

GREAT TORRINGTON SCHOOL

Academy Trust

Company Number 769819.

A Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England



Committee members are invited to attend the

Full Governing Board Committee Meeting

Tuesday 1st December 2020 at 9.15am via Microsoft Teams

Attendees	Initials	Position	Comments
Newberry, Ian	IN	Member Appointed (Committee Chair and Chair of Governors)	Present
Smith, Doug	DS	Member Appointed Governor	Present
Bloodworth, Andy	ABL	Headteacher	Present
Higgs, Rachel	RHI	Staff Governor	Present
Anstee, Sarah	SJA	Staff Governor	Present
Meardon, Lucy	LM	Member Appointed Governor	Present
Meeson, Sam	SM	Member Appointed Governor (Joint Vice Chair of Governors)	Present
Hemsworth, Robert	RH	Parent Governor	Not Present
Wall, Lesley	LW	Co-opted Governor (Joint Vice Chair of Governors)	Present
Turnwell, Michael	MT	Parent Governor	Present
Major, David	DM	Parent Governor	Apologies
Stevens, Jo-Anne	JAS	Parent Governor	Present
Pateman, Jo	JMP	Clerk to the Governing body	Present

MINUTES

2020/21/ FGB/14	Accounts/ Auditors	Governors were joined by Tim Borton, of Bishop Fleming. The management letter, surplus reconciliation, and governors' letter first draft had all been circulated prior to the meeting. Q –any differences to note since the recent auditors meeting? Nothing other than the pensions are now included, as are the trustees and governance statements, although they are in draft.	I Q
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	<p>Financial statements key facts - summary of expenditure of the trust for the year, that excludes pension adjustments and capital income etc i.e. it is operating income and expenditure for the year. £4.4 million income, expenditure just under £4.2 million (both split between restricted and unrestricted). Spent all but £30k of funds on capital expenditure. Funds carried forward at end of year have increased by £206k from the beginning of the year. Reserves brought forward £1.7 million, add on £206k, total just over £2 million in reserves, split between general annual pot and other restricted funds and unrestricted funds.</p>	I
	<p>Fits into balance sheet – amounts owed to trust and prepayments etc. £159k, just short of £1.6 million in the bank at the end of year and £333k owed to suppliers, net current asset position of just over £1.4 million, included in that is £188k of unspent capital, which is partly some of the CIF money not spent by year end and the rest devolved from capital not spent in previous years. Take £188k of unspent capital off net and it is £1.2 million of pre-reserve carried forward at the end of the year. That is the high-level summary of the overall position.</p>	I
	<p>Significant increase in the deficit on the local government pension scheme, which is now £3.3 million deficit. As previously discussed, that is not an immediate issue, as it is underwritten by the Secretary of State. Should the deficit continue at this level, employer contribution rates will increase, which will have an impact on the academy, as the school will need to fund that.</p>	I
	<p>Q – is it normal to have reserves and 3-6 months' worth of costs on top? No, this is high. Academy trusts know that the general annual grant is coming in each month, and will be pretty sure of costs, therefore there is no reason to carry such high level of reserves. Advocated by finance is a months' worth of expenditure sitting in reserves, although that will need to be tailored for specific trusts e.g. if pupil rolls are falling, you may want to carry forward reserves to protect the staffing levels through the demographic dip. The reserves policy set out in the trustee's report (page 9 and 10 of the accounts) £200k and £400k for reserves, that is roughly 5 to 10% of expenditure. GTS is carrying just over £1.2 million in reserves.</p>	Q
	<p>Advise to amend your reserves policy to explain for a higher level of reserves, the current policy is covering a deficit in the budget due to falling numbers, that does not mirror the current position. Amend to maintaining £200k to £400k for daily operating and reserves on top for dealing with changes in the demographic over time, and to make capital investments in a very old building.</p>	A
	<p>Q – would you advise to spend some of the reserves? There is always a balance between spending money on the pupils here now and being in a good place to serve pupils in the future. There is no liability left in the accounts for ROK. Governors have discussed wanting to do a big project, perhaps now is the time.</p>	Q
	<p>The school has spent some funds on capital works i.e. toilets. Canopies are £117k and toilets £80k – all from own funds. Only canopies in 20/21 toilets from last year. The forecast of a £93k deficit done in May, was prior to the teacher pay increases, we will now re-forecast the budget and it will show a higher deficit.</p>	I

