

EEGT SEND EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the online meeting held on 19 June 2025 at 3.00pm

Present physically:

Present virtually: A Friend, Committee member
C Broad, Parent Committee member – Sunrise Academy (part)
G Abbott, Parent Committee member – Chalk Hill (part)
K Points, EEGT Trustee
L Bennett, Committee member
M Cadman, Committee member
N Kellett, EEGT Trustee – **Vice Chair** (part)
R Inman, EEGT Trustee
S Daley, EEGT Trustee
S Snowden, EEGT Trustee – **Chair**

In attendance: A Whatley, Group Partnerships Director
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)
J Wakelam, EEGT Trustee (observing)
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: C Brickley, Head of School – Stone Lodge Academy & Peile
J Finch, Committee member
L Sutherland, Parent Committee member – Priory School

Absent: A Miti, Committee member
E Newport, Parent Committee member – Stone Lodge Academy

1. 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 for absence were received from C Brickley, J Finch and L Sutherland. The absences of A Miti and E Newport was noted.

The Chair apologised for the size of the paper bundle and suggested that we take the reports by exception.

2. Minutes of meeting on 15 May 2025

The minutes of the meeting was **agreed** as an accurate record, subject to an amendment of the time A Friend re-entered to 3.23pm.

i. **Suffolk County Council's visit report**

Members received and **noted** the report from the visit on 1 May 2025.

ii. **DfE response to EEGT's response to Termination Warning Letter**

Members received and **noted** the letter from Jonathan Duff, Regional Director the DfE's east of England division dated 21 May 2025.

Action

Gov. Prof.

3. **Matters Arising from meeting on 15 May 2025**

Of the ten matters arising from the last meeting, two were complete, three were ongoing and seven will be actioned in 2025/26.

Members challenged why so many actions are ongoing. L Chapman informed that he is currently Acting Head of Stone Lodge Academy, which has reduced capacity to implement the actions in time for this meeting. Members asked the Executive to progress these actions by the next meeting.

Members discussed MA5 and S Hopkins provided assurance in respect to the SEND school's Gatsby Benchmark compliance. Members queried why Chalk Hill does not receive the same careers support. N Jennings advised that this is due to the school's current designation and will change when the school is redesignated.

Members discussed MA10 and L Chapman provided assurance on website compliance. Members noted the SEN Information Reports enclosed will help provide up-to-date content to support updating the SEND school's website content. Members queried if the SEND school's websites will be updated in readiness for 2025/26. L Chapman confirmed that they will be.

Executive

4. **Termly reports on student experience and student council**

- **Chalk Hill**
- **Duke of Lancaster School**
- **Priory School**
- **Stone Lodge Academy**
- **Sunrise Academy**

Members received and considered papers which summarised each SEND school's wider student personal development curriculum and approaches to student councils and monitoring student experience.

Members reflected that the reports are very strong and showcase the difference between each school's community and thanked P Hamilton for helping to template this new report and support the other Heads of School.

Members invited the Heads of School to summarise from their reports areas they are most proud of and areas they are developing.

(Chalk Hill) N Jennings informed that the school has made significant changes over the last few years since she took over as Head and is very proud of how quickly students have engaged with these changes and how their behaviour and attitude towards learning has improved. N Jennings reflected that with the planned relocation of the school to new premises in Bury St Edmunds, student voice will be critical to ensure students feel settled and have a good experience.

(Duke of Lancaster School) E Barneveld informed that since she took over as Head in September 2024, they have implemented the student council by identifying students from each class who have been elected to their roles. E Barneveld explains that whenever possible she personally attends the regular student council meetings and gave examples of how the school's senior leadership team works with the student council so they can shape and influence decisions such as the school environment, the types of enrichment clubs, etc. E Barneveld informed that for 2025/26 the school is looking to enhance the personal development offer further to include more life skills and experiences and noted they are seeking both student and staff voice to shape this.

