**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXCALIBUR SCHOOL LOCAL**

**GOVERNING BOARD HELD AT THE SCHOOL**

**ON 19TH MAY 2025 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 |
| Felicity Hawkins | Co-opted Governor |  | Apologies |
| Rachel Hackney | Co-opted Governor |  | Present |
| Tom Egley | Co-opted Governor |  | Apologies |
| Shaun Smith | Co-opted Governor |  | Apologies |
| Sarah Sproston | Co-opted Governor  |  | Present |
| Philip Yeomans | Parent Governor |  | Apologies |
| Rachel Morrison | Parent Governor |  | Apologies |
| Kay Griffin | Staff Governor |  | Present |
| Ian White | Co-opted Governor |  | Present |
| Sue Lambeth | Clerk |  | n/a |

**PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

The meeting was quorate and started at 17.09.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Item** |
|  | **Staff Presentation – SEND**Anna McArdle explained the complex strategic and operational elements of the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) including:* The daily oversight of the day-to day operation of the school’s Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Policy and school information report both available on the website
* Co-ordinating provision for the SEND pupils e.g. correct interventions in place with appropriate timetabled staff
* Liaising with parents of pupils
* Supporting and advising colleagues including providing training and promoting exclusive teaching practices
* Liaising with external professionals including Educational Psychologists, speech and language experts, social services, Visyon, mental health services, paediatricians and occupational therapists
* Managing records and documentation e.g. staff contributions to Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and mediations and tribunals
* Monitoring and evaluating SEND provision
* Ensuring compliance with statutory requirements
* Liaising with Cheshire East and West Special Educational Needs (SEN) teams
* Aiding pupil transition from Nursery to Reception, and from Year 6 to Year 7

Latest information was that schools needed to be more inclusive, and no further funding was available for SEND. All CE SEND schools were now full for the next 3 years which had led some schools to set up their own provision for Reception pupils. Standard funding was insufficient to allow schools to do this, particularly in view of the need for specialist staff. Alternative provisions in the area had grown and changed. School felt strongly that staff would soon not be able to meet the needs of pupils. The resulting impact would be felt by all pupils and contact with Staffordshire Children’s Services was recommended for pupils in their area. Parents often wanted their children to attend normal schools which ultimately had to say that needs could not be met. There was serious concern about pupils once at secondary level. Some parents were of a similar view to the school and had challenged the LA. Two complex children had been refused access to special schools who were unable to meet needs. Excalibur wishes to be as inclusive as possible. However, this will become increasingly difficult due to budgetary constraints.Governors questioned whether Chancery MAT would be able to set up alternative provision as part of the current structure and SEND discussion would take place at the Chancery Forum. **Q: How many pupils are at risk of permanent exclusion or on a part-time timetable?**A: None at the moment as specific children have their needs met through 1-1 support. However, should this support need to be reviewed/adapted due to budgetary constraints, this could change for 2 children School endeavours to do its best for pupils, but is concerned, moving forward, that children’s needs may not be met. A meeting of HTs with Sarah Russell, MP for Congleton, is scheduled.Limitations to the work of the school were predominantly finance related. The cost of staffing this year amounted to £145k representing an overspend of £80k.SEND pupils in school and the provision provided comprised:* 10 children with EHCPs and some with significant complex needs requiring one-to -one support.
* One Looked After Child who required one-to-one supervision.
* Four children who were able to share support
* A child who had suffered severe injury and required a great amount of support whose application had been rejected due to the lack of SEN support plan previously.

