



MINUTES OF THE FEDERATION TRUST MEETING

Thursday 7 December 2023, 8.15am
The Gallery

Present

Andrew Cross, Emma Gautrey, Rob Guthrie, Andrew Holt (Chair), Guy Magrath, Alex Mould, Mark Tinkler, Stuart Williams (Executive Principal).

In Attendance

Kelly Jackson (Head of School Catmose Primary), Oliver Teasel (Head of Harington School), Chris Wilson (Chief Finance Officer), Sheryl Wilson (Governance Professional), Mark Jackson (Azets).

1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence

Andrew Holt welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from and Lindsey Madeley-Harland, Martyn Rhowbotham and Clive Norgaard Morton.

2. Declarations of Personal Interest and Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of personal or pecuniary interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12 October 2023

The minutes were signed to be a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising from previous minutes

Trustees who had not yet completed the annual safeguarding and prevent training were asked to do so.

5. Presentation and sign off of annual accounts

Mark Jackson from Azets was welcomed to the meeting to present the annual accounts to trustees.

Trustees were presented with three documents; 1) the consolidated management information for the year ended 31 August 2023 2) annual report and accounts and 3) the audit findings report. Comparisons were made between the available revenue and DFC funds from 2022 to 2023 (£1,418,380 as at 31 August 2022 and £1,6017,207 as at 31 August 2023).

Mark Jackson advised that the original budget deficit this time last year was forecasted at approximately £600,000 which included the capital build and there were many unknowns, for example, the support staff pay award, teachers' pay award and utility costs. The £694,060 deficit for 2022/2023 is close to that prediction. In the next 2-3 years a deficit of between £200,000 - £300,000 is predicted.

The ESFA have issued guidance on reserve levels:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-financial-management-good-practice-guides/academy-trust-reserves#:~:text=ESFA%20does%20not%20require%20any,reserves%20are%20used%20in%20ways>

The ESFA does not require any specific level of reserves (either percentage or monetary amount) – although trust reserves should not be in deficit – as trustees are best placed to decide on the trust’s priorities and are responsible for assessing the trust’s individual circumstances to ensure that reserves are used in ways that deliver best for pupils.

The level of reserves a trust decides to hold is likely to depend on the number, type, and size of the academies within the trust, and how their needs are reflected in the trust’s estates strategy, future plans, and upcoming risks or opportunities. Around 90% of trusts hold reserves of at least 5% of total income and many choose to hold around one month’s salary costs or expenditure as a minimum to protect cashflow (around 6-8% of income), but some trusts may decide to maintain reserves below this level, such as larger trusts or trusts without significant investment or growth plans.

The accounts are showing £1.6 million available revenue; however, this is reduced to approximately £900,000 partly due to the capital build.

Two years ago, the pension deficit for non-teaching staff showed a liability of £5.7million, last year this disappeared and has subsequently remained absent for this year.

The consolidated management information report shows a detailed breakdown of income and expenditure, with overall income up by £3 million from last year of which £2 million is capital income. Expenditure overall is up by £400,000 (excluding the capital build) and staff costs are up by £500,000.

Question: Why is there a difference in the average salary cost between Catmose and Harington staff?

The workforce census also shows the same data. It was acknowledged that it is difficult to apportion the cost of staff between the two schools. Mark Jackson commented that some trusts have decided to pool their funding and not to separate staffing costs for the schools in the trust. It was agreed that work will be done to improve and rationalise the accounting codes in order to review the performance of the Trust, rather than the percentage of time that teachers spend in each school. Mark Jackson agreed next year it would be helpful to exclude the columns on the accounts for each individual school. It would also be useful to compare staffing costs in next year’s accounts against 2022 and 2023.

Annual report and accounts

Mark Jackson advised that the ESFA have instigated an increased focus on estate management and this is referenced in the annual report and accounts. This is to ensure schools do not make short term decisions. Page 22 includes the official summary of

the income and expenditure, which is higher than in previous years due to the capital grants. Fixed assets are up from last year due to the capital build project. Due to the volume of trips and visits, debtors have also increased from previous years. The bank balance is reduced from last year due to the capital build.

Audit Findings Report

The report is clean with no issues identified. Emma Dilks was thanked by trustees for her work on the audit, along with colleagues in the finance team and wider teams. Stuart Williams also acknowledged the exemplary work of those involved with the capital build, it was managed extraordinarily well, with no changes to the design and delivered on time within the budget.

