MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CMAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD ON MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON 10TH DECEMBER 2025 at 17.30

Name	Designated Role	Attendance
Ann Kowalska	Chair of Trustees	Present
Maria Stelmach	Vice Chair of Trustees	Present
Louise Gohr	Trustee & CEO	Present
Chris Bell	Trustee	Present
Ros Caulfield	Trustee	Present
Karen Fuller	Trustee	Present
Louise Gibson	Trustee	Present
Amanda Mellor	Trustee	Apologies
Paul Tomkow	Trustee	Present
Simon Varo	Trustee	Present
Adrain Veale	Trustee	Present
Kerry Hulson	Associate Member	Apologies
Lesley Sumner	Observer	Present
Katy Jodrell	CFO	Present
Jenny Whiston	Governance & Compliance Lead	Present
Sue Lambeth	Clerk	Present

PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

	Item
1.	**Welcome, Apologies and Any Other Business** The meeting was quorate and started at 17.31. Apologies received from Amanda Mellor and Kerry Hulson were accepted. The Chair welcomed CMAT Trustees, particularly new trustees Karen Fuller and Adrian Veale and an observer, Lesley Sumner, to the meeting. No other items of Part One business were requested.
2.	**Declarations of Interest and Code of Conduct** Trustees declared no interests or conflicts with the business to be discussed in the meeting. Trustees who had not yet supplied the required Companies House verification code would receive a reminder.

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. New appointments Adrian Veale and Karen Fuller had now been appointed from 10th December 2025. Lesley Sumner, a potential trustee and former registered school nurse in the local area with safeguarding expertise, introduced herself. Individual meetings with the Chair would be arranged for the new and prospective new trustees. Chris Bell joined the meeting at 7.37.
5.	**CEO Report – Part One** MAT Development Plan Update Juliet Jones, Headteacher of Excalibur School, reported on her involvement with threads of the Chancery Development Plan. Headteachers' joint work on the trust development plan continued with schools benefiting from shared approaches to the curriculum, to leadership networks and to cross school working parties. The result was greater consistency of standards and increased outcomes for pupils. The new INSIGHT data tracking system had been adopted this year based on the successful experience of another trust. Visits by Chancery leaders had established the system to be user friendly, easy to navigate and efficient. It allowed schools' data to be easily extrapolated and filtered, gave a deeper understanding of progress and attainment trends, and allowed flexibility in comparative data e.g. gender differences in reading. There had also been a cost saving. Discussion with schools using the system had provided an understanding of best practice, and onboarding had been smooth due to the system's intuitive nature. The impact included more aligned assessment, access to accurate assessment information and inbuilt comparison with Fischer Family Trust (FFT) data (the aspirational targets set across Chancery schools). Staff had experienced a time saving and greater ease and speed of accessing reports. As a result, data conversations could be more focussed, and staff confidence in using data had grown. Lou Gibson joined the meeting at 17.41. The focus of the more able pupil group was a more common approach in

	maths and writing. Following group collaboration on the criteria for the identification of pupils, a triad based approach had been adopted in the individual schools. Findings would be shared and the same model would be adopted with the aim of working towards a Chancery standard for more able pupils. Barriers for pupils had also been identified as had some commonality around girls and maths. The maths group had a focus on reasoning and challenge around deeper mathematical thinking. The impact would be reviewed in upcoming meetings with schools sharing case studies and outcome data which would be further monitored. The aim was to achieve improved attainment for more able mathematicians and writers, and to develop a Chancery standards document for able pupils which would express expectations for challenge, progression and pedagogy across the schools. This would strengthen school consistency in identification, curriculum provision and support for higher attainers. Maria Stelmach joined the meeting at 17.50 Deputy Heads were working on a <u>standardised approach to curriculum monitoring</u> setting out a shared structure for steps to be taken by subject leaders when monitoring their subject areas. The focus was on the geography curriculum, the establishment of end points and the expectations for progression. Work was taking place alongside and related to the Ofsted toolkit. Other subjects were being reviewed in individual schools aligned to schools' priorities using the geography exemplification. The aim was to achieve consistency of curriculum monitoring across all Chancery schools, greater clarity for leaders around expectations under the new framework, to work collaboratively and improve curriculum oversight of the curriculum. **Q: Why was geography chosen?** A: DHTs agreed a humanity subject would be best. English and maths have a standardised approach, and humanities were felt best for exemplification and modelling. **Q: Does the work fit with the Chancery Development Plan?** A: Both history and geography fit well with the plan; however, considerable work with history took place in the previous year. **Q: Do schools focus on geography for a term or year?** A: The group is working to arrive at a model and exemplification which will then be used as a model by other subject areas. **Q: Are teachers sharing experiences across schools or are they working in isolation?** A: The structure has been embedded, following which a group of DHTs will tighten the end points. Cross school working will be the next step. **Q: Is there documentation capturing the work underway?**

