



MINUTES OF THE FEDERATION RESOURCES TRUST MEETING

Thursday 26 March 2026, 9.15am
The Gallery

PRESENT

Andrew Cross (Vice Chair), Rob Guthrie, Andrew Holt, Guy Magrath (Chair), Clive Norgaard Morton, Stuart Williams (Executive Principal)

IN ATTENDANCE

Oliver Teasel (Head of Harington School), Chris Wilson (Chief Finance Officer), Sheryl Wilson (Governance Professional).

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Guy Magrath welcomed attendees. Apologies were received and accepted from Alex Mould and Mark Tinkler.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND PECUNIARY INTEREST

No personal or pecuniary interests were declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from Thursday 5 February 2026 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee on Sustainability from Thursday 5 February 2026 were signed as a true and accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. FINANCE REPORT

The Federation is now at the mid-point of the financial year, and while the expected year-end position is becoming clearer, a number of uncertainties remain for the Federation.

As at the end of February 2026, the forecast shows an in-year deficit of £6k. This position includes the following planned capital and major expenditure:

- £30k for Orangery flooring
- £50k for IT investment
- £60k for a new boiler at Catmose Primary

The boiler cost has been included at this stage, although the outcome of the CIF bid to fund this will not be known until May 2026.

Staff salary costs are currently running slightly below budget, and the Pay Review (PR) process now reflects all updated salaries. In addition, the reduction in employers' pension contributions for support staff from 23.1% to 14.6%, effective from April 2026 is expected

to generate further savings. As a result, total staff costs are now forecast to track below budget for the remainder of the year, delivering savings of approximately £80k in the second half of the financial year.

SEN income is also performing better than anticipated, with an additional £100k now expected above budget. However, premises costs are currently exceeding budget, with repairs and maintenance costs tracking £50k higher than planned.

There is also ongoing uncertainty regarding the Pupil Number Adjustment (PNA) payment. The budget assumes receipt of £137k, but confirmation from the Department for Education will not be received until mid-May. Should this funding not be awarded, there would be a negative impact on the overall financial position.

Overall, the financial position is encouraging at this stage. The additional SEN income and reduced support staff pension costs are offsetting increased premises expenditure and provide resilience against the potential loss of the PNA funding. We will continue to monitor these areas closely as further information becomes available.

Question: Is there protection for utility costs rising?

The electricity and gas bills are capped at £220K and £120K respectively, and these figures are included in the budget.

Question: Is this the final year for the lagged funding?

Yes

Question: On the Catmose Primary figures, curriculum material is at £35K, although budgeted £16K.

This is due to teams making orders at the beginning of the academic year.

Observation: The cost of water is five times more than budgeted for Catmose Primary.

A contract for the water supply has just been reviewed and agreed. The CFO will however look at the split between the three schools to ensure the figures are correct.

Question: What is the increase in maintenance costs for?

The boiler costs at Catmose Primary can be attributed for some of the extra costs as work was needed to be done to ensure the boiler continued to work over the winter, pending replacement.

6. EXTERNAL AUDIT TENDER

The Academy Trust Handbook requires academy trusts to tender their external audit at least every five years. In line with this requirement, the Trust has commenced a competitive tender for the appointment of external auditors for the next audit cycle.

Letters inviting expressions of interest were issued on 11 February 2026 to 6 audit firms who were selected based on relevant sector experience, scale, and capacity to deliver academy trust audit services. Three companies responded with a bid. The next step will be for the CFO to provide an evaluation summary to Trustees and Members for a final decision to be made.

7. RISK REGISTER – FINANCIAL BENCHMARKING

Trustees received and discussed the Federation's DfE financial benchmarking analysis, noting that benchmarking is most meaningful when interpreted alongside accounting codes and the impact of apportionment. The review was undertaken at Federation level, as single-academy comparisons were considered unreliable. The Federation was identified as relatively small compared with peer trusts, with reserves currently at £970k (approximately 9% of income) and an in-year balance of £13k, reflecting a period of financial pressure following recent capital projects. Trustees noted that reserves have been shrinking but are expected to stabilise as lagged funding feeds through. Staffing remains the largest area of expenditure at around 82%, which is in line with sector expectations, and the overall financial position was considered understood and appropriately managed.

The benchmarking demonstrated that the Federation is highly efficient in staffing, with one of the highest spends per pupil once apportionment distortions are taken into account. Trustees noted that deliberate decisions have been made to tightly control staffing while investing proportionately more in learning resources and enrichment, contributing to strong outcomes, breadth of offer and continued parental demand. Apparent high-risk areas identified by the DfE, including catering, premises and utilities, were discussed and recognised as being influenced by gross rather than net measures, structural cost pressures and building design. When costs and outcomes were considered together, Trustees agreed the Federation represents good value for money and that the benchmarking exercise provided a reassuring health check, confirming that the Trust is operating efficiently and delivering strong outcomes within a challenging financial context.

8. STAFFING UPDATE

Current vacancies include:

- Cleaner
- Teacher of Art
- Teacher of English

Recent appointments have included: exam invigilators, science technician and two internal curriculum project leads for English.

Trustees agreed that if appropriate, a responsibility point could be split between two internal candidates, which will help with staff retention.

9. A.O.B

- Staff wellbeing event – Trustees agreed to allocate £2000 towards the event in July.
- Cyber resilience written update provided to Trustees.
- Topic for Audit and Risk committee - Thursday 14 May – Catering.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Resources - Thursday 14 May 2026, 9.15am
- Audit and Risk Committee Thursday 14 May 2026 (Catering)