**Present**

CHAIR: Eric De Regnaucourt, (EdR)

Headteachers: Paul Lufkin (PL), Rosie Williamson, (RW)

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| Steve Coventry (SC)Natasha Gourlay (NG)[[1]](#footnote-1)Georgia Harris (GH)Brent Madore (BM)Emeka Okorocha (EO)[[2]](#footnote-2)David Pack (DP)[[3]](#footnote-3) | Meghan Peatey (MP)Martin Pfutzner (MP)Raj Sood (RS)Chris Tregilgas (CT)Milly Williams (MW) |

**In attendance (\* denotes Associate Member)**

Steve Cleary, Clerk (SAC)

Lisa Kingsbury (LK) (\*)

Dan Wilson (DW), School Business Manager (WWPS)

*The features of effective governance from the competency framework: -*

*Strategic Leadership, Accountability, People, Structures, Compliance, Evaluation*

*All original papers are available on the LGFL MyUSO drive.*

1. **GOVERNANCE**

The meeting began at 19:00 and was deemed to be quorate. Governors confirmed that they had received and read papers received from the schools in advance.

Brent Madore was welcomed to the meeting as a prospective co-opted governor and all present introduced themselves. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint BM as a co-opted governor for a four-year period.

Apologies were received and consented to from Katy Gandon (KG).

In accordance with the Education (School Government) Regulations, governors were invited to declare any interest they might have in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

Governors **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the full governing body held on 21 March 2023 and publish on the website.

Governors were thanked for their attendance at the SATS examinations as well as staff for their work during a shortened week due to the coronation.

1. **SCHOOL BUSINESS FOCUS**

**West Wimbledon**

RW reported on the finance, staffing and premise issues at WWPS as follows:

* There have been no significant changes in contractors although in the light of ongoing changes within the school and the continuing drive for value for money, some changes have been made in contracts such as reduced cleaning and heating.PPA is reducing in line with staff reductions and the use of specialist teachers is to be reviewed.
* The year-end balance stands at - £243,197 (9.48% of adjusted budget share). The school has planned £78,221 to support the deficit next year with an effective reserve of £164,977 (6.43%). The school will still be running at a significant deficit across the next two years at least but has done enough that there is not an immediate concern despite funding levels remaining uncertain for the foreseeable future. Governors expressed the view that there was some benefit in the school having had to face the need for restructuring earlier as a result of moving to one form entry.

The school has reviewed the year end budget monitoring reports which contain detailed statements of income and expenditure and noted significant variations as follows:

* I01 – ARP funding – when the budget was set, assumptions were conservative and Merton paid the higher end of what was considered. This year, double checking with Merton confirms that the figure provided is correct.
* I03 – SEN Funding – assumptions were overly optimistic on budget setting. The focus of Merton SEND is on the ‘ordinarily available provision’ within the LA’s safety valve strategy. Alongside stretched external professional services, EHCPs are now harder to secure and we will be recommending a change of placement for the majority of the EHCP applications currently in progress and will therefore receive no funding ourselves. . There is an enhanced emphasis on schools providing resources within existing provision. This year, the school is confident that assumptions and forecasts are accurate.
* E01-06 – Unfunded pay rises pushed up staff costs unexpectedly, although this has been alleviated to some extent by the appointment of lower graded staff and maternity leave. In response to a governor question (Q) over the likelihood of further unfunded pay rises, the Headteacher responded that there is a significant degree of uncertainty over the government’s intentions on this. The school has budgeted for a 3 per cent increase in pay costs
* E19 – The variance is largely covered by income in i08B (£3000 from Merton for classroom furniture) + £9000 in I13 (FOWW Donation to help fund library refurbishment)
* E25 – overspend relates to vouchers for Free School Meals refunded by Merton into I18
* E26 – Treetops agency 1-2-1’s £32,000 refunded into i13
* E27 – OT services are funded by Merton - we had budgeted to pay £20000.
* E28 – Internal Clubs provision paid via payroll and added to E01 and E03 but budgeted for in E28.

