

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCE COMMITTEE OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY,  
HELD ONLINE ON THURSDAY 10<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 AT 5.30 P.M.**

**Present:** Ricardo Herbane (RH)(Chair), Debora Lucarelli (DL), Chris Jaggar (CJ), Julie Murphy (JM), Christina Bates (CB), Richard Warwick (RW), Tony Davies (TD) (Head teacher)

**Clerk:** Lis Silver

**1. Apologies for absence:**

There were no apologies for absence and all members of the Committee were present.

**2. Declarations of direct or indirect pecuniary interests relevant to any of the Agenda items**

There was one declaration of interest – CB reminded the meeting that she is H & S rep for the National Education Union (NEU).

**3. Review 'Resources for Learning' section of FGB/Resources Committee meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

It was noted that the last meeting of the Resources Committee had been a year ago and that during the Covid-19 pandemic the Resource Committee standing items had been brought to the FGB meetings. The "Resources for Learning Section" of the FGB meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> October was reviewed by the Committee and it was noted that they were reviewed at the December FGB meeting and agreed as an accurate record.

**4. Matters arising and agreed actions update**

There was one matter arising for this section regarding when payment of additional religious holidays had been withdrawn. TD advised that he had not received a reply from EPM

**Action: TD to go back to EPM to find out when payment for religious holidays was withdrawn**

**5. Review latest budget monitoring reports**

The meeting reviewed the draft monitoring report to the end of January (10/12 month report) which needs to be submitted by the end of the month. The Head advised that this a very likely end of year outcome of a £97k carry forward since all known costs have been included in the budget, unless there was some major unforeseen issue related to Covid-19 and clearly the anticipated carry forward means there is adequate resource to manage additional costs. He noted that all Clinically Extremely vulnerable staff are now being paid from the school budget since they are back at work full time working from home so there is no further income from sickness insurance. Within this provision there is £28k of Catch Up Premium funding, which was received after budget setting and is ring fenced. This leaves a carry forward of £69k and shows how difficult things would have been without the £60k raised by the PTA. This is a significantly better picture than the previous few years and is largely due to the significant increase in funding per pupil. He noted that there will be another significant increase next year to bring the school in line with the minimum funding target of £4k per child and should result in the school having a healthy carry forward for next year's budget which is very helpful given the large number of unknown factors at present. In answer to a question he advised that he believed a predicted carry over of around £80k is healthy for a school of this size with a £3.5 million budget although there is advice that schools can carry over between 4% and 8% but he thinks this is higher than needed. He expressed his thanks to the governors in helping him to manage the last 3-4 years

with significant cuts in funding without the need to make any staff redundant and with the ability, thanks to the PTA fundraising, to be able to buy in additional support when it was essential.

*Debora Lucarelli joined the meeting at 5.45 p.m.*

## **6. St Mathew's DfE Financial Benchmarking Report Card**

The DfE Benchmarking report card was presented to the Committee. TD advised that in most areas St Matthew's is in line with the other schools. It was noted that there are always some areas where comparisons can be misleading because accounting is done differently e.g. which budget is used for covering maternity leave so some of the discrepancies may be simply anomalies in accounting methodology. He highlighted the following areas:

- reserves are lower than average and this is an area where it is planned that the new funding levels will allow reserves to be built up to a suitable level
- expenditure on staff as a percentage of total budget is slightly higher than average
- educational consultancy (bought in professional services) is higher than average since this includes agency staff covering maternity leave.

It was agreed that it was interesting data but difficult to draw significant conclusions especially since the funding per child is significantly lower at St Matthew's than all the other schools listed (£200 less per pupil than the next school) so this will push up the percentages for fixed costs like staffing. It was noted that it will be interesting to see how the picture changes with the increased levels of funding and when our funding is more comparable to other schools.

One of the Governors asked about whether the school was full and was advised that there are only 15 spaces remaining across the school. There are some years with gaps whilst other years, including Year 6, have a waiting list. TD noted that all the schools in the City Centre are reporting a reduction in number and the likely explanations are as follows:

- i) Drop in birth rate seen at Nursery level
- ii) Effect of Covid with many people leaving Cambridge in the summer to return to their home country and far fewer travelling this year for study or employment.

The meeting was advised that the Admissions team are only processing applications for children not in the local Education authority so there will be no in year transfers from other local schools. It was noted that a small number of children have been signed off for home schooling because of fears around Covid. It was noted that our funding for the new Financial year will be based on the census numbers in October 2020 of 610 children. The impact of the reduction in the Ofsted grading was discussed but since the school is still Good it was not felt that this was having significant impact. It was noted that every year the school is still oversubscribed for Reception places. There was speculation as to whether the grading impacted where people choose to buy houses and which catchment area they chose to be in. One of the staff governors noted that the school has recently had a property developer ringing the school asking us to redraw our catchment area to include their development so it seems unlikely that this will be a problem in the future unless the grading goes below Good.

