EKC Schools Trust

Finance and People Committee Minutes

Meeting	Finance and People Committee	Date	Tuesday, 24th March 2026
Location	Virtual Meeting via Teams	Time	2.00 pm
Membership	Ollie Laughton (OL) – Chair; Paul Sayers (PS): Alison Gray (AG)		
In Attendance	Matthew Cooper, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Sharon Hollingsworth, Director of Governance (DG), Summer Macer. Chief of Staff (CoS) for items 5, 6 & 7 - virtual; Claire Edgeworth – Note Taker		

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and Apologies	The Chair welcomed Trustees to the meeting. The CEO sent her apologies.	
2	Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations other than those standing.	
3	Minutes of the meeting held 20th January 2026	The Committee reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting, and these were considered to be an accurate record and will be signed after the meeting. APPROVED – Minutes from the meeting held on the 20th January 2026	
4	Matters Arising not covered by this agenda	There were no matters arising that are not covered by the agenda.	
5	Gender Pay Gap Reporting March 2026 (snapshot data 30 March 2025)	The CoS presented the annual Gender Pay Gap report, which had been shared prior to the meeting. Trustees noted that Trust growth, including the TUPE transfer of new schools, continues to influence gender distribution year-on-year. The CoS highlighted that, despite ongoing expansion, the Trust remains in a positive position with a relatively stable gender pay	

		profile. Trustees explored the implications of shifts in workforce demographics. The Chair questioned whether the Trust was seeing improvements in male representation, particularly in lower-paid roles, referencing ambitions to promote positive male role models for pupils. The CoS explained that sector-wide recruitment challenges, particularly in primary settings, continue to limit male representation, and noted that a future deep-dive could explore recruitment patterns in more detail. The Chair advised he did not feel that the CoS needed to do more work on this, but the Finance and People Committee would continue to monitor. Trustees acknowledged the increasing stability expected in next year's reporting due to fewer structural changes. The Committee approved the Gender Pay Gap Report for publication by the statutory deadline – 31st March 2026. RESOLUTION – Gender Pay Gap	
6	Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap March 2025	The CoS presented the voluntary Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap report, which had been shared prior to the meeting. The CoS highlighted improvements in ethnic diversity across the Trust, particularly encouraging representation in areas such as the Isle of Sheppey, where community diversity can be more limited. Trustees praised the positive trend. Trustees raised concerns about meaningful disability reporting, noting that low staff disclosure rates may limit the reliability of data. The CoS advised that currently the data is not available but will look at how this information can be gathered during the next academic year. Trustees requested a school-by-school analysis of diversity to understand how representative each school workforce is of its community. The CoS confirmed she would complete this work for a future meeting.	CoS

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		NOTED -Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap 2025	
7	People Strategy update	The CoS provided an update on the implementation of the People Strategy, which was shared prior to the meeting. The update emphasised the importance of consolidating recent initiatives including flexible working, before introducing new ones. Trustees explored the flexible working models, such as 9-day fortnight and pre-planned part-time structures, and who would be eligible to apply. The CoS advised this was open to everyone, but they are looking more strategically, rather than responding to individual requests. The Chair sought clarity on recruitment implications, and the CoS noted that while flexible working is increasingly expected sector-wide, the Trust has not yet seen significant operational challenges. Trustees commented positively on feedback collected during school visits, highlighting strong staff wellbeing and investment in professional development. The Trustees acknowledged the importance of strong culture, retention, and workload management as part of Ofsted readiness and long-term strategic stability. Trustees sought clarification around the Education Reform Bill. The CoS advised this was an error, the paper should have stated the Employment Rights Bill. NOTED – People Strategy Update with the one amendment noted (Employment Rights Bill)	
8	Management Accounts January and February 2026	The CFO shared the January and February Management Accounts prior to the meeting. The CFO reported a position £100k above budget and EBITDA of £115k forecast vs £21k budget. There are key favourable variances including growth in high needs funding, increased nursery income, and savings generated through the DfE energy contract. £10k has been set aside for Audit fees.	

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		Year to date actuals is close to forecast. There have been some staff vacancies and £92k savings in Equipment and Consumables which is felt to be phasing. Trustees scrutinised geopolitical risks, including the economic impact of international tensions, such as the Iran conflict, which could raise non-pay costs in future months. The Chair queried progress on reviewing banking arrangements and the CFO advised that this remains planned for 2027 following recruitment of a Procurement Lead. Trustees praised prudent financial forecasting and early audit planning. NOTED – January and February 2026 Management Accounts	
9	Matters considered confidential	There were no matters considered confidential. .	
10	Any other business	<u>Long Term Financial Planning</u> The CFO provided an update on long-term financial planning. A temporary staff member has been appointed to support long term financial planning for both EKC Group and the Trust. A 3-year forecast must be produced each year and sent to the DfE. By the summer it is hoped there will be a 3-year forecast, and this will be updated annually, and each quarter will be discussed with the Business Lead and updated. Trustees explored the need for CPD for School Business Managers, but the CFO clarified that while some may need reassurance, the forecasting model aligns closely with existing budgeting practices. This will be discussed further with the CEO to decide if any CPD is required. The first full forecast is expected for review at the Committee's first meeting of the next academic year. NOTED – Long Term Financial Planning	DG
11	Date and time of next meeting	Tuesday, 23rd June 2026 at 2.00 p.m.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.55 pm.

Signed: .... Print: Oliver Laverton Date: 7/7/26