

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXCALIBUR SCHOOL LOCAL
GOVERNING BOARD HELD AT THE SCHOOL
ON 24TH MARCH 2025 at 17.00.**

Name	Governor Category	Designated Role	Attendance
Gail Whittingham	Co-opted Governor	Chair	Present
Gill Burgess	Co-opted Governor	Vice Chair	Apologies
Juliet Jones	Headteacher	Headteacher	Present
Felicity Hawkins	Co-opted Governor		Present
Rachel Hackney	Co-opted Governor		Present
Tom Egley	Co-opted Governor		Present
Shaun Smith	Co-opted Governor		Apologies
Sarah Sproston	Co-opted Governor		Apologies
Ian White	Co-opted Governor		Present
Philip Yeomans	Parent Governor		Present
Rachel Morrison	Parent Governor		Present
Kay Griffin	Staff Governor		Apologies
Sue Lambeth	Clerk		Present
Yvonne Hilditch	School Business Manager		Present

PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

The meeting was quorate and started at 17.00.

	Item
1.	<p>Staff Presentation</p> <p>Dan Hancock, Geography Lead, explained the five-year Geography journey at Excalibur.</p> <p>Previously, there had been a lack of consistency in the teaching of the subject with no progression, no fieldwork and pupils found it difficult to recall key knowledge. The recent School Improvement Partner (SIP) visit had evidenced the journey and confirmed that school was now in an acceptable position. The aim was to continue with the good curriculum in place and future development. Progression documents were now followed across year groups from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) where pupils read age-appropriate books related to Geography. The journey built up to independent fieldwork in Key Stage 2 (KS2) to carry out their own study e.g., carrying out a survey around the impact of the population in Alsager on litter and traffic. Kapow Primary Kapow Primary, adapted by teachers as appropriate, was used to help structure study. Pupils could now recall the majority of the language, and exit questions were used for recapping and recall. Field work e.g. visits to Delamere, to the beach and to Alsager took place across the school.</p>

	<p>FH, PY and GW joined the meeting at 17.02.</p> <p>The aim of progression was to give a solid tower of knowledge with sound foundations. Flashback 4 was used at the start of lessons and end of unit assessments e.g. a letter to explain what had been learnt were in place. Assessments would be completed at the start of the summer term and a museum showcase event would take place with parents to be invited. A progress document available on the website was shared which contained details of each lesson with key questions and the knowledge to be learnt alongside key vocabulary and an assessment task. A knowledge organiser was introduced at the start of each topic for pupil reference. Governors agreed the documents were clear and easy to follow.</p> <p>Q: Do teachers plan their own delivery? A: A structured presentation is available on Kapow (used now for three years) and core learning is structured. However, teachers may enhance if they so wish.</p> <p>Q: Does Kapow fit neatly with the scheme for delivery across a year? A: Yes. It fits neatly across the course of the year, with pupils studying History in the first half of each term and Geography in the second.</p> <p>Pictures of fieldwork were shared and governors learnt that pupils had engaged well with members of the public.</p> <p>Each half term subject leads had time to monitor their subjects and detail areas of strength and development.</p> <p>The next steps were to further enhance fieldwork e.g. on residentials, to enhance writing opportunities in Geography and about Geography and to ensure even more knowledge was retained as pupils moved through school.</p> <p>Dan was thanked for his work and left the meeting at 17.15.</p>
2.	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Any Other Business The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies received from Gill Burgess, Sarah Sproston, Shaun Smith and Kay Griffin were accepted.</p> <p>No items of Part One business were requested.</p>
3.	<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>
4.	<p>Chair's Action The Chair reported no actions since the previous meeting.</p>

5.	<p>Membership</p> <p>The membership of the LGB was confirmed to be as shown on this document.</p> <p>Rachel Hackney agreed to continue for a further 4-year term of office to 2nd July 2029.</p> <p>There were currently no vacancies.</p>
6.	<p><u>Headteacher (HT) Verbal Report – Part One</u></p> <p>This item was to be discussed under Item 9 Strategic Focus.</p>
7.	<p>Finance Report</p> <p>The School Business Manager joined the meeting at 17.55 and tabled the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor Management Accounts 24 03 2025 • Governor latest forecast 24 03 2025 • Governor ringfenced funds 24 03 25 • Governor Profitmaking activities 24 03 25 • Governor virements 24 03 25 <p>The following points were highlighted:</p> <p><u>Management Accounts Report March 2-25 - budget v actuals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GAG funding in the original budget was not showing correctly, although the reason for this was not known. • School started the year with +£24,914 as the budget and the latest position after all changes was a £50,664 rather than £90k. overspend. School still had a positive carry forward at the end of the year. • Governor were able to compare where the latest budget and the budget had changed. <p>Q: What is the comparative budget?</p> <p>A: That is for comparison with the original budget.</p> <p>The last pages explained the <u>virements</u> from the original budget.</p> <p>The latest budget was that worked upon by the Bursar and the Headteacher together and was the anticipated full year position. The comparative one was the full year last July.</p> <p>Q: Are some 100% e.g. TA usage, staff overtime and grounds maintenance?</p> <p>A: Yes. No in-month adjustments are made if payments are made for months in advance.</p> <p><u>5 year budget forecast</u></p> <p>The following points were highlighted:</p>

- The carry forward from the previous year had been £107k, £51k of which would be spent in the current year, and the carry forward would be £56,259. The figures indicate that school would spend £77k (excluding the £3k pay increment) in the next year; however, this was not possible as a negative budget was not permissible.
- The budget for the current year had been drastically cut. All single form entry schools now found themselves in a similar position.