Governors learnt that school currently had 7 Welfare Assistants in post (2 part-time in preschool). However, across CE there appeared to be a shortage of Educational Psychologists which had resulted in the statutory deadline being exceeded.In September 2025 there would be:* 7 with EHCPs. 2 additional EHCPs are being processed.
* 22 pupils at SEN support level

**Q: Does the SEND link governor provide support for the SENCO?**A: Yes, support is in place and school always finds additional time for the SENCO to complete her work if required. **Q: What is the benefit of being in a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**A: The members of the SEND group across the MAT are supportive of each other and work together effectively. **Q: What can school do to support the issues?**A: School does everything within its capability to meet the needs of pupils in school. The concern is the potential impact on staff wellbeing and other children. The situation is likely to worsen with more SEND needs coming through.**Q: Why are there more pupils with SEND needs?**A: It is thought the educational system is unable to keep up with the advances in the medical system and more children are surviving difficult births. The curriculum also adds difficulties especially for SEMH pupils. Some pressures need to be removed from the curriculum. **Q: How many nursery pupils in Nursery have SEND / EHCP?**A: Three, one with an EHCP.Anna was thanked for her excellent work to bring the challenges to the attention of the LGB and left the meeting at 17.44. |
|  | **Welcome, Apologies and Any Other Business**The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting.Apologies from Tom Egley, Felicity Hawkins, Shaun Smith, Phil Yeomans and Rachel Morrison were accepted. No other items of Part One business were requested. |
|  | **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. |
|  | **Chair’s Action** The Chair reported no actions since the previous meeting. |
|  | **Membership**The membership of the LGB was confirmed to be as shown on this document.There were no other governor terms of office due for renewal before the end of the academic year. Gill Burgess advised that she would be stepping down from the board at the end of the academic year due to relocation and Gail Whittingham would also step down in July 2025 due to the pressure of work. A new Chair and Vice Chair would be appointed to assume their roles from this meeting. The Headteacher thanked both governors for their years of valued service to the school and expressed the best wishes of the board for the future.Chair and Vice Chair roles**Ian White, proposed as Chair by Rachel Hackney and seconded by Sarah Sproston, was duly elected as Chair from 19th May 2025.** **Rachel Hackney, proposed as Vice Chair by Ian White and seconded by Sarah Sproston, was duly elected from 19th May 2025.** Discussion ensued on the resulting two vacancies for co-opted governors and it was agreed that possible new governors be contacted.TASK: To approach prospective new governors. (HT) |
|  | **Headteacher Report – Part One**Governors were requested to indicate their attendance on GVO in advance of the Chancery Governance Forum on 16th June at 9.30 at The Berkeley Academy.ACTION: To issue an email reminder to governors about the Chancery Governance Forum. (HT)Attendance stood currently at 97.17% with all categories showing improvement, and details of the daily and weekly routines had been shared with the safeguarding link governor during her visit. Currently 9 pupils were considered ‘persistently absent’. There were mitigating circumstances for some; however, difficult problems with two. School was in constant communication with parents and doing everything possible to address the issue.The school would be full in September 2025 after 35 first place choices and 85 applications. Although, two pupils currently in Reception had not received places, school was confident that the criteria of the admissions policy had been applied.An external report had been received following a visit from Jonathan Riley (JR) which celebrated the strengths and progress in writing in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Drawing club was also doing well. Staff in Years 1 and 2 were now doing joint planning in writing, a practice which would be rolled into lower Key Stage 2 (KS2). School had been selected for KS2 writing moderation in the current year, and discussions on the transition from Year 5 to Year 6 were taking place. Governors commended the school on its work reflected in JR’s excellent report.**Q: Will JR continue in his current role in English and reading or possibly take on the role of School Improvement Partner (SIP)?**A: A new SIP will be appointed for 2025-26 to provide school with rigorous external validation.**Q: Where does the responsibility for the appointment of the SIP lie?**A: The school has the choice in discussion with the trust.Governors had no comments on the CEO termly data.Transition arrangements including visits and transition days were in place for the four pupils new to the school. The other 26 pupils were currently in Reception and familiar with the setting. **Q: Are there lessons to learn from the pupils joining the school from other provision?** A: Feedback is that the pre-school children who joined in September 2024 from Excalibur were more advanced than others who were new to the school. Pupils from pre-school also settled well and were familiar with school routines.School data* Year 6 had completed the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and the HT thanked to Ian and Rachel for attending. Pupil behaviour had been excellent and the atmosphere had been calm.
* 77% of Year 1 pupils were currently on track for success in the phonics assessment, and 87% overall were anticipated to succeed with four expected to retake the test the following year.
* Over time there had been a tendency for spring data to dip, despite the appropriateness of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) assessments, and investigation would take place with further information to be shared with governors after the summer data drop.

