Background

Paratina is a developed unitary state of 70 million people. Over the past decade, though the birth rate has fallen, the population has risen, mainly due to increased life expectancy and a large rise in net migration to the country. Paratina is ranked highly in the global index for per capita income, education, civil liberties and quality of life. However, of developed nations, it has one of the highest levels of income and wealth inequality, and 20% of its population officially live in poverty. The official national language is English.

Elections to the national legislature are every five years, and the next are in September 2023. The current government is a coalition of the left of centre People's Social Democrats and the centrist Paratina Liberals. Recent opinion polls show that the right of centre Paratina Freedom Party (PFP) is projected to form the government at the next election.

National government is directly responsible for areas such as defence, healthcare, policing, and some aspects of children's education. There are 57 Regional Municipal Authorities (RMAs) in Paratina, each responsible for services in their regions, such as local transport, social care (adults and children), and some education services for children up to the age of 16. RMAs are funded by a mix of central government grants, local taxation on businesses and households based on property values in their regions, and charges for services such as public transport, parking, and use of RMA leisure and cultural outlets.

From 2010, Paratina experienced steady economic growth and low inflation, until the government imposed a strict Covid-19 lockdown for three months from April 2020. The government borrowed heavily to finance measures designed to offset the adverse impact of the pandemic on businesses, and to provide extra resources for public services such as healthcare. Since the relaxation of pandemic restrictions and reduced infection levels, the government has tried to revive the economy with tax cuts and public investment projects, but so far there is little sign of the economy reviving and unemployment rose steadily in 2022. The public deficit is now at record peacetime levels and the central bank has increased interest rates six times in the past year from historically low levels. In addition, inflation is growing rapidly, from 3% at the start of 2022 to 8% now, and forecast to rise further this year. The price of all items in the basket of items that feed into the inflation index have risen over the past year, but the price of energy and most foodstuffs have risen much faster than the headline inflation rate. Growth in average earnings levels has lagged behind inflation, but in some parts of the private sector there have been pay deals agreed recently that are in line with or above inflation. In recent months, there has also been increased industrial action as trade unions working in many parts of the public and private sectors seek comparable pay increases for their members. The PFP has been highly critical of the coalition's management of the economy, arguing that major cuts in public expenditure will be essential over the next few years to reduce the public deficit. Paratina's currency is the Paratina £, which is equivalent to the British £.

Education in Paratina

Education is compulsory from age 5 to age 16. The school year is divided into three terms, the first from September to mid-December, then January to early April and mid-April to late July. There is a two-tier system in the state-funded sector; children attend lower schools for six years from the age of five, then move to upper schools. Most children attend formal pre-school settings for 1-2 years before they start at lower school.

State-funded education for children features a mixed economy of providers as follows:

- schools run by RMAs, which devolve power to school governing boards (SGBs) in accordance with national government regulations and guidance;

- not-for-profit charitable educational trusts (CETs), which are directly funded by national government, and exist primarily to take over 'failing schools' from RMAs.

Around 10% of children attend private sector fee paying schools.

During the pandemic, schools run by RMAs and CETs closed from April 2020, reopening in September 2020. During the closure, schools put in place various programmes of remote online education and other support for families. There have been numerous Covid-19 related disruptions since then due to local outbreaks of the virus necessitating short periods of remote online education for individual, and groups of, classes at most schools, and sometimes closure of whole schools for a week or two. Many schools also continue to experience unusually high levels of staff absence due to the virus. In addition, attendance by children across all schools has averaged 88% both this year and last, 5% lower than the average in the year before the pandemic.

All RMA lower schools follow an admissions policy set by the RMA in line with principles set by national government. CET schools have some flexibility to set their own admission criteria. Parents apply to their local RMA listing their preferred schools and are generally likelier to secure a place for their child in their preferred school the closer that they live to the school or if their child already has a sibling in the school.

At all RMA lower schools, children follow a national curriculum specifying the subjects and learning outcomes, for each year group. Schools have some flexibility over curriculum delivery, including scope to vary the amount of time allocated to different subjects, how topics are taught and sequenced, and the length of the school day. Children take formal tests near the end of Year 3 and Year 6 in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science. The government publishes the test results, together with comparisons with national averages for groups of comparable schools. These tests were suspended in 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the pandemic. In RMA lower schools the curriculum also typically includes some time each week allocated to non-core subjects such as History, Geography, Music, Art, and Sport/Physical Education (SPE). Government regulations require that state-funded lower school classes are limited to a maximum of 30 children.

