

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXCALIBUR SCHOOL LOCAL
GOVERNING BOARD HELD AT THE SCHOOL
ON 7TH JULY 2025 at 17.00.**

Name	Governor Category	Designated Role	Attendance
Ian White	Co-opted Governor	Chair	Present
Rachel Hackney	Co-opted Governor	Vice Chair	Present
Juliet Jones	Headteacher	Headteacher	Present
Gill Burgess	Co-opted Governor		Present
Felicity Hawkins	Co-opted Governor		Present
Tom Egley	Co-opted Governor		Present
Shaun Smith	Co-opted Governor		Present
Sarah Sproston	Co-opted Governor		Missed
Gail Whittingham	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	SBM		Present

PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

The meeting was quorate and started at 17.00.

	Item
1.	<p>Staff Presentation – Outdoor Play and Learning OPAL</p> <p>Dan Hancock, OPAL Lead, explained the aim of OPAL was to provide pupils with the most varied lunchtimes possible which resulted in a positive impact on learning for remainder of the day.</p> <p>Prior to the introduction of OPAL lunch time activities comprised sporting activities such as racquet sports which had led to disruption and required staff intervention. The move to OPAL using Sports Premium funding had enriched and empowered break and lunch times.</p> <p>Felicity Hawkins, Phil Yeomans and Shaun Smith joined the meeting at 17.01.</p> <p>Following the changes made the impact had been positive and local companies had donated equipment e.g. tyres for the tyre tunnel and concrete rings. Playing with the equipment had promoted pupils' core stability, teamwork and management of their own risk. Children also constructed dens or cars using the loose parts available.</p> <p>Gill Burgess joined the meeting at 17.03.</p>

	<p>The benefits of OPAL were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of opportunities for pupils at lunch time • Fewer friendship issues ensuring learning was not disrupted. • Children speaking positively about outdoor play and learning • Achievement of the Platinum OPAL award • A variety of types of play e.g. exploratory, dramatic and imaginative play which benefited those not used to imaginative self-driven activity <p>Q: What is the difference between OPAL and forest schools? A: Forest schools comprises adult-led sessions.</p> <p>Q: Are school staff appropriately trained to supervise OPAL activities? A: All staff including midday staff are trained and can train others.</p> <p>The Excalibur Policy, based on Article 31 of the United Nations convention, and a risk benefit document had been produced to minimise risks. Assemblies took place each year to explain the equipment and rules involved, and the Site Manager undertook maintenance where required. Activities were celebrated in assemblies where pupils shared the enjoyment of their play. The rules of play were enforced by staff.</p> <p>Plans included the development of small world play, the replacement of some of the older wooden areas, greater opportunities for role play games e.g. dressing up clothes and the involvement of parents and wider community to raise funds and develop the area.</p> <p>Rachel Hackney arrived at 17.14.</p> <p>Governors agreed Rachel Morrison would take on the role of link governor for this area.</p> <p>Dan was thanked for his work and left the meeting at 17.14.</p>
2.	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Any Other Business</p> <p>The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting including Simon Whitney who was attending as an observer. As a former Head of maths at Alsager school. and director of Samaritans, Simon had wide and valuable safeguarding knowledge. Introductions were made.</p> <p>Gail Whittingham joined the meeting at 17.16.</p> <p>Apologies received from Kay Griffin were accepted.</p> <p>No other items of Part One business were requested.</p> <p>The Chair pointed out changes to the order of the agenda going forwards and confirmed that minutes would be approved in the meeting by those present and on GVO by those not in attendance.</p>

