

EEGT SEND EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the online meeting held on 15 May 2025 at 3.00pm

Present physically:

Present virtually: A Friend, Committee member (part)
C Broad, Parent Committee member – Sunrise Academy (part)
E Newport, Parent Committee member – Stone Lodge Academy (part)
G Abbott, Parent Committee member – Chalk Hill
J Finch, Committee member
L Bennett, Committee member
L Sutherland, Parent Committee member – Priory School
M Cadman, Committee member
N Kellett, EEGT Trustee – **Vice Chair**
R Inman, EEGT Trustee (part)
S Snowdon, EEGT Trustee – **Chair**

In attendance: A Whatley, Group Partnerships Director
C Brickley, Head of School – Stone Lodge Academy & Peile
C Shaw, Group Sixth Form Principal and senior DSL
E Barneveld, Head of School – Duke of Lancaster School
E O'Hara, Head of Welfare and Safeguarding (SEMH)
L Chapman, Regional Director SEND and Outdoor Learning
N Jennings, Head of School – Chalk Hill
N Savvas, CEO
P Hamilton, Head of School – Sunrise Academy
R Bamford, Group Vice Principal Quality
S Chesterton, Head of Welfare and Safeguarding (SEND cluster)
S Gales, Governance Professional
S Hopkins, Head of SEND Services (SEND cluster)
S-L Neesam, Group Head of Safeguarding and Welfare
S White, Head of School – Priory School

Apologies: K Points, EEGT Trustee
S Daley, EEGT Trustee
S Graham, Chief People Officer

Absent: A Miti, Committee member

Action

1. **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**
The Governance Professional informed that the Trust Board appointed S Snowdon as Chair and N Kellett as Vice Chair for 2024/25, at its meeting on 7 March 2025.
2. **Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence**
Members discussed and recognised their standing declarations. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies were received from K Points, S Daley and S Graham. The absence of A Miti was noted.

The Chair welcomed members to the Committee. Members introduced themselves.
3. **Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset**
Members received and considered the draft Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset provided.

A Friend left the meeting at 3.08pm

Members **approved** the Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset and **agreed to recommend** to the Trust Board.

4. **Minutes of governance meetings:**

- i. **Academy Council on 3 March 2025 (Duke of Lancaster & Sunrise)**
- ii. **Academy Council on 4 March 2025 (Chalk Hill & Priory)**
- iii. **Academy Council on 5 March 2025 (Stone Lodge & Peile)**
- iv. **Committee on 10 March 2025**

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

M Cadman, as the then Chair of the Academy Council for Duke of Lancaster and Sunrise raised concern about the completeness of the minutes of the meeting on 3 March 2025, noting they did not sufficiently reflect the positivity and supportive nature of the meeting. The Governance Professional apologised and informed that the clerk has since left and the Academy Councils have been wound down. Members **agreed** to accept the minutes as presented.

v. **DfE Termination Warning Letter and EEGT response**

Members received and **noted** the letter from Jonathan Duff, Regional Director the DfE's east of England division dated 4 April 2025 and the Trust's response sent on 6 May 2025.

Members queried if we had received feedback on Suffolk County Council's visit Stone Lodge Academy to review our safeguarding arrangements and progress since the Ofsted inspection. R Bamford informed that he received the draft report today, so once finalised we will share with the Committee.

5. **Matters Arising from meeting on 10 March 2025**

Of the fifteen matters arising from the last meeting, seven were complete, three were for the Audit and Risk Management Committee, one was for the Trust Board, three were ongoing and one was on hold.

MA8 – R Bamford updated that the SEND Curriculum and Quality Board are regularly looking at the KPIs and we are looking to source appropriate benchmarks for the KPIs.

Members queried, following the removal of the Executive Head role, who covers the Head of School if they are absent. The CEO informed the Deputy/Assistant Heads of School provide cover.