The school is delighted to report that it has achieved the requisite staffing reduction, entirely through voluntary means. A number of support staff have taken voluntary redundancy and a further teacher and member of support staff are going to work in Treetops from September 2023. The school has agreed with the local authority to open a sixth Treetops’ class in September 2023 and a seventh during the course of the next academic year. Funding for the seventh class has been front loaded to allow capacity to train new staff effectively and timely. The local authority has appointed a new ARP co-ordinator who will be supporting development and despite two teachers leaving, recruitment has been successful and the school has secured some higher end teachers coming into Treetops. Treetops Phase leader recruitment is underway, two substantive mainstream phase leader posts are in place and curriculum synergy has been improved. The SLT is clear that there is going to be more teaching commitment for them in the context of a one form entry school.

The budget for 2023/24 was discussed and the following key points were highlighted:

* The initial three year plan has been amended to reflect immediate risks around school finances;
* It remains quite volatile around uncertainty around pay settlements and inflation. The original plan to have large deficits and return to a surplus in year three is no longer workable, despite securing some savings in site maintenance.
* Purchasing is on a really low level, the school is looking to increase lettings, reduce admin costs and increase other sources of income through areas such as offering expertise to other schools in the ARP network. The use of agencies for staff cover is to be reduced and will be covered more by non-class based SLT.
* Further restructures are envisaged around the work undertaken by the senior leadership team, SENCO and head of base.
* The school is in the process of reducing its mainstream phase leader structure from three to two from September 2023. We are also recruiting a temporary Curriculum lead to help promote an inclusive curriculum across mainstream and Treetops and to support our teachers as we adapt to working as a one form entry school.
* The amount of PPA which is delivered by specialist teachers during the next academic year will be reduced. This is balanced by the reduction of the number of teachers and by an increase in teaching from SLT.

Actions taken already include:

* Staff restructure – partially completed but with adequate reductions agreed to secure approximately £225,000 savings in 23/24 and feeding through the following years.
* Reductions in non-pay budgets to minimal levels – i.e. resources from planned £30k to £20k, Building maintenance £60k to £40k, IT £10k to £7k
* Increased lettings and will continue to target further increases - 2018/19 lettings income was £19k this year we expect to take £28k
* Parents now receive a request for voluntary contribution to school funds of £20 per term with the option to pay more. (About £8k per annum)
* Admin costs in 20/21 = £172615 - Admin 22/23 predicted £163896 (including the extra £9353 unfunded pay rise and £8559 of lunch duty cover provided from the Admin budget) - comparing like with like and ignoring the pay rise it would be £145984 - a 15.4% decrease. Achieved by reducing staff costs and ceasing to pay for finance consultant support for Business Manager.
* Relationship with Keep Kids Connected has delivered 20 refurbed Chromebooks to pupils, 28 brand new chrome books for the school (which will become 1 of our class laptop sets) saving the school around £4500 and we have received 20 widescreen monitors which have been replacing our older one's as they fail saving around £1000
* Reduced usage of agency cover for absence – Non classroom based SLT teaching, merging classes, use of TAs to cover teacher absence.

Governors requested that future reports be in Excel rather than PDF format.

Key aspects of the asset management plan and associated works were outlined as follows:

Planned Capital this summer:

* Full refurbishment of the KS1 and KS2 toilets to the same high standards as the Early Years toilets refurbished last year.
* Full site drainage. Survey to take place during half term and subsequent works identified as necessary to ensure water is flowing away from the site properly.
* Final stage of Treetops development including external play area.

Future requirements:

* Car Park resurfacing – on plan for this year originally but pushed back by Merton for budget reasons. This is disappointing considering they will likely need to patch areas from the drainage works.
* Replacing pipework within building – significant amounts of pipework are corroding and restricting flow meaning our Legionella risk report is now raising concerns. This would be major disruption.

**Wimbledon Park**

The full year financial outcome was in line with the most recent January monthly monitoring shared at the Governors meeting March 2023 and over £40,000 ahead of budget. The biggest positive variance was in school generated income being higher than budget. However, this out-turn still represents a significant in-year revenue deficit of -£116,403.