In 1996, the government established the Paratina Education Inspectorate (PEI). The PEI operates an inspection regime for all state-funded education providers. After each inspection, a school receives a report and an overall rating. The possible ratings are: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Weak or Poor. Each PEI report is published on its and the school's website. Where an RMA school gets a 'Poor' rating or two successive 'Weak' ratings, the national government Ministry of Education (MEd) contacts the school and its RMA to set a timeframe to transfer the school to a CET identified by the MEd, which usually takes 6-12 months. The staff of a school being transferred to a CET have statutory rights to retain their terms and conditions of employment for a period, however a high proportion of staff, in particular school leaders and teachers, leave the school either before the transfer or within a year of the transfer to the CET.

Before the previous PFP government initiated the Schools Improvement Act 2005, all state-funded schools were run by RMAs. This Act established the role of CETs, which have a contract with the MEd to run schools. The PFP's 2003 election manifesto was the view stated that while the PEI had facilitated some improvement of standards in state schools, progress was not fast enough and the establishment of CETs was necessary to increase the speed and scale of school improvement. The manifesto argued that greater flexibilities given to CETs over salaries, the curriculum, admissions and how schools are led would improve standards. 35% of children in Paratina now receive education at schools run by CETs.

The parties of the current coalition government opposed the 2005 Act but have not impeded the growth in CETs and have not changed the PEI's powers and responsibilities. However, the pandemic seriously restricted the PEI's activities and, so, far fewer schools have transferred to CETs during the current parliament than the previous one. One of the PFP's policy proposals ahead of the upcoming election, stated to be in response to the adverse impact of the pandemic on children's education, is to increase the PEI's powers. One proposal is that any RMA school receiving a single 'Weak' rating will have to transfer to a CET; another is that governors of all RMA run schools can apply to the government to join a CET that is operational in its area, regardless of the views of its RMA.

One statutory responsibility for RMAs is the assessment of Extra Education Need (EEN) applications. Children have EEN if they have a learning difficulty, which requires the provision of extra targeted support. There is a range of types of EEN, including speech and language difficulties, cognition difficulties (for example, dyslexia), social/emotional/mental health difficulties, and sensory and/or physical needs (for example, visual or hearing impairments). EENs can be suspected or become apparent at any point in a child's development, including before they start at lower school. Schools are expected to be continually alert to the possibility that a child may have EENs, and to apply formal evidence-based review procedures. Where these needs are not complex, multiple, or severe, schools are expected to identify and implement appropriate support for the child concerned, continually monitoring the impact. This can involve input from external specialists such as speech and language therapists. Schools do not receive extra funding for this support. Where needs are more complex, multiple, or severe, schools and/or families can apply to the RMA for a formal assessment of a child's EENs. This can result in the RMA agreeing to fund an Education Support Plan (ESP) to allow the child to continue at the school concerned. On occasions, the RMA will agree to fund a place for the child in a different school that is set up to specifically cater for the child's EEN(s).

Schools derive most of their income from the formula-based government operating grant (GOG), with pupil numbers, as measured in an annual census on 1 November, the main element in the formula for the following year's grant. The current government has increased GOG funding slightly above inflation throughout its term of office. In addition, schools with disadvantaged pupils, as measured by their family's receipt of certain government welfare benefits, receive a per pupil Disadvantaged Pupils Grant (DPG), which has been increased in line with inflation since its introduction in 2019. The DPG is received by a school shortly after the child concerned joins the school. During inspections, PEI review whether DPG is demonstrably allocated for the benefit of the pupils concerned, and PEI expect it is used in part to support enhanced quality teaching for all pupils and in part to provide targeted one to one or small group support for the disadvantaged pupils. There is also a COVID recovery grant, which will taper to zero for schools by 2025/26.

RMAs receive ring-fenced grant funding for education from MEd and are expected to pass on to their schools as high a proportion of this grant as possible. RMAs can retain a maximum specified percentage of this grant to fund other statutory education responsibilities that they retain for their region such as school transport services, school admissions and school place planning to ensure demand can be met. Since the formation and growth in the role of CETs, RMAs have experienced reduced grant funding in real terms and have found it increasingly difficult to fund their residual statutory education responsibilities, and some have therefore had to reduce the percentage of grants that are passed onto their schools.

