MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CMAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD ON MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON 9TH JULY 2025 at 17.30

Name	Designated Role	Attendance
Ann Kowalska	Chair of Trustees	Apologies
Amanda Mellor	Vice Chair of Trustees	Present
Maria Stelmach	Vice Chair of Trustees	Apologies
Louise Gohr	Trustee & CEO	Present
Chris Bell	Trustee	Present
Ros Caulfield	Trustee	Apologies
Louise Gibson	Trustee	Present
Simon Varo	Trustee	Missed
Kerry Hulson	Associate Member	Present
Paul Tomkow	Observer	Present
Katy Jodrell	CFO	Present
Julie Richardson	Outgoing CFO	Present
Jenny Whiston	Governance & Compliance Lead (GCL)	Present
Sue Lambeth	Clerk	Present

PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

	Item
1.	**Welcome, Apologies and Any Other Business** In the absence of the Chair, Amanda Mellor welcomed CMAT Trustees, Katy Jodrell, Chancery CFO, and Paul Tomkow, an observer, to the meeting. The meeting was quorate and started at 17.31. Apologies received from Ann Kowalska, Maria Stelmach and Ros Caulfield were accepted. Simon Varo was not in attendance. Items of Part One business requested: • Companies House requirements
2.	**Conflicts of Interest** Directors confirmed there were no conflicts of interest with the business to be discussed in the meeting.
3.	**Chair's Action** No actions had been taken on behalf of the board since the previous meeting.

4.	**Membership** The membership of the Board was confirmed to be as shown on this document. Paul Tomkow, a semi-retired School Improvement Partner (SIP), former primary and secondary school teacher, Headteacher and His Majesty's Inspector, was attending as an interested prospective trustee. Louise Gibson agreed to act as interim Chancery Link Safeguarding trustee until a permanent link trustee could be appointed. Trustees were asked to consider taking on the role temporarily and jointly with Louise for a six month period. Details of the role would be circulated. TASK: To contact JW to discuss taking on a joint Safeguarding Trustee role for a sixth month period. (All) TASK: To share details of the safeguarding trustee role with the board. (JW) Trustees were asked to submit views of the continuation of the current system of link trustees. It was felt that the length of attachment to a board should be a minimum of two years. TASK: To feedback agreement to continue in current LGB link trustee roles in 2025/26 to JW asap. (all) Discussion between the Chair, the CEO and the GCL on trustee school link governors for 2025/26 would take place over the summer break. It was felt that Elworth Hall would welcome, value and benefit from a link trustee.
5.	**CEO Report – Part One** The board acknowledged the receipt of the latest CEO report. <u>Standard Assessment Test (SATs) results</u> Chancery Trust collectively had performed extremely well. Headline figures were: • The MAT level result of Key Stage 2 pupils securing reading, writing and maths combined at an expected standard stood at 72% against 62% national. • The more able writing aspect continued to reduce the Greater Depth Standard (GDS) performance. However, the CEO as an experienced moderator, had confidence that teacher judgements were correct, and green shoots of improvement were visible. • Chancery average for the multiplication check stood at 41% against the national figure 38%. • The outcome of the phonics check was 86% against approximately 80% nationally.

	• Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) results were 73% against the national result of approximately 69%. Analysis of school level results was to take place and schools would receive individual feedback. Discussion by the HTs would shape the Trust Development Plan for September 2025. The trust was extremely pleased. Attendance had been very positive across trust. However, data in terms of groups showed disadvantaged pupils did not attend as well as non-disadvantaged. Close monitoring revealed small but positive gains were being made. This would form a focus of school categorisation meetings with schools week commencing 14th June. Trustees received assurance that no Chancery schools had reached national levels of persistent absence. Nevertheless, Chancery schools aspired to be better. **Q: How many fixed penalty notices have been issued across the trust? Were they for persistent absences?** A: There are 1377 pupils in Chancery Trust, 61 of whom are currently hitting a DfE penalty notice threshold. 101 previously hit the threshold of 10 sessions unauthorised in a 10 rolling school week period within the academic year. Fixed penalty notices are being issued. Parents have made aware of penalty notices and the approach was bespoke. TASK: To analyse persistent absence by school and report to trustees. (CEO) **Q: Have HTs been requested to publish the framework of fines again as a reminder?** A: Yes. HTs have tight systems in place and newsletters and new starter evenings are used repeatedly to remind parents, to celebrate and to inform them of the implications of non-attendance. **Q: Are HT's sharing details of how they have achieved a reduction in persistent absence from 7.4% to 5.9%?** A: The recent Central Team meeting (Team Around the School) discussed the sharing of such details between Heads without requiring direction from the trust. The aim is to build a culture of HTs reaching out to each other around areas including the sharing vulnerabilities and learning and ultimately working together. There were no concerns and the CEO was aware of all incidents across Chancery. The Governance Forum Strategy Day had had a clear focus on SEND. Between three to six governors had attended from each LGB across the trust and there had been a feeling of cohesion, commonality and togetherness. Governors had an appreciation of the SEND position in their individual school, across the trust and at national level. Details of the shortfall in SEND funding

	had surprised the meeting. Possibilities for working differently on aspects within the control of schools were considered in breakout groups, and the ideas had been collated for discussion at the HTs strategy meeting. A proposal for the appointment of central trust SEND positions had been explored; however, the maintaining of SEND relationships with parents had been deemed vital and any efficiencies would be carefully balanced against this. Strategic work around SEND e.g. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) across the trust was currently handled by the CEO. **Q: Is there any benefit of an administration role across the trust to support all SENCOs?** A: This has been trialled at school level with the administration team giving one afternoon per week to SENCO support. However, the co-ordination of cases in a timely manner if actioned centrally could be a potential issue, and any backlog could impact pupils. The allocation of half a day of administration in every school could be possible. All SENCOs across the trust are extremely diligent. **Q: What is the time and financial allowance for SENCOs?** A: Pay has been aligned across the trust; however, the time allocation is contextual and dependent upon the number of pupils and their needs. Efficiencies to be made will be explored by the Central Team. <u>Other significant updates</u> The Elworth Hall School nursery was scheduled to open by September 2025 with building work scheduled over the summer. The Berkeley Academy had offered themselves for a Pilot inspection under the new Ofsted framework which had been positive from a trust perspective and had given an important insight into the future of inspection, the format of the new tool kit and the nuances of language. HTs had been encouraged to delay the writing their Self Evaluation Forms (SEF) over the summer and await the final version of the Ofsted toolkit which contained significant differences from the draft. Work to ensure schools were comfortable with the framework and the availability of supporting evidence was likely to become a trust priority in the autumn term. <u>Stakeholder views</u> had been positive overall, and outcomes would be discussed with HTs in categorisation visits. **Q: What is the position around physical security at Elworth Hall School?** A: School aims to erect new perimeter fencing, and the building of a case to prove its necessity is underway. The Cheshire East (CE) Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings (SCiES) audit judged some fencing to be too low. There have been site security issues and measures have already been taken e.g. the installation of a fob system. The level of risk has been mitigated.

