

## Finance, Premises and Personnel Committee – Minutes 25 February 2021

### Attendance – online Zoom meeting

Governors - Louise Russell, Claire Bolderson, Sajni Patani, Jodie Reed, Dan Hamilton

Mark Owen, Headteacher

Sara Wright, Business Manager

### 1. Budget Monitoring

- We reviewed the budget monitoring to end of January 2021.
- Currently, a deficit of £12k is being forecast for the year. Main reasons for this are:
  - o Whilst some Covid expenditure was reimbursed by the government (e.g. cleaner costs), an additional £7k that was not reimbursed was spent on making the school safe for September 2020 (including installing taps etc) – the school was encouraged to spend on these items, but did not get given criteria for what they could actually reclaim until too late
  - o Budgeted £1,400 for cleaning supplies, but spent £788 over what was reclaimed back
  - o Made some savings on curriculum supplies (as children working remotely), but still had to spend significant amounts on printing paper packs for children
  - o No savings on utilities as school was still open throughout Covid period
  - o Nursery fees – did not receive fees from paying parents
  - o Breakfast club – received less income due to reduced uptake due to Covid
- Discussed in detail the high agency supply teaching costs (40% over budget) – Mark confirmed that there are good reasons for this.
  - o There was a maternity cover required for staff that was not budgeted for, but for all maternity we get 90% back from maternity insurance/supply insurance, so the net impact is smaller than it appears
  - o Supply staff needed to cover staff shielding – exceptional circumstances due to Covid
  - o Additional SEN teacher came out of Supply budget – teacher was part time (and budgeted for) but during Covid, worked extra hours (full time) to cover shielding teachers/ Reception teacher who had Covid.
- Discussed SEN additional funds (9k received last year), but it was determined that this would no longer be funded by LEA. School discussed with LEA, and confirmed the school will receive an additional 12.5k for next year. Mark is hoping to also have the same level of income this year (but not yet confirmed, although he thinks likely to have c. £12.5k confirmed before 31 March). This could lead us to break even this year if it comes in. **Action: Mark to share emails on this topic with Claire/Sajni.**
- For this year, we will be closing with a deficit unless we get the additional SEN £12.5k funds (although accounts at school are closed meaning no further expenditure in March, Sara confirmed no other income foreseen for the rest of this year) – Sara is meeting with Finance to come up with deficit recovery plan, this must be cleared in next year's budget

- **Action:** Sara to send February and March budget monitoring so Finance Committee can continue to monitor.
- We discussed the fact that there is a cumulative deficit going forwards rather than c/f surplus. Governors have a duty to be aware of this, and review/discuss plan going forwards with the school to support with their plan to balance budget, but governors have no further fiduciary responsibility to rectify.

## 2. SFVS / financial audit update

- We discussed the SFVS and how governors can use it – generally the SFVS is a helpful tool for governors to use/drive asking questions, but data should be viewed as indicative rather than 100% accurate. The SFVS is submitted to the LEA however.
- For benchmarking – we can assume that the RAG rating is based on school's 2020/21 data, as compared to prior year benchmarking data (which is 2018/19 data, with some uplift).
- Dan asked if we can input data from last 2 years into the SFVS to allow governors to see trends. Sara confirmed we only have SFVS for last year in this format. **Action:** Sara to share prior year SFVS data.
- **Action:** Sara to update commentary on SFVS to explain that we have looked at agency supply costs, and explain why they are higher this year.
- Financial audit report has not yet been returned to Sara – however best practice recommendations have been included in SFVS. Auditor will revisit to make sure that changes are implemented.

## 3. 2021/22 budget planning

- Main concern for 2021/22 budget planning is that we no longer have a c/f surplus from prior years, and therefore need to plan carefully to ensure that we at least break even this year.
- Sara has a Budget setting meeting 11<sup>th</sup> March
- Mark discussed that the biggest expense is staff salary – in the long term, if there is no increase in income, then we will need to look at staffing/possibly make some difficult decisions.
  - o In the short term we are likely to lose one of our additional non-class based staff.
  - o In short term, the school will stop paying for an external Covid cleaner, and take steps to do this in house
- Long term, Mark will consider how best to deploy staff to match the vision for the school with available resources. This may involve some restructuring but this will not be for 2021/22.
- The school will not know until summer half term whether any staff will leave. If any future staff are hired, we discussed whether we can reduce expenditure on staff (e.g. hire lower qualified teachers). In the past, it was hard to hire at a less expensive rate for permanent staff (and resulted in more expensive teachers being hired). Mark emphasised again the importance of having strong staff for the school.
- Catch up funding should be viewed as separate to the budget, so will not help balance the budget next year. But to date, catch up funding has been used to increase hours of Orlando and Meghan (resident scientist) – the funds have to be used to do catch up activities (not on other things, e.g. funding non-contact time, or normal SEN activities)

- Parents donations were discussed as something to explore to help the 2021/22 budget – e.g. can we use FoG to get the message out to possible parent donors. Ideally would want to encourage a handful of donors to potentially donate larger amounts (e.g. explain that we have been hit hard by Covid this year, which has had consequences. Need to be careful to ensure that parents do not feel pressurised, and that we are not expecting parents to subsidize state education.

#### **4. Science for Life**

- We discussed the continued 'underspend' on Lab 13 – our current surplus is £135k and we have only spent £45k.
- Mark reiterated that there is no concern regarding possibility of us losing these resources – DAO foundation have requested that schools reduce spend by at least 10-20% (in case they have to reduce allocation in future years). They have no issue with us spending less.
- DAO/LEA keen to expand to other boroughs, and Mark keen to ensure not just him/Megan leading. DAO foundation has now set up steering group, LEA will also put in resource, to help development and expansion of SFL. Some of the money will be spent on this. We have said we wish to spend on additional resident scientist, as this will help the roll out of the program. Mark confirmed that Megan's role is secure. Mark views as success story for this school.

#### **5. Capital/Premises**

- We currently have a £2k carry forward
- The school has not been given its allocation for next year, normally get around 6k
- No plans for major capital spending for next year
- Mark hopeful that playground roof will be repaired over Easter (should be funded separately via insurance etc)
- If can be afforded, will continue cyclical painting/decorating of classrooms

#### **6. Personnel**

- No significant staffing changes to report.
- Mark is expecting both teachers currently on maternity leave will want to come back part time, so will need to find a way of covering additional days
- Orlando/Megan have increased hours over Covid period – will be reviewed by Mark/Sara as part of budget setting whether Orlando will have to reduce back from 3 to 2.5 days. (The extra 4<sup>th</sup> day for Orlando and Megan extra days are funded by catch up premium, so those will continue as long as the catch up premium continues).

**Date of next meeting – Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 5pm**