	<p>Key management personnel – page 39 note 10E, apparent increase from £327k to £430k, added that the Headteacher salary is included. Tim feels that is misleading, the school had a Headteacher the previous year, but it was two people. £327k previous year did not include any of the previous head's salary and only 1/3 of the new head's salary, but he was in post for two terms. If we add those bits in the comparative figure is £430k as well. This then provides a true comparison between the two years with effectively 1 less person in management this year, so there is some overall savings in salary which is then counteracted with the increase in teacher pension costs. Tim feels and recommends changing £327k to £430k, therefore comparing like to like.</p>	I
	<p>LM and ABL discussed this at length during the audit meeting, happy to follow your recommendation but concerned anyone looking at 2 sets of accounts will see different figures. Tim advised he could add a note that the comparative figure has been restated to be based on the same figure as the current year. Governors agreed and noted that everything should be transparent.</p>	I
	<p>List of management personnel – discussion regarding staff to include. KR not currently named, although she is CFO. Definition of what is key management personnel is those in charge of directing, controlling, and running and operating the trust on a day to day basis. Suggesting to list SLT on page 1 with the 6 individuals listed, add KR as CFO underneath, then star the first 3 SLT and KR as those staff who are key management personnel for disclosure purposes. Governors voted and agreed.</p>	I
	<p>Last point in the accounts themselves, page 43 note 16 – in middle of note £699k GAG is £635k of annual general grants and £64k of other. We will have details of what that £64k is from previous years files, clearly unspent at moment. Note 17 on page 47 – in restricted fixed assets £188k unspent capital £55k of that is from the CIF in 19/20 the rest is mainly historic devolved capital. This is being used to pay for the canopies.</p>	I
	<p>Governors discussed the reasoning behind not previously spending the budget on capital expenditure historically i.e. to keep costs low during a demographic dip. Governors noted that this dip had now passed, and funds should be spent on the buildings.</p>	I
	<p>Audit year-end adjustments surplus reconciliation details the trial balance to the accounts we are now seeing. 8 adjustments, first opening balance adjustments were not processed last year, probably during the handover period. We will make sure this year the trial balance is brought in line with the statutory accounts. Net balance £251.</p>	I
	<p>Next few adjustments deal with fixed asset matters, posting fixed asset addition in the year which we took as revenue expenditure. Then entitlement to CIF income at end of year that you had not received yet, so we brought that £73k into the accounts.</p>	I
	<p>Q – CIF set amount, why would we accrue that? Awarded before year end so under control of the trust for accounting purposes. Boilers did not go through until September so falls into current year – £73K spent. Awarded in 19/20 so must account for it in 19/20 but yes it has been spent.</p>	Q

