



## Minutes

### Approved by the Governing Body

### Meeting of the Full Governing Body (FGB) of Fowlmere Primary School

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025 – 7.00pm

**Via Microsoft Teams**

#### Present

Kym Rouse (KR), Headteacher  
Antony Kern (AK), Head of Burwell Village College Primary School, Executive Head Teacher  
Phil Butterworth (PB), Co-Chair  
Hayley Woods (HW), Co-Chair  
Anna Caroe (ACa)  
Abi Clarke (AC)  
Vanessa Cross (VC)  
David Webb (DW)

#### Apologies for Absence

Karen Stanton (KS)

#### In attendance

Lisa White (LW), Clerk  
Wendy Whistler (WW), School Business Manager

No.	Item	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>PB welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Karen Stanton.</p> <p>PB then welcomed new Parent Governor, David Webb and asked everyone to introduce themselves.</p> <p>Due to connectivity issues, DW temporarily left the meeting.</p>	

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Signed.....

Date.....

2.	<b>Any Other Business</b> It was noted that there was no other business added to the agenda.	
3.	<b>Declaration of Interests in relation to the Agenda</b> It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.	
	<b>Main Discussion Items</b>	
4.	<p><b>Finance – Ratification of 2025/2026 Budget</b></p> <p>A brief discussion took place regarding the purpose of the meeting and WW explained that ideally the aim would be to get to a point where a ratified Budget can be submitted, with a view to looking at the structure at a future date. WW added that she has checked with the Schools Corporate Team, and it is possible to resubmit a revised Budget either later this term or in September once a review of the staffing structure has been undertaken, particularly as given the decisions that need to be made will mean the ratified Budget will not necessarily be the final version.</p> <p>WW then referred governors to the notes uploaded earlier that evening and explained that what she has tried to do is to cost the different options available. WW further explained that she is not however dismissing the Federation model but at this stage she has not been able to find a model that gets the school out of deficit as quickly as the other options.</p> <p>WW added that she has therefore looked at a potential 3-class structure based on the models provided by AK, advising that this does however involve a redundancy process. WW then explained that she has been able to obtain some information from EPM, the school's HR Advisor, about the cost of redundancies but these are all approximate depending on which staff are affected. WW further explained that the school's Teaching Assistants (TAs) are on different rates of pay and that she has also included the cost of the shared parental leave for one member of staff, as this was not known at the last meeting. WW then advised that it may be possible to get some support from the Local Authority (LA) for the redundancy costs.</p> <p>WW therefore advised that based on the potential agreement to move to a 3-class structure and to not continue a teacher's temporary contract and a few other 'tweaks' in the non-teaching staff ledger codes, years 2 and 3 of the draft Budget start to look more manageable.</p> <p>It was noted that DW re-joined the meeting at 7.10pm, following which PB provided background information as to the focus of the meeting and the reasons behind the potential restructuring of classes. PB also advised that any information shared and discussed at this meeting is strictly confidential.</p> <p>DW then introduced himself to governors.</p> <p><b>PB then proposed, and it was agreed to consider the models put forward by AK to enable a decision to be made.</b></p> <p>AK explained however that given the static pupil numbers currently at Fowlmere, it will be necessary to move to a 3-class structure.</p> <p>AK then explained that there are ways to structure the teaching, including moving the Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) hours from the afternoons to the mornings, which would give some specific teaching in a class and allow focus on a specific year group.</p>	