The year end out-turn was slightly better than planned mainly as a result of school generated income, although it was a difficult year in which a large amount of reserves were used up. The year end reserves stand at £300,000. It is not envisaged that the budget will balance within three years, although variances are small enough to be able to be managed within the £300,000 pounds of reserves. It is intended that reserves will be used to essentially manage through until there's a period of greater predictability and stability.

The schools’ funding picture continues to be quite dynamic in the context of wage and cost inflation, alongside public sector finance constraints. Last year, the government had just announced supplementary funding to schools outside of the main school grant, but subsequently, wage settlements for both teachers and support staff were higher than expected and significantly in excess of the supplementary funding. This supplementary funding has now been included within the increases in the core school grants. Pupil premium funding rates have increased by 5% also this year.

Whilst there has been a significant increase in schools funding over the past 18 months, this is being immediately ‘swallowed’ up in inflationary cost pressures. The basic wage settlement for teachers is expected to be at least 5% this year (the government’s calculation was that the 4.5% offer rejected by unions should have been affordable within the new funding). It is important to note that headline teacher wage settlements are compounded by scale point moves, particularly for teachers on the main pay scale and promotions.

Support staff pay for 2023 is again not yet agreed but staff have been offered a flat increase of £1,925 (which has not yet been accepted by staff and unions). Because most support staff are among the lowest pay grades, this offer equates to nearly 10% (and means that pay for these lowest grades will have increased by around 20% since April 2021.

As a result of the foregoing and uncertainty over future funding, the school remains in a complex financial picture with large percentage changes in both income and costs happening, all of which are out of the school’s control. The financial modelling is that WPPS’s financial position is of a persistent in-year revenue deficit, somewhat offset by increasing school generated income, minimising costs and a minimal capital programme.

Finances were also impacted by the fall in pupil rolls during Covid, although numbers are slowly rising again which gives some more flexibility. It is expected that numbers are going to be higher at the October census and that there will consequently be a significant revenue increase. Further revenue increases are expected from voluntary and club funding.

Overall cost increases are in line or reduced from previous years other than where there are particular inflationary pressures.

In response to a governor question (**Q**) over the level of capital works and reserves, the Headteacher commented that a significant proportion of capital expenditure and investment in premises from 2019-20 had been taken from reserves which had fallen from around £750,000. In respect of capital projects, these have been scaled back around the single unit aircon project, so that instead of 18, the school is doing 6. The school is trying to engage more robustly with Merton’s sustainability team around cooling solutions

The most significant variance in budget centres on staffing costs. Staff absence rates have been double the levels which they have been historically and the school believes in hindsight that it has overcommitted to some professional development opportunities.

The Mayor of London is funding for free meals for all children for one year, not just those in EYFS and early years. WPPS estimates that this will increase the number of meals served by 50 per cent.

The school sector as a whole is a collection of subcritical small scale businesses with duplicated staff. If schools act at scale across, particularly leadership roles, then costs can be reduced in individual schools. It is likely that over the next five years, financial pressures are going to drive some consolidation to larger schools groups although there would be a need to ensure that there is not a negative impact on education or parental perception of the school which drives admissions and retention. Core teacher costs as a percentage of the school's total costs are lower now than they were 10 years ago although the average teacher cost is very significant.

The following governor questions were asked:

* *Is there scope to make the nursery a full day one and what would be the impact on finances?* There is potential and a working party for headteachers is currently looking at nursery admissions because the model of sessional nursery places such as three hours, five days a week, doesn't meet the childcare market in London. Whilst demand is still high, is it mainly in the private and voluntary sector for childcare. All schools are facing reduced demand and capacity. The working party needs to finish its process so that the school can go down the route of making the nursery sustainable and meeting the demand through making it a daycare nursery, where grant funding is combine with charging. This would also alter the employment model. Current demand is similar to the previous year. Merton are evaluating options whilst recognising at the moment, maintained schools don't have the flexibilities to be able to do something, which is more market and demand led.
* *Is there a limit to how much of reserve a school can have at any given time?* A school can only have an uncommitted reserve of 8 per cent, but if it goes over this figure, it could simply commit the reserve to meeting the future financial needs of the school, although there is a risk that at some indeterminate point, Merton could choose to aggregate all the reserves in order to meet wider needs cost. Voluntary funds are not affected in this way although they cannot be used to directly employ staff.