		<p>Fixed asset – spent some of own funds, recognised those. Spent some of general annual rant on fixed assets too and adjustment put through on that, finally two pension adjustments. Apart from the issue with the opening balance last year, the underlining records and accounting records are fine, and no real adjustments were needed other than the year end cut off issues.</p> <p>Brief discussion followed regarding the Sports Hall. Unlikely 1610 will return, Tim advised to run any future agreements through the school lawyer and DFSA.</p> <p>Audit – very well prepared and went smoothly. The pension report and trustees report were received last week, this should be better coordinated next year. Management letter – declaration of interests does not always disclose all the connected parties’ best practice is each trustee gives a complete list and the trust decides which is relevant to disclose on the website.</p> <p>Governors should now approve the accounts, KR requested time to check the draft and re-submit. Governors voted and agreed that this could be delegated to the resources committee, however all governors must email the clerk to confirm they have approved the accounts. Meeting paused at 10.25am, Tim Borton left.</p>	I I I I D
2020-21/ FGB/15	Apologies	Meeting resumed at 10.30am. Apologies were received and sanctioned from DM. RH was not present.	I, D
2020-21/ FGB/16	Conflicts of Interest	None.	I
2020-21/ FGB/ 26	Items Through the Chair	Governors revisited the timings of meetings and discussed at length. It was agreed to move the remainder of the governor meetings for this academic year to 3:30pm on Thursdays. The clerk will circulate new dates and invite governors via Teams and Outlook.	I, D
2020/21/ FGB/ 17	Minutes and Matters Arising	<p>Amendment to minutes 2020/21/FGB/8 third paragraph – should read ‘member of staff’.</p> <p>The boilers have now been checked and are all working.</p> <p>Q – are there any cases of Covid-19? There have been 2 positive cases, 1 resulted in several pupils being asked to stay at home. Due to the timing of the second and half term, it did not really affect us. Track and trace, however, is affecting staffing numbers.</p> <p>LW and RH are booked to attend Headteacher appraisal training in February.</p> <p>The exclusion feedback meeting is outstanding, it was agreed to schedule this after the exclusion training next week. JAS left at 10.50am and JSR joined.</p>	I I Q I I
2020/21/ FGB/ 18	Committee	DS asked FGB to ratify the decision of the resources committee to appoint Litmus to advise the school on the tendering process for the cleaners. All voted and agreed.	I, D
2020/21/ FGB/ 22	Pupil premium	<p>PP strategy circulated prior to the meeting. It was difficult to review last year due to COVID-19 and exam results.</p> <p>Q – individualisation is mentioned a lot in the report, is that a result of RHI’s presentation and study, can you talk about the impact that made? Also, cultural capital not mentioned and did not notice the NEETS element? RHI presented to all staff prior to lockdown making staff aware of the new direction the DfE is wanting us to take for PP. We have completed a lot of work with PP students through free school meals (FSM) and checking they have access to IT during lockdown. Child in care (CIC) is included in the PP funding. CIC receive £2450, £1000 more than an FSM child, which is £500 more again than a standard PP. CIC receive their own allocation of money and the number of parents and carers want us to provide a more individualised support package. Rather than that being added afterward we did it at the beginning, we</p>	I Q

		<p>have allocated £2k for that and it is already spent with 2 more terms to go. We have discussed at T&L, tuition to start in January and we will take £2k from the COVID-19 catchup to bridge the gap with CIC. RHI work is beginning to have more impact, we are conscious of our PP students and we are monitoring them closely. This year PP allocation put £5k aside to look at providing laptops and equipment for students, as we are aware, they will struggle if we enter another lockdown.</p> <p>NEETS – this falls under the category of CEIAG (careers education independent advice and guidance) we have doubled the amount this year, as we are aware our Year 11s missed their work experience opportunities. We have doubled the careers advisor allocation and increased the number of pupils who have accessed Careers South West. We do prioritise our PP for the CEIAG, they are seen first, then other high need students, particularly to look at potential NEETS and give pupils the independent advice and guidance under the Gatsby framework.</p> <p>Cultural capital – the lower school are in class bubbles; it is therefore difficult to have cinema days etc. due to the mixing of pupils. All Year 9 were given and have read ‘Of Mice and Men’. We have left the strategy deliberately loose this year as it is difficult to write a plan when we do not know what will happen next month, due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Music tuition is free for FSM and 50% for other PP. We allocated £1000, which is close to being spent. Lots of Year 7s have undertaken music tuition, we have lots of FSM and PP in that year group.</p> <p>Q – is any of CS salary paid from PP? Yes, partially last year and this will be made more explicit this year. Mental health and wellness come to the fore, we are aware that some of these students are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have experienced ACES, we have also increased the number of hours with our school counsellor.</p> <p>Q – how can you demonstrate the impact of these measures to governors? JSR will provide an update to FGB around Easter. With the new flightpath assessment model, we are in a much better position to identify and monitor PP in Years 7 – 9. We can provide more quantitative evidence around wellbeing etc. but the cold fact is we will be judged on our results. We can monitor those results, put interventions in place and hopefully, due to the COVID-19 catchup, we will soon have academic mentors in place to support PP and provide academic rigour. Pupil coaches will start their 360 reviews ASAP and that is a key part of the rigour in checking with every PP student. In addition, RHI in her role as impact RSL, has particular interest in PP and will monitor each of the lower school year groups looking at attitudes and grade data to ensure they are not falling below.</p> <p>Q – how is parental engagement given that we have not been able to hold parent evenings, particularly the parental engagement of our PP children? It is difficult to provide a definitive answer. Emails sent home to Year 11s did reach, and were answered by parents, some of whom would not have attended a parent evening. On the other hand, it is difficult functioning as a school when we cannot have parents into meetings and for some, this has been very difficult. However, with staff contacting the parents of children on the vulnerable list during lockdown, this may have enabled for better parental engagement. Our staff have been able to have numerous phone calls and it has broken down some barriers in ways we cannot always do face to face. JSR left at 11.10am</p>	<p>I</p> <p>I</p> <p>I</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>I</p>
2020/21/ FGB/ 19	Safeguarding	<p>DA joined at 11.10am to discuss the safeguarding report for the summer term, which had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting. The summer term figures include lockdown, which has affected the figures. Due to Covid-19, the school created a vulnerable list and</p>	<p>I</p>

