



**Governing Board of the Winchcombe School
Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting
Monday 29th January 2024 at 5.00pm**

Present: Richard Blofeld (RB) (Chair of Governors) co-opted governor; Liam Anderson (LA) (Vice Chair) co-opted governor; Kathryn Bowers (KB) parent governor; Matt Percy (MP) (Head teacher)

Apologies:

Absent:

In attendance: Sheilagh Peacock (SP), School Business Manager (SBM); Harriet Skinner (HS), Clerk, Elode Scarlett (ES) Deputy Head teacher

Key: Strategic direction/Challenge or Question/Answer/Action/Extract

The clerk chaired the meeting for items 1 & 2

1. Apologies

None

The meeting was quorate

2. Election of Chair

LA nominated himself, agreed unanimously by the Finance Committee (FC)

Clerk to update Governor Hub, website, register of authorising officers. ASAP.

3. Declaration of any other business

(i) None

4. Declaration of interests

(i) None

5. Budget monitoring report to governors Period 9 (P9)

(Main School Budget MSB) SP advised that P9 reports were a good indication of the position at year end.

RB noted 79% spend over the expected 75% at P9. Governors understood the reasons detailed in the report: buy backs, Local government pension scheme (LGPS) deficit, 6.5% teachers' pay award – 1.5% over the 5% budgeted.

LA asked about the total expenditure on staff, currently 81% (recommendation is 79-80%) and the FC conceded that this was not a cause for concern as in line nationally. LA enquired where savings could be made and MP explained fixed term contracts ending in August would not be extended but cautioned that this would be dependent on the number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils.

LA asked for clarification of the main concern around staffing – SP responded that it was educational support staff and SEN/Education and Health Care plans (EHCP)/high needs pupils. MP went onto explain that EHCP funding barely meets staff costs for a 1:1 teaching assistant and estimated that the financial shortfall was in the region of £80k. SP mentioned delays in receipt of promised EHCP funding and LA asked if everything was being done to chase this up. SP assured the FC that this was being followed by the school's Inclusion manager and herself.

LA questioned if the school was obliged to provide 1:1 SEN support if funding was not received, and KB wanted to know if a 1:1 for each child with an EHCP was mandatory. MP confirmed that, legally, the school has to support these children and that the level of support is stipulated in the ECHP.

RB asked if the school would be in deficit when setting the 2024-25 budget, SP cautioned that the position is very tight and several factors would influence this: resignations of staff and small amounts of fund from recovery programme, Universal Infant Free School Meals, retrieval of maternity pay for a leaver.

RB asked about strategies to increase income: is the school full? Governors learnt that the school is over-subscribed but nursery numbers are down. The FC discussed marketing strategies to boost attendance and governors learnt that Happy Kids pre-school (based on The Winchcombe School site) is in direct competition with the school. Governors concurred that the school nursery was distinctive in that there is a qualified teacher in charge and there is continuity for children moving up to reception class. The FC believed The Winchcombe School Nursery gave children an excellent experience and urged MP to explore marketing strategy, emphasising the school's unique selling point: quality of early learning from a qualified teacher and ease of transition to school. Governors suggested open days and advertising to boost take-up, but acknowledged that having 2 providers on the same site was not tenable and the FC wanted to know about the terms of the lease with Happy Kids. SP counselled that despite many requests to WBC over many years, sight of the lease was not forthcoming.

RB offered to contact WBC to ask for this – if necessary, making a Freedom of Information request. (By next FC meeting 25.3.24); marketing of nursery (MP ongoing)

The FC discussed remaining funds. RB enquired about Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) numbers and noted projection of 10 more PPG children from September 2024. RB urged MP to publicise eligibility for PPG and suggested MP add guidance to the HT weekly round-up. (MP)

The Capital budget was mentioned with regard to completion of the roof works.

A review of before and after school fees (The Phoenix Club) was mooted for September 2024, subject to a reassessment of the current provision, although MP asserted that first and foremost The Winchcombe is a school not a wrap-around nursery/child care facility.

6. School Financial Value Standard Checklist 2023-24 (SFVS)

LA, KB and SP collaborated on SFVS checklist. Points to note:

Item 20. MP signs off expenditure, SP added, that in line with the Financial Management Policy, SBM can authorise up to £1000. SP to amend SFVS before submitted for approval by the FGB.

Amend SFVS pass to FGB for approval – SP/Clerk by FGB meeting of 26.2.24

RB asked about the school's last finance audit and SP confirmed that it was in April 2021 and recommendations had been implemented.

LA questioned collaboration with other local schools and it was established that MP was examining shared INSET training.

The SFVS was recommended for approval subject to minor amendment of item. 20 (SP to action)

7. Benchmarking Report 2023

LA summarised the report and charts circulated to governors following LA/KB/SP working party to consider 2022-23 benchmarking. It was noted teaching staff slightly above average due to high number of UPR teaching staff and number of part time 0.6 FTE contracts. Governors felt there was little scope to make savings although where the opportunity arises, efforts to recruit lower grade teachers will be made. MP advised that the appraisal process will be more robust in future with regards to moving to UPR.

Additional hours were discussed and MP made a commitment to reduce claims as much as possible.

Governors understood that IT resources cost were high due to the on-site IT technician, this has now been abandoned with no discernible impact on service.

Premise expenditure was higher nationally and locally and the FC agreed with the steps to mitigate this outlined in the report.

8. Review of Charging and Remissions Policy

LA suggested that a sentence is inserted to the effect: "if your child is eligible for P.P.G please contact the school to discuss payment" this was agreed by the FC and the policy was recommended for approval by the FGB subject to the above change.

Amend C&R policy and add to agenda of next FGB meeting. Clerk

9. Review of School Fund Policy

Governors recommended the School Fund Policy for approval by the FGB.

Pass to FGB for approval - Clerk

10. The Winchcombe School Fund Financial Account 2022-23

The FC understood that School Fund was a private fund made up of voluntary contributions towards school trips, donations and fundraising (discrete from Friends of Winchcombe) and not public money. However, there is still a requirement for School Fund accounts to be audited independently and financial accounts for year ended 2022-23 were inspected.

There were no questions from the FC.

11. AOB

None

16. Date & time of next meeting

Monday 25th March 2024 at 5.00pm

The meeting closed at 6.30pm

	Supporting documents	Agenda item
1.	Agenda for this meeting	1.
2.	Budget monitoring report to governors January 2024 Fund 01 BMF Budget P9 & Commentary Fund 08 BMF Budget P9 & Commentary Fund 13 BMF Budget P9 & Commentary Fund 50 BMF Budget P9 & Commentary Fund 55 BMF Budget P9 & Commentary Fund 76 BMF Budget P9 & Commentary Fund 99 BMF Budget P9 & Commentary	5.
3.	Schools Financial Value Standard Checklist 2023-24 Winchcombe 2023 self-assessment dashboard	6.
4.	Benchmarking Report 2022-23 Local Benchmarking Charts National Benchmarking Charts Benchmarking report card 2022-23	7.
5.	Charging & Remissions Policy	8.
6.	School Fund Policy	9.
7.	The Winchcombe School Fund Financial Accounts The Winchcombe School Fund audit form 2022-23	10.

Minutes of the meeting of 29.1.2024

Signed: L Anderson Date: 25.3.2024