TD advised that the school have just carried out a Remote Learning Survey and the results had been very positive. There had been some feedback asking why the school was not providing full time online teaching balanced by some requests that the school should not increase the amount of online learning but overall the responses had been very positive about the provision this term.

## **7. Review of "First Rough Cut " Budget for 2021-22**

TD advised that this budget is for indicative purposes so governors have a sense of where the school will be at the yearend for 2021-22 if the assumptions are correct and all other things are equal. There are always many changes from this initial draft but this is likely to be even greater in an unpredictable year. He noted that whilst the initial picture is healthy the challenge will be in identifying if there

really is additional funding that can be used for new projects. There are many uncertainties in the budget but the initial draft of the budget shows a very healthy carry forward for the following year of around £170K. The next stage will be to identify priority areas strategically for investment of additional funding, moving the predicted carry forward closer to £80k. The meeting noted that in addition to Revenue funding there is also a small sum of £14k for Capital funding and the Head explained that this is used for IT equipment, maintenance or replacement of big items such as boilers. Prior to May 2010 the Capital revenue was higher and used for building projects but in recent years it is a smaller amount but is still accounted for separately. In answer to a question TD advised that any carry forward from this year will be rolled into next year's budget. He noted that the local authority has a provision for clawback if the school holds more than 8% of their annual budget (to prevent schools storing up large sums) but that schools would only normally do this in preparation for a big Capital project.

Governors asked the Head to identify concerns they should be aware of:

- i) Nursery numbers – drop in birth rate (impacting last year's intake and going forward) coupled with lack of clarity about how Covid-19 will impact numbers if parents are postponing coming to the city to work or study or since Nursery education is not mandatory parents choose not to use Nursery provision.
- ii) Staffing – there is likely to be some movement of children (SEND or with EHCPs) who are given places in special provisions and this will affect the number of TAs needed to support them.

In answer to a question as to why there is only £28k for Covid Catch Up Funding TD advised that only the first of three payments have been made to date. The rest of the money will be received in the summer term and this money needs to be ring fenced for the planned activities. This majority of this work is currently on hold until children are back in school although there is some Language development assessment being done in Early Years in relation to the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme that was to be introduced in January. This will work with the 15 children who score lowest in the assessments. Use of the money will be reviewed again in April and the plan adjusted to ensure it is targeted at the children that will benefit the most, since some of the vulnerable children previously identified are already in school and receiving support.

The meeting agreed that whilst there are still many variables in the budget the cushion provided by the predicted carry over means that there is room for flexibility and for a further review and adjustment of the budget in September when numbers and special needs are clearer. The Committee thanked the Head and the Business Manager for the excellent management of the Finances.

One of the governors asked how the school choose which bank to use and were advised that this is determined by the local authority.

## **8. Any other Business**

TD advised that he had one matter for any other business regarding payment of Teaching Assistants. A small number of Level 2 TAs are currently working at an elevated level for short periods of time. They are either covering classes of 10-15 children for half a day to provide PPA or covering a class for an hour so a teacher can do an online teaching session. He requested approval to pay the hours that they are working at this level at the rate of a Level 3 TA. This will be a very small sum (around £2 an hour more) but shows appreciation of their willingness to be flexible in a demanding situation where cover cannot be provided in the usual way with specialist staff employed to work with multiple groups. He noted that HLTAs are paid at Level 4 and that pre Covid they could be asked to cover a class anywhere and anytime in the school, but the Level 2 TAs are being used at set times to cover groups they are familiar with. Governors asked if this would set a precedent for the future and it was agreed that this was only a temporary measure for the unusual times where people cannot work with multiple

groups. Tony proposed the increase, and it was seconded by RH. Governors were asked to confirm their vote in writing to the Clerk and Head. The Chair thanked the Head for bringing this matter to the Committees attention.

**The Resources Committee unanimously approved that Level 2 Teaching Assistants to be paid the Level 3 rate for the time that they spend covering for the teacher with a group of 10-15 children during the Covid-19 arrangements.**

#### **9. Dates of future meetings and agreed agenda items**

It was noted that the Budget needs to be submitted by 7<sup>th</sup> May . Based on this the following dates were agreed:

FGB Meeting – Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 5.30pm

Resources Committee – 28<sup>th</sup> April at 5.30pm (budget approval meeting)

#### **Approvals:**

**The Resources Committee unanimously approved**

- **Level 2 Teaching Assistants to be paid the Level 3 rate for the time that they spend covering for the teacher (with a class of 10-15 children) during the Covid-19 arrangements.**

#### **Actions:**

- **TD to go back to EPM to find out when payment for religious holidays was withdrawn**