		<p>performed welfare checks on those pupils. We therefore had slightly more incidents than usual, as many were welfare checks. Last year's figure 188, compared to 203 this year.</p> <p>Safeguarding during lockdown was very good but often concerns are raised by other students and we missed that element and seeing pupils face to face. The figures are now increasing, this term so far, there have been 204 incidents, compared to 90 last year. There has been an increase in police reports this term i.e. things happening in the home. There have been big increases in self-harm (2 last year compared to 7 so far this term) and lots of concerns around e-safety. This mirrors the picture across Devon. DA is currently completing the safeguarding audit, which is due on the 18th December. Frustratingly, the audit never contains the same set of questions and it is therefore difficult to compare year on year.</p> <p>Q – do incidents relate to the same pupils or new pupils? Under Covid-19 summer 2020, it states that there were 203 incidents from 164 different students.</p> <p>Q – this is still a substantial increase? Yes, and we anticipate autumn and spring figures to be even higher. We are just beginning to see the real impact of lockdown now. When we first returned in September children were simply happy to be back. Now, after another lockdown and a decline in family situations, incident numbers are increasing and will continue to do so.</p> <p>Q – what sort of incidents are on the rise? Our biggest category is 'general wellbeing' and often, this is children who do not fall under any category. In addition, domestic abuse, self-harm, and e-safety are all on the rise.</p> <p>Q – is there anything further we can do as a school, do you need more resources? Someone who can work more directly in the home would help. As previously advised, we have signed up to a programme and have been allocated a social worker to work in school. We need someone in homes, rather than simply relying on what we are told.</p> <p>Q – when will this scheme start? The social worker is already here, she is currently moving her case load to concentrate solely on GTS. The projects aim is to reduce the amount of MASH referrals schools are making but already, she has seen first-hand, the risk and complexity of the information schools are managing and holding.</p> <p>Q – how are we supporting mental health in our pupils, how long are they waiting for additional support and is there enough available? For those pupils not meeting threshold for a social worker or CAMHS, we have Early Help. We also have a counsellor working in school. DA left at 11.30am and CS joined.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p>
2020/21/ FGB/ 23	Lockdown – effects on mental wellbeing	<p>Lockdown has exasperated mental health issues and we are seeing a lot of anxiety in school. Lots of behaviour issues with Year 7s, which is a direct effect of not having any transition. We also do not have the relationships with Year 7 pupils and parents we would usually have by this stage. We are trying to manage pupils with anxiety via the Hardy Centre, however this is difficult as we need to ensure pupils are kept in the correct bubbles. We are concerned that some pupils are not accessing the support they need.</p> <p>We have several school refusers and again, this has been exasperated by lockdown. Staff were in regular contact with all pupils, to assist with learning needs and support throughout the lockdown period.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>I</p>

2020/21/ FGB/ 27	Date of next Meeting	3.30pm Thursday 4 th February 2021.	I
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The meeting closed at 12.10pm

Action Log

WHO	WHAT	BY WHEN	Reference
Clerk	Circulate new meeting dates and times to all.	ASAP	2020/21/FGB/26
KR	Re-circulate the accounts, once checked, to the Resources committee.	15/12/2020	2020/21/FGB/14
KR?	Reserve's policy – amendment to reserves statement to better reflect our situation. Maintain £200k to £400k for daily operating and then reserves held for dealing with changes in the demographic over time and to make capital investments in an old building.	28/01/2021	2020/21/FGB/14
Clerk	Add 'Governor working party' to FGB agenda as standing item	04/02/2021	2020/21/FGB/17
Clerk	Contact all parents via Parent mail, asking for anyone with financial experience who may be interested in joining the governing board.	Christmas	2020/21/FGB/17
Clerk	Add HT Report to next FGB agenda	04/02/2021	2020/21/FGB/25

Signed as a true record Committee Chair