

Date: Wednesday 8th May 2024 at 4:00 pm.

Present:

Mr R. Benson (Chair)
Mrs K. Powell (KP)
Mr J. Green (JG)-arrived at 5:20 pm
Mrs J. Turner (JT)-arrived at 4:55 pm

Apologies:

Prof T. Sadat-Shafai (TSS)
Mr P. Turner (PT),
Mr S. Worthington (SW)

Absent: n/a

In attendance:

Ms H. Thurland – Headteacher (HT)
Mrs L. Darling – Deputy Headteacher (LD)
Mrs L. Salt – Deputy Headteacher (LS)
Miss J. Boulton – Assistant Headteacher, Head of 6th Form (JB) -left at 5:10 pm
Mr P. Blaylock (PB)-Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion)-left at 5:10 pm

Clerk: Mrs S. Pomeroy

Administration

1. The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from TSS, PT and SW. JT had informed governors that she would be late arriving at the meeting. The meeting was not quorate until JT arrived at 4:55pm and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved at this point. The minutes are recorded in agenda order for ease of reading. There were no Declarations of interest with the business of the meeting.
Unless stated otherwise, all papers and policies had been uploaded to Governor Hub (GH) prior to the meeting.
2. The minutes of the CHS LGB Meeting held on 24th January 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.
Matters Arising – Nothing to report. Actions all up to date.
3. Governors’ Skills Audit- The clerk had issued the link to the audit and governors were requested to complete the audit by 16:00 on Tuesday 14 May 2024. Completion of the skills audit would allow the Trust to identify individual and collective governor training needs and to review induction materials for new governors.

Leadership and Management

4. Strategic Direction and Progress Against Priorities

The Headteacher provided an update:

- Good progress is being made against the plan.
- There is still further work to complete on some areas such as SEND.
- Attendance has improved.
- The school has worked with families of students with EHCPs and strengthened relationships.
- There has been strong staff recruitment which has strengthened the SLT.
- The school received a positive Personal Development monitoring report from Alison Hooper (TLP School Improvement Adviser) which highlighted some outstanding provision and good engagement from students.

Governors commented that it was evident that there had been good progress, particularly with SEND and thanked PB for his work in this area since his appointment at the school. The Chair noted that there had been a reduction in the number of emails received from parents raising concerns around SEND.

PB responded that he enjoyed working with families and they are now more engaged with school. The use of the Hub and Excel has been re-defined, and the core purpose is to provide a quiet working space to support pupils. He confirmed that some items on the SEND plan would be carried forward into 2024-25.

Governors thanked LD for covering SEND and Safeguarding and the support received from the Trust was acknowledged.

The Headteacher raised an area of concern regarding Year 7 intake numbers in September 2024. Cheshire East has seen a drop of 240 students in the LA in current Year 6. This has resulted in schools being under PAN

for the first time in many years. Alongside this, expansion at other schools has taken effect. The net result on CHS is that there is a lower intake for Sept 2024. 180 pupils are confirmed currently. The school has been proactive in engaging with the Primary Schools and is forging a relationship with Dove Bank Primary (joined the Trust in January 2024). The school has a strategic plan to manage student growth but there will be a short-term impact on the budget. This is a big issue for Cheshire East and would be addressed at a Headteachers' meeting tomorrow.

Priorities for next year:

- A five-year plan is in place and next steps are identified.
- Focus on Quality of Education
- Embed and enhance improvements.
- Well-sequenced lessons
- School growth
- Students know and understand what's going on.

It was agreed that the Headteacher would arrange a meeting with governors prior to the next LGB to review the SIP set priorities for 2024-25.

ACTION: The headteacher to circulate possible dates to governors.

Quality of Education

5. Examination Results Year 11 and Year 13

Mock 2/Assessment 2 Data Set (Paper 5) -LS

LS shared the presentation and highlighted the following:

Year 11

- Prior attainment and disadvantaged information on slide 2.
- Contextual information-data is the worst-case scenario. Grades are cautious. 13 students do not have any grades in this data set as they are not currently accessing on-site provision. A further student is on-site but has not engaged in the mock process. Last year there were 33 children with no grades.
- Progress 8 is -0.38 and the school is hoping that this will improve.
- Disadvantage and SEND is an area of focus.
- Attainment 8 is looking stronger than in 2023.
- The school is supporting students with the aim of tipping into the next grade.
- The school is expecting that the exams will be difficult and have prepared for this.