Members queried the role and impact of the School Improvement Leads. R Bamford summarised their current role and members noted the papers include analysis work compiled by the School Improvement Leads.

A Friend rejoined the meeting at 3.23pm

6. **Termly reports on:**

- **ILP progress and Gatsby benchmarks**
 - o **Chalk Hill**
 - o **Duke of Lancaster School**
 - o **Peile unit**
 - o **Priory School**
 - o **Stone Lodge Academy**
 - o **Sunrise Academy**
- **ECHP annual reviews**

Members received and considered the paper provided which summarised progress and attainment and included detailed analysis of each SEND school's performance and areas for development. The paper also included analysis of each SEND school's compliance with the Gatsby benchmarks and areas for development, and a separate paper reporting statutory information on annual reviews and the support offered.

Members queried how long the SEND schools have been using Provision Map and whether 'secure', 'developing', etc. are standardly defined terms. L Chapman confirmed

L Chapman

the SEND schools have used the software for several years and explained how the terms are defined. Members asked that future reports explain the terms used and the thresholds for the terms.

Members reflected that progress monitoring relies upon accurate baseline information and queried how confident we are that student baselines are accurate. L Chapman explained how we evaluate student baselines and summarised how we are using best practice sharing to improve our baseline assessments. R Bamford informed that work is underway to establish and embed quality assurance processes which support staff when making progress judgements, to provide a framework of standards and our methodology, so we can be more confident in the rigour and fairness of our judgements.

Members queried if there are appropriate benchmarks we can compare ILP progress against. L Chapman explained that ILP targets vary per individual student and each school has a different student profile, and noted this variance makes benchmarking to other providers less meaningful. L Chapman explained that as an Executive they review and analyse the data to determine whether our ILP targets are appropriate and achievable.

Members reflected that ILP progress is part of the picture, and we need to monitor student's progress against the curriculum and queried whether school's look at both these parts together to evaluate whether the student is making expected progress and whether more intervention/support is needed and/or if the current intervention/support is having the intended impact. L Chapman explained that this data is held in multiple systems and analysed in multiple ways, however staff do look at it per student to understand their progress and what's working, and if additional support is needed. Members asked whether, in the future, this analysis will be presented to this Committee. L Chapman confirmed that it will.

Members queried why the report doesn't mention compliance with Gatsby benchmark 8 and whether we are compliant with the requirements, e.g. do we have suitably trained careers advisors to support preparing for adulthood in Year 9. S Hopkins informed that we are not yet compliant and explained that, due to capacity, our trained careers advisor supports students in Years 10 to 13. S Hopkins informed that we are supporting other team members to upskill to Level 6 and to reorganise the team to create additional capacity to become compliant. Members asked to receive a progress update at the next meeting.

S Hopkins

C Broad joined the meeting at 3.45pm

Members queried how we apply the Gatsby benchmarks for our SEND school children. The Heads of School explained how their schools provide careers guidance and monitor progress against the Gatsby benchmarks, and L Chapman explained the DfE guidance is quite inclusive so can be understood by our children.

Members noted the DfE Careers guidance has been updated and queried whether we have adapted our policies and practices in readiness. S Hopkins informed that the SEND school careers staff are working as part of the Group's highly experienced careers staff to strengthen the provision at our SEND schools and to prepare for the new guidance.

Members reflected that we need to work with students and their families to raise career aspirations and provide information. The Heads of School summarised how the careers staff liaise with students and families.

J Finch offered, given her professional role as careers lead for the Local Authority, to help and support the SEND schools to review their careers offer to ensure compliance with the current and new DfE guidance.

S Hopkins summarised the EHCP annual review paper. Members thanked her on the thorough report.

7. Update on school action plans - **Stone Lodge Academy**

- **Duke of Lancaster School**
- **Priory School**
- **Chalk Hill**

Members received and considered the report provided which summarised the progress on the school action plans against the due dates and included the detailed school specific action plans created to respond to areas for development identified by Ofsted.

