

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXCALIBUR SCHOOL LOCAL
GOVERNING BOARD HELD AT THE SCHOOL
ON 20TH NOVEMBER 2023 at 17.00.**

Name	Governor Category	Designated Role	Attendance
Gail Whittingham	Co-opted Governor	Chair	Present
Gill Burgess	Co-opted Governor	Vice Chair	Present
Juliet Jones	Headteacher	Headteacher	Present
Rachel Hackney	Co-opted Governor		Apologies
Simon Cotterill	Co-opted Governor		Apologies
Tom Egley	Co-opted Governor		Apologies
Shaun Smith	Co-opted Governor		Present
Philip Yeomans	Parent Governor		Present
Rachel Morrison	Parent Governor		Present
Kay Griffin	Staff Governor		Present
Joanna Longman	CMAT Chair of Directors		Present
James Fuller	LGB Link Governor		Apologies
Sue Lambeth	Clerk		Present
Yvonne Hilditch	SBM		Present
Deb Rogers	Staff Member		Present

PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

The meeting was quorate and started at 17.10.

	Item
1.	<p>Foundation and Key Stage 1 (KS1) Writing Presentation Deb Rogers / Kay Griffin (For full detail refer to the document in the meeting pack)</p> <p><u>Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)</u> The baseline for EYFS was that 6 pupils had not achieved the Early Learning Goal (ELG) in writing in the previous year and had therefore been unable to achieve Good Level of Depth (GLD) overall at the end of EYFS. Although all had mitigating reasons, the aim was to improve. Details of actions were shared with governors which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read, Write Inc., which incorporated spelling and writing words. • ‘Hold a sentence’ in which pupils, alongside reading, had the chance to write a sentence to ensure they learnt strategies to spell. • Fred Fingers for spelling. • Daily dough disco to improve muscle memory. • Maximisation of fine and gross motor skills including the correction of pencil grip and correct posture.

- Adherence to Drawing Club based on quality texts and exciting key words.
- Guided writing sessions at least once a week.

Joanna Longman joined the meeting at 17.17.

In Pre-school steps taken included Daily Dough Disco, funky fingers, letters and sounds Phase 1, Squiggle while you wiggle, fine and gross motor development, helicopter stories, language development with the introduction of Read Write Inc. in the summer term.

End points of Pre-School and Reception writing were shared.

Key Stage 1

The key areas considered were Transcription (Spelling and Handwriting), Composition and Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. Year 1 and 2 baselines in each of the three areas were shared together with actions and end points.

Sean Smith joined the meeting at 17.25.

Transcription

Pathways to spelling began in the spring term for Year 1, and in Year 2 parents were given ideas to support the learning of spellings. Pupils were expected to spell at the level they had been taught and governors learnt of the difficulties for pupils in copying spellings accurately and common exception words.

Governors learnt of the diverse range of handwriting abilities across Year 1, and handwriting baselines, actions and end points for Years 1 and 2 were shared and explained. Actions included a carousel with handwriting books introduced in Year 2. A new agreed handwriting style was to be introduced and the concept of handwriting families was introduced in Year 1.

Q: How important is muscle memory and what is the approach taken to focus on this?

A: Bad habits can have developed and it is a question of undoing them. A multi-sensory approach is taken and dealt with letter by letter.

Composition was based on quality text with adult support to help pupils plan their ideas if required. Baselines, actions and end points were shared for Years 1 and 2. Writing took place in small groups in Year 1 with writing modelled by the teacher and pupils are encouraged to reread. In Year 2 all writing opportunities came from personal experience or quality text and children worked collaboratively to develop vocabulary and sentence structure and edit work.

Q: Is the coverage of gross motor skills a recent introduction?

	<p>A: Post Covid staff became aware of the need to revisit how to sit appropriately on a chair and what is good posture. At the age of 5, very different mastery of these skills is apparent.</p> <p>Q: How are the reasons for steps in writing explained to parents? A: This is done through the Reception parents' introduction, and writing workshops for KS1 and 2 could be a possibility. Conversation with parents take place, the website has links and video links are uploaded to Seesaw.</p> <p>The Head confirmed that the possibility of parental drop in workshops, either in person or virtually was being explored.</p> <p>KG and DR were thanked for their work both on writing and in the recent Ofsted visit.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Any Other Business Governors and Joanna Longman, CMAT Chair of Directors, were welcomed by the Chair and Headteacher, together with Felicity Hawkins, a new Co-opted Governor who had received Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance and would joining the LGB from 20th November.</p> <p>Apologies received from Rachel Hackney, Simon Cotterill and Tom Egley were accepted.</p> <p>No other items of Part One business were requested.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Declarations of Interest There were no potential pecuniary interests or conflicts of interest between an individual and the governing board as a whole in connection with the business to be discussed during the meeting.</p> <p>All Declarations of Interest for 2023-24 had been updated on GVO.</p> <p>At the time of the meeting no documents had been read nor had the Code of Conduct been signed by Philip Yeomans, Simon Cotterill and Tom Egley. Governors were requested to log into Every to complete this as soon as possible. Kay Griffin was requested to read outstanding documents on Every.</p> <p>ACTION: To sign the Code of Conduct on Every. (PY, SC and TE) ACTION: To read and confirm all outstanding documents on Every. (All)</p> <p>Governors requested training on Every at the start of the Spring 1 meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: To request JW delivered training on Every at the start of the Spring 1 meeting. (Clerk)</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Chair's Action The Chair reported no actions.</p>