Governance of RMA-run schools

There are many government regulations and guidance documents relating to the governance of RMA schools. These schools are required to have SGBs which have devolved responsibilities from the RMA as follows:

- Set the school's vision, strategic objectives and values, ensuring these are clear, relevant to its local environment and effectively communicated to stakeholders
- Agree and monitor an annual School Enhancement Plan (SEP), including educational development objectives for the coming year and associated actions. The SEP is typically agreed by SGBs early each school year. During the process SGBs should review performance against the previous year's SEP. The SEP should include the metrics to be used to assess performance against the objectives
- Provide effective challenge to the school's executive leaders, and hold them to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Ensure that best practice financial management arrangements operate at all times and the school consistently delivers good value for money
- Ensure that effective policies are applied in areas such as safeguarding, recruitment, risk management, health and safety, data protection, ICT security etc.

Governors on SGBs are non-remunerated volunteers who are expected to have, or develop, relevant knowledge and skills. An SGB can have up to 12 members. At least two governors should be a parent of a child in the school concerned, elected by parents. One governor should be a member of staff elected by staff, and one governor is appointed by the RMA from among their cohort of elected members. The school's Head is automatically a member of the SGB. The SGB can recruit (or co-opt) other governors as it sees fit. Government guidance states that while effective SGBs can operate with fewer than 12 members, it is expected that SGBs should aim to have at least 8 members at any one time to ensure that the breadth of their responsibilities can be effectively discharged.

The financial performance of RMA schools is consolidated into the RMA's annual financial statements. Government guidelines encourage RMA schools to budget for a year end surplus of 5-8% of annual budgeted income. The schools can retain year end surpluses, but the school must give an explanation to the RMA if it exceeds 10% of that year's income and state how surpluses will be returned to expected levels. Under certain circumstances, the RMA can take back any surpluses deemed as excessive. An RMA school can set a deficit budget if it has the reserves to cover the planned deficit. When it does not have the reserves to cover it, an RMA school can only set a deficit budget if agreed by the RMA and there is a robust plan to return the school to surplus by the end of the following year.

Bragua City

The city of Bragua has a population of 250 000 people. It is one of the wealthiest cities in the country, with, for example, unemployment below the national average. There are, though, areas of the city where levels of deprivation exceed the national average.

Elections to Bragua City Council (BCC) in 2022 resulted in a change of administration with the PFP gaining a majority, having run on a manifesto promising to cut what it claimed was wasteful expenditure by the previous administration and to not increase local tax rates for at least the next two years.

As with the whole country, Bragua's population is ageing but high numbers of immigrants moving to Bragua has helped ensure that the birth rate rose steadily since 2010, though it has fallen slightly since 2020, in part because many young families moved from Bragua to rural and coastal areas during the pandemic as home-working became more prevalent.

So, in 2022, in Bragua in the 0-4 age group, there were 13 700 children, compared to 14 000 in 2017 and 13 500 in 2012.

Overall, the lower schools in BCC's area, 25% of which are run by CETs, can accommodate up to 12 000 children at any one time. Around 15% of children of lower school age were enrolled in one of the three private sector schools located in Bragua and its immediate surrounds as at September 2022.

In recent years, BCC has slightly cut the percentage of central government grants it allocates to its schools. This has mainly been due to the large increase in EEN children in Bragua and the need to fund the expansion of schools specifically set up for EEN children. This has also been despite BCC diverting some of its local tax revenues to supplement the grants provided by national government for education, a practice the new PFP administration has ended. Despite the increased resources allocated to EEN, BCC's 2022/23 EEN budget is massively overspent and the time taken to review EEN applications has risen from an average of 6 months two years ago to 15 months now.

During 2022/23, two BCC schools had to get BCC's agreement to set a deficit budget and at least two more are now expected to be in deficit by the end of 2022/23. The average surplus by the BCC schools projecting a surplus is expected to fall to around 5% of their income, compared to 7% in 2021/22.

