

PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the physical meeting held on 3 March 2025 at 6pm

Present physically at Exning Primary School:

A Friend	D Murphy, parent
A Goodfellow	H Arnold
B Needham	M Ley (part)
D Bicker, Chair	

Present virtually:

In Attendance:

E Hardy, Co-Headteacher
J Clark, Regional Director – Primaries
N Warren, Deputy Headteacher
R Clifford, Deputy Headteacher
S Gales, Governance Professional

Apologies:

J Malone, **Vice Chair**
O Lambert

Absent:

J Wyn-Beer

Action

1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

Members recognised their standing declared interests. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies for absence were received from J Malone and O Lambert. The absence of J Wyn-Beer was noted.

The Chair welcomed Desmond Murphy as newly elected parent member and members introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 30 September 2024

The minutes of the meeting on 30 September 2024 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

The Governance Professional **noted** that the Committee approved Exning Primary School's Admissions policies for this academic year (2024/25), next academic year (2025/26), and the following academic year (2026/27) via email in October 2024.

The Governance Professional **noted** that the Committee approved Exning Primary School's Pupil Premium Statement via email in November 2024.

3. Matters arising from the meeting on 30 September 2024

All eight matters arising were complete.

4. Committee membership, skillset and training needs

Members received and considered the report provided which summarised the membership, experience and skillset of the Committee, as well as a draft proposal paper outlining how this Committee could be adapted as/when there are more primary schools within the Trust.

The Governance Professional confirmed that the skillset of members aligned to the Committee Skillset.

Members reflected that the transition post-academisation to fewer meetings has reduced the opportunity for broader strategic updates and discussion and suggested for 2025/26 we schedule some additional meetings and consider the use of virtual/hybrid meetings if flexibility is needed. J Clark voiced support for additional touch points however noted the need to balance Executive capacity, especially as/when more primary schools join the Trust. The Chair, Governance Profession and J Clark to discuss and bring proposed 2025/26 meeting dates to the next meeting.

J Clark
Chair
Gov. Prof.

Members discussed for the proposal paper.

Members queried why the proposed change of Vice Chair. The Governance Professional informed that the current Vice Chair requested to stand down, due to their increasing work commitments reducing their capacity to fulfil the role. The appointment of A Goodfellow, as Vice Chair is proposed as she has recent, relevant experience (she was vice chair of Exning Primary School's pre-academisation governing board). Members supported the Vice Chair appointment.

Members queried the rationale for the proposed structure over other possible governance structures. The Governance Professional explained that the proposal reflects the governance structure overseeing the Trust's post-16 provision, which are all Ofsted outstanding. The structure seeks to support the Executive to establish an aligned approach over multiple primary schools to reduce workload and focus discussion, support and challenge. Expanding this Committee would bring additional skills and diversity which would support succession planning; it would also facilitate best practice sharing and support this highly experienced Committee to directly benefit another primary school by enhancing governance oversight.

Members queried the likely membership composition of this Committee as/when there are additional primary schools in the Trust. The Governance Professional informed that this Committee's membership would expand to include an elected parent representative from each primary school, willing and suitably skilled members from the joining primary school's existing governing board, the Trustee Lead for Safeguarding (primaries) as well as willing and suitably skilled members of this Committee. The Governance Professional noted that while this could result in a sizable Committee, we must be aware of succession planning and that governance members may wish to stand down/not serve on the new Committee. The Governance Professional confirmed that ahead of implementing the proposed structure, she and J Clark would speak to current Committee members and governance members of the incoming school to confirm their desire to serve on the expanded Committee. Moreover, we will continue to review our governance structure and arrangements as/when additional primary schools join the Trust, especially where there are significant geographical distances between the schools – as they would likely serve different communities and logistically it would be impractical to operate a singular Committee over such distances.

Gov. Prof.
J Clark

M Ley joined the meeting at 6.30pm

Members queried how the Trust considers inorganic growth opportunities, such as primary schools wishing to join the Trust. The Governance Professional explained the multi-stage due diligence approval process and noted that, while the decision is ultimately for the Trust Board, this Committee is able to influence the Trust's growth strategy via discussions at the Strategic Conferences. Members queried whether there were any primary schools looking to join the Trust and asked for information about the school. J Clark informed of the potential joiner school's ethos, size, community, context and the likely timeline for them joining the Trust.

Members queried how the expanded Committee would achieve integration and shared ownership of oversight of the Trust's entire primary provision, i.e. governance members serving all schools, rather than the singular school they were originally serving. J Clark outlined plans to expand the highly effective deep-dive approach established at Exning Primary School, so that governance members visit and deep-dive across the schools. J Clark noted this would help integrate Committee members and also help to spread and monitor the impact of best practice sharing.