	<p><u>Clerks' notes</u></p> <p>In line with the Chancery Policy, Part 1 of the meeting were recorded to ensure the accuracy of minutes and were deleted once minutes were agreed. Governors were requested to indicate their intention to attend on GVO before the day of the meeting and comments on documents posted on GVO would serve only as prompts for the meeting and not receive replies in advance.</p>
3.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>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</p> <p>The Chair reported a letter had been written to Sarah Russell, MP for Congleton, with an invitation to visit school to meet governors, others from Chancery and the Headteacher to discuss SEND funding. The Chair had attended the Chancery Forum and was now volunteering in school on Monday mornings in Reception and in Year 6.</p>
5.	<p>Membership</p> <p>The membership of the LGB was confirmed to be as shown on this document.</p> <p>Gail Whittingham was to step down at the end of the summer term and received the grateful thanks of the LGB for her work. Gill Burgess had agreed to remain as Co-opted governor to attend meetings virtually but would not carry out school visits. Governors approved the additional term of office for Gill Burgess.</p> <p>No <u>new appointments</u> had been made since the previous meeting; however, contact had been made with prospective candidates.</p> <p>It was agreed the <u>Excalibur LGB Pay Committee 2025/26</u> would comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair • The Vice Chair • Shaun Smith <p>A panel for any appeal would comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gill Burgess • Felicity Hawkins • Tom Egley <p>Link governor roles (including a training link governor) would be discussed in Autumn 1 LGB meeting.</p>
6.	<p>Headteacher Update – Part One</p> <p>The Headteacher provided an update as follows: <u>Safeguarding</u></p>

- The annual Section 175 safeguarding report had been submitted on (27/06/25). School was currently deemed partially effective in three areas of training, all of which were being addressed. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and DDSLs had all completed level 2 training and trio of vulnerabilities and suicide prevention at level 3. Those required at Level 3 for the audit in the current year had been child exploitation, neglect and contextual safeguarding all of which would be included in the safeguarding action plan 2025/26.
- The safeguarding link governor had visited in the autumn and spring terms and reports had been submitted. A summer visit was to be scheduled.
- The Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings (SCiES) audit had been completed which ensured school provision was as required. A SCiES audit was booked for May 2027. Chancery policy required this to take place every three years. School purchased the enhanced package which comprised training and supervision, and paid additionally for full day audits around policies and practice. All actions were addressed quickly.

HT actions from the previous meeting had been addressed:

- In response to the findings of parent survey indicating a lack of parent awareness of how their children were performing, consideration had been given to the merits of both Dojo and Seesaw as a communication platform. It would be ensured that parents could only access information relating to their child. A decision was yet to be made on which would be used. This would not increase staff workload and parents would be requested to continue to contact school in the current way for urgent communication. There would be no expectation for staff to respond instantly. Governors agreed the choice of system was an operational matter for the school
- A very productive meeting of The Chair, the Vice Chair and the HT had taken place to discuss the business plan in Pre-school. Strategic direction points agreed would feed into the School Development Plan (SDP) for 2025/26. Outcomes had been established which would drive strategic direction points for achievement in the year.

Q: Do the management accounts show Pre-school set aside?

A: The School Business Manager would be able to explain.

TASK: To contact the SBM for an explanation of the management accounts relating to pre-school. (Chair)

The recent positive Chancery Forum focussing on Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) had confirmed the great challenge in each school, and questions around provision and how to meet the needs of pupils had been raised. Chancery Headteachers were scheduled to meet on Friday 11th July to discuss ways to meet pupil needs, the Chancery role and funding.

	<p>The new <u>Chancery Chief Financial Officer</u> (CFO) Katy Jodrell had visited and been introduced to staff and the site.</p> <p>A very positive report from Craig Richardson, the <u>School Improvement Partner</u> (SIP) had been received and shared in the meeting pack.</p> <p>Q: How are specific recommendations in the SIP report tracked and monitored? A: Actions sit with the subject leaders and feed into actions plans and the next visit SIP visit.</p> <p>Governors thanked the HT for her update.</p>
7.	<p>Finance Report Yvonne Hilditch, School Business Manager, joined the meeting at 18.04 and reported:</p> <p>Details of the <u>budget v actuals</u> to the end of May 2025 had been included in the meeting pack. The latest forecast for the end of 2024/25 was -£62,660.28. A zero balance or small profit budget had been set at the start of the year. Contributing factors had included the higher than anticipated pay rise for non-teaching staff, additional costs for a released member of staff at a cost of £12k to £15k., the element of the teacher pay rise which had not been fully funded, an increase in catering costs by Cheshire East from Christmas 2024 and school subsidy of the cost of universal free school meals. The SBM confirmed that school no longer subsidised the cost of universal free school meals and school was obliged to pass on only charge for the Aspens service. The cost of lunchtime staff was funded by the school. School had also been required to cover bad debts caused by a number of trips which had not been fully paid for. An analysis of trip accounts would take place and lower cost trips would be considered for some cohorts.</p> <p>The carry forward was approximately £45k which was within the trust limits. Discussions were underway to arrive at a break even position in 2025/26. Spending on curriculum materials had been limited and contracts reduced to essential only. A tight approach to spending had been taken for next year.</p> <p>Q: What is the consequence of school not complying with trust limits? A: School is expected to set and remain within a budget within the Chancery limits. Spending decisions lie with the school.</p> <p>Q: Is a Reserves Policy in place? A: Yes, the Chancery Reserves Policy specifies a percentage of the General Annual Grant (GAG) funding to be built in as a buffer which is thought to equate to £60k. Schools are expected to spend as much as possible on the education of pupils.</p> <p>Q: What risks is school facing?</p>