Members reflected that the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee, which oversees our colleges, has some wider thematic areas of development; and queried whether this is the direction of travel for these action plans. L Chapman confirmed that we have some wider thematic areas for development e.g. approaches to curriculum development and confirmed that the action plans will migrate into School Development Plans.

Members discussed the Duke of Lancaster action plan and queried what is meant by a 'top 10' meeting. E Barneveld explained that they are meetings focussed on the top 10 students of concern e.g. safeguarding, attendance, etc.

Members commended the action plans and queried how this Committee will continue to capture progress and cross-cutting themes. R Bamford explained that in 2025/26 this Committee will review each school's School Development Plan and this, along with our standard agenda items, will provide this assurance.

The CEO reflected that these action plans were created, following the findings at Stone Lodge Academy, to review the practices at each school to ensure that the basics are in place. The CEO gave examples of the types of improvement work identified and underway at each school, and noted our focus is on strengthening the practices at each school. The CEO informed that it is premature to focus on each school's Self-Evaluation Documents and on Ofsted readiness, though explained this will be our focus for 2025/26.

L Chapman
(2025/26)

E Barneveld informed that since the papers were circulated the 'overdue' items for Duke of Lancaster are now complete.

Members discussed the action plan for Stone Lodge Academy and L Chapman summarised the progress on the completed and ongoing actions.

L Chapman explained that the recent safeguarding visit by Suffolk County Council helped provide additional external assurance that the safeguarding arrangements we have put in place at Stone Lodge Academy are impactful and are significantly improved, and they noted the improvement in leadership and governance oversight.

C Brickley explained that of the other areas identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement e.g. curriculum planning, reading support, attendance tracking and assessment, are all underway. C Brickley explained how the school is working to review its curriculum offer to align to the needs of its students and to support students to progress. C Brickley explained that the student profile at Stone Lodge Academy is spikey (non-linear) and so the school are looking at how they can sub-divide curriculum subjects to better understand student's progress to identify the specific support required e.g. rather than 'English' overall, looking at 'reading' and 'writing' separately – and noted this approach has been highly successful at Exning Primary School.

Members queried if this approach to sub-divide curriculum areas was used in secondary schools. C Brickley noted she didn't know, though confirmed that she is making contact with Outstanding schools to share best practice.

N Kellett, as Trustee lead for Safeguarding (SEND schools), informed that he visited Stone Lodge Academy this month and met with the safeguarding teams to scrutinise the progress against the action plans.

Members queried what staff development activities have taken place since the last inspection to ensure staff understand the changes we are making, are trained to use the new approaches/systems and there is consistency of approach. L Chapman informed that

since the inspection all staff have undertaken safeguarding training, and the PD days have been used to upskill staff and inform of our new approaches. L Chapman confirmed this training is being recorded on our central systems. C Brickley added that trained Ofsted inspectors within the Group have been supporting the school to develop their articulation skills to prepare for future inspections.

Members queried whether our PSHE curriculum now responds to cover topics emerging in school e.g. safeguarding topics such as healthy relationships, bullying, etc. and if the school tracks the frequency of concerns/interventions to see if the PSHE curriculum has an impact on student behaviours. C Brickley confirmed that the PSHE curriculum has been strengthened and gave examples of topics which are delivered at certain points of the year e.g. before/after a school holiday, to respond to emerging behaviours.

Members queried how we ensure staff are suitably knowledgeable and skilled to deliver our PSHE curriculum. C Brickley explained that we use Suffolk's PSHE portal to receive up-to-date guidance and training on emerging county-wide topics and our PSHE lead regularly attends conferences to upskill with the latest training.

Members queried whether we record skills gained from our PSHE curriculum, in students ECHPs as progress against their ILP targets. C Brickley explained that there isn't a direct link at the moment from PSHE to ILP, but explained we could look to develop this.

8. **Half-termly report on safeguarding**

Members received and considered the report provided which summarised the safeguarding data of each specialist SEN school.

