

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

Present physically:

Present virtually: J Finch, **Chair**
E Newport, parent member
J Rawlings

In Attendance: A Whatley, Group Partnership Director
E O'Hara, Head of Welfare and Safeguarding for SEMH
C Brickley, Head of School – Stone Lodge Academy, Peile Unit
C Shaw, Group Sixth Form Principal and Group Senior DSL
G Cowles, Deputy Governance Professional (Clerking)
J Clark, Regional Director – Primaries
L Chapman, Regional Director of SEND and Outdoor Learning (part)
N Savvas, Chief Executive Officer (part)
S Chesterton, Head of Welfare and Safeguarding (SEND Cluster)
S Gales, Governance Professional
S-L Neesam, Group Head of Welfare and Safeguarding

Apologies:

Absent:

Action

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed members to the Academy Council and made introductions to all in attendance. No apologies for absence were received.

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 12 November 2024

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

The scheduled meeting of 13 January 2025 was not quorate so could not go ahead.

4. Matters arising from the meeting held on 12 November 2024

One of the matters arising from the previous meeting was complete. Three were ongoing and one was updated at this meeting by the Deputy Governance Professional. The remaining matter arising was deferred to the next meeting.

MA4 – The Deputy Governance Professional informed that menopause support is being reviewed as part of a wider wellbeing policy under EEG, which will address the issue of supporting women in the workplace. Once the policy has been agreed, it will be available for viewing by governance members.

5. First Hand Feedback

Members received and considered the feedback forms from governance members First-Hand visits to Stone Lodge Academy during the last half term.

6. Update on Executive structure

The document "Update on Executive Structure" was circulated in advance of this meeting to governance members.

L Chapman informed of the changes to the Executive structure, including that L Chapman has taken up the role of Executive Head for all SEND schools, The School Improvement Leads (SIL) are stepping back from also being executive heads and will report directly to Rob Bamford, Group Vice Principal – Quality.

L Chapman informed that the Safeguarding Team will be led by Sarah-Louise Neesam, with Sarah Chesterton acting as Head of Welfare and Safeguarding (SEND Cluster) and Emma O'Hara acting as Head of Welfare and Safeguarding (SEMH – Social, Emotional and Mental Health) for the SEND schools and students.

L Chapman informed that former SENDAT staff's systems are being integrated to work with EEG systems and ensure a smooth transition of support for staff and students.

7. Update on quality improvement action plans

L Chapman informed that the quality improvement action plan is focusing on each of the five SEND schools to analyse the curriculum and how this can be improved to best support student outcomes and support by the right staff.

L Chapman acknowledged that work must be done to raise the quality of education for all SEND students, which will require ongoing support and motivation from school and executive leadership to raise student aspirations and enable student growth in the learning environment.

L Chapman informed that the Senior Executive Team will use the appropriate resources to support the action plans for each school, including the Safeguarding Team to ensure students are safe and well cared for in the teaching environment, by training and expectations for staff to deliver the highest quality of both education and safeguarding practice.

The Governance Professional informed that the Ofsted inspection report for Stone Lodge Academy, in the meeting folder, was to be discussed at this meeting to analyse the findings of the report and what the school needs to do to change the schools action going forward. The Governance Professional further informed that the governance members also need to look at what challenge should be raised to ensure sufficient and significant progress can be made in a timely manner to improve the school's rating and practices.

N Savvas joined the meeting at 5.40pm

N Savvas informed that the work to be done at Stone Lodge Academy is significant, as there is a lack of communications, accountability and ability to correctly record safeguarding data, and efficiency to put things in place. N Savvas informed that the school needs to have robust safeguarding procedures and training for all staff to be responsible for the safeguarding of students, not just the DSLs, and that communication is key to the procedures required. N Savvas informed that Ofsted will focus on checking that safeguarding arrangements are all in place and exemplary when they reinspect the school.

N Savvas informed that for quality analysis and assurance, there need to be clear quality improvement plans in place for each of the sections of the inspection report. N Savvas informed that Stone Lodge Academy will need to be fully prepared for the next inspection and be good or outstanding in that preparation by the training that is needed.

N Savvas informed that he recognised that C Brickley is fully engaged in the process of change. N Savvas informed that the expectation is that the action plan for quality improvements against the Ofsted findings by Stone Lodge Academy will be in place by Friday 14 March 2025, with a detailed plan for improving safeguarding expected by Wednesday 12 March 2025.

L Chapman informed that safeguarding training to all Stone Lodge Academy staff was given at a special personal development day where face-to-face training and assessment took place, with the DSLs receiving specialist training from S-L Neesam to ensure the Ofsted findings were addressed and remedied.

Members queried if the training would take place regularly. L Chapman replied that the Level 2 safeguarding training lasts for three years, but also that training on the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) updates take place annually or when updated by the DfE.

S-L Neesam informed that some staff have trained in the professional standards for safeguarding, Prevent training and are up-to-date with online training. S-L Neesam informed that the Safeguarding Team are supporting C Brickley in carrying out regular updates, and that C Brickley suggested she carry out a weekly update for safeguarding for all staff, with S Chesterton visiting daily, giving support as required.