A: The condition of the roof is approaching the point of risk as trays are in place at certain points to collect water in the event of rain. Two Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids have been submitted and were unsuccessful. School is carrying out its own damage limitation with previous work carried out by the Site Manager. There was some relief at the outcome of the CIF bid in light of the two CIF bids currently held by the school and the maximum allowed.

Q: Will it be possible for the condition of the Excalibur premises to be fed into the HTs meeting to allow this to be added to the risks facing the trust?

A: This will not be the appropriate forum; however, it could be raised at Team Around the School meetings or through email.

Q: What is the school doing to address the end of year deficit carry forward of £60k and a large risk?

A: The longevity of the roof is unknown.

Governors expressed their serious concern about the roof and the potential H&S risks and consequences to pupils.

TASK: To approach Chancery on behalf of the Excalibur LGB to request action on the dangerous condition of the school roof. (HT)

Virements were listed. The debtors and write offs document was not yet complete and would be sent to the clerk for sharing on GVO. Governors were requested to post questions.

TASK: To send a list of debtors and write offs to the clerk for governor comment on GVO. (HT)

Ringfenced funds

Most of the Sports Premium funding had been spent and a document was being prepared. Pupil Premium funding had been used in certain areas per the school plan. Governors received confirmation that the PE and Sports funding impact statement would be published by the end of July 2025 on the online tool.

Profit making activities

Pre-school and out of hours provisions were both profitable. Governors requested that balances between the two provisions be split and shared on GVO.

TASK: To send a document showing the division of income and expenditure for the pre-school and out of hours provision to the clerk for governor comment on GVO. (HT)

The 2025/26 budget currently forecast a £15k surplus at the end of year. Added to the £44k carry forward from 2024/25 this would leave £60k at the

	<p>end of 2025/26. Currently no indication of the level of non-teaching salaries had been given. The agreed level of teacher pay increase plus the amount of the grant promised had been included; however, the teacher pay rise would not be fully funded. Any additional monies received would be allocated if not already anticipated and built in. Other charging possibilities e.g. for after school clubs, the hiring of classrooms and other fundraising activities were being explored.</p> <p>Q: Do the budget deficits from 2026/27 onwards cause alarm? A: Government funding such as grants to cover pay rises will be received.</p> <p>The LGB approved the budget 2025/26.</p> <p>The following additional questions on the budget forecast document raised by governors on GVO would be responded to by the SBM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have SSDP priorities been considered for future years? • Are staffing levels and structure appropriate for the needs of the school/students? • Has any parental feedback on staffing structure been received? • What are the provisions for teachers in terms of class resources? • How has future SEN been considered? • In terms of school building: is there sufficient funding for maintenance, repairs and upgrades? Where do our risks lie? <p>TASK: To respond to governor questions on the budget forecast document on GVO. (HT)</p> <p>Governors received confirmation that the top slice was 5.5%.</p> <p>The <u>latest Benchmarking Report</u> had been made available on GVO and a comparison up to date report across Chancery school had been requested prior to the 2026/27 budget setting.</p> <p>TASK: To log a request for an up to date Chancery trust benchmarking report prior to 2026/27 budget setting. (HT)</p> <p>There were no <u>school-specific audit points</u>.</p>
8.	<p>Premises / Health & Safety (H&S) Matters</p> <p><u>SBM Report</u> Grace Ridler, Office Manager, had completed Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IoSH) training and was working with the SBM. All H&S matters were recorded on a weekly basis with the Site Manager.</p> <p>Following the Staffordshire County Council H&S visit, the report had been shared with governors and work on the actions was underway. School would also ensure compliance in all points in the <u>fire risk assessment</u> in September. RM would be H&S link governor.</p>

