

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 11th November 2024 at 5pm

Present physically: N Kellett, Chair

Present virtually: K O'Connell
P Rana

In Attendance: G Alcock, School Improvement Lead
G Cowles, Governance Professional
L Chapman, Director SEND - Finance Update only
N Jennings, Head of School – Chalk Hill
S White, Head of School – Priory

Apologies:

Absent:

Action

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed members to the Academy Council and started the meeting on time.

2. Declaration of Interests

No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2024

The minutes of the meeting were **agreed** as an accurate record.

4. Matters arising from the meeting held on 24th September 2024

The matters arising from the previous meeting were completed.

5. Finance Update presentation for School leaders and governors

The SEND Director updated the governors regarding Financing of the schools and the structure going forward.

- This was presented before item 3.
- This same information was presented at the Chairs' meeting of 6th November 2024.
- Most schools are currently showing as in deficit, but £168,000 was brought forward from last year's budget.
- Last year saw a £638,000 alternative provision (AP) spend, so the Finance Team decided to inhibit spending on AP.
- Reporting to governance will be increased.
- SEND projects remain high priority.
- Central Services are to be reviewed to lessen costs and use more funding for the students.
- EEGT will be a centralised structure going forward, to drive efficiencies and maintain operational excellence.
- The EEGT Finance Team structure was explained.
- Challenges of centralisation were explained, with the nuances of schools balancing their autonomy and being part of the new Trust.
- Budgeting forecasts will be discussed between Finance and the Heads of schools.
- Funding, High Needs will be balanced with Compliance and Government policies.
- KPI's were presented to show the need for monitoring the finances.
- Reserved and unreserved funds were discussed – fixed assets include the buildings. All funds are to be used for the benefit of students, even unreserved or donated funds.
- Members queried whether the provisions have access to funds for rewarding the students.

- L Chapman noted that rewards funding is in the curriculum budget. Also, staff in each school can change the school plan to save finances.
- G Alcock raised the concept of budget pooling.
 - L Chapman replied that SENDAT doesn't have reserves as per individual school, but rather as a lump sum.
 - G Alcock added that it was reassuring that SENDAT funding will be strategically spent within SEND provisions.
- Members noted the need to balance staffing expenses and pupil numbers. The query of whether any more could be done to improve student numbers was raised.
 - L Chapman noted that student numbers are strong, 10% up on last year. Sunrise will have more students in KS2, and Priory has increased student numbers at the Thurston site.
- N Jennings pointed out that of the AP referrals, only three are suitable for Chalk Hill. N Jennings has spoken to the Local Authority to get their referral numbers correct.
 - L Chapman added that the Empowering Futures provision and others are available to assist.
- L Chapman left the meeting at this point.

6. **Quality Assurance Update**

The School Improvement Lead provided a verbal update.

- G Alcock has continued to monitor behaviour reviews, with the Heads & EEG.
- G Alcock has been supporting at the other Trust schools for behavioural issues.
- Monitoring of challenging and new student intake is another aspect of the SIL role.
- G Alcock has engaged in paired Quality Assurance work with Scott Gaskins, the other SIL, including at Chalk Hill and helping with strategic leadership.

7. **Priory School – half termly report**

Members received and considered the report provided and S White summarised the report.

3 highlights

- First PD Day in the new September term was useful, with regards to input and training to get the School Development Plan trimmed down to focus on school improvement.
- The Priory Football tournament has started up again, with some external schools involved. Students loved it and are enthusiastically joining in.
- Angel Hill College (sited at Abbeygate College) has one student but can have up to 10. More are due to come on roll.

Quality of Education (focused on baseline of students)

- Work on curriculum and planning is a focus once more.
- The Subject Lead handbook has been launched, with key priorities and expectations highlighted.

Behaviours and Attitudes

- A successful start to September included intake to Year 6 students. The intake process is robust, so negative behaviour has lessened.
- Priory school values are being promoted, using Key Stage assemblies to reward achievements and give students a voice to mention their achievements outside of school and in relation to the SENDAT 20.

Personal Development inc. careers

- Outcomes are looking at the curriculum, where all students have a Maths and English reading baseline, which can be tracked.
- The Assessment Grid was explained. Students are given learning objectives, with IT help.
- A Personal Development (PD) team is being set up with G Alcock's support.
- Staff's knowledge of student's medication has increased, and a structure is in place for students who are able to self-administer medication.

Staffing Issues

- No staffing issues were addressed at this meeting.

