

Holbeach Primary School

**Non-confidential minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee of
Holbeach Primary School on Wednesday 16th October 2024 at 6.30 p.m.**

In attendance:

First Name	Surname	Governor Type	End of Office	Present
Gbolahan	Adedoyin (GB)	Parent Governor	05/01/2025	No
Ross	Baptie (RB)	Co-opted Governor Committee Chair	26/11/2027	Yes
Colleen	Boxall (CB)	Co-opted Governor	10/07/2028	Apologies received
Tom	Bulpitt (TB)	Headteacher Ex-Officio	-	Yes
Katie	Drew (KD)	Co-opted Governor	27/03/2027	Yes
Glenys	Englert (GE)	Co-opted Governor Vice Chair of Governors	18/09/2027	Yes
Sharon	Farnley (SF)	Co-opted Governor Chair of Governors	06/04/2027	Yes
Charlie	Killick (CK)	Staff Governor	17/01/2027	Yes
Sylvia	McCloskey-Quigg (SMQ)	Parent Governor	01/12/2026	Yes
Steven	Orpwood (SO)	Co-opted Governor	06/07/2026	Yes
Ben	Pitcher (BP)	Local Authority Governor Vice Chair of Governors	29/11/2024	Apologies received
Miriam	Baguley (MBy)	Governance Professional	NA	Yes

(v) denotes virtual attendance

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from CB and BP.

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2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations, in addition to those already registered, were made.

**3. PRESENTATION AND Q&A REGARDING LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANS FOR THE
SCHOOLHOUSE**

TB advised that Fiona Gavin (FG), Estate Management and Contract Manager for Lewisham Local Authority (LA), had been planning to attend the meeting but had sent late apologies due to illness.

TB noted that at a recent council meeting, councillors had confirmed the strategy to reduce or repurpose the schoolhouse estate, but a decision regarding the schoolhouse

at Holbeach had been deferred pending further review. Previous discussions with FG indicated there were several options being considered including community use and disposal of the asset to raise revenue for other projects.

TB highlighted the value of the schoolhouse to the school and local community and noted that Friends of Holbeach (FOH) was already using it as a community hub. Governors discussed and agreed that initial plans to develop the schoolhouse as a community resource should continue. TB advised that correct insurance cover was in place for the level of suggested use. TB noted that although FOH was ensuring the school did not bear the cost of any maintenance/upkeep in the short term, there was potential for additional expenditure in the longer term if the schoolhouse was retained.

RESOLVED: that FG be invited to the next Full Governing Board (FGB) meeting on 28th November 2024.

4. NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1ST MAY 2024

The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 1st May 2024 were circulated to the meeting.

Amendments noted:

- RB to be listed as a Co-opted Governor rather than Parent.
- Item 7 SRMA update. 'Marla' to be changed to Mala Dadlani, Group Finance Manager, Lewisham LA.

RESOLVED: that the non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 1st May 2024 were approved to be signed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the amendments noted.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising and all actions were complete or formed part of the items within this meeting.

6. FINANCE UPDATE

6.1. Budget Monitoring to 31st August 2024

TB referred the Committee to the budget monitor report circulated to the meeting and noted headline figures.

- The original budget set provided for an in-year deficit of £52.5k funded by cumulative reserves; £23.1k reserves would then be carried forward to 2025-26.
- The final year forecast, based on spending to 31st August 2024, was an in-year deficit of £150.8k with a cumulative deficit of £75.1k.
- Years 2 and 3 of the three-year plan could still move back into surplus if leadership costs were permanently reduced (non-replacement of staff after retirement).

Key variances:

Expenditure

- Administration and clerical staff. The overspend was due to an £80k pension cost relating to ill-health retirement of one member of staff. Clarification of the charge and procedures were being sought, and the LA approached with regard to financial support as there was potential for further costs in relation to a second member of staff.

The Committee discussed pension contribution mechanisms and the timescale for applying capability processes. TB confirmed the pension costs were not covered by insurance. It was agreed that Finance Link Governors would review the pension charges in more detail with Gareth Hudson (GH) and that independent verification should be sought if necessary.

- Agency supply staff. The forecast of an overspend of £72.8k against budget was likely to be accurate despite there being four fewer TAs compared to the same period last year.

The Committee asked what actions could be taken given the forecast cumulative deficit at the end of the current financial year. TB said that as there was already a deficit prevention plan in place which forecast moving back into surplus in years 2 and 3 and the school had proactively engaged with the School Resource Management Adviser's (SRMA) recommendations, the potential for LA action at this point was low. However, considering the high level of need across Nursery to Year 3, the impact of having fewer support staff should not be underestimated. If it was necessary in the interests of safety, additional agency TAs would be engaged.

The Committee asked how savings made by reducing permanent staff numbers compared to additional agency spend. TB referred to the SRMA's recommendations and noted that there was a current financial advantage, but this area would need to be closely monitored, especially because of the impact on remaining staff.