	<p>Most issues arising in school were small. Staff reported concerns via a board which were reviewed weekly. Fire Risk assessment actions would be cleared in the autumn term and school H&S walk arounds would be carried out on the first Tuesday of each month.</p> <p>Governors received confirmation that the school <u>Risk Register</u> had been reviewed by school, had been approved at the previous meeting and was now on the Every system.</p> <p>Approval of the <u>lettings charges for 2025/26</u> would be made at the Autumn 1 LGB meeting.</p> <p>The SBM was thanked for her input and left at 18.30.</p>
9.	<p>Strategic Focus</p> <p><u>The drafting the annual governance statement</u> was tasked to the Chair and Vice Chair and would be completed for publication on the school website.</p> <p>TASK: To complete the annual governance statement for publication on the school website. (Chair)</p>
10.	<p>Chancery collaboration</p> <p>Governors proposed no changes to the <u>CMAT Scheme of Delegation</u>.</p> <p>Chancery Forum was discussed in Item 6 of the meeting.</p> <p>The Chancery HTs were scheduled to meet on Friday 11th July to discuss items on their School Development Plans (SDP) for 2025/26 and to identify . common threads for inclusion in the <u>Trust Development Plan 2025/26 (TDP)</u>.</p> <p>Governors would have sight of both the School Development Plan and the action plan in September.</p>
11.	<p>Link governor reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Pupil Premium review had taken place with Mrs Rogers and a report would follow. • SEND link governor reports had been discussed in the previous meeting. • RM would carry out a Health & Safety visit and provide a report for the Autumn 1 meeting. • Link governor roles would be allocated at the Autumn 1 LGB meeting. <p>Governors were encouraged to visit school when possible.</p> <p>TASK: To carry out an H&S link governor visit and supply report to the Autumn 1 LGB meeting. (RM)</p>
12.	<p>Cheshire East Director of Children's Services Report (DoCSR)</p>

	Governors noted the contents of the DoCSR for Summer 2025 and the helpful summary provided by Jenny Whiston, Chancery Governance and Compliance Lead and had no comments.
13. 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"> Governors' attendance at the Chancery Forum had given an in depth understanding of the priorities for schools and the national SEND climate.
14. Policies	<p>The <u>Marking and Feedback Policy</u> was approved by governors on GVO.</p> <p>The LGB received confirmation that teacher workload in relation to marking , particularly writing, was always considered in the devising of all teaching and learning policies. Teachers fed back on draft policies which were then amended in line with observations.</p> <p>The Marking and Feedback Policy was approved.</p> <p>The meeting noted the following Chancery policies approved since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Capability Policy Support Staff Capability Policy Prevent Policy
15. Governor Training	<p>An introduction into basic use of the GVO platform would be given by Jenny Whiston at the Autumn 1 meeting. Induction later in 2025/26 on the Every system would be considered.</p> <p>TASK: To investigate availability of a calendar of governor training with Jenny Whiston. (Clerk)</p> <p><u>Outstanding Chancery Mandatory training at 2 July 2025</u> PY - Prevent RH - GDPR KG - Cyber Security SS - GDPR</p> <p>TASK: To complete outstanding Chancery mandatory training as per Summer 2 Pt1 minutes. (PY, RH, KG, SS)</p> <p>TASK: To obtain clarity of payment for governor training. (Clerk)</p> <p>The outcome of the <u>Governor Skills Audit</u> on GVO would be re-visited at the Autumn 1 LGB meeting.</p>

	Simon Whitney left the meeting at 17.59.
16. Minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising and actions	<p>The LGB approved the Part One minutes of the meeting on 19th May 2025.</p> <p>All tasks had been completed.</p>
17. Any Other Business	<p>There was no further business to discuss.</p>
18. Date of Next meeting	<p>The date of the next meeting of the LGB was confirmed as 29th September 2025.</p> <p><u>LGB meeting dates 2025/26</u> were agreed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29th September 2025 • 24th November 2025 • 2nd February 2026 • 23rd March 2026 • 18th May 2026 • 6th July 2026

The Part One meeting closed at 18.30.