

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

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

**On Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February at 4.30pm**

**Committee Attendees**

James Gowland (JG)  
Sara Walsingham (SW)  
Alberta Senyah (AS)  
Giuseppa Colella-Mare (GCM)  
Rachel Davie (RD)  
Hannah Lownsborough (HL)  
Victoria Crawford (VC)  
Clerk: Sandra Rodrigues

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**1. Apologies/Consent for Absence**

No apologies – all present

**2. Governing Body Organisation**

**a. Membership**

Agreed

**b. Acknowledgement of TOR**

No changes have been made or noted.

**c. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda & Register of pecuniary interests for 2023/24**

No new interests. No changes have been made or noted.

**d. Code of Conduct**

No changes have been made or noted.

**e. Governing Body Annual Calendar 2023-2024 and Governor Visits**

Question: Date of the next Resources meeting

Answer: 23/05/24

**3. Agreements of the minutes from the last meeting**

One comment on the minutes of the last meeting of 16 November 2023, noted Item 4: re:l09 –the wording “major” should read “Mayor”.

All governors agreed minutes.

#### 4. 3/4 Year budget review & forecast, current status

##### a) Current status of budgets & changes

Governors discussed the Viridis Budget Monitoring report at 9 months up to December 2023. It was reported that, at this point, a more accurate prediction of final outcome is possible and overall the budget is on point to the predictions with a small positive carry forward balance most likely.

##### Key points to note on Income:-

- I01: received more money due to the supplementary grant, which was received again this year. The last instalment of the budget was paid by HEd in January, this was the last so the outcome is accurate, the amount registers a total of £197K more than predicted.
- SEN Funding: final income in this area still unknown, two quarters have been received so far with another two still to be received. The LA payments are delayed, however this should not be too different from the budgeted figures.
- PPG: slight decrease in funds is predicted due to decline of pupil roll/pupils leaving/mobility of pupils during the year.
- Other Government Funds: MFL received confirmation of a total grant of approximately £35K for the Turing Programme to be used over a 2-3 year period. £9K has been received so far. This will be spend on the Spanish Trip. A small amount is received for Early Career Teacher and the Government paid £82K towards the cost of the pay increase of 6.5% awarded to teachers.
- Bank interests: increased to £100K due to higher interest rates. May drop over time.
- Catering: money received £28K up to July 2023. This represents the total income in this section as parents are no longer paying for school meals due to Mayor's UIFSM for KS2 pupils. To date 90% of the funds have been received from the Mayor's UIFSM, the figure received has been based on the number of children in KS2 in October 2023 census.
- Positive outcome of income overall compared to the initial budget, the forecast predicts an increase of £350K more income than originally predicted.

Question: Were there any surprises and does the income from the Mayor's UIFSM cover the expenditure?

Answer: No real surprises, except for the bank's interests, which were not predicted at scale. The funds received from LA for the Mayor's UIFSM do not cover the expenditure. Nursery meals are being subsidised by the schools entirely and before the Mayor's funds the schools have always subsidised meals. The Mayor's funding boosted up the funding to £2.65 per meal, which is more equitable for the part that the fund as there are two streams of UIFSM: the Government who continue to pay for KS1 school meals and the Mayor, now who is paying for KS2 school meals. The Mayor's funding of UIFSM will continue for 1 more year.

##### Key changes in Expenditure:-

A predicted positive £250K approx. carry forward. Predictions on point, albeit regarding building expenditure there could be a change due to any emergency repairs before the budget closes.

- E01: Salaries are the highest expenditure and includes the 6.5% increase for teachers. However, it is predicted a saving of £370K compared to budgeted figure; this is due to movement of teachers to fulfil senior position. Internal recruits mean a step up of salary rather than an additional full cost of salary.

- E03: Education support: A contracted TA in every class was budget for but these have not been filled and have been filled by agency staff instead. Thus a saving of over £100K is expected despite an unannounced uplift in support staff salary of £2300c flat rate.
- E04/E05 Premises/Admin/etc.: Show slight higher expenditure due to the increase mentioned above.
- E12 Building improvement: a spent of £65K more due to redecoration of classrooms and repairs.
- E16 Energy: The Federation use Hackney Education (HEd) contract framework. Due to the way HEd bought this large contract last year saw a savings as unit costs were charged at a lower rate than the national increase. However, this year prices have increased considerably, so far a predicted overspend of £100K is counted. The Federation are looking to leave the contract with HEd to save money, but this can prove to be difficult.
- E18 Other Occupational Costs: Statutory Testing has seen a higher expenditure of around £18K as once testing is complete any recommended repairs need to be carried out and these repairs are coded to the same budget e.g. emergency lighting.
- E19 Curriculum: overspend in this area is mainly due to enrichment/ and Trips. MFL trip not included when the budget was produced. PGL trip is also quite expensive.
- E20 Software: curriculum expenses are higher due to cost increases. A list of all current software licences with costs is being put together to evaluate these and decide if these are all still relevant and needed. Checks will include: are these being used to the full in class and are these all still used to capacity to teach the ICT curriculum.
- E25 Catering: KS2 pupils taking free meals has increased the expenditure; since the Mayor UIFM the uptake of meals has increase by around 35/40%
- E26 Supply Teaching: has increased with a predicted over spend of £120K
- E27 Supply Teaching Assistants: predicting an overspend of around £600K here due to savings in the contracted support salaries and the need to employ 1:1 SEN support.
- House at HG: a number of surveys have been carried out at a cost of around £20K, which have already been spent. Closing the year, the remaining £380K will be taken out and re-input in the new budget as a prediction.