BCC charges for services offered to its schools on an annual service level agreement (SLA) basis. The services are: governor advice and training; health and safety, property management; legal advice; human resources; financial accounts and management; and, payroll. In each SLA, a fixed annual fee is charged that covers most requirements, but there are supplementary fees for usage deemed to be excessive, unusual or particularly specialist. The fees were increased by an average of 2% for the 2022/23 financial year, and RMAs are expected to ensure that the fees do not exceed the full cost of provision. Most BCC schools buy into at least most of these services, though the volume of subscriptions typically reduces a little every year. Its schools can also join BCC's council-wide procurement arrangements for items such as energy and insurance.

Colodor Lower School (CLS)

Organisation and staffing

CLS is an RMA school located on the edge of Bragua's retail centre, near to many public bus routes that go from residential suburbs to the city centre. The building dates from 1900, with extensions added in the past 20 years. Unusually for Bragua's lower schools, it has large outdoor green spaces and all-weather facilities, providing the scope for various sporting activities. Its catchment area consists mostly of high-density housing and a population that is more ethnically diverse than the rest of the city. It also includes a comparatively high proportion of households for whom English is not their main language and 25% of households are living in poverty.

Nearby is Surana lower school, an RMA school which has received a 'Very Good' rating at each PEI inspection, the last in October 2022, and for many years has received admission applications well in excess of its Year 1 capacity. There are four other lower schools within three kilometres of CLS, two of which are run by CETs and each has recently received a first ever 'Good' PEI rating. The other two are RMA schools, both recipients of a first 'Weak' inspection rating in 2022. Each of these schools is not at full capacity, and each had five unfilled places in their 2022/23 intake. Most children from CLS go to Bolay upper school after year 6, which is 500 metres from CLS.

Across two classes per year group, CLS has capacity for 360 children. Each class has a full-time teacher. CLS also employs three non-class-based 'floating' full time teachers who lead on support for children with EEN, and provide many one-to-one sessions with children that need them. They also provide some cover for absent teachers and one manages the contract with the company that delivers CLS's SPE curriculum. Most of the teachers have worked at CLS for over 10 years, and there have been no starters or leavers since July 2020. CLS also employs 18 Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), who support teachers in classes and support other activities such as school trips and sports. LSAs also support the optional clubs run after school. Attendance at these clubs and on school trips usually involves a charge to families. The school also contracts with external agencies to provide temporary cover for teachers and LSAs when staff are absent.

CLS also employs a full time School Operations Manager (SOM), Ali Chima. Ali is a qualified accountant and is responsible for CLS's financial management, premises management, payroll, human resources administration, management of most contractors (including catering, cleaning, ICT and grounds maintenance) and general administration activities such as managing the website, sending communications to families, managing reception etc. Reporting to Ali is a receptionist, a premises officer and a general administrator, each of whom is part-time. The school also employs several people for an hour each day during school terms to provide support in the lunch break so that staff can have a break while the children eat lunch and have a break from classes.

The Head, Erik Bolay, leads the school's Senior Management Group (SMG) which is responsible for the school's operational management, and which meets weekly. The SMG comprises the Head, Deputy Head, Liz Urla, and the three teachers without a designated class. The teachers on the SMG have some specific management responsibilities in addition to their teaching role, focused on aspects such as curriculum development, subject leadership and line management of LSAs. The performance management of all the teachers is split between the Head and Deputy Head.

CLSs pupil numbers as at 1 November in recent years is as follows:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
2022/23	52	46	54	55	58	58	323
2021/22	50	50	56	56	59	57	328
2020/21	55	56	58	57	57	55	338
2019/20	56	59	58	57	56	56	342

PEI inspection

CLS was last inspected by the PEI in February 2020. It received an overall 'weak' rating, its first, with the main points of criticism being:

- There are inconsistent teaching practices between the two classes for most year groups, and the quality of teaching varies considerably across the school
- CLS has a shorter school day than most lower schools in Paratina, and should consider raising it by 30 minutes to facilitate better curriculum coverage
- Greater priority needs to be given to staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD), especially their curriculum knowledge and teaching practice
- The school is struggling to provide effective support for the increasing numbers of children with EEN, and other children awaiting EEN assessment by BCC
- Attainment measures at Year 3 and 6 have fallen since the last inspection and are generally significantly lower than at comparable schools
- Children's attendance is below national average and falling. Staff try hard to improve it, but many of the families concerned resist attempts to engage with them

- Children's behaviour was observed to be good, but feedback from staff, children and families suggests that classes are regularly disrupted by poor behaviour.