Q. If the students who are not engaging are removed from the data, does it make a significant difference?

R. The number of such students is less than last year. They are included in the data. They are on individual programmes with targeted support.

- EBacc Analysis-strong focus on core subjects. Grade booster sessions for core subjects have replaced registration for 120 invited students.

Q. How can the school measure the impact of these grade booster sessions?

R. The impact will be evident in the summer exams. However, positive feedback has been received from staff and they may consider this approach for a longer period next year. They would also like to work with Year 10.

Q. Has the school had any feedback from students?

R. The students have responded well and only one opted out. Some students requested to attend a different session, but the school used the data to justify which sessions they had been invited to.

- Subject Progress Index-Discussions are held with faculty leads if progress is not strong. Vocational subjects are usually green at the end as not all course work has been completed yet.
- Mock 2 Position Statement-indicates P8 measure of -0.38 which is an improvement from -0.61 in mock 1 and in-line with summer 2023 outcomes. The school anticipates that results will be improve from what the assessment 2 data indicates.
- A range of additional support is in place as specified on the slide.

Q. Does the school plan any social events during the exam period, like those many primary schools organise during SATs week?

R. There is not a formalised programme, but students meet prior to morning exams. Earlier lunch is planned for some exams. Tutor teams also support students during this period and reasonable adjustments are made for some students.

Year 13-JB

- JB explained that a similar approach had been taken as with the Year 11 data and teachers had been asked to be cautious in their predictions.
- The data is indicating an average grade of C+.
- Applied General is Merit, down from Merit +; media studies is the issue.
- Technical studies-Distinction-.
- Vocational subjects are outperforming A Levels.
- Boys are under-achieving in Year 13.
- ALPS thermometer-on 7 based on mock 2 but the school is hopeful of achieving 6.
- Subjects of concern-Engineering, Geography, Physical Education, English Language.
- Individual subjects have been reviewed to consider how they can be strengthened.
- The school is looking at how to achieve the best outcomes for the students. Some will study into Year 14, and some will reduce to AS Levels.
- Plans are in place to address issues in media studies.
- A parental drop-in session was organised.

JT arrived at 4:55 pm.

Q. Is attendance in Year 13 lower than in Year 12?

R. A Level attendance is good, students on vocational courses are bringing the attendance down. There are also issues with how some work placements are recorded and this affects the data.

Q. Is parental support good?

R. The drop-in session was not well attended but meetings are regularly held with parents.

Q. Are there any lessons to be learned from the preparation up to this point? Is it applicable to other year groups?

R. The whole strategic approach to teaching and learning going forward will be the key to improving results. The school is considering a 6-week programme at the start of Year 12 on study skills and key sessions would take place throughout the year. Students have been consulted.

Q. What are the key subjects to review? Media seems to be a recurring issue.

R. Going forward the school will review its curriculum offer and is currently awaiting a report from Mike Cladingbowl which will inform this review. There are significant issues round long-term curriculum planning. For example, the school wants to retain Engineering and Business Studies for Year 11-12 and is considering alternative courses and qualifications which are being released and are of better quality.

The headteacher explained that two sets of internal exams had been scheduled as the students needed the practice. Revision sessions have been improved and are now more tightly structured. Interventions have been strategically planned and will continue to be revised so that bespoke plans are in place to maximise progress.

Q. How is good practice shared within the Trust?

R. Data dashboards are shared and there is a Headteacher challenge meeting. The school is working collaboratively with Knutsford Academy and is building links with SJD. A significant amount of work has taken place with the Trust on SEND to streamline and strengthen processes and the school has been integral to this. There are many opportunities to work together on topics such as lean learning. Strong appointments have been made to the SLT and they have brought their expertise and skills from other settings to CHS.

PB and JB left the meeting at 5:10 pm.