Governors **RESOLVED** to:

* Adopt the one year and three year budgets for each school;
* Approve the authorisation of expenditures over £20,000.
* Note variances outlined in each school’s report.
* Request PL and RW to circulate contract comparisons between the current year and 2022-23. **ACTION: PL/RW**
* Note the intended examination of contracts by each school to obtain best value.
1. **PARENT SURVEY (WWPS)**

The WWPS parents survey has been undertaken and had a 34 per cent return rate. The mood in the school is indicated as positive and the following results were reported:

* My child feels safe at this school - 96%
* My child can take part in clubs and activities at this school - 95%
* I would recommend this school to another parent - 93%
* My child is happy at this school - 93%
* The school makes sure its pupils are well behaved - 93%
* The school supports my child’s wider personal development - 93%
* The areas which brought up the least amount of satisfaction are aligned with some of the school’s development ideas for the next academic year;
* The school makes me aware of what my child will learn during the year - 82%
* We have plans to adapt the way we share curriculum information beyond publishing it on the website. Moving forward we are going to adapt the presentation of our curriculum to parents and will directly send curriculum maps to parents via parentmail.
* The school has high expectations for my child - 84%. This is something which is going to be addressed during a refresh of the school’s vision with achievement at the core of the ‘we work hard’ value.
* Only 28 parents of children with SEND returned the survey. Of these, 5 parents felt the school does not give them the support they need to succeed although the school is able to pinpoint the reasons for these comments around complexities in applications.

There is some ambiguity over the question regarding bullying. We have worked with the children regarding what ‘bullying’ actually means and there may well still be a misunderstanding both amongst the children and parents about the difference between bullying and unkindness. There have been very low incidences of what we would categorise as bullying this year, however, we continue to manage the poor behaviour choices of a few pupils involving external agencies when necessary.

Of the 22 written comments in the survey, 14 are very positive and will be shared with the members of staff mentioned. Of the more negative comments, 2 relate to issues we were already aware of and now dealt with. Two relate to the lunchtime service and one is about how Curriculum information is shared. One comment is requesting more information about how children are delivered to their after-school club and two relate to how a specific teacher is engaging with their child. These issues will be addressed to parents in a newsletter in the coming weeks.

1. **FEDERATION AND PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

The Chair updated governors on discussions with the local authority regarding de-federation and it was noted that they are sceptical over the planned timing of the defederation with effect from 1 September. There is a need to put in place governing boards from this date and governors were requested to indicate which particular boards they would wish to serve on from the commencement of the newly constituted governing boards by 5 June. As an interim measure, one or two governors could sit on both boards whilst staff and parent governors are elected. Those present agreed that it would be beneficial to run a circle model at both schools. The view was expressed that it would be helpful to start the search for new governors at least on a shadow basis, so that boards could form in September. PL is to produce a timeline based on a decision being made on 11 July followed by each governing board setting dates and activities for 2023/24. The Chair reported that as a local authority governor he might not automatically be reselected for nomination following the end of his term at the end of August. Governors requested the Chair to make it clear that the defederated boards would need two local authority governors to cover each of them. **ACTION: EdR**

1. **CLOSING BUSINESS**

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| **Action Points arising from 2022-23 meetings:** |
| ***No.*** | ***Action*** | ***By*** | ***When*** | ***Status*** | ***Note*** |
| 1 | Speak to Merton regarding the process that needs to be followed for appointment of substantive Headteacher at West Wimbledon.  | Chair | - | COMPLETE |  |
| 2 | Request circulation of contract comparisons between the current year and 2022-23.  | PL, RW | - | NEW |  |
| 3 | Make it clear that the defederated boards would need two local authority governors to cover each of them.  | EdR | - | NEW |  |

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11 July – 10am – Curriculum focus with presentation by the Head of the Base. WPPS.

***Meetings are scheduled to last for a maximum of 2 hours.***

The meeting closed at 20:55.

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Print Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Zoom [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Zoom [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Zoom [↑](#footnote-ref-3)