



Local Governing Board to The Learning Alliance

**CHESHIRE STUDIO SCHOOL LGB
Blended Meeting
MINUTES – Part I**



Date: Thursday 10th March 2022 at 4:00pm

Present:

Mrs C Millson (Chair)
Mr D Hermitt
Mr N Jackson (via Teams)
Mrs A Sennett (Vice Chair)

Absent: Ms J Brogan (JB)

In attendance:

Mr J. Whittaker – Headteacher (HT)
Mrs K. Key – Deputy Headteacher
Mr C Leigh – Assistant Headteacher (item 8&9)
Mrs N. Phillips – Director of Operations & Finance

Clerk: Dr. A . Howells (AH)

Administration

- Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quoracy - The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting, apologies were received and accepted from JB and quoracy was confirmed.
- Declarations of Interest - There were no declarations of personal or prejudicial interest.
- The Minutes of the meeting of the CSS LGB held on 30th November 2021 uploaded to Governor Hub prior to the meeting, were **approved**. Matters Arising – The Action Log was updated as noted thereon.
- LGB Appointments - The Chair reported that JB was joining the LGB following her success in the recent parent governor election.
- Matters for the Trust Board to Share with the LGB – The Clerk reported the appointment of AH as the Director of Quality. The appointment would help provide additional senior capacity at Trust level and support governance development. The LGB was also informed that the Trust was still developing undertaking early exploratory work that would support pupils at higher risk of exclusion and pupil referrals. The LGB would be updated on any progress in due course.

6. Admissions and Staffing Update

- Admissions update - Paper 6.0 – 9.1 CSS LGB Papers uploaded to Governor Hub prior to the meeting, was **received**. The HT provided a chart that summarised the current student population by year group. Data was available for KA and CSS, since KA was the feeder into CSS. **It was reported that** applications for Yr 7 entry into KA for 22/23 remained strong, with the 220 PAN expected to be met. The admissions process was still ongoing, with the latest position indicating 600+ applications of which more than 260 were placed as first choice. This was the largest number seen in recent years. **It was reported that** the Yr10 intake for CSS in September was estimated to be 31. It was anticipated that Yr1-12 entry numbers would rise in subsequent years as the growth in KA Yr7 entry worked through.

7. School Performance

- Year 11 and Year 13 - Pupil performance. **The Committee received and noted the report on pupil performance in Paper 6.0 – 9.1 CSS LGB Papers.** Projections, based on current tracking data, for the Yr11 cohort progress outcomes was provided. The HT reminded governors that because the school operated with relatively small numbers large statistical variation could result from 1 or 2 children.
 - Governors sought clarity on the underlying assumptions and modelling upon which the outcomes were built.** This was provided and assurance was achieved through an in-depth analysis of historic cohort performance data. Key points that were highlighted during the discussion included: the unknown impact from Covid; the pattern and trajectory of progress mirrored that of previous cohorts; the current Yr11 cohort was demonstrating a higher profile at this time than previous 3 years; that final progress and attainment projections still had margins of error due to external examination board practices regarding standards and the application of grade boundaries. Whilst the expected Progress8

outcomes were projected to be around -1.0 to -1.2, this was still viewed positively, having been estimated as -1.5 in Dec21 and -1.8 in Dec 20. The Deputy Headteacher explained that small pupil numbers enabled individual learning plans to be developed for each pupil. These plans form part of the strategy to improve attainment and grades over the next year. Intervention plans for maths, English and science are varied. They include 1:1 tuition, the displacement of core PE and PSHE lessons, and after school booster classes

- **Governors challenged whether deployment of different teachers to those delivering main lessons might be beneficial as it could offer a different teaching approach.** The leadership team would consider this.

7.1.1 Yr13 progress data was presented at the meeting. **It was reported that** attainment projections were modest, reflecting an average D- grade currently, which, following further intervention over coming months, was anticipated to be elevated to C-.

- **Governors challenged how this would impact wider employment or study opportunities.** Pupils were being supported with apprenticeship pathways, and therefore it was recognised that the development of relevant key skills would support this cohort as much as a modest increase in attainment. The Chair asked that more detailed data, including destination data, be presented at the summer meeting of the LGB. **Action: HT**

7.2 Staffing and Curriculum Update - Governors received the staffing and curriculum update report in Paper 6.0 – 9.1 CSS LGB Papers. It was noted that 7 teaching posts across Knutsford Academy and Cheshire Studio school were in the process of being recruited and that interviews were taking place for some roles this week. A further resignation had been received this week and a replacement would be sought for this role. Candidate pools had appeared strong. In parallel, some existing teaching roles had resulted in reduced hours.