Question: In E25, £540K should be funded by UIFSM and this figure should have balance out with the income, why has it not?

Answer: All the funds have not come in as yet. It is expected that HEd will give a figure to be able to accrue before closing the accounts.

With the influx of children especially at HG, an application for funding from the LA has been made as these children were not taken into account in the October census. Still awaiting the outcome.

Question: This budget shows the school's figures are understated at the moment.

Answer: It was noted that predictions err on the side of caution due to a number of funds not having been received as yet.

Question: Has the house been agreed to move forward.

Answer: It was confirmed it is at the tendering stage.

It was noted that in the Hackney context in this financial year 2023/24, 65% of schools are predicting a deficit at year end. Overall, the financial surplus in Hackney has dropped £9.2m – £2.7million, which is a significant drop across Hackney.

Question: Although the school is exploring the decision of going ahead with house this needs to be a final decision by the FGB; are any other steps being looked at in making the ongoing expenditure sustainable.

Answer: This will take place in the May meeting.

Question: With a school's budget nearing deficit is the school's falling roll number a consequence?

Answer: If there is a significant deficit prediction for a school an application for a licenced deficit from the LA would take place, normally this involves a Recovery Plan over a period of time

It was noted it is always better to avoid a deficit by taking action now to avoid this, it will leave schools in a better position for the future.

Question: Is the school funding formula an issue and are we part of a London wider network of schools? Do we have any premises income?

Answer: Each year, the government allocates money for all state-funded mainstream schools, including academies and council-run schools, using a formula that ensures funding is fair and reflects their pupils' needs. This is called the National Funding Formula (NFF). This formula takes a variety of factors into account, such as the number of pupils a school has and how its location may affect the school's running costs. The funding system also protects schools against large decreases in per-pupil funding from one year to the next, giving schools stability to help their budget planning. We do not have any lettings currently, as this needs to be a balance of the value of income vs managing the lettings.

Question: Could extending the resources of what we already have e.g. ASC/extended day care be a possibility to boost income?

Answer: There is no profit, the extended day service is simply a wraparound care, this is another area which is subsidised by the schools' budget.

#### b) Indicative Budget 2024/2025

A figure of £10.7 million funding is predicted for next academic year which is encouraging as it is around the same amount as last year. Need to note this is a predicted budget and as yet not confirmed. The reason for a very similar budget figure for the 2 years is because between last year's budget and this year's budget, we only lost 7 children overall despite the falling roll. Within the Federation some schools lost pupils and some gained, this year budget is based on October 2023 Census, we counted 1228 children across the three schools last October. Even if we lose more children during this financial year the budget will not change.

- The Federation forecast around £70K income for bank interest
- Mayor funding meals will continue into next year so income will be based on the number of children on roll in KS2.

At this stage any further information is not predicted, although in terms of salaries 3-4% increase will be added to salaries in the new budget as a buffer just in case there are any salary increases.

Positive to note that if everything stays as predicted next year's budget should be manageable (excluding the house.)

#### 5. Staffing Update (including risks to recruitment & retention)

- Staffing update
- ITT & Apprenticeships
- Falling Rolls

- HT role for SW - 2 successful internal candidates have been shortlisted but this is currently on hold at the moment due to other situations within the Federation regarding senior leadership teams.
- SENCO role at SW has been filled with an internal appointment and is now being inducted
- DHT at Orchard has now gone on maternity. There will be a 5-week gap as the cover DHT returns from Maternity.
- Staff teaching preferences have now been completed with 85% predicted to stay next year, staff typically follow through their choices.
- Recruitment process will recommence in the next two weeks.
- Music Teacher at SW is leaving at Easter and an internal class teacher will be moving into that role and we will be recruiting for the class teacher gap. Music subject will move forward to a two teacher structure similar to the MFL structure. A long-term plan needs to be considered as whether to continue having Music/MLF specialist provision.
- Teaching Assistant caps are continually to be reviewed for next budget
- HT at SW is currently supporting and leading the initial Teacher training programme. She is reviewing applications for Apprenticeships in the next academic year, there is a need to be careful as the programme has had some changes which is leading to Apprenticeships not staying beyond their training after they have qualified.
- There are 3 members on the mentoring course.