The PEI report also included the following positive points:

- Safeguarding practices are effective, and staff demonstrated excellent knowledge of the regulatory and best practice requirements
- Some of the teaching is of very high quality
- All staff showed strong commitment to the progress and wellbeing of the children
- The school has a good, well-balanced curriculum, with provision especially strong in Music and History, and it has excellent facilities to support a strong SPE offer
- The school works very well with pre-school settings and families to help ensure a smooth start for the new intake into Year 1
- Via the School Forum children from each class, chosen by their peers, meet with teachers each half term to input to decisions about aspects of the school's operations, such as the choice of new playground equipment, or school lunch menus. It is very helpful for the personal development of children.

Due to its 'weak' rating in 2020, CLS should have been re-inspected in the current school year but due to the pandemic, the next inspection is in September 2023. To help improve its performance, CLS commissioned Ecuna Consultancy Services to review the school; their report of September 2022 highlighted the following:

- Behaviour of children is a concern, with Years 1, 2 and 3 a particular problem. In part this could be due to the pandemic with children missing school or pre-school for long periods and CLS unable to engage effectively with pre-school settings
- Teaching quality has improved overall and is more consistent but there is insufficient evidence that improvement is embedded securely and that attainment in Year 3 and 6 tests will have improved significantly in the 2022/23 school year
- All staff have received annual training on areas such as safeguarding and health and safety. But CPD activities on developing subject knowledge and teaching practice have been patchy in the past year and processes to identify and plan to meet staff CPD needs are not reliable
- CLS is lagging behind other lower schools in its application of modern technology in the delivery of the curriculum in the classroom
- CLS has cut the provision of non-core subjects, such as SPE, and increased time for core subjects and one-to-one support for children identified as struggling and those with EEN, whether their EEN status has been validated by the RMA or not. This may improve Year 3 and 6 test results, but it is questionable whether this provides a balanced curriculum and may not be in children's long term interests
- CLS provided an impressive online learning offer in the pandemic, which has also been used effectively since it re-opened when it has been necessary to close individual classes. This also leaves the school well-placed for any future instances when the school needs to close, for example during adverse weather
- As CLS is not part of a CET-run network of schools, it has fewer natural opportunities to learn from other schools, and benchmark approaches. The Head and some teachers do this in a limited way but the school should pursue such opportunities more extensively and in a more structured way.

<u>Governance</u>

Following the 2020 PEI inspection, many of CLS's senior staff, including the Head and Deputy Head, and all of the SGB, resigned. A new Board became operational from September 2020. The new Head, Erik Bolay, previously held his first Head position at another lower school for four years, gaining a strong reputation for rapidly improving the

school's educational performance following a 'weak' PEI inspection rating. During the recruitment process, run by BCC, he argued successfully that his Deputy Head from his previous school, Liz Urla, should be appointed as his deputy at CLS. Liz Urla was the only member of staff who registered an interest in becoming staff governor.

In September 2022, the following information about CLS's SGB was published on the school's website as part of its annual governance report:

Name	Governor designation	Appointment date	Meetings attended in 2021/22	Occupation	Declared business and personal interests
Erik Bolay	Head	1 September 2020	4/4	Head of CLS	None
Hans Peco	Co-opted governor, Chair of the Board	1 September 2020	4/4	Journalist	Parent of child in year 5 at CLS
Liz Urla	Staff governor	1 December 2020	2/4	CLS Deputy Head	None
Sal Parca	Co-opted governor	1 September 2021	2/4	Architect	Parent of twins in year 6 at CLS
Dina Elbia	RMA governor, Deputy Chair of the Board	1 April 2020	3/4	Elected member of BCC	BCC Lead Member for Transport. Parent of two children at Surana Lower School
Cal Argor	Co-opted governor	1 September 2021	3/4	Owner of Argor IT Services	Parent of child in year 6 and year 1 at CLS; Argor supplies IT services to CLS

The Board meets once a term. The minutes of the first meeting of the current school year are at Appendix 1. The Board does not have any standing committees as the Head and Chair agreed in 2020 that with so few governors it would place too heavy a burden on governors and committee meetings would probably rarely be quorate.