(Priory School) S White informed that they have two very established school councils – one for the main school and one for the residential provision – and explained that there are two student representatives per class which supports all students to participate irrespective of their communication style need. S White explained that each year the students choose a charity to support and raise money/awareness for and informed that in

September 2025 the students will elect the new student chair and council members, their new project and the new charity.

(*Stone Lodge Academy*) L Chapman explained that students are involved in staff interviews and with supporting visitors to the school. L Chapman informed that in 2025/26 the school senior leadership team will be seeking feedback from students with regard to the impact of the improvements put in place in 2024/25 following the recent Ofsted judgement.

(*Sunrise Academy*) P Hamilton informed that students engage in a broad range of sporting events and activities which are essential to support their SEMH needs and also help boost their sense of community and achievement. P Hamilton commended their success at recent competitions in the county and informed of plans to create an area to display the student awards and trophies. P Hamilton informed that the students think up activities they would fund to raise money for charities e.g. sliming the Head of School. P Hamilton explained that he plans to meet the student council more and involve them, wherever possible, in the redesign of the school's interior.

Members commended the strength of approach at each SEND school and queried if the Heads of School meet regularly to discuss and share best practice. P Hamilton explained that the Heads of School meet weekly at the SEND Curriculum and Quality Board for this purpose.

Members queried how students are supported to raise items with the student council and to hear from the student council. N Jennings explained how form times are used for this and that staff also help support this communication

5. Termly update on Ofsted, curriculum development, lesson observations and staff development

Members received and considered papers which summarised the quality assurance /improvement activities, that have taken place across the SEND schools and those that are planned to occur from September 2025. The paper included updates on stakeholder engagement and curriculum development at Stone Lodge Academy, strengthening curriculum assessment and Ofsted readiness for each SEND school, and to enhance the quality review cycle and link this to SEND school staff's CPD.

R Bamford summarised the changes we are making at Stone Lodge Academy to take on board best practices and recommendations from outstanding schools and local authority advisers and to strengthen the curriculum.

Members queried how using Evidence for Learning (EfL) is different to the current system being used at the SEND schools. R Bamford explained that the current practices across the SEND schools are inconsistent and not as rigorous as we need to have reliable meaningful data, and feedback from staff is that they don't feel the current system is easy to use. R Bamford explained that four of the SEND schools have participated in the EfL trial and praise the new system as easier to use and more applicable for SEND schools.

N Jennings praised the support of the Trust and of the consultants who are supporting preparations for Ofsted.

Members queried when we anticipate Stone Lodge Academy will have an Ofsted monitoring visit / inspection. L Chapman explained the likely timeline and noted it is likely this would be under the new Ofsted framework.

Members commended the strength of report and approach.

Members queried if the SEND schools use agency staff and how agency staff are supported to integrate within this approach. N Jennings and S White explained that there is minimal usage of agency staff at Chalk Hill and Priory School and informed wherever possible they use Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA). E Barneveld and P Hamilton explained that Duke of Lancaster School and Sunrise Academy do use agency staff when

needed, though explained this is not ideal as the change of staff is dysregulating for the students and is difficult for leaders to manage as, due to the complex needs of the students, all staff need to be suitably trained (e.g. trauma informed, de-escalation, etc.) and to understand the school's safety practices. The CEO explained that HR continue to work closely with the Heads of School to support the appointment of suitably trained staff.

6. Annual reports for

- i. **Impact of school's use of pupil premium funding**
- ii. **Impact of school's use of PE/sports premium funding**
- iii. **School's SEN information**

Members received and considered papers for each SEND school's use of pupil premium, use of PE and sports premium, and the SEN information report.

Members invited the Heads of School to summarise from their reports what they learnt from producing these reports.

(Sunrise Academy) P Hamilton reflected that this is the first year where the Heads of School have been actively involved in shaping these reports, previously this was led by the Regional Director for SEND and the Executive Headteachers. P Hamilton explained that in the future they will look to expand the swimming offer and continue to review the impact of the funding

L Chapman explained how these funds can be utilised within schools and noted there is a new online reporting portal. L Chapman noted that it can be challenging to evaluate the impact of the funding other than to report on the breadth of activities the funds enabled.