L Chapman left the meeting at 5.50pm.

N Savvas informed that EEG has employed Conscious Comms to act as intermediary for any media coverage of the Ofsted results when they are published. N Savvas informed that EEG will recognise the Ofsted report but also state that Stone Lodge has good practices in place for students, who interact well with staff in strong relationships.

N Savvas informed that EEG already has three colleges graded Outstanding, and EEG is now working with a large SEND provision, using their experience and expertise to put measures in place for the schools. N Savvas informed that EEG will invite parents in to speak to C Brickley or N Savvas to address any concerns and be updated clearly on what is being done to improve student care and lift education standards to an excellent level.

8. Update on complaints and investigations

L Chapman informed that the document "Update on complaints and investigations" had been presented to the SEND Educational Excellence Committee but had not been presented to the Academy Councils.

L Chapman informed that a new procedure is being followed with regards to complaints or compliments is being followed, where the Executive Assistants receive the complaint and log it, then allocate it as appropriate.

The Governance Professional informed that the Complaints policy and procedure is to be discussed with the Heads of School to update them regarding the procedures to ensure they understand them and then create a SEND school cluster complaints log. The Governance Professional informed that the log would hold actions taken, and what stage the complaint has reached, whether a Stage 1 informal complaint or if it is to be escalated.

The Governance Professional informed that the Academy Council should question that there are significant assurances that the complaints on the document are being dealt with effectively by having strategies to make sure that students are not experiencing the situations mentioned in the complaints.

Members discussed Complaint 1 and queried the actions taken to resolve the complaint. L Chapman replied that no child fitting the description was removed from the school. L Chapman informed that there is another school with a similar name to which the Local Authority may be referring.

L Chapman informed that any bullying activity is logged according to levels of incidents and dealt with by school staff.

S Chesterton informed that the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) that is used to log incidents is being reviewed to be more defined, as regards the accuracy and description of categories. S Chesterton informed that she had not observed a culture of bullying in the time that she has spent at Stone Lodge Academy.

The Governance Professional queried whether the use of physical restraint was appropriate and recorded properly, linked to the concerns raised in the complaint. L Chapman replied that CPOMS is preloaded with physical intervention categories which reflect the interventions staff are authorised and trained to use.

C Brickley informed that staff are trained to use physical interventions, rather than restraint, and that all such incidents are logged and monitored, with regular analysis for Personal Development of staff.

C Shaw informed that inspections show that staff are confused over logging incidents on Arbor and CPOMS. C Shaw informed that self-harming incidents were being reported on Arbor, rather than CPOMS. C Shaw informed that the Designated Safeguarding Leads had no clear oversight over reporting and that staff need to be confident in the use of systems. C Brickley replied that she is happy to analyse the Arbor data logs and share them with S Chesterton.

S-L Neesam informed members that the Safeguarding Team will look at all categories of incidents on the logs, to check they are appropriate and then the information will be disseminated to all SEND schools to ensure all staff are trained in the same categories and have a consistent approach to logging and analysing the data.

Members queried whether there was a guide to using the two systems, Arbor and CPOMS. S-L Neesam confirmed that a training guide will be made available to staff for the use of Arbor and CPOMS once the categories have been reviewed and defined more clearly.

9. Stone Lodge Academy – half-termly report

Members received and considered the report provided and C Brickley summarised the report.

The members noted the contents of the agenda and requested that the Heads focus on the points detailed to ensure appropriate challenge.

Attendance and persistent absence

C Brickley informed that persistent absence is currently at 36%, of which 30% is attributed to ongoing illnesses.

The Governance Professional queried whether the English as an Additional Language (EAL) students' families have received and were able to understand communication regarding the importance of attendance and whether the school uses alternative arrangements to translate information for them. S-L Neesam replied that the Language Line can be accessed.

C Brickley shared a whole school attendance spreadsheet that showed tracking data for each student, with actions taken to monitor their attendance and updated actions to evidence the monitoring measures taking place.

N Savvas informed that the Trust Board will want to see what actions are taking place for each student on a detailed action plan, where it clearly shows whether there are any improvements in attendance and learning. N Savvas informed that if no improvements are evident, Trustees will need to see change demonstrated to find a method that works and demonstrates engagement with the students and their families.

C Brickey replied that the Whole School Attendance document shown clarifies actions taken and the reasons. C Brickey informed that this tracking for their child can be shared with families to support the school in its attendance policy.

N Savvas informed that genuine absence can be demonstrated that this is helpful in monitoring attendance. N Savvas queried the mechanism to track progress if the

child is at home, as well as the impact to their learning and safety while away from the school. C Brickley replied that work will be sent to students out of school, but some persistent absence is due to multiple occurrences rather than long term. C Brickley informed that home visits are carried out and documented, but the school doesn't normally visit unless more than 5 days out of school have been recorded.

