

**Kingsbury Episcopi Primary School
Full Governing Body**

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 27th March 2025

Present:

Jon Loxston (JL) – Vice Chair
Melanie Lawson (ML) - Headteacher
Mike Gulliver (MG)
Charlotte England (CE)
Elodie Carson (EC)
Neil Burn (NB)
Fiona Guest (FG)
David Harris (DH)
Rebecca Lewins (RL) – Clerk to Governors

Apologies:

Simon Faull (SF) – Chair of Governors
Barbara Teale (BT)

The meeting opened at 6.30 pm

1.	Welcome & introductions
	Karen Keal, SSE Financial Services was introduced to the FGB.
2.	Apologies
	Apologies had been received from Simon Faull and Barbara Teale. These were accepted. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
3.	Declarations of Interest/ Register of Business Interests
	There were none.
4.	Minutes of previous meeting
	The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2025 were agreed as a true record and will be electronically signed and dated by the Chair.
5.	Matters Arising
	Redundancy process – two additional governors will be required to sit on the dismissal panel. It was confirmed that these would be DH and MG. The energy efficiency grant has been spent. New lighting will be installed over the Easter holidays. There will be new flooring for all toilets, with the remainder going towards new laptops so that there is a full set for the school.
6.	Actions (See appendix A)
	• Updates to be added to the December 2024 minutes as an appendix. Complete. • Quotes to be shared with governors. Complete.
7.	Matters of urgency
	Headteacher recruitment - discussions were had around creating a timetable and working party that would meet the requirement for any successful candidate to give notice by the end of May in order to be in post for September 2025. This was agreed and will be taken forward outside of this meeting.

	If a candidate cannot be recruited by 31 May, governors will need to look at putting in interim Headteacher for at least the autumn term. A Headteacher recruitment pack has been sourced that includes a sample job description etc.
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New Items	
8.	2025/26 Budget Report and presentation – Karen Keal (KK)
	This proposed budget has to be submitted to the Local Authority (LA) in agreement with the governing body because it is in a deficit position. Governors will need to work with the LA on a deficit recovery plan to reach the point of a balanced budget. The key column is the 2025/26 proposed budget – this is what governors are agreeing to. <u>Income</u> The budget statement is the bulk of the funding. It is based on the October 2024 census headcount; however, some figures are missing from this. These are grants that come from the DfE and are sent out throughout the year. They include Pupil Premium, PE and Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) and are all based on census information. There is currently no information from the DfE to say if this data is correct. Once the figures are in, if they are very different, this will be highlighted to governors. The new grant is the national insurance grant and is to do with national insurance rates increasing from April 2025. This will be a significant cost to schools. A realistic figure has been put onto the budget plan. <u>Question: expenditure for teachers seems to be dropping. How is that worked out?</u> <u>Question: have teachers' pay and pension rates gone?</u> Rates haven't gone completely, but the DfE are saying that these pots are now in the national insurance pot. <u>Expenditure</u> The bottom line shows an in-year balance of c£3.5k if the plan is adhered to. The reason the budget is in a deficit position is because the deficit is forecast to be carried forward into 2025/26. The deficit will start to reduce if this plan is successful, meaning that by 2028/29, the deficit will clear altogether, and the budget will break even. This is even with the forecasted drop in pupils down to 118 on roll. <u>Question: does the budget include the proposed redundancy savings?</u> Yes, this is forecast in the budget. Budget assumptions build up the budget plan, including a 3% pay award for teachers from September 2025. This is currently an estimate because the final figure hasn't yet been agreed. A 3% pay award for support staff was agreed, backdated to April 2025. There is no change to pension costs. It is anticipated that staff absence will be covered in-house, so there hasn't been an allocation made for supply. This is a risk, but a risk that should be managed.

Question: is this not a risk, given that there will be one less teacher in school? How is it going to be possible to cover anything at all?

The new Headteacher will either have to take on the SENDCo role, a part-time teaching position or provide PPA cover. This is normal procedure in a four-class school and often provides better cover and continuity than varied staff coming from an agency.

Question: will joining the Richard Huish Trust offer some options?

It is possible that there may be opportunities for shared staffing.

The pension levy and deficit come from recommendations of the figures that the LA has set.

The DFCG, which is ringfenced for capital projects, is around £5,400. There are no known plans as to how that money can / will be spent.

Utilities are based on 2024/25 costs with a slight inflation, again based on LA recommendations.

Question: is the building maintenance cost centre a similar amount to last year?

No, it is half of last year.

Cleaning costs – the school is working with the current cleaning contractor to negotiate a reduction in costs; however, some legalities mean that there won't be as much of a reduction as had been anticipated. There will be a saving of £5k, which is what is forecast in the budget. The school is not currently in a position to be sourcing a new cleaning contractor.

Extended schools – it is anticipated that this will provide a £4k income, which is the same level as last year. School trips should be self-financing.

ICT – the school has moved to a new MIS and finance system "Arbor"; increased costs have been included. This move will reduce costs in other systems, eg communications with parents. Moving forward, assessment and data can come through Arbor and will save money within the next 12 months.