Bel Colas, a self-employed photographer is due to be co-opted to the SGB and take over as Chair at its next meeting. Bel's eldest child finished at CLS in 2020, and she has a child in year 4. Bel's company takes the annual photographs of the school's children, which are made available for sale to families, as well as photographs for the school website.

<u>Strategy and stakeholder engagement</u>

In September 2020, the newly-appointed Board set a new vision for CLS as follows: *Providing a safe, caring, and inclusive environment for learning and personal development, enabling all children, regardless of ability, to maximise their potential, and to develop a lifelong love of learning, preparing them to be good world citizens.*

A newsletter is sent to all families at the end of each term. It includes details of what each class has been doing in the term, summarises performance in the formal Year 3 and Year 6 tests and in the internal assessments taken by all classes, and reports pupil attendance statistics in that term. Each family is also invited to be a member of a private social media group administered by CLS, to which the school posts photographs of school activities. Also, near the end of each school term, families are invited to a short online meeting with a teacher to discuss their child's progress that term.

CLS administers an annual family survey. The same questions were asked in the last two years. A summary of the results from the July 2021 and 2022 surveys is below:

	2021 Agree	2022 Agree
1. My child is happy at school	90%	85%
2. My child feels safe at school	95%	95%
3. My child makes good progress at school	85%	80%
4. My child is taught well at school	85%	80%
5. The school ensures that children are well-behaved	90%	80%
6. The school is led and managed well	95%	88%
7. School staff are responsive to my queries and concerns	95%	83%
8. I get valuable information about my child's progress	95%	92%
9. The school has an excellent curriculum	78%	82%
10. I would recommend the school to other families	85%	80%

The response rate was 50% in 2021 and 40% in 2022. A few respondents included text in the free form response box inviting any other comments, the main ones being:

- Four respondents stated they had not received enough information about the curriculum to be able to answer question 9, and this also meant they did not feel able to provide effective complementary input at home for their children
- Five respondents stated that holding the termly meetings with the class teacher online rather than in person, was very convenient
- Six respondents raised concerns about the cost of the school uniform, pointing out that the overall cost to families is higher than at some other local schools
- The same six respondents also stated that families are expected to pay too much towards activities such as the post-school clubs and school trips
- Eight respondents stated that they wanted a return to in person termly meetings with their child's class teacher as happened prior to the pandemic
- Nine respondents stated that they had found it very difficult to arrange ad hoc meetings with staff to discuss issues relevant to their child's education
- Nine respondents raised concerns about the disruptive impact on their child's education of the behaviour of some other children in class
- Ten respondents stated that they were not sufficiently consulted about the increase in the length of the school day by 30 minutes from September 2021 and that the change was still causing them practical difficulties.

<u>CLS finances</u>

As with all RMA schools and government bodies, CLS's financial year is 1 April to 31 March. Its 2021/22 outturn and 2022/23 revenue budget, for which an inflation factor of 3% was assumed for most items, is at Appendix 2.

<u>CLS internal audit</u>

Periodically, BCC's internal audit function reviews the schools for which it is responsible. The most recent internal audit at CLS took place in July 2022; a summary of the report, sent to the Head and Chair of Governors in August 2022, is at Appendix 3.

The candidate

You are Fran Cosama, recently appointed as Finance Officer in BCC's Education department, providing financial management support for schools and for the department generally. You report to Uri Venala, Head of Finance in the Education department.

Minutes of CLS SGB meeting on 14 November 2022 **Appendix 1**

Decisions and action points

Item 1: Welcome and apologies for absence

- Apologies from Liz Urla who had to cover a Year 6 class at short notice due to staff sickness. Sal Parca was absent, no apologies submitted.

Item 2: Declarations of conflicts of interest

- There were no new declarations of interest made.

Item 3: Annual governance business

- The Board's terms of reference set in 2020/21 were re-approved for 2022/23.
- All governors reminded to complete annual declaration of adherence to the code of conduct, and the skills audit to inform governor training and recruitment plans.
- Discussion of governor training plans for 2022/23 deferred to next meeting.
- Hans Peco to stand down as Chair but continue as governor. No-one else wanted to be Chair. Need to urgently recruit at least two new governors, one to be Chair. All governors to gauge interest amongst local contacts. Governors agreed new Chair needs strong skills in strategic planning and marketing. Hans would also ask BCC if it could help with a strategic review of CLS.

