

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 3 March 2025 at 5pm

Present physically:

Present virtually: M Cadman, **Chair**
C Broad, parent member
L Bennett

In Attendance: A Whatley, Partnership Director
E Barneveld, Head of School – Duke of Lancaster
G Cowles, Deputy Governance Professional
L Chapman, Director SEND and Outdoor Learning (part)
N Savvas, Chief Executive Officer
P Hamilton, Head of School – Sunrise Academy
S Chesterton, Head of Welfare and Safeguarding (SEND Cluster)

Apologies:

Absent:

Action

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed members to the Academy Council. There were no apologies.

2. Declaration of Interests

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

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2025

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

4. Matters arising from the meeting held on 14 January 2025

Six of the matters arising from the previous meeting were updated verbally at this meeting, one was addressed in the meeting.

MA1 and MA2 – L Chapman informed that the fire doors at Duke of Lancaster School and the carpeting at Sunrise Academy are being dealt with by Estates.

MA3: L Chapman informed that trial placements of students are not permissible, therefore placements are continually being reviewed with close relationships with the Local Authority, whilst complying with Sections 7 and 19 of the Education Act 1996.

MA4: E Barneveld informed that seven Specialist Teaching Assistants applications have been received, with interviews to take place shortly.

MA5: E Barneveld informed that the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) referrals have been under the continual review of the Safeguarding Team. There are six referrals in total: four internal (of which three were for use of physical restraint of students) and two external (involving Social Workers). E Barneveld informed that additional training has been implemented and confirmed that both HR and Safeguarding are involved in all cases. E Barneveld informed that staff are now more proactive in reviewing the cases.

MA7: L Chapman informed that the Assessment framework will be addressed at the next Academy Council meeting.

5. First Hand Feedback

Members received and considered the feedback forms from governance members First-Hand visits to Duke of Lancaster School and Sunrise Academy during the last half term.

C Broad updated governance members on the visit she made to Sunrise Academy and noted the warm welcome, well-stocked library and supportive atmosphere fostered by staff towards students.

P Hamilton requested that any First-Hand feedback forms be copied and sent on to him for his records.

6. Update on Executive structure

L Chapman informed members of the changes of the executive team structure.

L Chapman informed that the School Improvement Leads will no longer act as Executive Heads of the SEND schools, but their role as School Improvement Leads will remain in the structure.

L Chapman informed that the School Improvement Leads now report to Rob Bamford, Group Vice Principal Quality and that L Chapman will act as Executive Head over all SEND schools.

L Chapman informed that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) role has been changed to be responsible to Sarah Chesterton for Safeguarding. L Chapman further informed that Emma O'Hara will care for the SEMH students and the Safeguarding of all SEND schools will be overseen by Sarah-Louise Neesam. S Chesterton informed that her role is one of support and oversight of the SEND cluster safeguarding, training and setting improvement to the highest standard.

Members welcomed the new safeguarding arrangements as described.

7. Update on quality improvement action plans

L Chapman informed that the executive team are implementing quality assurance action plans on a school-by-school basis, according to student needs, curriculum needs and staffing and environment needs. The aim will be to improve student engagement and educational standards.

L Chapman informed that under the new system R Bamford will oversee the quality of self-assessment for teaching and learning. L Chapman informed that S L Neesam will oversee and review all safeguarding arrangements and SAFEcic will be utilised for independent safeguarding reviews at all SEND schools.

L Chapman informed that Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are to be used as the basis for self-assessment.

Members queried what KPIs would be presented at the meetings. L Chapman responded that annual data, such as Pupil Premiums, will be brought to governance meetings once per year, while others, such as safeguarding and attendance data will be presented for governance scrutiny each meeting.

Members asked if the incremental KPIs can be shared with governance members at the meetings. L Chapman confirmed that incremental or intermediate KPIs will be shared with members, via R Bamford.

8. Update on complaints and investigations

L Chapman informed that the document presented – “Update on complaints and investigations” – holds updates for all SEND school complaints.

L Chapman informed that all complaints are taken seriously and are handled according to EEG's Complaints policy.

L Chapman informed that the executive assistants acknowledge the complaint, then filter according to the nature of the complaint. If found to have a safeguarding element, they are to be sent to Colin Shaw, Group Sixth Form Principal, who is the

executive lead for Safeguarding and will decide on the investigation path for the complaint.

L Chapman left the meeting at 5.43pm

9. **Duke of Lancaster School – half-termly report**

Members received and considered the report provided and E Barneveld summarised the report.

Members acknowledged that Duke of Lancaster School has made improvements under the leadership of E Barneveld due to her and her leadership team's hard work.