6. Governance Professional

Emma Gautrey's term of office as a governor on the Catmose College local governing body had come to an end. Emma was willing to stand for another 4-year term as a governor, including vice chair of the Catmose College local governing body and named safeguarding governor. Trustees approved this appointment. Emma, had however, decided to resign from her position as trustee with effect from 7 December 2023. In her role as trustee, Emma had been chair of the Resources committee. It was unanimously agreed that Guy Magrath will take on this position with effect from the meeting in February 2024 and Andrew Cross will be the vice chair of the Resources committee.

With regards to the Audit, Scrutiny and Risk Assessment committee which Emma Gautrey was part of, this will now consist of Clive Norgaard Morton (Chair), Andrew Holt, Robert Guthrie and Guy Magrath.

There is currently a vacancy for a Member and conversations were taking place with Sarah Sykes to look to fulfil this position.

It was acknowledged that there are current vacancies for trustees following the resignation of Sam Hearth earlier in the year and Emma Gautrey. Those interested in state education with a broad set of expertise in business, finance or law would be beneficial to the Trust.

7. Federation Transformation Plan

The Federation Transformation Plan was presented to trustees which focuses on resources, including: governance, finance, IT, catering, site and admin.

Stuart Williams explained that the biggest financial implication this year is the IT budget, with approximately £100,000 needing to be spent. £33,000 had been allocated in the budget, therefore this will be a capital expenditure which will need to be taken out of reserves. The IT team are skilled in either repairing or replacing equipment and they keep on top of wear of tear; however, further investment was required.

Question: Does this expenditure include the new MIS system?

This is already accounted for in the budget over 3 years.

Trustees recognised the need to invest and approved the IT budget.

Catering prices will increase in January to keep the provision in an even place. The catering team deliver a good quality service, whilst also accommodating student growth.

The site team have been instrumental with the progression of the capital programme, including moving the finance team into the new building from Central Services and the refurbishment of the old sports hall. The surveys have been very positive, with the exception of the toilets which is a national issue in schools and not a fault of the site team. This year the site team will focus on maintenance.

Governance is in a good place with each of the local governing bodies holding a governors' day, regular scrutiny panels and governor visits. The trust carried out a self-review of governance and the audit and scrutiny risk assessment committee meet three times a year with topics relating to the Trust Transformation Plan.

The admin team had strong survey outcomes and will fully embed the new management information system during the new academic year. The finance and HR teams are also in a good place.

Trustees approved the 2023/2024 Federation Transformation Plan, which will be added to the website.

8. Principal's Update

Stuart Williams presented the recently published College performance data: [Secondary - Catmose College - Compare school and college performance data in England - GOV.UK \(compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/Secondary-Catmose-College-Compare-school-and-college-performance-data-in-England)

The data shows that the results were significantly above average. History results were in the top 20% in the country, with art and music also being very strong. The data shows that the College is below the national for non-free school meals, however, this should increase in next year's results as this is a priority.

9. Head of Catmose Primary Update

Kelly Jackson explained that she had shared the recent published results with the Catmose Primary local governing body, these were positive with good progress seen from the previous year. Children have enjoyed the nativity performances and things are very settled.

10. Head of Harington School Update

Oliver Teasel advised that the modern foreign languages exchange trip from Paris had been a success. Taster sessions had been held for current Year 11 students which had been well attended and over 400 people had attended the Open Evening which has resulted in a large number of applications for September 2024.

Students have enjoyed the extracurricular activities, such as a trip to Melton cinema, involvement with the charities committee, with calendars being distributed, and creating the eco garden.

Discussions are taking place as to the whether it is viable to offer Design & Technology, German and Music A level next year.

Harington School had instigated an external safeguarding review, the recommendations had been minor adjustments. Governors had also been invited to a day at the school, which reinforced the view that the culture is phenomenal which is credit to all of the staff.

11.Policies

The below policies were ratified by trustees; details of amendments were shared prior to the meeting.

- Federation Adoption Policy
- Federation Maternity Policy
- Federation Paternity Policy
- Federation Safer Code of Conduct Policy – connected to safeguarding review
- Federation Premises Management Policy

12.A.O.B

There was no further business.

Date of next meeting

Trust meeting - Thursday 8 February 2024, 8.15am