	Review of achievement of milestones on the Trust Development Plan would take place at the HT's meeting on Friday 11th July. Each HT had responsibility for leadership of strands, and evidence of impact in 2024/25 would be gathered and shared with the board in the autumn term.
6.	**Finance and Audit committee report** The Chair of the Finance & Audit committee reported that a very constructive Summer 2025 meeting had taken place on 2nd July, the minutes of which would be shared shortly. The contribution by schools to the trust contingency finances would be considered the CFO. Trustees received confirmation that the latest Management Accounts had been received and discussed at the Summer 2025 meeting.
7.	**Budget** Approval of the consolidated budget for 2025-26 and 3 year forecasts Trustees' attention was directed to document 1.07.2 containing all school budgets scrutinised and approved by individual LGBs together with the Chancery budget. • The Chancery budget for 2025/26 showed a positive in year position of £18k. • Elworth Hall was forecast an in-year deficit in 2025/26 based on very prudent nursery assumptions. • Excalibur, Pikemere and The Berkeley all forecast in-year surpluses • Willaston was forecast an in-year deficit in 2025/26. The consolidated brought forward of £600k plus the additions from the schools in surplus was forecast to result in £750k in reserves across all schools at the end of 2025/26. **Trustees had no questions and gave approval to the CMAT budget for 2025/26.** The CFO confirmed that at the end of the next three years the trust would have cumulative reserves in line with the Reserves Policy of 3% to 5%.
8.	**Finance Matters** The meeting noted the receipt of the letter received by the Accounting Officer (25.06.25) alerting the trust to the publication of The Academy Handbook for 2025/26 which included reference to estates management, sustainability and digital and technology standards. There were no urgent matters and a Chancery IT strategy would be considered over the summer break. The investment plan proposal considered by the Finance and Audit Committee at their recent meeting was presented to trustees. The plan detailed a possible opportunity for the trust to invest some of the cash

	balances across the schools and illustrated the potential for income generation. Options comprised continuing investments with Lloyds Bank or moving monies held to a different platform. The latter would also mitigate risk through increased FCA protection and generate funds at no negative risk. **Q: Would the investment require constant monitoring?** A: It can be left once set up. The proposed platform, Insignis, would provide monthly heat maps detailing alternative / better investments. Once established, the trust would be alerted to any changes in interest rates. Administration is not onerous. Trustees were alerted to the difference between cash and reserves due to the timing of funding. Read only access could be available to staff or trustees as required and investments would be monitored at the end of each month with interest automatically added into the account. Income generated could be made available to the Headteachers for spending on agreed trust development projects. All changes would require two signatories. **Trustees gave approval to move forward with the proposed investment plan.** The **Audit and Finance Committee had met with Murray Smith, the trust external auditors, and had approved their strategy plan for the current year's audit.** At the Summer 2024 Trust Board meeting the decision had been taken not to buy into Trade Union Facilities Time. The trust had been asked to re-consider at a cost of approximately £4.5k. The value of the spend was felt uncertain as all union members received support under their trade union subscription and the trust budget had been set. **Q: Is there any indication by school what percentage of the workforce belong to a union? Have we contributed previously? Have any schools made use of it? and have any costs been incurred due to the lack of membership?** A: Union membership information cannot be collected under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)although HTs encourage staff membership. This contribution appears to refund the employing schools for the cost of union representatives released. **Trustees agreed not to buy in to the Trade Union Facilities Time.**
9.	**Premises, Health and Safety** There were no significant Health and Safety issues to report. Outcome of CIF bids The Excalibur Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bid for a new roof submitted in December 2024 had been unsuccessful. After discussion at the Finance

	and Audit Committee, the decision had been reached that the condition of the roof was not at a critical stage. The school would build more evidence and re-apply in the next round of applications. Had the bid been successful the school would have been required to contribute 10%. Replacement of the boiler at Willaston and the CIF bid had been discussed at the previous Trust Board meeting, following which Simon Varo, trustee, had discussed the situation with the GCL and had spoken to the consultants E3Cube. Comments had been added to GVO. E3Cube were now requesting an update on approval and wished to use the summer to carry out background work to build their evidence and case. Trustees felt that since SV had applied his expertise and could be involved in any decisions around the scope and specification, the approval of the board should be given. It was thought that Willaston had welcomed the advice and support of Chancery. **Trustees approved the replacement of the boiler at Willaston and E3Cube would be informed.** There were no other known H&S issues at Chancery schools.
10.	**Compliance** A summary of the compliance checks completed over the last term had been included in the meeting pack, and the GCL would visit schools to offer support. There were no known major concerns. The Asbestos Management Plan was the most time critical item for completion and schools had been requested to do so by the end of term. Trustees had no questions.
11.	**Risk Register** Risks assigned to the Full Board The few changes made were the additional points regarding H&S and IT strategy. A meeting to discuss IT strategy had taken place with a further one scheduled for the autumn term. TASK: To contact JW with any additions to the safeguarding item at the end of the risk register document. (All) Trustees had no questions.
12.	**Local Governance** Highlights from link trustees on LGB meetings held since the Spring 2 meeting The Berkeley AM reported on the delightful presentation from the pupils on what they liked about the school and what could be improved. There were no concerns and the meetings were well chaired and led.