Members focused discussion on the points below, whilst acknowledging the other aspects in the report.

Attendance and persistent absence

N Savvas informed that the comments in the current Head of School's report does not give the level of detail required, such as who the persistent absentees are, why they are absent from learning and what is being done by the school to remedy the attendance levels. E Barneveld informed that weekly attendance meetings are being held, where actions for concerning students are discussed by staff and leadership.

Members queried that attendance data is inconsistent from report to report. It was recommended that dates are needed as to when the data is recorded to demonstrate that the information is consistent, and that governance member are able to scrutinise the data effectively.

Members challenged the persistent absence data, which is currently at 44%. E Barneveld confirmed that future reports will present the data in a more thorough way, breaking down data according to type and what is being done to improve the attendance levels.

Exclusions and Suspensions

Members queried the reasons for the suspensions in the Head's report. E Barneveld informed that the two periods are recorded for a student who had demonstrated extreme physical behaviour that had harmed staff and was not safe to be on the school site, as they had damaged school property. E Barneveld informed that she has met with the student's parents and has followed this up with support plans, such as the student accessing alternative provision for their educational needs temporarily. E Barneveld informed that, after discussion with senior leaders, the decision was made to suspend the student, as recorded.

E Barneveld informed that the suspension policy will need to show that the head of school can make the decision to suspend. E Barneveld informed that a reintegration meeting has been held, the parents joined the meeting remotely and that behavioural expectations (via an action plan) have been established. E Barneveld informed that the student involved in the incidents has not acted similarly since the occurrence.

E Barneveld informed that all other behavioural incidents are being managed safely within the school by trained staff to perform appropriate interventions, ensuring students and staff are kept safe at all times.

Members noted the positive change of behaviour of the student that had recently been suspended, resulting in a successful reintegration at Duke of Lancaster School.

Ofsted readiness

N Savvas informed the members of the need for a culture change, which is being implemented. All Assistant Heads will share in the changes, as there is no development plan with data at present. N Savvas further informed that the correct systems, professional development and standards for achievement are being put in place. The basic standards will be implemented for improvement, such as the right

staff, right infrastructure and right attitude will be enacted before Ofsted arrive for the next inspection.

N Savvas informed that he will continue to engage with the schools' leadership teams to systemically analyse the KPIs and noted how hard E Barneveld has worked to change the culture of the school, with support from her senior leadership team and EEG. An action plan with expected dates of completion and expected results is to be developed.

Safeguarding

E Barneveld informed that the LADO referrals were discussed in the matters arising item of the agenda and she has now arranged weekly DSL meetings, with support from S-L Neesam and the Safeguarding Team. E Barneveld informed that the meetings are recorded, and a next steps action plan is being implemented.

S Chesterton informed that the Safeguarding Team are working on the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) to analyse and increase categories to ensure detailed data is recorded. S Chesterton informed that the team need to ensure all schools are aligned in their practice of recording incidents promptly and using are using the same categories.

S Chesterton informed that the next safeguarding audit will be carried out in due course. S Chesterton informed that there are a large number of cases that have not yet been closed. This will be interrogated more thoroughly during the safeguarding audit at the school. S Chesterton informed that safeguarding assessments will be implemented and that SAFEcic will audit the procedures and each student's needs.

Members queried the reason the font for some categories on page 9 of the Head's report, such as those for the LGBTs Discriminatory incidents, Child on Child abuse, sexist/misogynistic incidents and Harmful sexualised behaviour were in purple. The Chair replied that these categories were added after discussion with E Barneveld as data that should be included in the KPIs.

Members queried the use of 'Other' incidents under the Harmful Sexualised Behaviour category and asked for it to be removed and replaced with individual categories so the data could be broken down and interrogated more thoroughly. E Barneveld confirmed that the categories will be more robustly listed in future.

Members queried the outcome of the intimidation incident recorded and the follow up action taken by the school. E Barneveld replied that the categories will be reviewed and that S Chesterton and S-L Neesam will investigate to ensure categories that are ambiguous are remedied to give accurate data.

N Savvas informed that the school leadership will need to look at the data in terms of why incidents are taking place, rather than just how many there are being recorded. N Savvas informed that then staff can be proactive in detecting and preventing the action or behaviour. N Savvas informed that staff should be monitored as to who is recording and analysing the data, which then needs a purpose. N Savvas informed that KPIs will be introduced to drive improvement and help student growth and learning.

Quality of Education (focused on expected exam entries)

E Barneveld informed that the KPIs have been developed with R Bamford, in conjunction with the Assistant Heads of the school. E Barneveld confirmed that the KPIs will report into governance.