Members queried EEG's policy on visiting absent students. S-L Neesam replied that the Safeguarding Team will be investigating when to visit students' families, make videoconferencing calls and follow up procedures for the whole SEND school cluster. C Brickley informed that the school will review categorising of persistent absentees more thoroughly, such as by those who are school refusers, those on a part time timetable and those who require ongoing medical support linked to their Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

Exclusions and Suspensions

C Brickley informed that no exclusions or suspensions are recorded for this reporting period.

Ofsted readiness

C Brickley informed that Ofsted preparations for the reinspection of Stone Lodge Academy are being made with R Bamford. C Brickley informed that action plans are being put in place, with support from EEG's Senior Executives, and these has been discussed at this meeting.

Safeguarding

The Governance Professional queried the actions taken relating to incidents in the Head's report, regarding the racist incidents, Child on Child abuse incidents and Harmful sexualised behaviour incidents. C Brickley replied regarding that the incidents are addressed with the students involved, interventions have taken place and there has been communication with families to inform them of the incidents.

The Governance Professional queried the actions taken for the victims of these incidents. C Brickley responded that support has been put in place for the student concerned.

S Chesterton informed that a healthy relationships discussion has also taken place with the instigators of the racist incidents, as often children will emulate language they have heard elsewhere.

C Brickley replied that staff also educate the instigators about healthy relationships. C Brickley informed that some children instigate an emotional reaction due to their learning need, therefore staff will be briefed on adjusting social times for the students to lessen the opportunities for these incidents.

C Brickley informed that whole school assemblies also seek to clarify appropriate behaviour and behavioural expectations, and that staff also use seating plans to help lessen the possibility of incidents taking place.

S-L Neesam informed that the sexualised behaviour is difficult to navigate, as some have no intent but may touch inappropriately due to their age or understanding, but due to the categories on CPOMS it must be recorded as sexualised behaviour. S-L Neesam informed that the data is to be analysed and recorded more accurately to ensure appropriate follow up action can take place and keep the students safe in the school environment.

Members queried what action will take place in recording more accurately harmful sexualised behaviour. S Chesterton replied that the school has made a referral to the Harmful Sexualised Behaviour Team and have received a consultation regarding the student involved. S Chesterton informed that the CPOMS categories will be broken down to more accurately refer to the types of incidents taking place.

C Brickley informed that future reports will provide evidence to support the actions taken and the resources that were used.

Members commended the Stone Lodge Academy's leadership team for the comprehensive approach to improving safeguarding, which demonstrates the school's concern for all under its care.

Quality of Education (focused on expected exam entries)

Not discussed

Behaviours and Attitudes

Not discussed

Personal Development incl. careers

Not discussed

Staffing Issues

Not discussed

Admissions

Not discussed

Staff training and professional development

Not discussed

10. Peile Unit – half-termly report

Members received and considered the report provided and C Brickley summarised the report.

Attendance and persistent absence

C Brickley informed that attendance at Peile is currently at 91.22%. C Brickley informed that one school refuser has moved on to a different provision.

Exclusions and Suspensions

C Brickley informed that no exclusions or suspensions are recorded for this reporting period.

Ofsted readiness

C Brickley informed that Peile Unit has just received an ungraded Ofsted inspection, and work on curriculum planning within the mainstream setting continues, to improve the teaching and learning experience for the students in the unit.

Safeguarding

C Brickley informed that 4 safeguarding incidents have been reported - 2 for student presentation and two at students' homes. C Brickley informed that she has contacted the families concerned to address, with Child Safeguarding Concern (MARF) support. C Brickley informed that the parents have been sent resources to resolve some conflict issues raised at home. C Brickley informed that any follow up actions are logged and closed within five days, as necessary.

Members queried the Peile Unit's relationship regarding safeguarding with the mainstream Chantry school. C Brickley replied that safeguarding is led by two DSLs on the mainstream site, with whom Peile communicate regularly. C Brickley informed that the mainstream school's DSLs provide safeguarding support when C Brickley is not present at the unit.

Quality of Education (focused on expected exam entries)

Not discussed

Behaviours and Attitudes

The Governance Professional queried the high level of behaviours shown in page 7 of the Peile report and asked what has been done to address the issues raised. C Brickley replied that for the C3 Extreme Defiance in Lesson case a Year 11 and a Year 9 student from the same class and are in a relationship, which has led extreme behaviours being exhibited between them. C Brickley replied that staff have been in conversations with them over healthy relationships and the Year 9 student is now placed with the Year 7 and 8 students. C Brickley replied the school is building on promoting healthy relationships with students and their families, which has lessened negative behaviour.

Personal Development incl. careers

Not discussed

Staffing Issues

Not discussed

Admissions

Not discussed

Staff training and professional development

Not discussed

11. Update on Governance induction, training and support

The Deputy Governance Professional informed that induction training has been arranged by the Governance Professional and includes meetings 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

None.

11. Any other business

The CEO gave his commendation for the stone lodge team in a difficult time. Progress being made.

The meeting was concluded at 6.20pm

Date of next meeting – Tuesday, 29 April 2025