Members asked that future reports to expand acronyms and provide previous terms data and benchmarks for context and trend analysis.

S Chesterton

R Inman left the meeting at 5pm

Members asked that future reports, without providing confidential/sensitive information, expand on the underlying cause of any LADO incidents so that members have additional context.

S Chesterton

Members queried whether we have confidence in the assurance provided by the Safe CIC safeguarding audit. S-L Neesam and E O'Hara confirmed that we have confidence in the Safe CIC as they were given full access to conduct through deep-dives.

Members discussed the data for sexualised and intimidatory behaviours and queried why the levels at Stone Lodge Academy are comparatively high. S Chesterton explained how we are working with staff to use the same criteria for these behaviours and summarized how we are working with students to confirm expectations and acceptable behaviours.

Members discussed the data for bullying and harassment behaviours and queried why the levels at Duke of Lancaster School are comparatively high. S Chesterton explained that we are transitioning our reporting criteria to be more consistent across the SEND school to help our data be more meaningful. S Chesterton explained why there are a higher proportion of harmful sexualised behaviours at Duke of Lancaster School used by some students, and explained the support and interventions being put in place.

Members discussed the PREVENT training for staff and noted the safeguarding team now includes a highly experienced PREVENT officer who is supporting the SEND schools and their action plans.

Members discussed the process for closing C-Poms cases and queried why it differs across the SEND schools and whether the number of open cases are a concern. S Chesterton explained the impact of the differing practices across the SEND schools and noted that the higher levels of open cases at Priory School could be a result of the date of reporting (e.g. before the team have met to discuss and close cases), rather than a particular concern.

Members queried the safeguarding team's opinion of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at Stone Lodge Academy. S Chesterton advised that safeguarding arrangements and practices at Stone Lodge Academy have significantly improved, and S-L Neesam informed that we are appointing additional safeguarding specialists to increase capacity at Stone Lodge Academy.

9. Half-termly report on attendance and persistent absence

Members received and considered the report provided which summarised the attendance and persistent absence at each specialist SEN school compared to appropriate benchmarks, and the intervention strategies used to improve attendance.

Members discussed the data and noted that some students with poorer attendance have withdrawn and queried how this has been achieved. L Chapman explained that where students are not attending due to their travel time or not wanting the placement, we have worked closely with the Local Authorities to find them alternative placements which better meet their needs. L Chapman also noted that there have been two permanent exclusions at Sunrise Academy.

Members noted that the analysis of the interventions is helpful however it needs more analysis to identify the impact of interventions, to inform future decision making.

L Chapman

Members discussed the relationship between attendance, behaviours and safeguarding, and queried how we look at these collectively to identify underlying causes to put in place appropriate and impactful interventions. S-L Neesam informed a multi-disciplinary team discuss and analyse these indicators at the 'top 10' meetings. Parent members queried if it is always 10 students. S-L Neesam explained that the number of students varies depending on the number of students considered 'at risk' and reflect the size of the overall school cohort.

Members reflected that students with very low attendance and high levels of persistent absence are often well known by the school as they are receiving regular intervention and support and queried how the schools engage with students with low attendance e.g. 80%. S White explained that this is an area of focus, working as a multidisciplinary team, to understand the core underlying issues of each case so that effective support and intervention can be offered.

Parent members queried how the families are being involved to be part of our approach for improving attendance. L Chapman informed that the schools work very closely with families and will call them to invite them to discuss the reasons for the absence, and to reduce any barriers to them attending. S White added that we have a trauma informed approach and our family support workers conduct home visits and/or will meet families offsite and use professional curiosity to help find appropriate ways to engage the family and their child to support attendance.

E Newport joined the meeting at 5.32pm

10. Half-termly report on behaviour (inc. suspensions/exclusions)

Members received and considered the paper provided which reported on student behaviour within the SEND schools analysis of the number of suspensions and exclusions and the actions taken by school leaders to improve behaviour.