6. Admissions and Pupil Numbers

The Headteacher provided an update:

- 180 places are currently confirmed for Year 7 in September 2024.
- The birth rate within Cheshire East has fallen.
- Preferences are in line with previous years.
- The school is aiming for 195 first choice places.
- There are significant spaces within school.
- The PAN was increased from 210 to 230 at the request of the LA and reserves were used to fund the build. The pupil numbers have not materialised in the local area.

- The Headteacher will discuss a reduction in the PAN with the Trust.
- The school has a marketing plan in place.
- 65% of Year 11 students are staying on but the school is not attracting external applicants and needs to pro-actively market the sixth form. The key is to improve results.
- The feeder primaries are working as a group and new transition leads have been appointed.
- Prospectuses will be reviewed for September 2024.
- The school is working closely with its partner primary schools and is building relationships with Dove Bank who have recently joined the Trust.

Q. Has the school received mid-year applications?

R. The school has seen an increase and there are currently 12-13. The school has a good induction programme and has also taken students on managed moves.

Q. Do many students leave?

R. Not as many as are admitted.

JG arrived at 5:20 pm

Q. Is the birth rate low?

R. Yes, this is the case across Cheshire East. The school needs to navigate carefully through the next few years and is already planning for the years ahead. Savings of around £300k have already been made for next year.

Q. What about funding from Pupil Premium and EHCPs?

R. The school does not receive as much funding for these areas as some other schools. It is likely to become more difficult to get an EHCP due to changes and financial pressures at Cheshire East.

Governors noted the impact of falling pupil numbers on school budgets and acknowledged that the school may need to make difficult decisions.

7. Curriculum-Progress

This item was covered under agenda item 5.

8. Curriculum-Attainment

This item was covered under agenda item 5.

9. Curriculum-Link Governor Monitoring

- Three link monitoring reports had been shared on Governor Hub: two from PT on Careers and one from RB on Safeguarding.
- PT had highlighted Careers counselling and guidance and employer engagement.
- KP was confirmed as the new link governor for Safeguarding.

Q. The lead teacher for Careers has left. How is this being covered?

R. Other staff are being trained to cover the post and the previous lead is being retained on a consultancy basis. The school is confident that it will achieve the Gatsby Benchmark Quality Mark for Careers in the summer 2024.

Q. What is the Trust strategy on Careers?

R. Careers work is school-based, and it is the schools who are driving best practice. It is an area of development, and a trustee will take on responsibility for Careers. A debating event was recently organised by the Trust and there are opportunities to build careers events.

Q. How can the impact of good careers advice be tracked?

R. This is done through analysis of data such as destinations, NEET and contact with alumni. Informal takes place on across the Trust.

Personal Development

10. Attendance

LD provided an update:

- Attendance stands at 92-92.2%. Details are included on the Data Dashboard (Paper 8).
- Key cohorts have been targeted, especially with students with SEND.
- An attendance Officer was appointed in November 2023 and has put systems and processes in place. The impact will be seen next year.
- PA for SEND students is higher than national. Work has been carried out to address this and more still needs to be done.
- The school is part of an Attendance Hub. This is a national programme where the school is linked with an outstanding school. It is a good opportunity to learn from their good practice.

- The Headteacher is also engaging with the Trust and the LA in working groups and more recently as part of the 0-25 SEND Partnership Board as the school continues to drive improvement and share best practice.

Q. Is there a correlation between attendance and results?

R. The school has found that if it puts pressure on families regarding attendance, that they have greater access to home education. Following the Covid-19 pandemic there are a greater number of tutoring companies available.

Q. Does the school monitor home education?

R. Cases are monitored and referred to the LA. Sometimes families opt for home education in Key Stage 3 and then come back to school for Key Stage 4/5.

Q. Does PA have an impact on attendance overall?

R. Pupils with SEND (also an overlap with PP students) have higher rates of absence. Some families expect a hybrid model of education and then it is often difficult to get the pupils back into school full-time.