Governors requested a Teams demonstration of the GVO system at the Autumn 1 LGB meeting. TASK: To arrange a demonstration of GVO on Teams at the Autumn 1 LGB meeting. (Clerk)Governors were assured that a review of the Risk Listing had taken place and further discussion, if required, would take place at the Summer 2 LGB meeting.A report on the Chancery LGB Chairs’ meeting would follow. The meeting had been supportive around SEND and had been well attended. An update on Chancery had been shared with news that a full-time Chief Financial Officer (CFO) had been appointed. The acting CFO was to revert to her School Business Manager (SBM) role. **Q: What is the reason for the appointment of a permanent CFO in view of the current consideration of the future of Chancery MAT?**A: Discussions around the future of Chancery MAT continue and will be discussed at the Chancery Governance Forum on 16th June. The new Chair of Trustees is Ann Kowalska.Stakeholder surveysThemes in the resultant data had been analysed by year group, with a particular focus on Year 3 and Year 5.Parents* From 180 parents, there had been only 45 responses. In 2025/26 parents would be invited to complete the survey at parents evenings. Responses had been discussed with class teachers.
* The number of negative bullying question responses at four, was lower than previously. The issue of school dealing properly with concerns raised had been high in Years 5 and 6.
* Most parents believed children had done well in the school; however, some issues in non-response to concerns had been raised.
* Seven parents had felt the school did not keep them updated with how their child was doing in school. As a result, parent links and communication would be added to the SDP for 2025-26, and parents would be encouraged to come into school. A termly newsletter would be issued and the website would be kept up to date. Dojo, currently only used for positive praise, was to be explored for parental communication. Only 2 parents felt their children did not feel safe.
* Overall, the feedback had been positive, with a little negativity around SEND.

ACTION: To investigate use of Dojo for parental communication. (HT) Governors suggested that survey feedback be given to parents and ‘what would make it better’ suggestions requested.Pupils* Responses to questions on the behaviour of pupils in their class, especially in the challenging Year 5 cohort, (Reception year during Covid) had been particularly negative. To address this, school had engaged Mini Medics for 6 weeks to tackle resilience and mental wellbeing, and the Year 5 teacher was to work full-time. The Creative Action Team had also visited. In line with the national picture, there appeared to be a significant issue with mental and health wellbeing. PSHE sessions took place with the class and the timetable for 4 pupils had been adjusted to the school day by allowing them to arrive in school early. There were no pupils on a part-time timetable. The substantive part-time Year 5 teacher was to return to school at the end of the current week. Consideration was being given to the reasons for the behaviour, whether a job share was appropriate and the possibility of the teacher moving through to Year 6 with the cohort.
* 45% of pupils across year groups and subjects had reported they were only being challenged in some lessons. This would be investigated in greater depth.
* 18% of pupils felt they did not have access to an adult to talk to if worried. Of the 8 pupils, 5 were in Year 5 and similar to the data in the previous year. The lack of improvement would be investigated, particularly the behaviour in Year 5.
* The data had been analysed by the SENCO and Kay Griffin to understand how to make it better for the pupils in their final year at Excalibur.
* The main concerns around behaviour in class had come from the pupil survey.

Staff* Of the total number of staff only two members of staff were not totally happy.
* Nevertheless, all liked and were proud of working at the school, felt that all pupils were safe.
* Welfare Assistants had previously expressed concerns at their lack of access to CPD e.g. positive handling training or autism and this would be addressed.