<p>5.</p>	<p>Membership The membership of the LGB was confirmed to be as shown on this document.</p> <p><u>New appointments</u> Felicity Hawkins was confirmed as a new Co-opted governor with effect from 20th November 2023.</p> <p><u>Vacancies</u> Simon Cotterill's term of office was due to expire on 24th November 2023, and he had confirmed his wish to continue either attending meetings in person or virtually. He would be re-appointed from 24th November 2023.</p> <p>There were no other governor terms of office due for renewal before the end of the academic year.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>Headteacher (HT) Report – Part One</u> The HT report was available in the meeting pack and governors were thanked for their comments on GVO.</p> <p><u>HT report comments / questions and responses on GVO</u> Q: 1.2 Attendance. Would it please be possible to show the total impact of absence within the characteristics reported vs the overall? In other words, be good to see FSM +LAC + other + other, etc total absence contribution vs the rest of school. A: This information is not easy to extrapolate. Moreover, the information given is for governors to have assurance that our vulnerable children are not having significantly high levels of absence.</p> <p>Q: 1.2 What was the absence % from last term? A: Attendance over the last full term is 95.13%. Comparatively, the summer term before was 95.82%</p> <p>Q: Are we comfortable that we have reviewed lessons learned from our bullying incident in Spring 23? A: Yes, this has been fully investigated and continues to be monitored. We treat each case of bullying seriously and in the same way. We have had recent meetings with children and parents involved and the situation is, at the moment, resolved, but we will continue vigilance.</p> <p>Q: 2.1 I have never known us have one teacher complete 2 x job shares across 2 different classes. That's 2 classes to lesson prep for and c60 children to consider and engage with, as well as up to 120 parents/carers. Sounds tough. How is that going? A: The teacher works in the Reception class on Thursday afternoon and Friday all day. She works in the Year 1 class for one whole day, on a Monday. She has paid PPA time, so has an appropriate amount of time to plan. In addition, she works closely with class teachers to ensure consistency of approach. As she taught the Year 1 children in Reception, getting to know both them and their parents is not a problem.</p>

	<p>I have recently completed the teacher's performance management and this raised no concerns. A brief update can be included in future HT reports.</p> <p>Q: 2.4 Great reduction in team absence, year on year. Now that we're heading into our most challenging time of year in terms of illness, are we asking staff what might make a difference for them? Do they have ideas?</p> <p>A: This is a standing discussion point in our performance management discussions. Where modifications to roles/ responsibilities and time given can be made, these have been actioned, such as the redistribution of a staff member to support (this has happened as a result of two PM discussions).</p> <p>Q: Pre-School: thank you to everyone who worked so hard to get us in shape to build the nursery. 14 children - wow! Love the next steps, shows forward planning and love the idea that everything we do is making the children 'school ready'. I would be interested in early parent feedback to help us shape our roadmap. What are our plans to conduct a parent survey?</p> <p>A: We will be sending out our annual parent survey in March.</p> <p>Q: 6.3 The spend for identification of dyslexic characteristics is great to see. It would be good now to know how our practice can adapt as a result of understanding children better and also, how our library offering can grow to accommodate more children.</p> <p>A: Classroom practice has been modified throughout the school to improve teaching and learning for our dyslexic children. For example, all Power Points/ worksheets are now shown/printed (where possible) with coloured backgrounds. Coloured overlays have been purchased and are available for our children. With regards to the library, we are expanding our resources through the acquisition of a reading bus which will enable more children to access reading for pleasure.</p> <p>Governors thanked the Head for her comprehensive replies and had no further questions.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Finance Report</p> <p>The School Business Manager explained the following documents shared in the meeting pack:</p> <p><u>October management Accounts</u></p> <p>In the latest forecast the budget showed a £7k surplus for the year.</p> <p>The CMAT CFO had confirmed that no adjustment had been required for the previous year and the reserves carry forward was as anticipated at £101k. This was £14k more than expected with a capital carry forward of £8k. The actual v budget figures could now be prepared and the latest forecast last year compared to actuals would be shared.</p> <p>The SBM highlighted the following as identified in the CFO meeting:</p>

