

ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Board of Governors' Meeting held at St Mary's Primary School on Wednesday 24th
April 2024 at 5:00pm

Present:		
Mrs M Dunstan - HT		Staff Governor
Miss H Read – Chair		Parent Governor
Mrs C Dibble		Co-Opted Governor
Mrs C Layton		Staff Governor
Rev S Osmond – Vice Chair		Ex-Officio
Mr S Cross		LA Governor
Mr S Hellard		Co-Opted Governor
Mrs M Clothier		Co-Opted Governor
Mrs N Kemmish		Clerk
	Minute	Action
1	Apologies: Mr D Ballantine – Parent Governor – no apologies received but was not in attendance	
2	Declaration of Business Interests No Business interests to declare	
3	Minutes of the meeting of 17th January 2024 These were taken as a true copy.	
4	Matters arising from the minutes of 17th January 2024 No matters to discuss.	
5	Chair/Head's urgent business None to report	
6 6.1	<p>Finance 2024/25 Proposed Budget</p> <p>The Business Manager (BM) shared the proposed budget plan and notes for 2024/2025 (see documents attached). As it stands there are insufficient funds to commence work on the hall extension. The deficits are being reflected countywide in many schools. Discussions were held surrounding hall plans and staffing. The Headteacher (HT) added that there have been significant absences within the school staff, not seeing the full quota of staff in the building at the same time since June 2023. The current situation is that if any of the Teaching Assistants were to leave it would not be possible to recruit replacements.</p> <p>Question from Governor – If it is not possible to re recruit will this have a great impact on staff and increase pressure they are under? The HT is aware that this would be the case so further discussion will be held prior to any decisions being made.</p> <p>This year's budget states that there is to be a 5% pay rise for Support Staff, however this has not yet been agreed with Unions, that being said the Local Authority are often correct with their predictions.</p> <p>Question from Governor – Does this account for the expenditure rise on the budget plan? HT confirmed this is due to the 5% pay rise predicted.</p> <p>Question from Governor – How much is needed for the hall works? The BM confirmed that £250,000 is required to undergo the necessary works and currently we have £150,000 available. This includes £36,000 funding from Nursery funds.</p> <p>Question from Governor – Is it possible to obtain grant funding? HT advised if we were to apply for Grant Funding, the building would need to be publicly accessible for community use, this would mean housing a separate hall to the school with public facilities such as toilets.</p> <p>Question from Governor – Are we likely to spend the capital before the next budget? – BM stated that the capital is ringfenced, but it depends if any emergency works are required in the meantime. Therefore, the funds are not being committed until we know a plan moving forward.</p>	

Question from Governor – Will the Local Authority not be able to claw back funds? Discussions surrounding this have been held and the Local Authority will not claw back funds.

Question from Governor – what happens if we are unable to set a balanced budget? BM advised that the Local Authority then step in to review and would most likely look at staffing costs. We currently are spending more on staffing than we have budget for.

Staff Governor added that there is a big push on wellbeing so this would be taken into consideration as part of wellbeing at work is to ensure that there is sufficient support in place to run effectively.

The BM has worked extremely hard on the plan and has kept predictions as low as possible.

Question from Governor – How do the percentages of benchmarking compare?

About middle ground, 66% so not low, managing expectations. BM explained that a decision is required to either complete the hall works or make redundancies pending government changes for the better.

Pupil numbers are steady but as it stands, we are not full for September 2024. This is due to a low birth rate this year due to a dip following the covid pandemic. Current Foundation Stage intake numbers for Sept 2024 stand at 46 which mainly consists of children from our onsite Nursery, Little Oaks, this may increase yet pending any appeals. Other schools such as Northgate and Enmore are full.

Co-Opted Governor added that it seems as though the hall works are less likely to keep staff numbers as they need to be? Maybe it is worth considering having the hall as a community project.

Question from Governor – what are the new intake like behavioural wise? HT stated that the data for this has not yet been communicated so is not yet known.

Benchmarking

6.2 The Benchmarking document (see attached) is a result of work carried out for the SFVS.

Question from Governor – what is meant by self-generated funding? BM confirmed this would be anything that generates an income for the school, such as, hall hire, solar panels, the nursery. St Mary's has the second highest staffing numbers with Somerset Bridge being the top. Staff Governor confirmed that this could be due to Somerset Bridge having a high percentage of pupil premium children – see action point. It may also be that they run their own holiday clubs. St Mary's trialled a new holiday camp company during easter which was successful, but this is not possible for the summer due to the site being used for other purposes. But may be something we can provide moving forward.

Action to enquire with Somerset Bridge as to why they have a high percentage of self-generated funding.

SFVS

6.3 BM and CTG worked on the SFVS document and produced evidence to support the questions asked as part of the report (see attached). The report shown to all in attendance – all agreed and signed. The BM has provisionally tried to set a 3-year budget, but it is not yet possible to balance it due to awaiting information from the Local Authority, this being the case with all other schools in the County. In future the SFVS will be discussed in the January meeting so we can prepare data ahead of time.

SFVS to be added to the January agenda in future

VMFI Report

6.4 Again this is a further document based around the SFVS – St Mary's has two amber sections, premises and catering but this is based upon old data from 2022/2023 so not yet up to date.

Question from Governor – Why is the cost of premises lower? Is this due to us maintaining premises internally? The BM confirmed that where possible all works are completed by the Premises staff on site, hence the premises expenditure



	<p>appears low and the Premises staff expenditure is high as we do routine, non-specialist maintenance ourselves and don't often buy in to get work carried out. The HT praised the BM for her hard work on formulating all these documents and working extremely hard to ensure we are doing the best we can.</p> <p>Question from Governor – Will we need to start thinking about redundancies if there is a low budget? The BM stated that the deadline for this year has already passed due to the delay receiving the core offer and budget from the LA. So, we were unaware of what may be needed and what was to be included. This will be discussed at January meetings moving forward.</p> <p>Question from Governor – Are there any staff due to retire in the coming years, may wish to reduce hours, voluntary redundancy? Or is it last in first out? The BM advised that there are a few staff reaching retirement age and over 60 so possible considerations for VR, reduce hours or potential to job share classes. The carry forward on the budget is reducing as time goes on so this won't last forever. Lots of schools across the County have struggled with a shortage of staff and have been left having to close classes some days. At St Mary's there have been periods of time where all of SLT have been covering classes due to staff illness and supply staff are proving very difficult to book.</p> <p>Question from Governor – What are the illness causes, are there any patterns or common reasons? The HT explained that times are proving hard in class, so the staff are possibly getting run down and ill then not giving themselves chance to recover and pushing through which in turn is making them poorly for longer. When staff are off, they are genuinely not able to work. Their cups are full then illness on top causes them to overfill. The BM stated that on all return to work forms the Bradford Score is now included so that the staff are aware of where they sit on the scale.</p>	
7	Clerking	
7.1	Clerks Update No updates.	
7.2	Correspondence No correspondence to discuss.	
7.3	Any matters of a confidential nature Budget report and associated documents to remain highly confidential.	
8	Date of next meeting 3 rd July 2024	
	Meeting closed at 6pm	

ST MARY'S BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Actions from the Meeting held on Wednesday 24th April 2024

Item	Action	Who	When
6.2	Action to enquire with Somerset Bridge as to why they have a high percentage of self-generated funding?	BM (CD)	
6.3	SFVS and budget plans to be added to the January agenda in future.	CTG (NK)	January meeting

K. Head