The Committee asked if the increased level of need was reflective of the experience across the LA. TB said levels of need coupled with challenging behaviour had been increasing in all schools even before the pandemic. The question schools faced was how best to support pupils and families when the access to, or quality of, external services was so reduced.

TB provided an overview of the level of need in the school and actions taken to support this and noted the following points:

- the current Reception intake arrived with fewer EHCPs in place compared to last year
- typically, it took three terms to gather enough evidence to support an EHCP application
- nurture groups were in place for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Staff ratios were being monitored.
- the LA was expanding SEN provision through hubs, but there were insufficient specialist places.

In response to questions, CK highlighted the impact on staff, especially during the longer autumn term. The Committee asked for its thanks and recognition of the difficulties staff faced to be passed on.

Income

- SEN funding. The forecast income to the end of the financial year had been reduced by £16.5k. There were some discrepancies in the income received which could not be explained by the LA and would require further challenge and monitoring by TB.

The Committee noted the LA's performance issues especially with regard to SEN funding and lack of transparency in utility charging and discussed raising concerns more formally through a complaint. Given the challenging financial environment, it was essential to have accurate information on which to be able to base decisions.

- Other grants and payments. £50.6k received in relation to the expansion of wrap-around care. This was also shown under expenditure as it would be used to fund additional staff.

In response to questions, TB said that the expansion of wrap around care had gone well, and numbers attending had doubled. Income was expected to exceed costs incurred and the effect of this would be evident in future budget monitors. The school would be able to bid for a similar level of grant money as received this year in the next financial year.

Committee members noted that despite the increase in size, the wrap around provision had not lost its warm and caring ethos and still offered a home-from-home experience.

The Committee noted GH's move to a consultancy role, and asked about how the school business manager role was now being managed in school. TB said the administration team was overseen by Phil Morriss (PM), with GH providing additional support and the situation was sustainable for the next two years.

6.2. Utilities update

- Utilities.
 - Gas and electric. No variances were shown, but invoiced figures were unreliable. The LA had been unable to explain why costs had not decreased in line with market rates. Utility contracts, which were due for renewal in April 2025, would be reviewed by Finance Link Governors in January. Exit fees would likely apply if the contract was ended early.
 - Water. Although a leak had been suspected, the issue was more likely to be in relation to incorrect invoicing which has not yet been resolved.

6.3. SRMA recommendations and responses

TB referred to the document circulated with the agenda.

- A table would be developed for information to show the reduction in staff and as a basis to determine what was sustainable going forward.
- Likely future leadership structure to comprise Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, and full-time SENCo. There would also be one class teacher per class plus a system to provide cover for PPA.

RESOLVED: RB to liaise with TB regarding raising a complaint with the LA (item 6.2).

7. TARGETED FUNDING STATEMENTS

TB provided a verbal update on targeted funding which aimed to increase outcomes for various pupil groups. Spending was usually focused on key areas of provision.

Ring-fenced grant funding received in respect of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) required an annual submission (for 2023-24) to identify and account for all spending. This had been submitted according to schedule and no clawback was expected. Around £24k had been received which had been used to fund interventions either bought-in or provided in-house. Tutors were usually known to the school with good relationships with pupils.

Pupil Premium Grant and Sports Premium statements would be completed by the end of the autumn term.

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8. DISPOSAL AND WRITE-OFF ASSETS/DEBTS

Nothing to report.

9. PREMISES REPORT

Compliance schedule

To be covered as part of the spring term Health and Safety visit.

Health and Safety report

The LA Health and Safety Audit had been circulated with the agenda and would be reviewed by GE and KD with TB and PM.

The overall scores and contents of the action plan were noted.

The Committee asked if there had been any issues relating to the newly reinstated gate on Bradgate Road. TB said initial teething problems had been resolved and the school had been able to reduce the administration team's hours now the gate was in place. The gap in the gate had been useful in enabling communication and assessment of outside hazards whilst keeping it shut.

The Committee noted the placement of an HMO opposite. TB said interactions with residents had improved and its existence formed part of the contextualised safeguarding picture.

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10. POLICIES

There were no policies circulated to the meeting.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Wednesday 15th January 2025 at 6.30 p.m.

12. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Finance Link Governor report.

13. ANY URGENT OTHER BUSINESS, AGREED WITH THE CHAIR IN ADVANCE

The date change for the Curriculum and Standards Committee meeting to 14th November 2024 was noted. A review of statutory PE time in Years 5 and 6 to be added to a future agenda.

TB to circulate dates for school events by email.

In response to questions, TB said that the mixing of Year 4 classes had gone well. The experience of the previous year had informed best practice and communications with parents had been effective. Depending on the cohort, it was likely that Year 4 classes would be subject to change every year as it was good preparation for secondary school. Mixing was done purposefully to distribute levels of need, but close friendships and pupil voice was taken into account.

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14. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

None.

Meeting closed 8.00 p.m.

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE:.....

DATE SIGNED:...../...../.....