Question: is the PTA picking up some of the ICT costs?

They have contributed £1,600 to new laptops.

Grants are used to offset current costs as much as possible, with the exception of UIFSM as that is ringfenced.

Pre-school - forecasted costs and recharges are based on the current financial year. Income from pre-school session numbers showed very few actual figures but there is a forecasted deficit of £33k if those numbers are correct. The forecast deficit is in line with this current year.

See later agenda item.

Question: of the deficit projection for the year, is it correct that half of that is the pre-school?

Yes, and half of the carry forward deficit also makes up the deficit.

There is a proposed saving of £30k in teaching staff, followed by a full saving in the following year.

	<u>Conclusion</u> The budget identifies a few risks: • Pre-school, potentially, if income figures are wrong. It can go on the recovery plan. • Supply if absence can't be covered in-house but overall, it is a reasonable budget to take forward to the LA.
9.	2025/26 Budget Governors to formally agree budget for 2025/26 Governors formally accepted the budget as a reasonable option and agreed for KK to take it forward to the LA. The LA will scrutinise it with a view to looking for further savings. It was noted that governors can't formally approve it because it is a deficit budget.
10.	Cleaning Contract A 15% saving has been made simply by choosing different paper towels alone. As a result, two members of staff get to keep their hours and their jobs in schools.
11.	SEND Update EHCPs - seven applications are ongoing, have been or are going to tribunal or have been rejected by the LA. It was noted that when parents apply, rather than the school, applications seem to be approved. A LSA is leaving, leaving an EHCP without an LSA, which means taking another LSA from a class. Coincidentally, a child with an EHCP has a place at a special school, freeing up a LSA. However, if another child requires additional support, this cannot be accommodated as there is no money. On the positive side, one Year 6 pupil has had the most successful six months of education they have ever had. This is down to staffing at KEPS. Everyone is included and welcome.
12.	SDP Previously circulated Progress against priorities: Red – work hasn't started on it yet. Amber – in progress. Green - behaviour policy. 12-18 months ago, behaviours in school were different. As a result of the new behaviour policy, incident numbers across the school have reduced significantly. Two skilled TAs are working with children with complex needs, which makes children feel welcome and safe. This has implications on other children and the class because disruption is less. The down side of this is that higher skilled TAs and HLTAs are being used to support children with additional needs, meaning there is less time for them to work on interventions and general classroom assistance. Assessment: Insight is likely to be replaced by Arbor because Arbor will be able to cover everything.
13.	Pre-school spring term report The pre-school celebrates its 20-year anniversary this year.

	The Richard Huish Trust is likely to be able to help with the deficit. It is understood that before the school took over the pre-school, the pre-school books were balanced. An overhaul of current practice is needed; the Richard Huish Trust proposal brings a potential increase in hours, holiday cover, provision five days per week and extending provision to younger children. There have been barriers to the school being able to do any of this. It was suggested that the pre-school be advertised through social media. It was felt that there is currently no capacity in the office to do this. It was noted that the forecast figures are very pessimistic and represent a worst-case scenario.
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14.	Update on Academisation
	The process is moving forward, the DfE application process is happening but is unlikely to be complete before Easter 2026 as it is a long process. It was agreed that an update can go out to parents. It was noted that the LA is seeing an increase in small schools wanting more support.

15.	Richard Huish Trust Nursery provision presentation and discussion
	<i>This was deferred to the next meeting.</i>

Standing Items

16.	Headteacher Report
	<i>This was deferred to the next meeting, along with the school improvement advisor report.</i>

17.	Policies for review
	There were none at this meeting.

18.	Safeguarding
	Staff need more training regarding hazards and behaviour outdoors and on trips. All staff need an update on risk assessments for outdoor teaching.

19.	Health & Safety
	A tree survey has been undertaken. The last was in 2022. All trees are deemed safe with the exception of one that may have to come down, but this isn't urgent. One other needs to be trimmed. Question: are there two costs associated with this because two companies are used? No because the service is part of the package the school subscribes to.

20.	SEF
	<i>This item was not discussed.</i>

21.	Complaints
	There were none for this meeting.

22.	Governor training/roles/visits
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	FG has undertaken new to governance training. NB will undertake new to governance training in May. Governors asked what SSE training courses are available to them. RL agreed to find out.
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23.	Any Other business
	Following questions around whether the appointment of a new Headteacher could mean that a teacher no longer needs to be made redundant, LA HR advice is that the two processes are separate, should be seen as separate and should both continue in parallel. Affected teachers can make representations along these lines as part of the consultation process.

Date of next meetings:

Wednesday 21st May 2025

Tuesday 8th July 2025

The meeting closed at 8pm.

Actions arising from this meeting

Item	Action	Who	When
14	Update on academisation process to go out to parents.	ML	No deadline
15	Richard Huish Trust Nursery provision presentation and discussion to be on next agenda.	RL	Next agenda
16	Headteacher report to be on next agenda.	RL/ML	Next agenda
22	What SSE training courses are available to governors?	RL	Next meeting