**Broughton Jewish Cassel Fox Primary**

**Finance and Premises Committee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**School: Broughton Jewish Cassel Fox Primary School**

**Quorum**: **3 + Principal (met)**

**Chair: Izzi Rosenberg**

**Clerk: Frances Bennett**

**Date of Meeting: 27 March 2025**

**Venue: Broughton Jewish Cassel Fox Primary School**

**Attendance**

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| **Name** | **Governor Type** | **Term of Office Expiry Date** | **Present (P)**  **Apologies (Ap)**  **Absent (A)** |
| David Bondt | Foundation | 31.07.27 | P |
| Izzi Rosenberg - chair | Foundation | 29.07.25 | P |
| Rabbi Yehuda Pearlman | Principal | Ex-officio | P |
| Dani Mechlowitz\* | Foundation | 29.07.25 | P |
| Leo Lachs | Co-opted | 16.12.28 | P |
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| David Mechlowitz | Foundation | 29.07.25 | Ap |
| Steven Graff | Foundation | 06.06.28 | Ap |

*\* joined the meeting later - see item 5*

**Others present**

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| **Name** | **Role** |
| Rachel Baker | School Business Manager (SBM) |
| Nicola Taylor (Deputy Headteacher) | Staff Governor |
| Helen Green | Chief Finance Officer (CFO) |
| Michael Whitehead | External Business Support Consultant |
| Frances Bennett | Clerk, One Education |
| Michael Krebs\* | Co-opted governor |

*\*joined the meeting later – see item 5*

**Agenda Items**

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| **1** | **Welcome and Apologies** |
| Apologies were received and accepted from David Mechlowitz and Steven Graf. | |

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| **2** | **Verbal declaration of interests and changes to annual declarations** |
| There were no declared interests relating to the agenda or changes to annual declarations. | |

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| **3** | **Notification of confidential items or items for AOB** |
| There were no notifications under this item. | |

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| **4** | **Minutes of last meeting 17.12.24 and matters arising** | | |
| The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17.12.2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. A copy was signed on GovernorHub.  Matters arising  The year accounts should be noted and not approved as there was a cumulative deficit position. This is not a regulatory requirement. It is best practice. It was also noted that a three year plan has been put in place to recover a balanced budget position. | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | **Owner** | **Timescale** |
| D | * Minutes 17.12.24 approved | Finance Comm |  |