Item 4: Family Survey

- The Head reported that there had not yet been time to consider the results of the survey from July, and this item should be deferred to the next meeting.

Item 5: Review of 2021/22 performance

- Oral report from Head. Reminder provided of the disruptive effect of Covid-19, from last term of 2019/20, through 2020/21, which limits historical comparisons.
- Except for small improvement in Mathematics, Year 6 results similar to 2018/19 for all subjects, at 7-13% below national averages and 3-6% below averages for benchmark group of schools. Year 3 results showed a small improvement in all subjects compared to 2018/19, but still 5-7% below national averages and 1-3% below averages for benchmark group of schools.
- Attendance at 83% in term 3, compared to 85% (term 2) and 86% (term 1). A governor asked why attendance had fallen. The Head stated it was the usual factors, i.e., family holidays and illness, plus the ongoing effect of Covid-19.
- Teachers' & LSA sickness absence still high: 2021/22 average 13 days (national average 11 days), 2020/21 17 days (national average 14 days).

Item 6 2022/23 School Enhancement Plan

- The Head gave a lengthy oral presentation, with a detailed handout. He referred to improved consistency in the quality of teaching as per the September Ecuna consultancy report, so assumed that the 2020/21 vision and objectives and actions set for 2021/22 should be rolled forward for 2022/23. The objectives focus on consistent high quality teaching, strengthened internal formative assessment and feedback mechanisms and high quality support for disadvantaged children and families. Also, as in 2021/22, performance targets for Years 3 and 6 are to match the benchmark groups' results.
- Governors clarified some jargon but had no questions and approved the School Enhancement Plan.

Item 7: Staff Structure 2022/23

- The Head presented the staff structure for 2022/23 which is the same as 2021/22 plus the appointment of an extra LSA, due to the increase in children suspected of

having EEN. The Head noted that a Year 3 teacher retires at the end of July and he would initiate recruitment plans in January. Governors approved the structure.

Item 8: Admissions, New Starters and Leavers

- The Head noted a small increase in Year 1 admissions to 52 this year. Responding to a governor question, the Head confirmed the pre-pandemic practice of teachers visiting families before their child started at CLS had not been reinstated.
- The Head reported that 10 children from Years 1-5 left CLS last year, and 10 children had started in Years 2-6 this term. A governor queried the reasons for the leavers and the Head stated that no formal analysis had been done but that it was probably due to the families moving house.

Item 9: Ecuna Consultant's report September 2022 (*paper circulated before meeting*)

- The Head reported that the findings of the report were taken into account in producing the School Enhancement Plan. Governors had no questions and noted the report.

Item 10: Finance

- The Head stated that the October 2022 management accounts was not yet available, but it would be forwarded to governors for information when available.
- The Secretary noted that a budget approval meeting is needed in March 2023.

Item 11: Internal Audit report July 2022

- Due to lack of time, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

Item 12: Head's termly update report (*paper circulated before meeting*)

- Governors noted the Head's report providing updates on safeguarding, staff performance management, and curriculum developments and had no questions.

Item 13: Update from Chair

- The Chair summarised new government requirements on pupil attendance monitoring following PEI concerns that attendance had not returned to pre-Covid levels. The Head stated that CLS already did everything it could to minimise pupil absence and governors need not be concerned about the new requirements.

Item 14: Update from RMA Governor

- Dina Elbia gave an oral update on developments at BCC, including the appointment of a new Lead Member for Education, plans for a BCC secondary school to join a CET and changes to school transport policies.

Item 15: Reports of Governor school monitoring visits and training activities

- Hans Peco reported on how much he had enjoyed volunteering to read with CLS children identified as needing extra help with reading. The Head reinforced how valuable this is, and asked if other governors could provide similar help this year.
- There were no governor training activities to report on from last term.

Item 16: Policies for approval

- Governors had no questions or observations on the policies tabled on whistleblowing, staff code of conduct and safeguarding and these were approved.

Item 17: Any other business

- The Head asked a governor to help with the LSA interviews on 18 November.
- The Head asked for at least one governor to attend each school Christmas event – the Year 3 and Year 6 plays, the Christmas lunch and the fair.