11. Behaviour

The Headteacher provided an update:

- Behaviour is good.
- Significant improvements have been made.
- A new house system is in place.
- There are some behaviour concerns in Year 8 with a core group of pupils. Bespoke plans are in place.
- The Queensbury charity is involved with bespoke plans.
- There was a Permanent Exclusion in Year 8.
- Some pupils require needs assessments which are unlikely to be granted.
- The school is reviewing its pastoral care for September 2024.

Q. There are six stages in the Behaviour Policy. If there is persistent, disruptive behaviour does the school wait for a serious one-off incident before issuing a permanent exclusion?

R. It depends on the circumstances for each student and the school follows the Behaviour Policy. To issue a permanent exclusion for persistent breaches of the Behaviour Policy the school needs to have around two years' worth of evidence. The school is firm on its expectations and standards. This is part of preparing students for adulthood. It is often clearer to provide evidence of a single, serious breach of the Behaviour Policy.

Governors also noted that the school has a duty to other pupils and members of staff.

The Chair asked whether the Headteacher feel well-supported in her role. She is doing an excellent job working with vulnerable and challenging families and this can be stressful. This is an important issue for the Trust and the DfE.

ACTION: The Chair would discuss support for Headteachers at the next Chair's Forum.

Welfare

12. Safeguarding-Paper 12

- Domestic violence is becoming an increasing problem.
- Strategies are in place to support the whole community.
- Work has been carried out at Trust level to standardise procedures and reduce the workload for schools.

Governors recognised that Safeguarding has become a much wider and more challenging area for schools to deal with.

13. Welfare and Wellbeing – Pupils

- Enrichment activities and Student Voice are included in the Headteacher's Report.
- Student voice was collected during the PD review by Alison Hooper. She commented that students could talk confidently about the school's vision and values and knew who to speak to if they had a concern or worry. Students were also excited about the new house system.

14. Welfare and Wellbeing – Staff

Staff absence figures are included in the Headteacher's Report. Staff wellbeing is supported through OHU referrals, EAP counselling, return to work management that is supportive, flexible working, and weekly staff recognition.

Local Matters and Stakeholder Engagement

15. Local Policy Approval -There were no polices due for approval at this meeting.

16. Governor Training Update

- Governors were reminded to log on Governor Hub any training they have completed.
- Governors noted the Trust Governor Conference on 13th July 2024. The clerk was requested to feedback that a Saturday morning is not the preferred option for many governors who work all week and give their time voluntarily.

17. Stakeholder Engagement – Parents/Carers-Paper 17

The Headteacher explained that the Trust asks its schools to administer this survey and that it is based on the Ofsted Parent View survey. She highlighted the following points:

- There are lots of positives in the results.
- There are some legacy issues regarding SEND which the school is addressing.
- Positive feedback was received regarding the enrichment offer and there is a wide range of activities.
- The school would prefer to send out a shorter, more targeted questionnaire.

Q. How are the results feedback to parents?

R. This will be done in a “you said, we did” format.

Q. Is a staff survey carried out?

R. A well-being audit was administered in December 2023 by the Trust, but the school has not yet seen the outcomes. The headteacher would share these with the LGB.

Q. How does the school set and monitor parental expectations?

R. There is a Parents’ Charter which is displayed in the reception area of school. The school’s vision also sets out how everyone contributes. It can be difficult to manage expectations, especially where students have additional needs.

18. Stakeholder Engagement – Wider Community

A Range of community engagement activities are detailed in the Headteacher’s report.

19. Communication to Trust

The chair would raise the issue of support for Headteachers at the Chairs’ Forum.

The Clerk would feedback to AH on the timing of the Governor Conference.

20. Communication from Trust

None for this meeting.

Meeting Closed at 6:30 pm

Next Meeting Wednesday 19th June 2024 at 4:00pm at Congleton High School

Signed.....Date.....

Actions:

Action	Who	When
4. To arrange a meeting with governors to review SIP and identify priorities for 2024-25.	HT	19/06/2024
6. To discuss possible reduction in PAN with the Trust.	HT	19/06.2024
14.0 To share with LGB results from Trust staff well-being audit.	HT	19/06/2024
14.1 To discuss support for Headteachers at the next Chair's Forum.	RB	19/06/2024
16. To discuss timing of Governors' conference with AH.	Clerk	19/06.2024