Members discussed the report and commended the improved behaviours reports. Members discussed how poor behaviours by peers has a dysregulating impact on students and can lead to the social, emotional and mental health issues, as well as distracting them from learning. L Chapman agreed and explained how we work with students who witness poor behaviours by peers to support them to regulate and recover.

Members discussed the suspensions of each school and how these are used as a last resort. E Barneveld explained how the student and family voice is a central part of the

reintegration process following a suspension, so we can discuss and agree how school staff can support them.

P Hamilton reflected that many SEND students have experienced suspensions and exclusions in mainstream education and have accumulated trauma through this.

Members discussed the importance (particularly in SEMH settings) of continuity of staff and 'trusted adults' to students behaviours, though noted dysregulated behaviours which lead to assaults on staff risk the continuity of staff.

11. **Half-termly update on residential (inc. Standard 3 visits)**

Members received and considered the paper provided which included Chalk Hill and Priory School's recent Standard 3 visit reports for review and comment, an update on the action plan arising from Chalk Hill's residential Ofsted inspection in January 2025 and provided an update on the residential provisions at each school.

Members discussed the ongoing action plan arising from Chalk Hill's residential inspection and N Jennings provided an update on the ongoing actions.

Members **approved** the Committee's formal response to the Standard 3 visit reports to be 'thanking the reviewer for their thorough reports and acknowledging and accepting the findings'.

Members **agreed to delegate authority** to the Committee Chair, Committee Vice Chair (as Trustee lead for Safeguarding – SEND and residential), the Regional Director SEND and the Governance Professional to review future Standard 3 visit reports. Members **agreed** that the Committee's formal response should be to either 'acknowledge and accept the findings' or highlight concerns.

12. **Report on use of Alternative Provision**

Members received and considered the paper provided which summarised current use of Alternative Provision (AP) across our SEND schools, the safeguarding arrangements for our students at these AP providers and proposed how we will review the oversight and application of AP going forward, in line the DfE's Arranging Alternative Provision guidance.

Members commended the progress and strength of the report.

13. **Risk Register extract**

Members received and considered the risk register extract which included **0 red**, **10 amber** and **3 yellow** risks relating to the SEND schools.

Members reviewed the risks and **felt assured** that the mitigations were appropriate.

14. **First Hand feedback**

Members received and considered the feedback forms from visits to the SEND schools provided.

The Chair thanked members for their visits and feedback and encouraged members to reach out to the Governance Professional to arrange visits.

The Chair noted that, following the merger, some of the school information on the websites are outdated and queried when the information will be updated. L Chapman informed that the website is constantly being updated and the school SEN information reports (which will be presented to the Committee in June) will be used to update the websites. L Chapman to provide update on website compliance at next meeting.

L Chapman

15. **Policies**

- **EEG Educational Visit Policy and Procedure**
- **EEGT SEND Positive Handling and Physical Contact/Intervention Policy**
- **EEGT SEND Attendance Policy**
- **EEGT SEND Behaviour to Learn Policy**

Members received, considered and **approved** the above policies, and **agreed to recommend** them to the Trust Board for approval.

Members discussed the SEND Behaviour to Learn policy and queried whether the policy should retain individualised school practices/approaches. S-L Neesam explained that these have been included to reflect the unique context of each school and informed that, following research of best practice SEND schools, in future we may look to further evolve the policy.

16. Any Other Business

- Rebuild of Priory School

L Chapman provided an update on the rebuild of the school.

- Relocation of Chalk Hill

L Chapman provided an update on the timeline for the relocation of Chalk Hill from Sudbury to Bury St Edmunds.

- Review of the meeting

The Chair reflected on the discussions of the meeting and noted it closely aligns to the Committee's purpose (as defined in the terms of reference), and thanked members for their contributions to discussions and their support/challenge.

The meeting closed at 6.07pm