- 1.9% was to be added on General Annual Grant (GAG) funding which could result in some double accounting since the school's Maintained School Additional Grant (MSAG) had been carried forward into the next year.
- A government error had been made in the DfE GAG funding and £12k would be clawed back which would result in a £5k deficit. However, this should not be an issue.

5 year budget forecast

Governors were requested to submit questions on GVO.

Ringfenced funds / Profit making activities

The SBM agreed to upload the ringfenced funding report for 2022-23 and figures up to October 23 together with details of the profit making activities for this year. Documents would be uploaded to GVO and questions were requested.

ACTION: To upload the ring-fenced funding document for 2022-23 and up to October 2023, the budget for 2022-23 and the profit making activities (Out of Hours and Early Years) reports to GVO. (SBM)

Q: Will the original budget for Nursery based on 8 children be amended as there are now 14 children?

A: Yes, the number will be 14 for the current year. However, this could increase to 21 or 24 with the correct staffing.

Q: Could pre-school accounts be shown separately?

A: Currently out of hours and early years can be seen separately and is shown as a profit making hub across the school. These can be identified separately and shared with governors.

All virements were shown on the documents shared with governors.

Debtors and any write offs

Debtors were audited at the year end with no issues. Debtors over 90 days had not increased and no increase in provision was required at the end of October.

No school-specific audit points were known

Q: Are the costs for work underway on the mobile under control?

A: The handover of keys is scheduled for 15th December for a move on 19th. The work will be completed on time and on budget.

The Chair thanked the SBM for her work during the Ofsted visit Ofsted and for the timely production of reports.

OFSTED

	<p>The Head thanked governors for being part of the team effort during the recent Ofsted visit. Governance had been identified as a strength in the report and the inspector had been impressed by the level of challenge to school and trust. The School Development Plan (SDP) had already been adapted in line with improvement points. The visit had revealed no surprises and the school had made no challenges on the draft report. The final report had been sent to parents within the appropriate time. The expectations of staff and the behaviour of children were clear as was the culture.</p> <p>The school had submitted no funding bids.</p> <p>The contracts schedule for the school would be added to Every.</p> <p>ACTION: To upload school contract schedule to Every for Governors. (SBM)</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Premises / Health & Safety (H&S) Report The termly <u>SBM Report</u> was available on GVO.</p> <p>An outstandingly successful afternoon <u>fire drill</u> had been attended by the Chair. As the first for pre-school children, it went extremely smoothly.</p> <p>Governors were pleased to note the improvement in classrooms particularly relating to trip hazards. Development of the outside area for Pre-school, Reception and KS1 pupils was included on the SDP led by Kay Griffin.</p> <p>The two Summer 2023 H&S incidents had been reported on Prime, and learning had been taken from the incidents. One incident involving a member of staff had resulted in a reduction of the risk and the area was no longer a problem. A new electronic reporting process would be in place from January 2024 which would allow trend analysis.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Chancery collaboration</u> <u>MAT Action Plan for the year</u></p> <p>Chancery SEND link governor group was scheduled to meet on 30th November and no date had yet been set for the Safeguarding link governor group.</p> <p><u>Chancery Communications – Health & Safety</u> The Vice Chair had sought assurance for the board from the Head via the following questions to which the Head had responded:</p> <p>Q: As per the document, seeking assurance please that our School has reviewed the changes to the Premises Management Procedures, understand them and is implementing.</p> <p>A: The policy has been written and updated by Yvonne. She is responsible for the day to day running of Health and Safety and Premises Management in the school. The requirements within the policy are incorporated into compliance tasks set on Every.</p>

Q: As per the document, seeking assurance please that our HT and key colleagues are aware and are implementing documents and resources now available via Entrust.

A: At the moment, we do not have access to the Entrust website. However, both Yvonne and I have had an induction meeting with Alison Dawson, Entrust representative. Logins are being chased by her.

Q: Please can the HT and key colleagues provide feedback to the LGB on their satisfaction with and differences in quality of provision between CEC and Entrust?

A: It is difficult to answer this, at this present moment, as we are unable to review resources, or have had any dealings with the services provided.