E Barneveld informed that the whole school vision and ethics have been written to include not only staff but also parents and students, increasing student and family engagement. E Barneveld also informed that assemblies are being held that discuss the students' progress and achievement.

Members queried how the change to the curriculum is being enacted. E Barneveld replied that the new curriculum offer is being adapted and gave the example of the English curriculum, which is being taught according to the national curriculum but adapted for the students' needs to increase engagement. Teachers are linking English to Humanities but may also include sessions on history and social studies.

E Barneveld informed that some students can access a level of the national curriculum, but that the subjects are adapted for their needs, so that students engage in reading and communication more proactively.

Members asked for examples of evidence of curriculum impact. E Barneveld informed the governance members of the school's leadership working weekly with Jan Hatchell, who is a SEND consultant and link to the National Association of Head Teachers, to gain leadership skills and improve the school's development plan. E Barneveld explained that the school leadership is working to rigorously implement the statements in the Ofsted framework under the headings of intent, implementation and impact. E Barneveld informed that progress is slowly being evidenced.

Members noted the comments in the Head of School's report from the School Improvement Lead, stating "The development of the curriculum is particularly encouraging and there is a clear focus on ensuring that every student can follow an appropriate pathway and are supported on their journey. This is a particular challenge considering the diverse needs of the current cohort. The new curriculum design addresses this challenge and also ensures there is support for all students who have considerable gaps in their education. With the new assessment procedures now in place, the team should also begin to add this data so they can see where gaps are evident and where interventions need to take place."

Behaviours and Attitudes

Members queried the number of LGBTQ-related incidents and asked if these were being perpetrated across the school or by one or two individuals, as well as what measures the school has taken to address the issues. E Barneveld informed that the incidents are mainly caused by a few Year 9 students using discriminatory language. E Barneveld further informed that the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) has visited the school to present the consequences of the behaviour and staff have contacted the involved students' parents to follow up on the language being used. E Barneveld informed that staff are actively supporting the student that is the recipient of the abuse to ensure the impact on their wellbeing is being cared for appropriately and in line with established safeguarding standards.

Personal Development incl. careers

Not discussed

Staffing Issues

Members queried whether staff are accepting of the changes being brought into the curriculum. E Barneveld replied that lesson expectations are given to staff in advance of a drop-in and more staff are engaging well with the changes, with teaching delivery impacting students being provided as a motivation.

E Barneveld gave an example of staff being more personal in reading to students, rather than using videos to present information, which increased engagement of the students.

Admissions

Not discussed

Staff training and professional development

E Barneveld informed that teaching staff are being trained for reading plans for improving the curriculum.

E Barneveld informed that more learning walks and drop-ins of senior staff are taking place to ensure feedback is targeted. E Barneveld informed that staff are being

trained to ensure they share expertise and build on personal development opportunities.

Members asked for the response from staff regarding the training with regards to the curriculum. E Barneveld informed that staff training sessions around teaching expectations are being implemented, and school leadership are mentoring the teachers and High-Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) to meet the expectations. E Barneveld informed that the next term should show the difference in teaching quality and student performance outcomes.

Members commended E Barneveld on her work to improve staff and teacher engagement with improvements by training.

N Savvas informed that both the leadership at Duke of Lancaster and Sunrise have engaged well in the changes that are being brought under the new trust and that they are willing to put the work into ensure that improvements can be realised swiftly to support the students' learning journeys and increase achievements from now on.

10. Sunrise Academy – half-termly report

Members received and considered the report provided and P Hamilton summarised the report.

Members commended Sunrise staff and P Hamilton for the recent 'good' Ofsted grading. Members recognised that immense progress has been made in the work done by staff to raise the quality of education for students, with the Ofsted result of good overall reflecting the work done to improve

Members focused discussion on the points below, whilst acknowledging the other aspects in the report.

Attendance and persistent absence

Members queried if the persistent absence was challenged during the Ofsted inspection and what actions school leadership took to address the attendance data. P Hamilton acknowledged that absenteeism was a challenge, due to the school finding the correct settings for some of the students on their roll. P Hamilton informed that he has been in regular contact with the Head of Specialist Education Services at Suffolk County Council to accelerate placing the students in a setting most appropriate to care for their individual needs.

P Hamilton informed that in the school, pastoral work being used to reduce absent students, with parents called to alert them to student attendance levels and followed up with personal visits and letters to encourage student attendance and increase their engagement in the learning provided at the school.

P Hamilton informed that the inspectors recognised that the school's attendance increased by 7% from last year and that interventions used ensure that students studying remotely have appropriate education, with support from the Local Authority.

Members commended P Hamilton on the work being done to reduce persistent absence in the school and continue to motivate the staff to support his lead on driving improvement for all students.