	<p>AK added that when looking at the numbers, the actual decision is where the school feels the break is best placed and advised that there are some things that can be done around higher attaining and lower attaining pupils and working in various classes.</p> <p>AK then advised that as per his recommendation, a mixed Year 4, 5 and 6 class works better (Model A), as it is possible to structure the end of Primary School experience as a clear ladder for Year 4 upwards. AK added that in his opinion, the maturity gap and age gap between Year 2 and Year 4 pupils is wider than between Year 4 and Year 6. AK further advised that the Year 2 and Year 3 combination works well, as Curriculum wise it is easier to structure and allows for less of a jump between Key Stage One (KS1) and Key Stage Two (KS2).</p> <p>AK also advised that as already recognised at the last meeting, there is teaching strength in Reception and a link between Reception and Year 1 and with the current Foundation Stage Lead, it is viable to mix those 2 year groups, with careful consideration around the teaching of English and Maths and how the rest of the Curriculum is structured required going forwards.</p> <p>AK then referred governors to Model B, which has a mixed Year 2, 3 and 4 class and explained that this can also work and would allow a targeted approach on Year 6 outcomes with quality teaching in the mixed Year 5 and 6 class. AK advised that this does not however leave much room for movement within the Year 2, 3 and 4 class and if there were some lower attaining Year 2s and higher attaining Year 4s, this feels like a bigger gap.</p> <p>AK further explained that his real reservation for Model B is that the model would have to change in the fourth year as the Year 2s cannot be in a class larger than 30 and there would be 33 children if the numbers remain static.</p> <p><b>Governors asked:</b>  <b>Question:</b>  <b>How do you protect the outcomes of our Year 6 pupils under Model A? This needs to be a significant focus.</b>  <b>Answer:</b>  I think utilisation of HLTA hours is crucial so I would be advocating that. It will be necessary to structure Curriculum so that it points to the crucial end points of Year 6. Some elements of the Curriculum could be taught using HLTA hours. There could be targeted teaching for 3 out of the 5 days. There might also be some consolidated teaching planned by the teacher that could then be taught by the HLTA.</p> <p><b>Question:</b>  <b>Do you think we have the necessary experience within existing staff to do this?</b>  <b>Answer:</b>  KR advised that she thinks further training would be needed as she is not sure with this particular model, there is there is the necessary experience.</p> <p><b>Question:</b>  <b>Are you aware of a school that has the same class structure as this in Cambridgeshire?</b>  <b>Answer:</b>  ACa replied that she did not immediately know of such a school.</p>	
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	<p>VC explained that when she worked at a local school, they worked to Model A, and there were a lot of interventions in place to target Year 6 pupils for their Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) and this school is now graded as 'Good' by Ofsted.</p> <p>At this point a couple of governors advised that Model A would be their preferred option.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> <b>In terms of Budget projections, it looks like the proposed changes would start to have an impact in year 2 of the plan. Could we therefore continue to review the structure going forwards?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> I think it will be an ongoing process, and we need to be cautious as the pay awards are likely to be higher than budgeted.</p> <p>It is worth noting that we need to be realistic and unless there are proposed local housing developments, our future pupil numbers are going to remain fairly low and static. You also need to consider the general size of the building as there is an overall capacity issue anyway, so it is unlikely that you will be able to run 5 or 6 classes in the next few years.</p> <p>There are falling rolls all over the country, so a small village school needs to be realistic to be sustainable. For context, my school is 2-form entry, and I expect we will need to move to a mixed class structure with one and a half classes.</p> <p><b>A governor then expressed concern that Model A may lead to a greater concern amongst parents than Model B, as the latter is similar to the existing class structure.</b></p> <p><b>A governor then asked:</b> <b>Question:</b> <b>Am I right in thinking that Year 4 and Year 5 are currently together? If so, the structure proposed in Model A is not too significantly different.</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Yes. I think that to have a structure that is consistent over the next few years is what is important to parents.</p> <p>The majority of the classes remain the same for next year from a parental perspective.</p> <p>Governors then noted that it will be vital to explain how the Year 6 pupils will be supported under the proposed Model A.</p> <p><b>Another governor asked:</b> <b>Question:</b> <b>Can I just clarify the support in each class? What does the staff ratio look like in each?</b></p> <p><b>Answer:</b> In my illustration, there is a full-time teacher every day, supplemented by the Head Teacher for the 80% or 90% contracts. HLTA support would then be provided for subject release and then 15.5 hours of TA support for each class.</p> <p>What I am not sure of is what level of support is needed for the pupil with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</p>	
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At this point, KR advised that this pupil is currently in Year 6 and will therefore be leaving at the end of this academic year. KR added that there is another child who has been highlighted to the LA Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo), but that it is unlikely that funding will be received within the next 12 months as this child has not yet been tested. KR further advised that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will need to work out how to support that child in their Year 6 class.

WW then explained that how TA hours are distributed can be considered when a structure is agreed. KR added that support should be assigned on a needs basis.

WW also advised that if the teacher who is currently on maternity leave chooses to return on different hours, this will also need to be factored into the Budget going forwards. WW added that it is possible to ask staff what their intention is when they return to work to give a starting point, although it is not possible to hold them to this.

**Governors also asked:**

**Question:**

**In terms of TA hours, could we justify more hours if there are more pupils? Year 2 and Year 3 only have 20 pupils, is that correct?**

**Answer:**

Yes. However, I think the operation of those classes is different to the structure and that is an operational decision for the leadership team. The actual teachers in the building may determine how you structure the teaching of subjects.

**Question:**

**In terms of our Published Admissions Number (PAN), if we were to receive more pupils in Years 4, 5 or 6, how would that work?**

**Answer:**

There is no upper limit in KS2. I think the bigger issue is with KS1 if our Reception and Year 1 numbers start to increase, and to some extent our Year 3s, but again this is possibly 3 or 4 years ahead.

**Question:**

**In your notes, Wendy, you state that a senior teacher costs £2.6k less than a Head Teacher on L6. Is that for an additional member of staff?**

**Answer:**

No. This relates to a teacher taking on a Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR), for example, someone who is on Upper Pay Scale (UPS) 3 with a TLR to take on additional responsibilities or putting them on the leadership pay scale.

In a Federation model, there would be an Executive Head Teacher for 2 days for example and there is not enough of a gap currently to pay a senior teacher or a Deputy Head Teacher as the UPS and the lower end of the leadership scale is too close.

**Question:**

**So, is this a teaching / senior teacher role with a TLR and no identified Head Teacher in school?**

**Answer:**

Potentially yes, or a 2-day Executive Head Teacher with someone else taking on the responsibility the other 3 days.