**Q: Could training be provided across the trust for welfare assistants?**A: This has taken place with Pikemere School in the past and will be considered wherever possible. Governors thanked the HT for her comprehensive report and responses. |
|  | **Finance Report**The 2025 / 2026 budget would be presented to governors at the Summer 2 meeting, following the meeting with the acting CFO in Summer 2. |
|  | **Premises / Health & Safety (H&S) Matters**The school’s H&S Audit had been completed and attended by GB. The H&S link governor, Tom Egley, would be invited into school to carry out a walk around.TASK: To invite the H&S link governor to carry out a walk around. (HT) |
|  | **Link governor reports**Safeguarding (SS)The safeguarding link governor had visited school and had met with the Pupil Safeguarding Team comprising six Year 6 pupils with safeguarding responsibility e.g. delivering assemblies on fire and stranger danger. The group explained the current initiatives in place, the support given and training provided. All in all, they were group of empowered young people. The Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings (SCiES) document had been completed for Spring 2 and Summer 1 with all elements covered. A lockdown drill would be put in place and the Single Central Record (SCR) had been checked. Discussion around persistent absence had taken place with the HT as well as a meeting with the SENCO. The mental health agenda and the whole school programmes in place were considered and filtering and monitoring had been discussed. The next visit would include discussions with staff around safeguarding which was high on everyone’s agenda and on every staff meeting agenda.**Q: Can governors be assured that learning has taken place from the prejudice-based incident?**A: The two incidents involving two pupils related to use of a word in certain songs on social media, was treated seriously and parents contacted. Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) had addressed the issue and pupils were reminded of the No Outsiders work previously undertaken. There had been one sexual harassment incident which related to one action which was reported as accidental. The guidance at primary level was not broad; however, the incident was logged. Age-appropriate behaviour was examined and the incident was dealt with appropriately.KG left the meeting at 18.19. |
|  | **Impact statement**Impact of the work of the governing board on the pupils of Excalibur School since the last meeting* Governors discussed and challenged the outcomes of the surveys.
* A new and effective LGB leadership team was appointed.
* Governors gained a good understanding of SEND and the areas of challenge for the MAT.
* Assurance on safeguarding was received from the HT and the safeguarding link governor.
* The views of staff, parents and children were reviewed in order to understand any issues and governors received assurance on the next actions.
 |
|  | **Policies**There were no policies for approval at this meeting. The Marking and Feedback Policy would be shared for approval at the Summer 2 meeting. The meeting noted the following Chancery policies approved by Directors since the last meeting:* Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
* Grievance Policy and Procedures
* Low Level Concerns Policy
 |
|  | **Governor Training**There was no feedback from recent governor training. It was agreed that a link governor for training would be appointed, and Felicity Hawkins would be approached to take on the role.TASK: To approach Felicity Hawkins to take on the training link governor role. (HT)TASK: To check how training is assigned to and shared with governors on GVO. (Clerk) |
|  | **Cheshire East Director of Children’s Services Report** The Summer 2025 report plus summary would be shared on GVO once available. |
|  | **Clerking Arrangements**It was agreed that the current clerking arrangement would continue for the academic year 2025-26. |
|  | **Minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising and actions**The LGB confirmed the approval of the Part One minutes of the meeting on 24th March 2025 on GVO.There were no matters arising.Any governors with tasks outstanding would receive a reminder from the Clerk. |
|  | **Any Other Business**Holiday datesFor the convenience of the parents and school community, school would align term dates with those of Alsager High School including three INSET days at the end of the summer term.  |
|  | **Date of Next meeting**The date of the next meeting of the LGB was confirmed as 7th July 2025.LGB meeting dates 2025/26 were agreed as:* 29th September 2025
* 24th November 2025
* 2nd February 2026
* 23rd March 2026
* 18th May 2026
* 6th July 2026
 |

 The Part One meeting closed at 19.11.