Exclusions and Suspensions

Not discussed

Ofsted readiness

P Hamilton informed that Sunrise Academy received an inspection visit from His Majesty's Inspectors the week of 24 February 2025, with the draft grading to be published.

Members queried the outcome of the inspection visit. P Hamilton replied that with support from R Bamford, S-L Neesam and C Shaw, P Hamilton was prepared for the call from the Ofsted inspectors. P Hamilton explained to the inspectors, the context of the school and its' student profile to help them understand the school's objectives and improvement journey.

P Hamilton informed that R Bamford led on paper planning and preparation for the inspection visit, and that the online portal had the relevant data ready for inspection.

Safeguarding

Members queried Ofsted's safeguarding judgement and asked for an update on safeguarding. P Hamilton informed that safeguarding was found to be effective during the inspection and explained that a strong culture of safeguarding has been built. P Hamilton informed that Emma O'Hara has taken on a wider role in the Safeguarding Team, but works in the school, bringing her experience and skills to ensure Trust policies and statutory duties are followed.

Members acknowledged that two complaints received and are being investigated in line with the Compliments and Complaints Policy. These complaints will be discussed at the next SEND Educational Excellence Committee meeting on 10 March 2025.

Quality of Education (focused on expected exam entries)

Members queried how the quality of education was judged by Ofsted. P Hamilton replied that several teachers have been absent, with other teachers filling in the roles, such as for Science and Maths. P Hamilton informed that the teacher stepping into the Maths role was appropriately held to account for their planning and presentation of work during the lessons.

Members commented that it was good to see how training is being carried out for staff to increase their skills and noted that the KPIs will assist in providing evidence for the improvements in educational quality.

P Hamilton informed that the staff were challenged for triangulation of information by the Ofsted inspectors when they conducted deep dives into the subjects, such as the planning and use of Gatsby benchmarks and the outcomes in the classes and students' workbooks.

P Hamilton informed that the reading and writing skills are being further developed via Phonics. Members noted the work being done to increase literacy and English lessons and the difference it was making in individual students' lives in the school setting and at home.

P Hamilton informed that he has been working on the KPIs with R Bamford to be able to present these to future meetings to demonstrate the impact made on the students' school experience.

Behaviours and Attitudes

Not discussed

Personal Development incl. careers

Members queried what measures are being put in place to address the improvement of students. P Hamilton responded that he is training staff to take ownership of lesson planning and presentation, and take on further leadership opportunities, as well as lead on careers with students.

P Hamilton informed that visitors from the Joe Dix Foundation are due to visit to educate the students on the consequences of knife crime, with former magistrate also due to visit to provide instruction to the students on the benefits of obeying the law.

P Hamilton informed that there are more networking opportunities being supported by Suffolk County Council to help the students excel, as well as networking between Sunrise and other schools outside the Trust sharing best practice.

Staffing Issues

N Savvas informed that the correct systems for leading the school successfully were not in place, but now the Trust's senior leadership is working on the teams to improve delivery of high-quality education for the students. N Savvas informed that the school will deliver education for the students in-house, rather than via alternative provisions offsite, with the right staff being put in place to facilitate the needed delivery. N Savvas informed that R Bamford will start to organise the SEND Curriculum and Quality Board with the executive leaders to analyse the reports and KPIs being produced before they are sent on to the SEND Educational Excellence Committee.

Admissions

Not discussed

Staff training and professional development

Members queried if the staff are supportive of the changes being requested by the trust leadership. P Hamilton informed that the staff are grateful for the support that EEG has provided so far, with systems being put in place to improve student learning and educational aspirations.

P Hamilton informed that teaching including a lead on student careers demonstrating that the school now meets the eight Gatsby benchmarks, including linking the school's curriculum to careers.

11. Update on Governance induction, training and support

The Deputy Governance Professional informed that induction training has taken place for all governors, with one-to-one meetings with the Governance Professional as well as meeting with the Heads of schools and other governance members and Trustees.

The Deputy Governance Professional informed that further training will be conducted on an ongoing basis to ensure governance members are effective in their role, with both mandatory and non-mandatory short courses being provided for their participation.

The Deputy Governance Professional informed that all governance members are welcome to contact the Governance Professional or Deputy Governance Professional to discuss training and support needs.

12. Update from Trust, and items of concern to escalate

Members acknowledged and commended the amount of work being done by both Heads of Schools and due to be done in the new structure and commended the Trust Senior Leadership for their support in the changes being implemented.

11. Any other business

None was raised for this meeting.

The meeting concluded at 6.35pm

Date of next meeting – Wednesday, 30 May 2025