Governors learnt that the main contributing factor was the increasing number of pupils with growing SEND needs, with school experiencing a deficit of approximately £15k for every child requiring one-to-one support. Pupils just below the criteria for one-to-one support cannot be catered for and the situation was unlikely to improve.

The revenue balances for the next 5 years were £-£50,9216, £-77,677, -£105,242, -£118,919 and -£125,177.

The ringfenced funds document showed actual figures 2023/24, actual to date figures for 2024/25 and forecast figures for 2024-25 for Pupil Premium, Sports Premium and Friends of Excalibur (FoE). The funds from FoE events were kept in school, and Lloyds bank would re-instate the Friends of Excalibur account on receipt of the necessary documentation.

The Income generating activities – March 2025 document showed that this year to date Treetops had made £25k and Pre-school £6k, with a prediction of £53k for Treetops and £32k for Pre-school for the whole year.

Virements

- Virements included an additional £39k income some of which was due to the increases in expenditure e.g. teaching staff up £20k. To compensate for the money received for the CSBG (Core School Budget Grant) at £28k was to pay for that, and also to pay for increases in gas and electric and for some increases in percentages of expenditure as obviously salaries keep increasing and other expenditure goes up. The CSBG was paid from April to March but because school is an academy it will be paid from April to August as well and then it will be rolled into the GAG funding. The other increase this year was the NI which had just come in. Part of the increase in the educational support staff, the administration staff and all other staffing was due to the NI increases but school has received a grant of £8522 from April to August as announced in the previous week. A grant would be received for the next year also.
- Other increases were in Early Years due to the consistently greater number of children. £225k was a cautious figure.
- Non-government revenue had increased by £6k based on the actual which was Treetops and trade income. Parent and Nursery income had been increased by £4.5k. This was the funding received for parents

who only received the 15 hours and not the 30 concession which would start when children were three and the charge for lunch time.

A discussion on the number of hours funding and parent entitlement ensued. Funding for 30 hours from the age of three would be available from September 2025. The changes would not necessarily impact negatively on school income.

Staffing Costs

- An increase of £21k in the cost of educational support staff represented the increased number of welfare assistants and for payment of £1569 to all support staff across all grades. There was a proposal for an increase of £3k for every member of support staff together with one additional day's leave. No subsidies were anticipated. This would cause difficulties in staffing for the school.
- Premises staffing reflected a decrease in Site Manager and cleaner hours and an increase in agency staff.
- Administration staff costs had increased by £12.5k due to new members of staff.
- The £6650 increase for behavioural support was to be paid from Pupil Premium (PP) funding, and resilience sessions with whole year groups.

Other costs

- An additional amount of £11k in catering costs reflected the increased cost of dinners for the autumn term and the £5k contribution for the setting up of the new contract.
- The cost of food and drink at Treetops and Early Years had increased by £3k.
- There had been a £2k increase in interest paid on loans and financing i.e. for the CIF Loan and finance over 3 years for IT equipment. The new caterers were costing more than first imagined, and there had been teething problems with the electronic ordering system and suppliers. Nevertheless, the quality of food for children was better and pupils were eating more. Take up had decreased due to the lack of variety in the menu and, after discussion with the School Council, school had moved to the world menu which offered a variety of food similar to that provided previously and included desserts. The take up of Free School Meals had remained constant.

Q: Have Treetops fees increased to cover the cost of food provided?

A: No. The fees are currently in line with other provisions. This will be reviewed.

- ICT costs had increased by up £5.25k due to the purchase of new iPads and Barracuda filtering and monitoring. School had bought into Smoothwall to get in the moment feedback of pupils' internet activity. Filtering was now provided by Barracuda and monitoring by Smoothwall.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other increases included £11k in employee costs; namely an ex gratia payment in the autumn term, recruitment costs for the new Site manager, staff training and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. The increased asset finance costs covered the gate system at the front of school at £19k and £7k for the mobile classroom contribution over 10 years. <p>A further <u>Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bid</u> for the roof work required could not be afforded currently.</p> <p>The <u>Friends of Excalibur</u> funds were held in school by the SBM.</p> <p>After conversations with the auditors, debtors would be investigated and chased. Provision was included and the SBM had no concerns. The Office Manager was pursuing Pre-school debts and the SBM was pursuing those of Treetops.</p> <p>To the knowledge of the SBM there were no <u>school-specific audit points</u>.</p> <p>No <u>funding bids</u> were being considered.</p>
8.	<p>Premises / H&S Matters</p> <p>The termly report was tabled, and governors were requested to contact the School Business manager with any queries.</p> <p>School had scored a Grade 5 on the Health and Hygiene Audit and a Fire Risk Assessment had been carried out. The Fire and Risk document detailing 100 points for attention would be shared on GVO. Some additional costs would be incurred. Those points with a 3-month deadline would be to be addressed first.</p> <p>The Health & Hygiene document had been received and issues would be addressed.</p> <p>The <u>Premises Improvement Plan</u> would be discussed with the Site Manager and the Office manager who was working towards a qualification allowing her to take over the premises responsibility.</p> <p>The report from H&S audit carried out by Entrust (Staffordshire County Council) in February was awaited.</p> <p>The <u>risk register</u> was to be updated in the summer term. The SBM left the meeting at 18.36.</p>
9.	<p>Strategic Focus</p> <p><u>Curriculum and teaching quality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of teaching & learning assessment Curriculum updates & new initiatives

