



MINUTES OF THE FEDERATION MEMBERS' MEETING

Thursday 4 July 2024, 3.00pm
The Gallery

Present

Laurence Howard, Andrew Holt, Rob Mulvey, Judith Gilboy via Teams, Sarah Sykes

In Attendance

Clive Norgaard Morton, Oliver Teasel (Head of School, Harington), Kelly Jackson (Head of School, Catmose Primary), Chris Wilson (Chief Finance Officer), Stuart Williams (Principal, Catmose College), Sheryl Wilson (Governance Professional).

1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence

Andrew Holt welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. This was Sarah Sykes' first meeting as a Member.

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 6 July 2023

The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising from previous minutes

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

5. Clerk's Business

The meeting dates for the new academic year were shared with Members.

6. Principal's Report – Catmose College

Stuart Williams gave a summary of the past year of life at the College. GCSE results in 2023 were strong with students achieving on average $\frac{1}{2}$ grade higher in subjects compared to national figures. There has been a strong focus on the Free School Meal first strategy which will also continue to be a focus next year.

The student council had created a board with great things about Catmose, these included good food, freedom at lunch and break times, extracurricular activities and trips and visits.

The College was inspected by Ofsted in March 2024 and achieved an Outstanding grading in all categories, which was a phenomenal achievement with the College remaining one of the few state schools to have remained Outstanding.

Trustees and governors provide strong support and challenge to school leaders. They value the staff and prioritise their well-being. Staff are very well supported to develop expertise and manage their workload. They are proud to work at this school.

Teaching across the Trust remains strong, the methodology of lesson observations and judgements has changed with healthier accountability and where exemplary best practice is seen, this is shared across the organisation.

In terms of behaviour, post Covid there has been a change in a minority of students, with the key change being refusal. As a result, this year there have been 4 permanent exclusions and 47 suspensions to date. SEND issues post Covid have also increased with funding for support being constrained. A number of staff have been trained to deliver social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) literacy and the pastoral and attendance teams have been extended.

Student attendance is currently at 93%, pre covid this was 96% and nationally attendance figures are 90%. Bespoke work is carried with individual families to help their children attend school.

Question: This is all a huge challenge, what support are staff given to help students?
Staffing is stretched, however more support has been put into the pastoral team which in turn will support teaching staff. Timetables are however very tight and at capacity. Senior staff always consider the impact on workload for staff when they are asked to do something. Staff attendance across the Federation is very good and wellbeing activities and social events are offered, including support for a welfare package and this year the Federation has launched a tax efficient salary sacrifice scheme for electric and hybrid vehicles.

Question: Is the College still managing students who are passing out?
This is no longer the case.

7. Head of School Report – Harington School

Oliver Teasel reported that there are 327 students on roll, with 333 applications for September 2024, induction days have been well received. A level results have remained strong and have improved since Covid. Attendance has been at 94% for the majority of 2023/24, with no permanent exclusions and only a small number of suspensions.

Students are also involved in extracurricular activities including the Christmas Concert, racing a green power car at Blyton Park and a ski trip and trip to Malaysia. Priorities next year include:

- Improving the Academic Enrichment Programme by introducing 3 accredited leadership courses: Sports Leaders Award (Level 3), Dance Leaders Award (Level 3) and Eco Leaders Award.
- Expand the current range of Wellbeing Activities on a Friday afternoon and include more student led activities.
- Explore how the school could secure the funding for an extension to the Harington building, thus allowing us to take more students in the future.

Question: Are governors ready for a potential Ofsted visit next year?

The agenda has already been started.

Question: Is there any debating teams at Harington?

When students first arrive, they have the opportunity of completing the Harington Challenge whereby they have to prepare a 1000-word paper, they present this to the class in the first term and the winners are entered into a house competition. There is also a student led Friday debate club.

Question: Is information sent sporadically to the founders of Harington School to share the ongoing progress of the school?

This is a good idea and if contacts are known, this can be done.

8. Head of School Report – Catmose Primary

The School is in a good place with the Key Stage 2 outcomes due to be published next year. Indicators show that this is in line with the national average. The attendance figure is at 97% and the school is full with only one spare place in Year 1.

There are very few numbers of pupils who are on a pupil support plan, and if there is, there is a significant amount of support for that child. Pupils have the opportunity of completing an activity passport and once completed, they can earn a bronze, silver or gold badge which is presented in the weekly celebration assembly. Wider opportunities include the dance show, talent show, productions, cross country events, inter-school competitions and trips and visits. Priorities for next year include:

- Focus upon supporting and challenging greater depth pupils (GDS) to achieve and make further progress.
- Focus upon supporting vulnerable pupils – free school meals (FSM), service children and looked after pupils.
- Continue to develop the curriculum – foundation subjects.

9. HR Report

Staff attendance across the Federation is strong, with an overall attendance rate of 98%; this figure includes all absences that aren't disability-related, for example, sickness absence, hospital admission, and dependants' leave.