Members voiced support for the proposal paper.

Members reflected that there wasn't school wide communication about the appointment of the parent member, and suggested communication to this Committee and to the school's parent body be reviewed/improved. J Clark and the Governance Profession to consider.

J Clark
Gov. Prof.

5. Governance Deep Dives and First-Hand Feedback

Members received and **noted** the first-hand feedback from visits in the autumn term and so far in the spring term.

Members received and considered the deep dive reports for PSHE and Music.

A Goodfellow summarised the findings of the PSHE deep dive completed in November 2024. A Goodfellow noted PSHE links to the Behaviours and Attitudes, and Personal Development sections of Exning Primary School's 2024/25 School Development Plan and commended the effective lesson planning and strong evidence of the use of pupil voice to tailor the PSHE curriculum.

R Clifford-Turner explained how PSHE is delivered and monitored across the school and informed that the school has recently introduced Hamish and Milo (a social and emotional learning/intervention tool) to support children to develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, confidence and resilience skills. R Clifford-Turner explained the impact this tool has had for children and families, as evidenced by recent parent feedback, and outlined plans to further expand use of the tool to support more children across the school.

Members commended the joined-up approach, working with families to develop parents skills so they can better support their children and work alongside the school as part of a consistent and holistic approach.

R Clifford-Turner informed that Suffolk County Council's primary school mental health worker visited Exning Primary School last week and commended the school's implementation of Hamish and Milo.

A Goodfellow reflected that the Peer Mediation introduced last academic year has made a positive impact and resulted in the school being shortlisted in the National Mediation Awards. The Chair commended the staff for the innovative and impactful programme, and recommended members watch the video on the school's website, as it shows how the children develop skills and strategies which are readily transferable into adult life. N Warren welcomed members to visit the school w/c 19 May 2025 to meet the peer mediators.

N Warren
Gov. Prof.

Members queried if there were any concerns arising from the PSHE deep dive. A Goodfellow confirmed that there were no concerns, though some minor areas for improvement were identified, and noted that future deep dives will be scheduled when PSHE delivery can be observed.

A Friend summarised the findings of the Music deep dive completed in February 2025. A Friend commended the breadth and inclusivity of the music curriculum and the opportunities available to children. A Friend noted that she observed children engaged and participating in lessons, and that the children spoke positively about the subject.

Members queried if there were any concerns arising from the Music deep dive. A Friend confirmed that there were no concerns.

Members received a verbal update on the deep dive reports of French and History. The Chair asked that members upload deep dive reports to GovernorHub.

B Needham summarised the findings of the French deep dive completed in January 2025. B Needham noted that KAPOW (a specialist primary curriculum and lesson planning tool introduced last academic year) is having a positive impact on lessons, as teachers feedback that their subject confidence is improving, and children feedback that French lessons are more engaging. B Needham observed that there has been increased focus on French oral skills, and that equal focus is needed on evidencing development of French writing skills.

Members queried if there were any concerns arising from the French deep dive. B Needham noted there were no areas of concern, though future deep dives should consider whether sufficient curriculum adaptation is in place to support children with SEN.

E Hardy

M Ley summarised the findings of the History deep dive completed in December 2024. M Ley noted that the transition from Target Tracker to SONAR (to record assessment and progress) has been implemented effectively and commended the use of virtual school visits to expand children's curiosity and engagement with the history topics. M Ley observed that there is strong evidence that the topic approach has a positive impact in developing cross curriculum learning as well as children's literacy, reading and analytical skills, and that topics are adapted appropriately.

Members queried if there were any concerns arising from the History deep dive. M Ley confirmed that there were no concerns, however children would benefit from more subject/skill identification during topic work so that they can identify the link to specific subjects.

The Chair thanked members for their reports and asked E Hardy to reach out to members to schedule future deep dives.

E Hardy

Update on 2024/25 academic year

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

6. Headteacher's Report

- i. **Staffing and staff CPD update**
- ii. **School development and improvement plan**
- iii. **School data return**
- iv. **Attendance**

Members received and considered the report provided which summarised highlights so far in the spring term, provided an update on school staffing and staff CPD, an update on the school development plan, safeguarding arrangements and attendance analysis, as well as an update on integration into the Trust. Members also received and considered the termly data return to Suffolk County Council, the Spring 2025 (mid-year) attainment and progress analysis report, and a detailed SEND report.