	A: The aim is a process of refining the curriculum with geography being the choice of the schools. The group is working on an operational document which allows the identification of refinement. All schools are following the same model and structure with their own curriculum. **Q: Are schools changing or adapting their curriculum?** A: Schools are reviewing their curriculum and identifying areas for tightening / refinement. **Q: Is work taking place across schools or are they working independently?** A: The DHTs are working collaboratively to shape the strategic direction the trust is taking the curriculum. School leaders are then applying this in their own schools. **Q: How long has this work been ongoing? And when will impact be seen?** A: Work started in September 2025, and outcomes will be reviewed later in the year. The next step will be the monitoring of the implementation and obtaining pupil voice. **Q How will a judgement be made about progress and impact?** A: The Ofsted toolkit is the biggest marker of the success of a teaching curriculum since this is what schools will be judged against. Pupils' ability to talk about the taught curriculum is an important element in the new framework. Juliet Jones was thanked and left the meeting at 17.55. <u>MAT development Plan update</u> Part one of the Chancery Development Plan had been discussed above. • To address the schools' need to prioritise their <u>readiness for Ofsted</u>, the CEO had joined training by an Ofsted inspector and shared learning from the pilot inspection. Everything discussed from an Ofsted training perspective matched the pilot. A health check against the new framework would take place for the schools approaching the Ofsted window and this would be followed by a pilot inspection to re-assure HTs of their position against the standards. The evidence base was discussed at each Headteachers' meeting. • Sustainability work had started well with a working party of HTs and other staff across the trust. Teachers and pupils would also be involved. • As part of the IT strategy, half termly meetings were taking place with the trust IT provider. Task: To contact JW to express an interest in joining the sustainability / environment working group. (All)

	Q: Is there any correlation between the figures for persistent absence at Pikemere and the school having the highest number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)? A: There is some correlation between persistent absence and SEND. Persistent absences are all individual cases for which all HTs are able to articulate the context of the situation and evidence the processes and systems in place to mitigate and to improve the attendance. There are some small pockets of SEND and absences which are the target group. INSIGHT allows the filtering of pupil data by groups e.g. SEND or Young carers which allows easier and speedier scrutiny and analysis. INSIGHT has revealed that schools have similar demographics.
6.	**Finance and Audit committee report** The trust finances and accounts had been discussed in detail at the Finance and Audit Committee. Key points highlighted by the CFO were: • The statutory accounts had been reviewed and the Audit Completion Report 24/25 had been discussed. • A clean audit report had been received and auditors raised only a small number of low level concerns. • Schools had added to their reserves and generated in year surpluses thanks to the work of the HTs. • Audit checks had taken place on payroll, purchasing, tendering and governance minutes. • The two low level issues raised were not school specific, and CFO would be looking at fixed asset disposal and their individual significance. The generation of a figure for larger disposals would be reviewed, and further work was to take place on some historic intra trust balance issues and the timing of some cut off areas. • Auditors had thanked everyone in school for the preparation of the documentation. Trustees confirmed that Chancery Trust should be pleased with the auditors' report, and those with financial expertise offered support going forward. **Q: How will the fall in pupil numbers impact income?** A: The pupil numbers' concern at Willaston is in the Nursery and the school has an amended forecast for the current year based on Nursery numbers. An in year amendment has also been made at The Berkeley for the Nursery. Elworth Hall have only one small year group in the main school. Nevertheless, school numbers are not a concern despite CE reporting a falling birth rate. Marketing and profiling of the schools continues and the trust is doing everything possible to maintain pupil numbers.
7.	**Financial Statements and Trustees Report** The **financial statements were approved** on recommendation from the Finance and Audit committee.

8.	**Finance Matters** The trust board confirmed that Management Accounts for September and October had been received and discussed. Management Accounts for November would be available shortly. Work was underway with some schools to move to a pre-payments and accruals methods of working. There were no Letters to the Accounting Officer. Confirmation was received that the Land and Buildings Collections Tool had been submitted to the DfE week commencing 1st December. This document provided the DfE with data around the addition / reduction of any classroom capacity together with details of the leases in place e.g. on photocopiers.
9.	**Premises, Health & Safety** Significant issues • The leak in the roof at Excalibur continued. This had been the basis of the unsuccessful Condition Improvement Funding (CIF) bid in the previous year. There were no dangers or hazards to children. • The long-standing problem with the skylight and roof at Elworth Hall continued, and the central team were now involved. The CFO was liaising with Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) insurers and a claim would be made for legal support to resolve the dispute. A meeting was scheduled at the school on 12th December. Despite remedial works the problem was not being solved, and the adjuster was advising whether this was a legal or a buildings matter. CIF applications In addition to the Excalibur bid, Willaston Academy, as previously discussed, was to submit a bid for the replacement of the boiler. After consideration the school was intending a move to a ground source heat pump with a whole new heating system. Elworth Hall were to submit a safeguarding CIF bid to raise the height of the perimeter fencing. The CFO continued to liaise with schools and LGBs around the level of the school contribution. The EH contribution would be 10% i.e. approximately £14k. A letter of recommendation from the police would accompany the submission. Willaston had already spent £5k in the current year to keep the boilers operating. **Q: What is the CIF bid process? What if bids fail? Is there a next step for emergency funding considering the potential impact?** A: Emergency capital funding is available and can be applied for. As part of the RPA cover it is possible to claim if there is a school closure and a loss of days of teaching. There is also an appeals process for CIF bids.
10.	**Compliance** Summary information of termly compliance checks for Autumn 1

