These are slightly higher for our schools as the Communication Manager was recruited pushed the spent just over the recommended 6%, the Viridis spent in this area is slightly higher but not much, we are at 7%.

Federation characteristics: Viridis Federation is in the lower average teacher cost at 10% and pupil to teacher ratio due to the number of SLT and subject specialised teacher e.g. MFL/Music

(SW) noted that the comparison was also only compared to one other Federation therefore it depends on how they report their information.

(JG) questioned if the fact that we have a low average cost of lower junior teaching pyramid and therefore this comparison was lower.

(RD) confirmed this is a self-assessed report used nationally. The Viridis Schools has a wider leadership team and less experienced teaching team.

Comparability with New Wave the key things that stood out were:

- slight fluctuation in the budget expenditure of £2m but NW have more pupils
- staff total comparable with teacher/leadership with spend slightly more in admin staff however we have a higher agency teacher staff spend and NW has interestingly a larger agency support staff spend
- premises total reasonable comparison on cleaning/caretaking/spend on maintenance/premises staff, occupational total rates/hygiene
- Supplies & services differs with the assumption that NW may be supporting a fourth school
- Community expenditure the Viridis schools spend more
- Income from grant funding is comparable
- Self-funding NW have out of hours use
- In-year balance – as discussed previously
- **Revenue reserve –**
- School work force looking at class teachers/SLT/TA/Support it is comparable with the slight difference between NW and Viridis is the auxiliary staff and NW employ their own catering staff.

(SW) questioned if there was anything radical that would bring a change after the comparison analysis.

(RD) Explained that rationally not much difference and that she had carried out other comparisons without SEN/FSM but nothing that was of concern. RD found it to be a useful tool.

(JG) noted that it was positive that we compare well with other schools.

(SW) noted her surprise that no other MAT comparisons were available.

7. Communications

- Marketing Plan

(RD) noted that this comparison was started this last academic year and the data would be better compared over three years period, this will give a much better comparison.

Pupil mobility's comparison is data over the last two years which highlighted the stability across the three schools, with balanced numbers. Although there are in-year leavers we have numbers coming in with a stronger picture than other schools in Hackney.

Staff Leaving in 2021/2022 the numbers were consistent across the three schools with the biggest turnover at Orchard including year end and in-year leavers as well. Orchard was higher last year as there were four long term sickness absences (10/26 relocation, 4/26 long term absences, 6/26 external career moves, 3 career breaks, 3 did not return from maternity).

Rachel confirmed that relocation is the highest category were people are moving out of London due to the increase in living expenses.

(JG) note that the report was produced by the Communication Manager and was a clear and good visual.

8. Premises Update

a) Caretaker house at Hoxton Garden (feasibility document)

(RD) The study of the refurbishment works means the Federation is in a strong position to start the works on the house. The allocation of a project manager is on track to be appointed middle of March.

(SW) questioned if planning has been agreed.

(GCM) confirmed it is the school's responsibility to fund the project and therefore we are in a better position to choose who we prefer after putting the feasibility report together. We are now in a position to appoint a consultant and start the project.

b) Façade Work Update

- HG completed
- Orchard due to start 03/4/23 all now agreed. Scaffolding will go up around the whole building predominately during the Easter holidays and due to finish by the summer into September as delays may happen. Only once they start they will give us a better time schedule. Will comprise the EYFS area however this area activities has been taken into consideration. Expectations and ground rules have been discussed from the beginning and their conduct during school hours.

9. Policies

a) Charging and Remission Policy

b) Disposal of Assets Policy

c) Governors Allowance Policy

d) GPC Cardholder Protocol

(RD) advised there were no changes to the policies other than key informational changes relating to the new academic year and staffing changes.

(HL) questioned what the meaning of: “Governors may not be paid attendance allowance” in the Governor Allowances Policy.

RD noted there was a typo error and should read “paid attendance allowance”. i.e. Governors cannot be paid to attend meetings other than travel expenses or substance expenses were needed.

SW – All agreed policies

10. Any Other Business

None

11. Glossary of Common Terms

None

Meeting ended at 5.35pm