- Staff workload & wellbeing considerations

The strategic focus in the summer term would be the compilation of the annual governance statement.

Teaching & Learning was typically good with visible consistency in classroom practice. Monitoring was based on informal drop ins three times per week for 10 minutes to see typicality. Instant feedback given where necessary and if after two weeks anything significant was causing concern e.g. teacher talk for too long, mention was made and targets set. Teachers and classes wanted to demonstrate what they are doing and the approach enabled the HT to talk to parents about their children based on first-hand knowledge. More robust feedback was sent to teachers. To ensure robust evaluation, findings were triangulated with book looks and data.

Curriculum Development was a focus across the school with leaders in all areas using their allocated half day to carry out monitoring and to talk to teachers and children. Leads in Science, History and writing had presented to the LGB and the reading lead would present at the Summer 1 meeting. The SIP had supported the work with subject leaders and reviews in Maths, Science, DT, Geography and History had taken place.

Staff wellbeing and workload remained a key focus. School did everything possible to minimise the enormous pressure on teachers. Kapow was used to support T&L and schemes of work; however, it was important for teachers to own their lessons and ensure they worked for their pupils. Subject leader time was given and marking has been tightened and was mostly done in class e.g. pupils marking their own Maths work which was seen by their teacher at the end of the lesson. The HT had an open door policy and was approachable. The first question in performance management review (PMR) always related to wellbeing.

Q: Is there a great amount of teacher preparation required for PMR?

A: Teachers are set three targets at the start of the year, one classroom related, one subject leader target and one career specific. Interim reviews in the spring are to identify how teachers are moving towards the achievement of targets and to raise any concerns. At the end of the year there is a final review.

10. **Chancery collaboration**

Feedback from any Chair or Link governor meetings

SEND Links 27th March

IW would attend future meetings together with Rachel Morrison.

SG link governors

The Chair had attended and had nothing to report.

Update on the SSDP in the context of the MAT Action Plan and any collaboration work across the trust

	<p>The work of the Chancery groups had continued, with the HT leading and facilitating the group working on the provision for more able pupils across the trust. Jonathan Riley continued his work on writing with the schools. The DHTs' group had met and discussed potential barriers to achieving greater depth, the deployment of adults and the appropriate level of challenge. DHTs were now visiting each other's schools. One thread emerging was girls and their confidence to achieve greater depth. After analysis of the latest data, the group would identify whether there was a thread for further work. Visits to other schools allowed reflection.</p> <p>The HT advised discussions around the development journey of the Chancery Trust continued.</p>
11.	<p>Link governor reports</p> <p>The link governor visit schedule would be shared with governors once complete.</p> <p>Governors thanked IW for this excellent <u>SEND</u> report, and it was agreed that a presentation on SEND would be made by Anna McArdle (SENCO) at the Summer 2 LGB meeting.</p>
12.	<p>Impact statement</p> <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"> • A discussion with the HT had taken place around attendance and information on attendance guidelines had been shared. The termly attendance review meeting had taken place and a glowing review had been received. Attendance currently stood slightly below 97% (national 93%) and had improved from September. The current effective attendance monitoring system at school remained in place. • A governor had accompanied pre-school pupils on a trip to Ford Door Community Farm.
13.	<p>Policies</p> <p>There were no school policies for governor approval at this meeting.</p> <p>The meeting noted the following Chancery policies had been approved in the Spring term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' Pay • Teacher Appraisal • Pooled Funding and Appeals (<i>no change to top slice</i>) • Charging and Remissions • Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedures • Grievance Policy • Low Level Concerns Policy
14.	<p>Cheshire East Director of Children's Services Report</p> <p>The Spring 2025 report plus summary had been shared on GVO and governors noted the contents.</p>

15.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising and actions</p> <p>The LGB confirmed the approval of the Part One minutes of the meeting on 3rd February 2025 on GVO.</p> <p>There were no <u>matters arising</u>.</p> <p>A list of incomplete tasks from the previous meeting was included in the meeting pack and governors would receive individual reminders from the Clerk.</p>
16.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no additional business to discuss.</p>
17.	<p>Date of Next meeting</p> <p>The date of the next meeting of the LGB was confirmed as 19th May 2025.</p>

The Part One meeting closed at 18.40.