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| **5** | **2024-25 management accounts** |
| The external consultant presented the 2024-25 management accounts, up to the end of February 2025, and associated papers. The following points were raised in discussion.  2024-25 management accounts  Some extra income has already been received from the Department for Education (DfE) in February and this has positively skewed the numbers.  The school would expect to have spent 50% of the budget at this stage.  Revenue year to date 2024-25.   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Actual | Budget | Variance | | Total Income | £1,605,534 | £1,374,018 | £231,515 | | Total Expenditure | £1,371,321 | £1,405,157 | £ 40,674 | | In year surplus | £ 234,213 | £ 31,119 deficit | £265,351 |   Other grants - special educational needs (SEN) funding is less than expected due to funding still being discussed with Salford LA.  *Q. Is the school waiting for this SEN funding?*  The LA works on a fiscal year and the amount currently being discussed relates to the period April 2024 to March 2025.  Staffing – The budget is showing a £25,842 overspend mainly due to slightly higher SEN costs which will be recovered.  *Q. Is this year to date?*  Yes.  *\*Dani Mechlowitz and Michael Krebs joined the meeting.*  *Q. Is the new income included in the spreadsheet?*  The first tranche which was received in January is in the income and expenditure account and also included in the cash flow report.  *Q. Is the amount owed to the LA included in the income and expenditure?*  The full salary costs have already been included in the monthly management accounts in the month that they were incurred, the creditors report shows the amount outstanding that has still not been paid to Salford LA. A six month repayment plan was agreed and is currently being worked to.  At this point half way through the year it was budgeted that there would be a £31k deficit but this has been offset by the extra funding received from the DfE as a part of the recovery plan.  *Q. Why is repairs and maintenance underspent? There is £30k in the budget and only £2,089 spent year to date.*  The spending is being managed over the year and there are two accounting codes that this type of expenditure is coded to.  Q*. Will the budget, for the year, be spent?*  Yes.  *Q. Can energy costs be managed better as £50,114 has been spent compared to the budget of £45k, year to date?*  Costs are not constant, depending on the severity of the winter and will reduce over the Summer period.  *Q. Could solar panels be considered?*  They are expensive to install. The school may be able to apply for a grant.  The external consultant stated that the school would contact the DfE to look at suppliers they would be satisfied with and explore any opportunities for grant funding.  The governing body Chair, David Bondt, advised that the school has investigated installing solar panels before. Work had to be undertaken on the roof before solar panels could be installed and this has now been completed and if the school received a grant, this could be feasible.  The external consultant explained accounting for capital expenditure in schools. Purchases with a life span of over one year and a value in excess of £1k can be capitalised, otherwise the purchase will be included in the budgeted spend through the income and expenditure account.  Balance sheet.  Governors noted the balance sheet as at the end of February 2025.  Cashflow forecast  Column I has been updated. This is the cashflow as at February 2025. The cash balance was £385,760 at the end of January and this reduced to £63,554 by the end of February. £241,271 has been repaid to the LA in February. £77k is forecast to be repaid to the LA in March, April, May and June. The current SEN template shows that the LA will be approached to provide the school with approximately £200k of extra SEN pupil funding.  *Q. Will the school repay the amount to the LA despite the fact that we are asking them for extra SEN funding?*  Yes. This is a fixed debt for salary oncosts from several months ago. A payment plan has been agreed with the LA. The school has still to agree the extra SEN funding with the LA.  *Q. Why is the school paying the LA when they owe the school money?*  They are owed to and from different departments within the LA and the school is still negotiating the extra SEN payment and it is a sensitive situation. The money owed to the LA is a clear debt. The money owed to the school has not been agreed yet. Negotiations are underway to agree the funding for SEN pupils. The school needs to work with the LA. They work on a fiscal year which differs from the school working on an academic/financial year ending 31 August. The school also has different systems in place from the LA. The school will look at obtaining a fair settlement.  The cashflow document needs to be used more effectively from the end of this term because cash needs managing more effectively going forwards.  Aged creditors report  This shows the debt owed to the LA. Most of the aged creditors are in respect of catering and payable within 30 days.  *Q. Are national insurance increases in the budget?*  Yes. Schools are now receiving a grant, although this may not cover the full cost of the increases.  2025-26 budget  This needs to be submitted by the end of August 2025. It is going to be difficult to present a balanced budget. The school will be showing a cumulative deficit budget which is part of the recovery plan. The school is aware it will be in breach of the academy trust handbook (ATH) as it is not setting a balanced budget.  *Q. Can any savings be made to the budget?*  There is a workforce plan in place for next year. This has been costed. The levels depend on the number of pupils and the school is trying to increase pupil numbers. It needs to provide assurance that it has the budget to educate pupils.  One governor commented that staffing costs are 90% of the budget which is high.  Governors were informed that this is due to lower pupil numbers. It is not sustainable in the long term. The LA stated that they did not want the quality of education at BJCFPS to be compromised by budget constraints.  The school will review underlying causes for the deficit budget. Broadly, a balanced budget should be set, however, this would be unrealistic in the current circumstances.  The three year projections are in the recovery plan. The school should also be setting a three to five year business plan with the main aim being to increase pupil numbers.  Governors noted the contents of the financial reports presented by the external consultant. | |