Date of next meeting: 9 February 2023, 6.00pm.

CLS 2021/22 Outturn and 2022/23 Revenue Budget **APPENDIX 2**

	2021/22 Budget £	2021/22 Outturn £	2022/23 Budget £
INCOME			
Government operating grant	1 633 000	1 633 702	1 664 700
DPG	137 500	147 583	159 400
EEN grant	125 700	111 044	138 100
Covid recovery grant	58 300	58 300	47 600
Donations[1]	17 500	27 500	28 300
Charges to families (trips, school clubs)	120 000	114 388	117 800
Premises hire charges	1 200	250	1 300
TOTAL INCOME	2 093 200	2 092 767	2 157 200
EXPENDITURE			
School leadership staff	182 500	183 128	188 600
Teaching staff	765 700	766 206	796 400
LSAs	457 000	459 353	475 000
Administrative staff	135 300	135 882	140 000
Lunchtime assistants	55 000	55 487	57 200
Temporary external staff	28 000	50 113	29 000
Staff training and development	15 000	5 150	15 500
Staff recruitment	3 000	0	3 100
Energy[2]	45 200	52 088	53 700
Water	7 400	8 991	9 300
Building maintenance	31 500	23 089	23 800
Grounds maintenance	10 400	5 537	5 700
ICT	33 100	44 262	45 600
Learning resources and equipment	65 700	73 188	75 400
School trips' direct costs	20 000	22 244	22 900
After-school clubs' direct costs	81 800	85 754	88 300
Office supplies	18 900	18 827	19 400
Insurance[2]	11 300	11 355	11 700
Cleaning	27 800	29 992	30 900
Catering	58 900	62 331	64 200
BCC SLA charges[3]	32 900	37 088	33 900
Governor expenses	3 000	4 138	4 300
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2 089 400	2 134 203	2 193 900
RESERVES BROUGHT FORWARD	202 082	202 082	160 646
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) IN YEAR	3 800	(41 436)	(36 700)
RESERVES CARRIED FORWARD	205 882	160 646	123 946

1 Regular donations have been received from local businesses for some years, plus there was a legacy payment received from a former pupil of £10 000 in 2021/22.

2 CLS has its own contracts for energy supplies and insurance, having chosen not to join BCC's central procurement arrangements

3 CLS has subscribed to all the SLAs offered to schools by BCC.

- Some recommendations made in the last internal audit review in 2019, particularly concerning controls over ordering and payments, have not been fully implemented.
- Documentation regarding some supplier contracts was incomplete.
- There was no evidence of leaders systematically assessing the value for money provided by supplier contracts and no policy on the regularity of tendering. It is unclear who in school formally manages supplier contracts, and whether sufficient expertise exists within the school for effective contract management.
- Unlike many other local schools, CLS has not joined any purchasing consortium arrangements, such as those provided by BCC for items such as energy and insurance, and no evidence that this option has been thoroughly evaluated.
- The school does not have an asset register and there are no systematic asset management plans in place for the premises, ICT and school equipment.
- In producing the 2022/23 budget, detailed working papers were produced by the SOM but there is little evidence of a systematic consideration of risks to budget assumptions by school leaders, or analysis of potential longer term income and expenditure projections.
- Monthly management accounting statements are provided to the SMG by the SOM, and a quarterly summary is provided to the Chair of the SGB, but there is little documentary evidence of review of them by school leaders.
- School leaders do not systematically benchmark running costs. This is useful for many expenditure areas, but as an example, in 2021/22, CLS's expenditure per pupil on teaching (including temporary) staff and on LSAs were respectively 10% higher and 15% higher than the average for relevant benchmark schools.
- There is no evidence that the school gives serious attention to the scope for increasing income generated. Options might include hiring out the school building for activities when children are not on site. Also, as many other schools in Bragua have limited or no green outdoor spaces on their sites, some may be interested in obtaining periodic access to CLS's excellent playing fields for their children.
- The website complies with regulatory requirements. It has good functionality for families; for example, access to curriculum resources. Also, the process for online booking and payment for extra activities such as school trips is very user-friendly and robust. However, there is little information on the website about the school's vision, values, objectives, activities, and a general lack of images. Some links, for example to newsletters, were broken.