- **Governors queried whether the reduction in hours still provided sufficient teaching/teacher capacity.** This was confirmed.

8. Action Plans and Student Welfare

8.1 Behaviour - Governors received a detailed graphical breakdown of behaviour within the school, which was distinguishable by year group. It demonstrated that overall behaviour within the school was generally good, and that monitoring data suggested it was fluctuating at or near the 1.5 points target position. It was reported that the variation between cohorts followed the typical pattern, as did the data provided on merit/demerits awarded.

8.2 Attendance - Governors received the latest attendance data. It was reported that absence continued to follow historical patterns between year groups. It was noted that national data attendance figures, were averaged across yr7-11 (with yrs7-9 having higher figures and 10-11 lower). CSS is made up of yrs 10-13 and doesn't benefit from the younger age groups when attendance is calculated. Although attendance had been suppressed due to the pandemic, the combined attendance rates across KA and the CSS were at 90.4% which compares very favourably (+2.8%) to national data. The higher proportion of Pupil Premium pupils within CSS (yr10= 44, Yr11=48%) resulted in more volatile and lower attendance compared with KA and national figures. Data variances were also amplified as a result of small numbers generating wider statistical variances.

- **Governors challenged whether overall rates were affected by a small number of persistent absent pupils.** It was the case that four Yr10 pupils had contributed to a large variance in the data.
- **Governors challenged the leadership as to whether engagement with learning and the curriculum was a better measure of pupil success as opposed to attendance,** as the pandemic had demonstrated that remote and digital learning was achievable. The leadership team agreed to reflect upon this. However, it was noted that government policy remained using attendance as the proxy measure, and it was possible that the increased frequency of measurement (fortnightly as opposed to half-termly) undertaken during the pandemic could result in this proxy gaining higher profile.

- **Governors also challenged whether there was a geographical relationship with poor attendance**, although it was confirmed that this was not the case. CSS was using its own enhanced attendance tracking system to target and monitor higher risk pupils (inc SEN and PP) so that it could deploy interventions earlier and faster.

8.3 School Improvement - The papers published on Governor Hub provided an update on the school improvement priorities. Governors noted the progress made against the individual actions aligned to the three strategic priority areas. The Leadership team highlighted three risk areas contained within the papers which then framed a more in-depth discussion. Social and behavioural maturity appeared lower as a result of the pandemic, with the detrimental impacts more prevalent on SEN pupils.

- **Governors challenged whether the school had sufficient SEN support to address this.** The School had recently appointed of a new SENCO and provided both internal and external specialist SEN support. The School had also undertaken an external SEN review that would be used to support the new SENCO to carry out her role. The SEN review highlighted the need for the school to review roles and responsibilities, but it had not indicated any capacity concerns.
- **Governors challenged whether the identification of pupils with SEN needs utilised sufficient parental engagement and whether parental communication was effective.** The HT/DHT agreed to reflect on this and ensure that faculty leads are alert to early or potential SEN identification. The HT did confirm that the recent SEN data review did not demonstrate a shortfall in SEN pupil progress at the cohort level.

Pupil outcomes was highlighted as a second operational risk that was actively being managed by the SLT, and this was being addressed through a range of interventions including individual learning plans. The third risk related to the development of individual pathways for vocational careers. Governors explored and encouraged the leadership team to engage with other schools across the Trust, and in particular the UTC, to explore opportunities to collaborate or shared good practice. The high-level of vocational pathway destinations for CSS pupils could possibly align with similar characteristics found at the UTC, and therefore Governors encouraged SLT to explore opportunities in this area. Governors would welcome the opportunity to participate in a cross-trust brainstorming session on vocational education to assist defining the strategic direction of the Studio School.