(Priory School) S White reflected that nearly 50% of the school received pupil premium and notes that their approach is to ensure that everybody gets equal opportunities and has access to trips/visits to develop life skills and within the school environment all the classrooms have bean bags and sensory equipment to support every student to feel safe. S White explained that this fosters inclusivity as everybody gets the same opportunities.

Members discussed Priory School's pupil premium report and queried why the costs in the report. S White to review and amend.

(Duke of Lancaster School) E Barneveld reflected that as the newest Head of School it has been helpful to learn the process and informed, she and other Heads will be attending online training by the DfE's national leader for Pupil Premium.

Members discussed other minor errors within the reports and asked the Heads of School to review and update.

(Chalk Hill) N Jennings discussed the complexities associated with the school being designated as Alternative Provision and noted that when the school is redesignated next year it will receive greater funding which will have more of an impact for students.

Members queried whether the SEND schools receive Free School Meals. L Chapman explained that SEND schools do not receive discreet funding for Free School Meals.

C Edwards and N Kellett joined the meeting at 4.02pm

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.

S White

Heads of School

R Bamford explained that we intend to complete these action plans by the end of this academic year and transfer any ongoing actions to the new School Development Plans.

Members invited the Heads of School to summarise from their reports what actions they anticipate taking forward to their new School Development Plans.

(Priory School) S White noted that the school are working to review their curriculum and assessment model to get it ready for the new academic year, with a focus on standardising the programme of assessments and recording methods for each subject. S White noted this is particularly important at Priory so we can evidence achievement and progress, on the non-accredited courses. S White noted this builds on the improvements in ILP progress recording, assessing and evidencing they have already achieved.

(Duke of Lancaster School) E Barneveld informed that two 'overdue' actions are now complete and noted that their focus remains on improving staffing and the curriculum.

(Sunrise Academy) P Hamilton informed that Sunrise is starting to recruit youth workers to support students in more Alternative Provision type settings and the school is working with East Coast College to create links for students to undertake vocational learning and to continue to explore how to improve the estate.

(Chalk Hill) N Jennings informed that their focus is on improving the curriculum and assessment model, as well as ensuring the relocation of the school is smooth.

(Stone Lodge Academy) L Chapman explained that following the Ofsted inspection they have implemented widespread changes to improve practices at the school which we still need to full embed. L Chapman informed that next year there will be further changes including the lesson times, the approach to literacy and numeracy, the structure of year groups, the planning and sequencing of delivery as well as lots of staff professional development.

G Abbott joined the meeting at 4.09pm

Members queried how reactive the school's need to be in-year, and how much can be pre-planned. The Heads of School confirmed that they must be very responsive though noted the action plans have been helpful to focus on core areas for improvement.

Members discussed the Stone Lodge Academy action plan and queried what actions relate to behaviours and attitudes. R Bamford explained that the actions in the safeguarding section relate to specific concerns raised e.g. absence, appropriate use of alternative provision, the tracking and monitoring of interventions, etc. R Bamford reflected that we have also been leading a wider culture change at the school.

The Chair commended the improved reports to governance which enable them to monitor progress and the impact of actions being taken by the Heads of School.

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 try to analyse trends within the data and some more context and some short case studies to help the Committee understand the concerns at each school. S-L Neesam advised that for 2025/26 it will become a termly report with a different format to allow more analysis.

Members discussed the different profiles of each school and the complexity of trying to compare them.

Members discussed the additional complexity of reports to two different local authorities – Suffolk and Norfolk.

S Chesterton
E O'Hara

Members discussed that Chalk Hill's most recent standard 3 report referenced issues accessing safeguarding data and queried if this has been remedied. S Chesterton confirmed that the data was/is available, the issue was user-error and has been remedied by training.

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.