Admissions

- No admissions issues were discussed at this meeting.

Attendance

- Family support is being focused on students whose attendance is a concern.
- The Family Welfare Team has capacity for visits and calling parents/carers in for meetings.

Staff training and professional development

- Staff are joining accreditation courses to enhance teaching.
- Hannah Gadie, as lead for the Empowering Futures provision, is working with School leadership and the SILs in a whole school review.
- Lisa Andrews leads on staff deep dives for Subject Leads, strengthening the leadership team in strategic development.

Exclusions and Suspensions

- No exclusions or suspensions were reported or discussed at this meeting.

Ofsted readiness - Safeguarding update and discussion

- The half-termly Safeguarding meeting has been held.
- The Quality of Education review is to be on 20th November 2024.
- Key Stage staff meetings include safeguarding practice and scenarios.
- The next PD Day will be practical - staff are due to attend a specialist teaching lesson, to enhance teaching quality.

8. Chalk Hill – half termly report

Members received and considered the report provided and N Jennings summarised the report.

3 highlights

- The National Test-style Standardised (NTS) assessments had a good start.
- All children have taken a short First Aid course and are now able to respond to wounding/serious injury scenarios if needed.
- The curriculum has been increased to enhance variety.

Quality of Education (focused on baseline of students)

- There is a continuation of training of new teachers, who are new to SEND settings.
- Academic options are in place.
- Members recommended Lexonik for tackling dyslexia.

Behaviours and Attitudes

- The Enrichment scheme is in place and beginning to have a positive impact on students, who are being rewarded for good behaviour but will include homework, as minor rewards for those completing it as required.
- Leadership will continue to ensure the curriculum is engaging for students. This will include exploring with EEGT to use other provisions outside of the school, such as the VR lab.

Personal Development inc. careers

- Horse riding is being enjoyed by students.
- The Forest school is doing well. Students are reported to be engaging with nature and learning.
- School leadership is trying to get external agencies in to expand the curriculum and give students confidence.

Staffing Issues

- The Standard Three list need re-establishing. The Heads of Care have met with outside providers to action this point.
- Staff are not forthcoming regarding their views on the potential move to Horringer Court, as yet.

Admissions

- Any admissions issues were not raised at this meeting.

Attendance

- Attendance has now increased to 94%.
- Members queried whether student holidays are reflected in persistent absence data.

- N Jennings confirmed that student holidays taken in-term were accepted, as they are cheaper for out-of-school holiday periods.

Staff training and professional development

- Coaching for new teachers is ongoing.
- CPD will be focused to target Trauma Informed practice.
- School leadership is developing links with the University PDC team.

Exclusions and Suspensions

- No exclusions or suspensions are reported for this period.

Ofsted readiness - Safeguarding update and discussion

- Maths interventions need filling. SW recommended the White Rose Maths education provider.
- One student was discussed, as regarding sexualised behaviour. Teacher training is being reviewed to ensure confidence of staff in dealing with these kinds of situations.
- PR recommended Gamcare for gambling addiction training.
- MASH referrals were discussed – one involves the police. N Jennings is currently dealing with it.
 - KOC queried if the police are actively handling the case at present.
 - N Jennings will check and confirm with KOC.
- It was confirmed that there will be no 12-month 'grace' period from Ofsted, although the school has joined a new trust. Only changing Chalk Hill's designation may do that.

NJ

9. Executive Head update

The School Improvement Lead provided a verbal update on the schools under his care.

Three things were raised by GA, as evidenced by his weekly visits to schools.:

- Acknowledging the 8-week half term, GA complimented the Heads for maintaining the positive lead from a new academic year start.
 - Staff resilience and positive demeanour was commended, despite financial constraints.
 - Staff are observed giving their best to the students, with strong leadership teams in place.
- School leadership at both schools has worked hard on the School Development Plan and have addressed improvement points from Ofsted.
 - Ambitions and creativity are well seen.
- New ways of working and developing the relationships with EEG has presented their own challenges, but schools are doing well in addressing them.

10. Update from Chair's meeting and Trust, and items of concern to escalate to Leadership team and/or Governance (via Gov. Prof.)

- Heads of schools are to get new templates for the January 2025 round of meetings.
- Chair will relay inappropriate referrals to the SEND Education Excellence Committee and noted that EEG are keen to get involved in parent and student feedback.

Chair

11. Any other business

- The recruitment process for parent Academy Council roles is underway and progress will be fed back by the next meeting.

GP

The meeting was concluded at 6.20pm.