Q: When will be school be able to identify a benefit from the replacement of CE H&S by Entrust e.g. in terms of wellbeing?

A: A review will take place at the end of the academic year.

Although a meeting had taken place to discuss the new package, school log ins were still awaited. Governors expressed serious concerns around the lack of access to the system as payment had been made, particularly as an important part of the package centred on wellbeing. Currently there was no access to risk assessment or wellbeing documentation. The LGB felt they were not assured that the school was accessing and implementing the documents and resources available via Entrust as was requested in the Chancery Communications document. The Head was to lead on wellbeing and SBM would lead on Health & Safety. The CE audit had not been completed in July and a refund was being pursued.

ACTION: To contact JR /JW to investigate and obtain log ins for the Entrust H&S system as a matter of urgency. (HT)

Monitoring of the SDP in the context of the MAT Action Plan and any collaboration work across the trust

No clashes had been identified within the documents and the SEND cross over this year would continue. Headteachers had discussed the deployment of the Deputy Head (DH) group. At the next HTs meeting the Deputy Heads would consider succession planning in the leadership for all schools. The partnering up of Heads and Deputy Heads in a coaching / mentoring approach to carry out deep dives in different schools in order to provide them with a model for this activity.

Further discussion around Heads producing a report for the LGB on all collaborative work taking place was scheduled for the next Heads' meeting. The aim was to convey this information to LGBs on a termly basis.

Chair of Directors response to Excalibur questions July 2023

The background to this item originated from governors' concern around resourcing for the success of the MAT Action Plan.

Following discussions at the Summer 2 LGB meeting, questions had been forwarded to the Chair of Directors which resulted in a meeting at the Chancery Governance day.

The Chair apologised for any misrepresentation of the responses to the questions and the CoD reiterated that CMAT Directors welcomed challenge and questions and that an appropriate communication process was now in place which meant that the Chair and Vice Chairs of the CMAT Board could be contacted directly. They would be happy to attend meetings or respond by email. The aim of the board was for LGBs to meet all directors and also for Directors to attend one LGB meeting per term over an academic year.

The current Link Director, James Fuller, had been unable to attend meetings in the current term; however, there were now three new prospective directors. The LGB welcomed the attendance of a link director at some meetings in order to act as a point of contact.

The Chair set out the main concern of the LGB around the current situation of the CMAT CEO acting as Headteacher at one trust school for 0.8 and acting as CEO for 0.2 of her time.

Q Is this a correct understanding of the situation?

A: Yes. A financial arrangement is in place with the school to pick up a proportion of her salary costs.

Q: What does this division of time equate to?

A: The CEO acknowledged that her role is for 5 days per week as the trust has no Deputy CEO. In reality she is based at the school but is actually working for more than doing more than 0.2 of her time as CEO. Steps to develop the leadership capacity across the trust have been put into place.

Q: How do you have assurance that more than 0.2 CEO is being received?

A: The board has seen no diminution in quality of leadership provided across the trust. Leadership in all requested areas is taking place and she is being held to account for this.

Q: Does greater responsibility and pressure fall on the level of leadership below?

A: To some degree this happens through delegation but not abdication; however, the board is clear that the responsibility remains with the CEO. The need to broaden and deepen leadership capacity across the trust has already been identified prior to the current year and part of the role of the CEO is to develop the capacity across other leaders. The CMAT board could investigate the possibility of a Deputy CEO, although the cost of a full-time non-teaching CEO and Deputy CEO would be prohibitive. There are very skilled, experienced and high quality senior leaders within the trust who could have

the opportunity to look outside their own schools and gain the benefit of strengthening their own school.

Q: Is there time and money for collaboration such as is happening in SEND, Health & Safety and Early Years to be a benefit for all levels?

A: All collaborative strands across the trust require careful monitoring and the CEO remains accountable for all.

Q: Who is leading the trust?

A: The CEO and the Board of Directors lead the trust and set the strategic direction.

Q: Will the current situation result in less involvement by the CEO?

A: Whilst the CEO will have less direct involvement, it should be seen as an opportunity for school heads to have greater chances to lead more widely and in other settings and to develop skills and experience across other schools.

The Head confirmed the benefit of going into other settings and thereby to strengthen their own school. Nevertheless, Excalibur pupils were the prime concern of both the Head and the LGB, and the impact on the school had to be balanced. This would be an opportunity to develop other leaders in the school.

Q: What is the trust long term plan?