Members queried why there are proportionately more staff in Year 4 than other year groups. J Clark explained that this was a strategic decision, to increase staffing to not only support Year 4 which has a high proportion of children with SEN and to create additional capacity to mentor newly qualified and trainee teachers with the aim that these trainees rapidly develop the skills and experience to be highly effective practitioners. J Clark reflected that the feedback from trainees is that this has had a positive impact and noted we are hopeful this model will support retention of newly qualified teachers and help with success planning. J Clark also explained that there are a few cases of long-term absences across the school, and so the additional capacity in Year 4 helps to balance the cover workload.

Members queried how the new assessment software SONAR has been received. J Clark informed that following a transition period, it is now working well and explained how the data has been presented to show attainment (starting point/prior-learning) and progress (impact of in-year learning).

Members with children at Exning Primary School, reflected that there had been a change in the format of progress reports provided at the recent parents evening, and queried the rationale for the changes and the parent feedback to the new style reports. E Hardy explained that the progress reports were supplementary to the detailed feedback provided by teachers to parents, and that the format change was a result of the transition to SONAR. Members fed back that the previous format was helpful in helping parents communicate with their child themes from the parents evening feedback, and that the new format was less detailed and could not be used in the same way. Members asked the Executive to consider if the format could be improved to better display the child's progress.

J Clark

Members queried what is meant by 'disadvantaged'. J Clark explained what metrics are included in the term.

Members queried when Exning Primary School is likely to be inspected by Ofsted and whether staff are suitably prepared. J Clark informed that following academisation we expect

an inspection by 2027 and summarised how staff are self-assessing against the Ofsted criteria and preparing for a future inspection.

Members discussed the SEND report.

Members queried why there are a higher proportion of children with SEN in Years 1 and 2 than in previous years. R Clifford-Turner explained that nationally and locally we are seeing families seeking SEN diagnosis earlier.

R Clifford-Turner noted the school's overall IEP target score is 0.6 which shows children are achieving above expected progress and noted the specialist SEN unit (the Hive) are measuring progress against the Cherry Garden framework for the engagement model.

Members queried the attendance and engagement at the SEND parent forum. R Clifford-Turner noted that attendance is variable and outlined strategies used to support parents to engage in the forum. R Clifford-Turner summarised the discussions at the forum and the actions taken in response to parent feedback.

SAFEGUARDING

7. Termly report (Autumn 2024)

Members received and considered the termly safeguarding report provided.

D Bicker, as Trustee lead for Safeguarding (Primaries), informed that there has been a meeting of all the Trustee Leads for Safeguarding across the Trust to share best practice and create a joined-up approach, and informed that the Group Head of Safeguarding and Welfare is working with the school DSLs to strengthen reporting and safeguarding arrangements across the Trust.

D Bicker, as Trustee lead for Safeguarding (Primaries), commended the strong evidence of embedding age-appropriate safeguarding learning within the curriculum, and confirmed that the school's single central record is compliant and staff training is up to date.

Members queried the reason for the significant increase in 'concerns raised' compared to previous terms. N Warren explained that this increase reflects changes to staff's use MyConcern rather than indicating a rise in concerns.

Members queried how safeguarding will be reported to this Committee as/when additional primary schools join the Trust. The Governance Professional confirmed that this Committee and the Trust Board will continue to receive detailed safeguarding data per school, however it may be presented differently so that trends, concerns and actions taken are readily identifiable e.g. with an executive summary cover paper. N Warren voiced support for the new approach and for the support/expertise of Trust's safeguarding team.

8. Risk Register Extract

Members received and considered the paper provided which included 1 red risk, 5 amber risk and 1 yellow risk.

Members discussed EEG019 (relating to lack of student capacity) and noted that Exning Primary School is at capacity so there is very little mitigation for the school, other than developing new units and/or sites. Members discussed that more children with SEN are applying to the school from out of catchment and discussed that, as SEN is a priority admission criterion, this then reduces available places for children from our local community catchment. Members noted that the school cannot control or mitigate this, however it is a capacity consideration linked to developing specialist SEN units.

Members **felt assured** by the mitigations.

9. Any other business

- Inclusivity in school and extra-curricular activities

Members discussed feedback from the SEND parent forum, noting that they would like to better understand how teachers select children for school and extra-curricular activities. J

Clark explained how teachers select children and noted that all children are given extensive opportunities to participate, both as individuals and as entire classes/year groups to ensure inclusivity and fairness.

- **Skills escalator day**

Members fed back from their first-hand visit to the Skills Escalator event at the Extended Reality Lab in January 2025. Members commended the excellent day and noted that Exning Primary School children attended and took part in enriching activities.

Meeting closed at 8.34pm