(Duke of Lancaster School) E Barneveld explained that attendance is of biggest concern within Key Stage 4 students e.g. Years 10 and 11, and summarised the strategies being used to address the high levels of persistent absence such as additional support for those students and encouraging attendance through positive outcomes in school, daily attendance checks and calls home to the family to challenge absence, weekly attendance meetings of the family support workers and the Assistant Head of School to discuss what is working/ areas of focus. E Barneveld explained that further rewards for positive attendance and behaviours will be introduced next year to encourage and incentivise students, as well as more communication with parents and carers to support them to be proactive and supportive partners of the school in regard to improving attendance. E Barneveld added that staff will be given additional training to support the schools improving attendance strategy and confirmed that next year the school will replicate the proven impactful strategy used at the colleges to send attendance letters to families to further challenge persistent absence.

(Chalk Hill) N Jennings explained that there are eight students which are persistently absent due to taking term-time holidays and two students with emotional based school avoidance. N Jennings explained the strategies used to support these students and to work with students and their families to improve attendance, including rewarding attendance above 95% with Amazon gift vouchers. N Jennings explained that this strategy has proved impactful especially in improving attendance of those with emotional based school avoidance and noted that, working with the local authority education welfare officer (EWO), the school has secured funding to continue this reward strategy next year.

(Priory School) S White reflected that overall attendance is good and that the school's family support worker team are very effective in making timely interventions where needed. S White explained that there are three families with persistent absences though noted, of those, two family's attendance are starting to improve because of the programme of intervention the school has put in place. S White explained that there are a few students who are incorrectly placed at the school and so declined to attend due to the family not accepting the placement and informed that this has been resolved and they have a new placement for next year. S White explained that the school remain live to the attendance and the Assistant Heads of School conduct weekly tracking of attendance for students with 80-90% attendance and develop interventions as needed. S White noted that the cohort of students at Angel Hill College are new this year and all have emotional based school avoidance, so this is a key area of focus/risk in relation to improving attendance and explained that she is seeking out appropriate training for staff to help this cohort, which if impactful can then be expanded to all Priory/SEND school staff.

(Sunrise Academy) P Hamilton explained that many students which join the school have had very poor prior attendance at- and were excluded from- their previous school, which means the school must work very hard to encourage attendance and gave an example of a recent joiner who had 8% attendance at this previous school. P Hamilton reflected that the school's strategies are making a significant impact as overall attendance continues to improve each year, currently circa 7% higher than last year. P Hamilton explained how that the school is developing the wrap-around offer at the school to encourage students to attend and summarised the strategies used by the school staff to explain the importance of attendance to students and their families and to work with them to improve attendance. P Hamilton informed the school now uses the local authority's education welfare officer to help improve attendance.

(*Stone Lodge Academy*) L Chapman advised that attendance is improving, and persistent absence is declining because of the school's interventions and explained that school leaders are closely tracking students whose attendance is of concern (e.g. between 80% and 90%) to put in timely interventions. L Chapman advised that where students are incorrectly placed and decline to attend due to the placement, we are working with the local authority and those families to help find more suitable placements

Members discussed instances where families are opting to take their children out of school for holidays and possible reward systems for good attendance (e.g. badges, certificates, awards, etc.) and penalties for poor attendance (e.g. penalty charge notices, etc.). Members discussed the need for a range of approaches to suit the school/specific case. Parent members fed back that it is important to recognise the challenges some parents face due to their child's needs.

Members commended the improved report and asked that future reports help categorise the types of interventions taken and their impact.

Executive

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.

The Chair noted the recent exclusions at the SEND schools and thanked the governance members who supported the panels. The Chair informed that she has requested a 'lessons learned' report for the next meeting.

Gov. Prof.