There have been 17 staff leavers this year – 10 teachers and 7 support staff. Total staff turnover rate is 8.1%.

Teachers – 9.8% - this is significantly lower than the national average of 16.9%.

<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/big-mats-have-highest-teacher-turnover-epi-finds/>.

Support staff – 6.4%

10. Finance Report

An in-year deficit of £47k is forecast for this academic year, although with some budgets not expected to be fully utilised, a break-even position could be achieved by 31 August 2024.

The year started with significant reserves which had been boosted by capital grants received during the 2022/2023 financial year, and not fully spent in the year. These grants were received for the refurbishment of the old sports hall, and to build the new Science, Technology and Engineering block. Payments of £769,749 will have been made in this accounting period and reserves are likely to reduce to £986k. (If we deliver a £47k deficit or £1,033k if we break even) as a result. This remains a healthy position.

The new building has enabled the College to grow by 30 additional students each year with our Published Admissions Number (PAN) at 240. Funding for the additional 30 students (circa £150k) is lagged by a year, which does put pressure on budgets until we are full.

Harington School remains oversubscribed, with 327 students on roll and there is strong demand for places in September 2024. Catmose Primary is also full, whereas other primary schools are seeing a decline in pupil numbers.

Reserves of between £986k and £1,033k depending on the final months of this academic year are forecasted for the next. This may also increase depending on the dilapidation payment agreed with Rutland County Council in respect of the lease they currently have on our sports hall.

FORECAST FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS

With the main expenses of the Federation being salaries, it is not yet known what the pay increases for teachers or support staff will be. Teachers' pay rises tend to be funded by a separate grant if they exceed the 1.9% rise in the General Annual Grant received, historically no further funding has been received for increases in support staff salaries, which ranged from 2.5% to 9.71% last year.

The Local Government Association have reported that a 'full and final' pay offer to support staff has been made. The offer is £1,290 per pay point (FTE) which has been calculated to be around 5% on average and when on-costs are included, amounts to £140k extra per annum. There has been no response from the unions involved (although their initial request was for a £3000 or 10% increase in all pay points (whichever was the greater), and a reduction in working hours of 2 hours per week.

The Federation will lose circa £50k per annum of income from Rutland County Council once the lease of the sports centre is released.

Lagged funding for the increase in students at the College costs approximately £150k per annum.

An increase in the budget for teaching staff has been included over the next 3 years, as additional teaching staff will be required due to the increase in student numbers.

When all of these factors are considered, a deficit of circa £137k for the next 3 years has been forecasted. Chris Wilson has erred on the side of caution, using an inflation figure of 4% each year (OBR forecast between 2.5% & 3%), and support staff pay to increase by 5% each year, which is unlikely.

The finance team are currently in the process of adopting the Department of Education's (DofE) 'Chart of account codes' which are standard codes used by the DofE and allows the automation of many returns in the future. This will cause some disruption to the ordering system at the start of the next academic year, but once in place will allow for more up to date financial systems and electronic ordering to be introduced.

POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS

Catmose College Sports Hall

Rutland County Council would like the Federation to release the lease of the sports hall, as they are no longer willing to subsidise community sports. Negotiations are currently taking place.

Pupil numbers

Pupil numbers are expected to fall in primary school aged children over the next 5 years, and numbers for secondary are expected to stay similar over the period.

Catmose Primary is a feeder school for the College and so demand for places does not appear to be an issue. Other primaries in the area that feed into the College are seeing declining numbers and this should be monitored, however, with the College awarded an Outstanding Ofsted rating recently, it is expected that demand for places will remain strong. The primary is currently full and projecting being full next year also.

Utility Costs

These soared in 2022/2023 as demand increased worldwide as we came out of Covid restrictions, and then the war in Ukraine. We entered into a fixed contract in September 2022 to provide gas and power, at a time when prices were at their peak. In September 2023 prices had reduced considerably and we were able to fix our costs at cheaper rates. Our costs reduced from £726k per annum in 2022/23 to an estimated £555k per annum this year. To avoid being caught in this position again, we have entered into a 3-year 'cap and collar' agreement which begins in October 2024, where utilities are purchased for us in advance when the market is cheap. We are anticipating that this will save us a further £60k per annum.

Buses

Although the majority of pupils live close to Catmose and Harington, we provide a Federation bus service for students who are travelling from the Uppingham, Stamford and Melton Mowbray area. Bus prices have increased over the last few years and cost £1,100 per student. It is becoming increasingly difficult to fill the buses and this year

we will make a loss of circa £22k, as parents find other ways to transport children to school.

The increase in bus prices also impacts on the cost of school trips, and we are careful to ensure that these are priced affordably so that as many children as possible can take part.

Recruitment of staff

Staff recruitment remains difficult, particularly in subjects such as maths and science and this remains a concern not only for the Federation but nationally also.

11.A.O.B

Members commented that they were extremely proud to be associated with the 3 schools and well done to all staff involved for another successful year.

All members were invited to attend one of the local governing body meetings at 5pm.

12.Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 3 July 2025 at 3pm