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| **6** | **Cashflow forecast** | | |
| This was covered in item 5 above. | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | **Owner** | **Timescale** |
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| **7** | **2025-26 budget planning** | | |
| This was covered in item 5 above. | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | **Owner** | **Timescale** |
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| **8** | **3 year budget projections** | | |
| This was covered in item 5 above. | | | |
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| **9** | **Resource management self-assessment checklist** | | |
| The external adviser informed governors that this had been completed and circulated to the finance committee and submitted within the deadline of 14 March. It is a questionnaire for guidance. It also raised discussions about some statistics and ratios. | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | **Owner** | **Timescale** |
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| **10** | **Pupil numbers October census and Spring census and current month** | | |
| The Principal stated that the October census showed lower pupil numbers. Three pupils are leaving tomorrow, and two pupils are joining the school. There were 333 pupils on roll at the end of February. Capacity is 420 pupils.  There are 12 new pupils in early years foundation stage (EYFS).  *Q. What are Reception numbers for September 2025?*  The school already has 35 pupils and 12 are joining the school. Total number of pupils will be 47.  The school is not attracting pupils from outside the local community. Families within the local community are attracted to the school.  *Q. What are the current pupil number in EYFS?*  Nearly 70 pupils.  *Q. Can the school extend capacity?*  It can legally, fit in 83 pupils.  *Q. As the school is under capacity, by 90 pupils, in Y1 to Y6, could it use an extra classroom for EYFS if it was needed?*  Yes. | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | **Owner** | **Timescale** |
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| **11** | | **Staffing** | | |
| Staffing costs make up the bulk of the budget. There have been no significant changes.  *Q. What is the situation for next year?*  There have been a number of staff absences. February consisted of 20 school days and 26.5 teaching days were lost to absence in February. This is excluding maternity which was a further 20 teaching days. This data is similar for most months. Absent management systems are in place.  *Q. How many teachers does the school employ to cover for absences?*  There are four teachers who are absent, most of the time and this is covered in house, usually. The school does not employ extra staff to cover absence.  The external consultant stated this is consistent absence and the high levels of absence are due to sickness and maternity leave.  There have been three teaching assistants (TAs) on long term sick leave. One of these has now returned to work. | | | | |
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| **12** | **Benchmarking** | | |
| Governors were informed that it is difficult to benchmark expenditure against other similar schools as BJCFPS characteristics are different and there are no schools that are the same. However, some benchmarking has taken place and the finance committee has discussed the variances. | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | **Owner** | **Timescale** |
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| **13** | **School/Academy/Trust Strategic Plan – Financial Aspects** | | |
| This is part of the three year recovery plan. | | | |
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| **14** | **Premises, Health and Safety Update** | | |
| The DHT provided an update for governors.  Equipment has been ordered. An invacuation event took place which worked very well. It did highlight the need for a larger fire door. New fire doors have been ordered. Ceiling tiles have been replaced, where needed, but this work is ongoing.  *Q. What is the situation regarding the floor tiles. They are dangerous and need replacing very urgently.*  They are on the list of jobs to be carried out.  *Q. Where are they located?*  In Y3 corridor.  *Q. When will these be replaced?*  The school needs to be closed for the work to be undertaken. Quotes have been obtained. The SBM will action this.  *Q. Does the school have a caretaker?*  Yes. The service level agreement with the caretaker is being reviewed. Unfortunately, he has been absent quite a lot during this school year.  *Q. Did the ceiling tiles cost £1 for each tile?*  Yes. The school has a lot of ceiling tiles and there is a plan in place.  *Q. Can governors have sight of the plan?*  Yes. The SBM will sent his to governors.  Work is going to be completed outside, at the front of the school, now that the weather is improving. This will improve the entrance to the school.  *Q. Is the caretaker carrying out regular checks?*  The SBM will check. | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | **Owner** | **Timescale** |
| A  A  A | * Action Y3 corridor floor tiles replacement * Send out plan to governors * Check caretaker carrying out regular checks | SBM  SBM  SBM |  |

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| **16** | | Review compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty | | |
| There was no separate discussion under this item. | | | | |
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| **17** | | **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Update** | | |
| There have been no reportable breaches, freedom of information requests or subject access requests. | | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | | **Owner** | **Timescale** | |
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**Audit and risk items – Staff cannot be part of the committee for these items. They are ‘in attendance’ only.**

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| **18** | | **Audit and risk** | | |
| The external consultant presented this item.  Internal audit  A brief overview of the last internal audit was provided. This related to 2023-24.  External audit  Four points were raised on the last external audit.  The issue around purchase orders has been addressed. Governors annual declaration forms have been completed, for last year and Companies House has been completed.  Financial controls  The reports shows weaknesses that the school needs to monitor. Procurement is being carried out in line with requirements and items are being approved appropriately.  The school is acting efficiently in dealing with the budget.  The DHT stated there may be some funding available for new heating for some schools. It is unlikely that BJCFPS would receive this.  There is a plan in place for replacing technology.  Governance structures are in place. An external review would look at how governors review the school.  Risk register  This was not discussed. | | | | |
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| **19** | | **Any Other Business (AOB)** | | |
| One item was taken to the governing body meeting.  The date of the next meeting was changed to allow more time for discussions. | | | | |
|  | **Actions (A) or Decisions (D)** | | **Owner** | **Timescale** | |
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| **Date and time of next meeting:** | **Tuesday 15 July 2025, 5.30pm** |