(*Sunrise Academy*) P Hamilton advised that the SEMH needs of his students are often due to previous trauma and noted their SEMH needs triggers poor behaviours. P Hamilton explained that there has been an increase in exclusions this year compared to last year, however confirmed these were a last resort due to extreme violence and aggression towards staff and students; and reaffirmed his strong commitment to keeping students in school. P Hamilton gave examples of the types of strategies and interventions used to support students to learn to regulate and to engage in learning, including targeted use of alternative provisions. P Hamilton explained that where there are poor behaviours, staff use restorative practices to repair and rebuild trust.

(*Stone Lodge Academy*) L Chapman reflected that there have been no suspensions or exclusions so far and noted that the school continues to work with staff to promote positive behaviours.

(*Chalk Hill*) N Jennings advised that while there were a few suspensions at the start of the academic year, there have been no exclusions; and reflected that those students have now moved to different provisions which can better meet their needs. N Jennings explained how the school uses incentives and rewards to support positive behaviours.

(*Priory School*) S White advised that while there have been a few suspensions due to violent behaviour towards students and staff, and damage to school property; there have been no exclusions.

(*Duke of Lancaster School*) E Barneveld explained that there have been several suspensions and two exclusions due to extreme violence and aggression towards staff. Looking ahead to next year, E Barneveld explained that the school is working to improve the consistency of staff approaches to underpin the behaviour policy and support positive behaviours.

Members commended the SEND school staff in supporting students with such challenging behaviours but queried how we support school staff given the prevalence of violent and aggressive behaviours. S White explained how school leaders support staff. N Jennings explained how staff explain to students and families the inappropriateness and dangers of those behaviours. Members discussed that where staff are at risk of violent behaviours this does impact staff retention.

Members discussed table 1 and suggested that future reports clarify if the figure is 'students' or 'days'.

Members discussed that we also need to consider how to report on the impact of poor behaviours on other students e.g. where other students do not attend due to fear / concern about the behaviour of other students.

P Hamilton gave examples of how senior leaders formally recognise and reward students where behaviours have improved, and how senior leaders create safe spaces for 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 Chalk Hill's recent Standard 3 visit report and N Jennings confirmed that the actions in the action plan have been implemented and training has been provided for the Acting Head of Care.

Members reviewed and **approved** the Committee's formal response to Chalk Hill's recent Standard 3 visit report as 'thanks the reviewer for their thorough report and acknowledges and accepts the findings and confirming that the Trust and School have implemented an action plan as a result of the findings'.

Members reviewed and **approved** the Committee's formal response to Priory's recent Standard 3 visit report as 'thanks the reviewer for their thorough report and acknowledges and accepts the findings'.

S White informed that the process of agreeing the Committee's formal response to the Standard 3 visit reports needs to be timelier, so the reports do not lapse. The Chair and Governance Professional agreed to review.

Chair
Gov. Prof.

12. **Risk Register extract**

Members received and considered the risk register extract which included 0 red, 8 amber and 4 yellow risks relating to the SEND schools. R Inman, as Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee advised that the proposed new risk EEG00X (relating to capacity to improve) has been withdrawn for further consideration.

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

13. **First Hand feedback**

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

M Cadman fed back from his visits to Duke of Lancaster School and Sunrise Academy and commended the progress at the schools.

K Points fed back from her visits to Stone Lodge Academy and Sunrise Academy and commended the behaviour of students.

The Chair invited members to visit the SEND schools by liaising with the Governance Professional

14. **Policies**

- **EEGT SEND Absconding Policy**
- **EEGT SEND Alternative Provision Policy**
- **EEGT SEND Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance Policy**
- **EEGT SEND First Aid and Medication Policy**
- **EEGT SEND Provider Access Policy**

- **EEGT SEND Sleep in Policy**
- **EEGT SEND Work Experience Policy**

R Bamford explained that these policies have been reviewed and recommended by the SEND Curriculum and Quality Board and noted that these policies are a mixture of enhanced/updated SENDAT policies and new policies.

Members commended the thorough and clear writing of the reports.

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

15. Any Other Business

- **Thank you**

The Chair thanked the Executive for the improved standard of reports and Governance Members for their ongoing support and commitment.

The meeting closed at 5.53pm