	Willaston Academy There had been some slight concern about a perceived lack of communication regarding potential trust mergers which would be discussed with the GCL, the CEO and the Chair. There had been no new LGB appointments. At Excalibur Ian White, who had a long standing involvement with the school and trust, had taken over as LGB Chair with Rachel Hackney as Vice Chair. The previous Chair had resigned from the end of the summer term and the previous Vice Chair was to remain on the LGB and attend meetings remotely. A long-serving governor at The Berkeley, Craig Dobson, had submitted his resignation from the end of the summer term. See discussion under Item 5 for Outcomes from the Governance Forum on 16.06.25.
13.	**Policies** The following Trust policies were approved subject to the comments made and changes included in final version: • AI Policy • Acceptable Use of ICT • Social Media • Governor Visits • Lone Worker • Working at Height • Pensions Discretions • Neo-natal Care Leave The Data Protection Policy was approved and would be amended if required by any new update in line with DfE guidance. The policy would be amended to clarify the need for HT's to refer any matters to the Central Team. The Scheme of Delegation for 2025-26 had been shared with all governors for comment, and amendments for 25/26 included changes to the Terms of Reference for the new Finance and Audit. Committee. **The Chancery Trust Scheme of Delegation was approved.** It was noted that the Code of Conduct (operational) would be reviewed by Headteachers and shared on Every.
14.	**Minutes of the previous meetings / matters arising and actions** The meeting **confirmed** that the Part One minutes of the meeting on 21st May 2025 on GVO were an accurate account and approved them. There were no matters arising.

	Outstanding tasks relating to the discussion of the safeguarding link trustee role and investigation of the impact and take up of communications around the working with families project would be carried forward. All other tasks were completed.
15.	**Board Impact** Board impact on pupils and staff across the trust since the previous meeting • The budget set would ensure sufficient funding for the running of each school for 2025/26 and beyond. • The approval of the Willaston School CIF bid would enable the school to move forward with a new and efficient heating system. • The Scheme of Delegation had been reviewed and considerably updated to take the trust forward. • The successful Governance Strategy Day and the impact of collaborative working had resulted in the identification of the key priorities for SEND across Chancery.
16.	**Any Other Business** Companies House now required trustees to supply identification documents which would be requested by the GCL over the summer break. Lou Gibson reported the excellent behaviour of pupils from The Berkeley at the recent Careers Day at Reaseheath College and encouraged other Chancery pupils to attend.
17.	**Meeting dates** The dates of the meetings of the Chancery Trust board for 2025/26 were confirmed as: • 24th September 2025 (in person) • 10th December 2025 • 28th January 2026 • 11th March 2026 • 20th May 2026 • 8th July 2026 Finance & Audit Committee meetings were confirmed as: • 26th November 2025 • 25th February 2026 • 1st July 2026 Trustees were requested to apologise if unable to attend. TASK: To email trustees with details of the in person Autumn 1 Trust board meeting. (GCL) The date of the Autumn Governance Forum on Teams would be 15th October 2025 at 17.30 on Teams.

Paul Tomkow was thanked for his attendance and left. The Part One meeting closed at 18.51.