A: An advertisement was placed for the recruitment of a Headteacher at the school where the CEO is currently based, but due to the quality of the field no appointment was made in the summer term. As a result the board made the decision, based on all known factors, that it was best for the trust and the school for the CEO with her strong vision to raise all standards there alongside her CEO role over a period of three terms. In the long term the aim is for the CEO to revert to her trust leadership role full-time and to oversee all schools; however, school improvement can use the skills of individuals across the organisation. decision was motivated by the need to address issues at the school and the impossibility of recruitment.

Q: What would happen in the event of another school in the trust requiring intervention?

A: Whilst issues have been identified at another trust school, the challenges and solutions are different.

Governors felt strongly that Excalibur pupils could not be allowed to suffer, and the Chair of Directors confirmed this was understood and that the board was confident that the Excalibur Head working with other schools would be beneficial to the pupils of the school and there was a possibility of reimbursement for her time.

Discussion took place around the contribution to the trust by way of the top slice and the accuracy of the information in the top-slice document provided.

ACTION: To investigate the accuracy of the information (quotation in colourful star) on the top slice document and respond to governors. (JL)

Q: Where is the financial benefit of the reduction in CEO and CFO hours going?

A: The CFO job is still being done as was the case with the previous CFO. The current CFO is also SBM at one school with some possible administration backfill.

Q: Is there a saving of 0.8 salary from the post of Onboarding Lead?

A: The person continues the SBM role along with those of CFO and Onboarding Lead. However, there are currently no schools joining the trust. The CFO is reporting and providing information to the board as did the previous CFO.

Q: Is there a financial benefit to the trust in this arrangement?

A: There is some saving which has been offset against previous years' deficit in the central budget. Costs have been reduced to close the gap. This year the trust will have a focus on the consolidation of schools.

Q: What is the contingency plan if other schools fail to appoint a Headteacher?

A: In that event a reassessment would take place. There are strong deputies within the trust.

Q: Is the trust currently looking to move forwards with its current number of schools or expanding?

A: The current size precludes the trust from doing everything it wishes to provide the level of school improvement it desires. The business side is a strength particularly in areas such as H&S and financial reporting. An estates strategy is now in place. Plans are in place to grow capacity across school improvement, to develop strong heads, deputies and teachers. However, having an Educational Psychologist or having leaders in areas such as numeracy or literacy are not possible as a 5 school trust.

Q: Is there an optimum size for a trust?

A: Based on current research the next step would be to 10 -12 schools. Larger than that could involve in some loss of identity.

Q: How would expansion be tackled?

A: There are many single schools and small trusts in existence which could be explored.

Governors thanked the Chair of Directors her responses.

10. Link governor reports

Rachel Hackney and Gail Whittingham would visit as soon as possible.

	<p>Governors received assurance that the Single Central Record (SCR) had been reviewed.</p>
11. Impact statement	<p><u>Impact of the work of the governing board on the pupils of Excalibur School since the last meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of the LGB was clearly identified in the recent Ofsted report. • The LGB had gained detail behind the SSDP priority on spelling and writing. The Head confirmed that presentations going forwards would be based on the SSDP areas as well allowing staff from other areas to present. • Discussion with the Chair of Directors had added to governors' understanding of the trust. • Governors had received assurance on the position regarding H&S and the successful fire alarm.
12. Policies	<p>The LGB confirmed the approval of the following school policies on GVO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Continuity Plan • Critical Incident Plan • RHE Policy • Lockdown Policy • Premises Management Policy • Behaviour Policy (subject to amendments in comments) <p>The Assessment Policy and the Marking and Feedback Policy were to be presented to teachers prior to ratification by governors.</p> <p>The Parent Handbook would be uploaded to GVO for approval along with the Admission Policy.</p> <p>ACTION: To send the Parent Handbook and the Admissions Policy to the Clerk for approval on GVO. (SBM)</p>
13. Cheshire East Director of Children's Services Report	<p>Governors noted receipt of the report and the summary from Jenny Whiston.</p> <p>The Vice Chair urged governors to sign up to exclusions training.</p>
14. Minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising and actions	<p>The LGB confirmed the approval of the Part One minutes of the meeting on 25th September 2023 on GVO.</p> <p>There were no <u>matters arising</u>.</p> <p>The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and the following points highlighted:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were requested to continue to visit the school as often as possible. • Mike Cross had decided to continue as a governor. • The Chair was to attend safer recruitment training in February 2024. • All other actions had been completed. <p>ACTION: To arrange for Mike Cross to be added to GVO and complete necessary actions on the system. (SBM)</p>
<p>15. Any Other Business</p>	<p>There was no other business for discussion.</p>
<p>16. Date of Next meeting</p>	<p>The date of the next meeting of the LGB was confirmed as 5th February 2024.</p>

The Part One meeting closed at 19.18.