9. Safeguarding

9. Governors received in Paper 6.0 – 9.1 KA LGB Papers, a summary of actions that had been taken on safeguarding and a statistical update on safeguarding numbers. Governors were advised that numbers had not changed. Actions were ongoing although a particular focus had been on wellbeing and mental health. This included a draft updated antibullying policy for Yr22-23 which was currently undergoing consultation with parent and student focus groups, and was the only outstanding action in the annual plan. Leadership training and capacity had strengthened, with 3 staff trained at L3 standard (which was ahead of the 2025 requirement for 2 SLT members to be trained). Resources from the mental health support team (MHST) and externally, 'Just Drop In' enabled the school to be able to route higher risk pupils through these structures to CAHMS much quicker than the school could do directly. Governors were also made aware of the approach and activities that the school was planning to lead on, establishing a mental health cluster across all Knutsford Schools, which would enable good practice to be shared and early intervention practices to be developed. The underlying approach would be to promote positive mental health, as opposed to managing poor mental health. Governors endorsed this work and expressed their thanks to all the staff involved.

10. Future Meeting Administration – A report by AH

10. Paper 10.0 Future Meeting Administration uploaded to Governor Hub (GH) prior to the meeting, was received. It was noted that this work would be ongoing and its purpose was to ensure that Governor time and resources were maximised and deployed to greatest effect to underpin effective governance. Governors remarked that current arrangements worked well and that the enhancements proposed would be supported. Specific feedback also included: The development of corporate decks of resources which could then be available for schools; annual calendars for meetings and process cycles; facilitating and supporting coordination of activities between HTs to share best practice and incorporate into governance reports. There

was agreement that the proposed approach of “done with” as opposed to “done to” would be appropriate. Governors were invited to email any further reflections to the Clerk directly.

11. Policies

11. No policies were considered at the meeting. **It was noted that** work was taking place at Trust level to manage more actively policy version control and approvals.

12. Finance Update

12. Paper 12.0 – CSS Income and Expenditure Reports P5(1), uploaded to Governor Hub prior to the meeting, was **received**. The report indicated an expected outturn deficit of approximately £25k. **The HT reported that** the current position coupled with a favourable projected surplus at KA enabled some upfront investment in staffing.. **It was reported that** budget planning for 22/23 was about to commence, although the HT had already undertaken preliminary work on staffing costs.

- **Governors reiterated the request to reflect and apportion pupil premium and other funding lines within the budget income section for the current year and future year finance reports. ACTION COO.** This would allow governors to fulfil their duty of holding the Headteacher to account with regard to ‘monitoring pupils’ progress by cohort, including the more able, SEND pupils and those eligible for Pupil Premium funding and highlighting any issues to the trust board’ as per the scheme of delegation.

13. Trust Support

13. The Clerk summarised the support provided in the areas of Finance, Human Resources, Estate Planning and School Improvement. School improvement include core elements for all Schools (e.g. SEND reviews) and other support linked to operational need. Service Level Agreements were being developed by the Trust and would be shared with schools in due course.

14. Matters to Share with the Trust Board and 15. AOB

14. Cross-Trust working opportunities: to highlight that the positive cross-working now taking place between schools in the Trust, in particular with Congleton High School, and also the broader opportunity that the incorporation of the UTC into the Trust could offer the CSS in terms of curriculum development and delivery.

15. AOB Public Transport offering Knutsford to Lymm. A governor noted that the public transport (bus) timetable between Lymm and Knutsford was not aligned favourably to school hours. This resulted in higher private vehicle usage, and was detrimental to the broader environmental agenda. They wished to lobby the local authority on this topic and requested whether the school was able to provide some anonymised, high-level statistical data.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Monday 20th June at 4:00pm

Meeting Closed 6:32pm

Minutes approved:

Date:.....

Action Log – Post March 2022 Meeting		
Action and Item Number	By Whom	By When/Complete
7.1.1 Updated pupil progress data projections, including destinations	HT	Update for June 2022 meeting

8.3	Enhancing communication with parents on SEN identification and actions	HT	Update for June 2022 meeting
12.	Income lines on finance reports to set out specific income streams	COO	As soon as appropriate.
November 2021 Meeting			
4.	Parent Governor Election	NPS/HT	completed March 2022
6	The COO will include separate apportionments for leadership & Staffing costs, and include appropriate income lines in the management accounts.	COO	Ongoing- budget process
11	Admissions Policy to be finalised.	NPS	completed
12	Trust to recommend NGA learning Link Modules	Clerk	Exclusions module recommended to date – ongoing.