**Question:****Would that person still be teaching full-time?**

Answer:

Potentially, yes. The difference between UPS3 and L6 is only around £3k, which means Federation is not an option for you right now. The best option is a 3-class structure with a Head Teacher in post.

It is also worth noting that the Budget does not factor in additional leadership support for the Autumn term, but if you were successful in getting financial support for redundancy costs, there is scope for that to continue.

**Question:****Whilst we are proposing redundancies based on the school's finances, what about the pension strain?**

Answer:

There are some TAs who are over 55, and some new teachers who will not be eligible for redundancy pay and I am not sure how this will work.

At this point, AK advised that whilst redundancy is not pleasant, if this is not done, the school will be in a much worse position for a longer period of time.

**Question:****Given that we have paused the Head Teacher recruitment process, when do we address this and is this with or without KR present?**

Answer:

The current contract ends in August and therefore KR will revert to her substantive post.

**Question:****With this proposal, do we need to advertise externally?**

Answer:

I do not think that is necessary as you would be suggesting it is a permanent post. You could say it is a fixed-term contract, but I do not think anyone externally would go for that.

Governors then noted that this is not a decision that can be made at this meeting and agreed that achieving the deficit reduction outlined in the revised draft Budget is a significant achievement.

In addition, governors noted that the benefits to a potential Federation goes beyond the financial impact and should be driven by lots of other factors and as such needs further consideration.

**There being no further questions from those present, it was noted that the Governing Body unanimously approved the move to a 3-class structure from September 2025 and therefore ratified the revised 2025/2026 draft Budget.**

WW then addressed the questions raised prior to the meeting as follows:

**Question:****Driver expenses, who are these for?**

Answer:

This covers members of staff who support children to get to school from the taxi. It is a small cost at £1k and would likely cost more to go down the redundancy route.

**Question:****Meals for staff / adults – who are these for?**

Answer:

This is where staff have a school dinner but there should be some income to offset this cost. It may also include some parents trying school dinners but again, I would expect some income to offset this.

I have asked the Administration team to look at the reports that come back to make sure what we pay for is what we have as I am not sure how it works here.

**Question:****Grounds maintenance costs seem to be high for the size of the school – has the contract been queried?**

Answer:

When I was first involved with the school, the grounds person also cut the grass on the Butts and we charged the Parish Council for this. The contract has been renegotiated but I am not sure what they are doing for what they are paid. It is worth noting that costs have gone up this year as well, so I think it would be sensible to review the contract.

**Question:****Why are our electricity costs so high given the size of the school?**

Answer:

This is due to estimated bills so I will need to check that the usage is correct.

**Question:****What is the line for rents / leases?**

Answer:

This will be like the rates where there is an 'in' and an 'out'.

**Question:****Is the PE / Dance expenditure covered by the carried forward PE and Sport Premium funding?**

Answer:

Yes.

**Question:****What are the Self-funded curriculum expenses?**

Answer:

This is £3k of 'self-funded' money from commissions or donations.

**Question:****What is the Consultancy cost?**

Answer:

This is the cost of the LA SEND support, School Business Manager support and additional leadership support provided by AK.

**In addition, governors then asked:**

**Question:****Are there any plans to increase what we charge Kids Choice, particularly as they also offer holiday clubs now? Is it worth reviewing the contract?**

Answer:

Yes, it is worth reviewing it, especially if they are also using the school during holidays. I also think the rate should be reviewed in line with the current market rate

	<p><b>Question:</b>  <b>Has the increased rate that the Diocese going to charge the school been reflected in this Budget?</b></p> <p>Answer:  I do not think it is as high as they were suggesting, but where it is significantly higher, you should receive some additional funding to cover this.</p> <p>Lastly, governors discussed next steps including communication with staff, parents and the community.</p> <p><b>A governor asked:</b>  <b>Question:</b>  <b>Is there a plan in place to approach staff with the proposed re-structuring?</b></p> <p>Answer:  Not yet, but that will be the first step now that the Budget and the move to a 3-class structure have been approved.</p> <p>We will need to address the fixed term contract first and then look at the redundancies around our support staff and this is something KR and I will focus on over the next few days.</p> <p>WW added that the draft Budget also includes a reduction in teaching hours.</p> <p>It was then noted that a separate catch-up will take place regarding the earlier Federation meeting.</p>	
	<b>Routine Business</b>	
5.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b>  It was noted that was no other business added to the agenda.</p> <p>However, WW asked that if any information from the meeting earlier that day has an impact on the Budget to let her know.</p> <p>ACa then reminded governors of the need to ensure any of the information shared for this meeting remains strictly confidential.</p> <p><b>A governor then asked whether governors' input is needed in the application for a deficit licence and WW advised that she will complete the application and copy governors into the submission.</b></p> <p>Governors then thanked AK, KR and WW for their hard work and support in providing the information for this meeting to enable decisions to be made.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Dates and Times of Future Meetings</b>  Date of the next meeting was confirmed as follows:  ➤ <i>Wednesday 9 July 2025</i></p>	
	<p><b>Close of Meeting</b>  There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.10pm.</p>	