Current risks – this is mainly due to the falling roll number of pupils. However, there were 42 new entries at Hoxton Garden, who have come from closing schools. An application for extra funding of £165K has been submitted to HE as they have stipulated there are some funds available for schools which are admitting in-year pupils from closing schools, we are still awaiting confirmation if this has been successful. LA have committed to an extra £1k for each child with SEN status, however funding is still awaiting to be received.

There are talks of more school closures (6-8 schools) up to September 2025. Also the current number of pupils that have applied for our Reception is low compared to the number of places we have. This will be clearer when Reception numbers are published in May. If the drop is confirmed there could be the possibility for Orchard to change from a three forms to two forms from September 24. Discussions are taking place of the management of staffing.

Noted that the prediction PAN for London for Reception places is dropping significantly, the Viridis Federation is significantly below as there are 90 additional vacant reception places across the borough below prediction.

## 6. Financial Standards

### a) Financial Value Standards Review

Question 3 of the document states there should be 6 financial meetings a year and the Federation only holds 3 which has been agreed. **ALL Agreed.**

**Action: (JG) to sign.** To be reported to the FGB

### b) Benchmarking

It shows the school's Income, expenditure, in-year balance and revenue reserves which is uploaded on the DfE website.

Discussed the benchmarking document, based on a comparison between Viridis Federation, New Wave and Leap Federations who are very similar. Viridis schools are in par with the other federations with a difference of around 200 pupils +/- with the other compared federations. The other element is the percentage of FSM children which is aligned with the other federations.

Special Facilities – raised last year – this is based on how expenditure is allocated in the system, where NW/Leap use this section to record wrap around care where as The Viridis Federation does not.

## 7. Orchard FOO accounts closure

Orchard is the only school with a private funds account. This was running for a number of years. As parents have moved on and with the advent of Covid there has been no one running this for the last two or three years. There is a credit balance of £9k on the bank account and the small accounts needed to be audited by an independent SBM from another school.

This has now been completed and accounts have been audited and signed up to March 2023. A decision has been reached to close the account and move the funds into the main account as a donation which is normal practice. The account will be revised in March and audited again for the final year to March 2024 after all funds have been transferred and the balance is Zero and the account will be closed. The final accounts will be presented in May to the Resources Sub Committee.

## 8. Premises Update

- a) Hoxton Garden caretaker house going through the procurement now; ensuring docs are ready before tendering. The resources committee agreed to instruct the tendering process as this still does not commit to anything and once the tendering quotes have been received it will then be time to decide if this goes ahead.

At the next resources meeting, with tenders costed, a better discussion can take place and final recommendation will be taken to the next FGB

**All Agreed**

- b) Façade Work Update - In progress at Orchard, roof needing further works and investigating who is responsible. Southwold's façade works are in progress, looking at replace/repair windows to ensure longevity at least for the next 8/10 years. Senior staff attend all meetings  
New incident at Hoxton Garden, a piece of ceiling collapsed on the third floor, this is being resolved, the Federation are prioritising the H&S around that and undertaking the costed works associated to this situation. HE will reimburse the costs of reparation.  
Orchard's back lands play structure will need to be replaced as repairs will overtake the cost to replace with a new structure - be brought to the FGB.  
House at HG as discussed earlier in the meeting is now through to procurement stage and documents are ready for tendering process. If this is not to go through a decision needs to be made imminently. **A base decision made in this meeting is to go ahead with the tendering process and further in-depth discussion for next meeting. All agreed**

(HL) left 17.46 pm.

## 9. Policies

- a) Charging and Remission Policy
- b) Disposal of Assets Policy
- c) Governors Allowance Policy
- d) GPC Cardholder Protocol
- e) Financial Procedures Policy

No changes to note on the above policies except for 9.(e) Financial Procedures Policy which was agreed in November, however the Federation in December had school finance audit. One of the actions Audit listed was to amend this Policy to include a paragraph on Fraud.

- They stated that although they verified we follow procedures correctly, the process followed needed to be annotated in our policy accordingly under a new section “Fraud” which has been completed – **All agreed changes and policies.**  
– **ACTION: Full Audit outcome to be discussed in next meeting.**

**It was confirmed the new Budget also needs to be agreed in next meeting.**

#### **10. Any Other Business**

None

#### **11. Glossary of Common Terms**

None

Meeting ended at 18.15pm