	The summary showed compliance checks undertaken over Autumn 1, and further progress had been made since the report. The central team was aware of schools requiring additional support.
11.	**Risk Register** The GCL confirmed that the red risk at the top of the document was a new risk and red text on the document denoted a change had been made. **Q: Do the risks around IT affect all schools?** A: Yes. The trust is working with the IT provider and regular strategy meetings are taking place. Visits by the providers into schools are underway to carry out ongoing monitoring and ascertain an accurate picture of whether schools are meeting the DfE standards for IT. The end result will be an action plan to ensure standards are complied with by 2030. **Q: Is the bank account opened to generate interest at a low risk achieving its aim?** A: Balances from schools were transferred in in September, and interest of £1400 for September and £2000 for October was earned. It was reducing the overall risk as trust money was now spread across more than one bank. The interest generated enabled the cross trust groups as discussed in Juliet Jones report to meet. Some monies may need to be returned to schools depending on the outcome of CIF bids. **Q: Are the control measures around the IT risks reducing the risk currently? If not, what else could or should be done?** A: Until the IT providers have supplied their visit findings, the trust is unable to take the next steps. IT providers are now engaging in strategy meetings. **Q: Are IT providers being proactive and supplying the correct support and guidance?** A: The IT providers stress that the trust has until 2030 to achieve compliance. However, in view of the possibility of tight budgets over the next five years, the trust will be endeavouring to move more swiftly than is currently the case. **Q: What is the plan around a review of trustees?** A: A governance review has been undertaken, and further review will take place as is best practice. Guidance is to undertake an external review every three years. Should there be future growth developments for the trust, governance could form part of the due diligence process. Trustees agreed the format of the risk register. Work was underway on a move from the Every compliance package and the new one would include a risk register.
12.	**Local Governance**

	The GCL confirmed that trustees were asked to attend two LGB meetings per year and were free to touch base with schools in between. However, trustees were urged to avoid carrying out a governor role. Link trustees were invited to report back on meetings attended. Suggestions for any changes to the current approach would be welcomed. Link trustee role descriptors were available on GVO and clarification could be obtained from Jenny Whiston. New LGB appointments / resignations • A new Co-opted Governor, Emma Hume, was to be appointed at Elworth Hall. • Kerry Hulson had resigned as Associate member of the Chancery Board of Trustees and Chair of Pikemere LGB due to family circumstances. • The Willaston Chair had indicated their intention to step down in March and a replacement had been appointed at the recent meeting. Trustees agreed that the arrangements for LGB self-evaluations would be discussed at the next Chair's meeting. LGBs could consider the governance elements of the Ofsted toolkit linked to the evidence required at inspection. Trustees expressed their thanks to Kerry Hulson for her service, her time and her dedication to Chancery at both school and board level.
13.	**Policies** The SEND Policy would be reconsidered and re-presented for approval on GVO. Confidentiality Policy Trustees received assurance that staff were not allowed to use USBs, Visitors were asked to ensure their phones were switched off, and signs in Reception were clear to say that visitor phones were not to be used. Parents were able to use phones in assemblies with the proviso that photographs were not to be posted on social media. Safer Recruitment Policy The amended policy incorporated a small number of changes in light of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (KCSiE) and training attended. Trustees were requested comment / approve the Confidentiality Policy and the Safer Recruitment Policy on GVO. The following policies had been approved by the Finance & Audit committee: • Tendering and Procurement • Lettings • Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-Bribery

14.	**Minutes of the previous meetings / matters arising and tasks** The meeting **confirmed** that the Part One minutes of the meeting on 8th October 2025 on GVO were an accurate account and **approved** them. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Simon Varo. There were no matters arising and all actions from the previous meeting had been completed.
15.	**Board Impact** <u>Impact of the Trust Board on pupils and staff across the trust</u> • The in depth presentation by Juliet Jones on the collaboration on areas of the Trust Development Plan across schools had showed the progress made. • The INSIGHT system now allowed deeper analysis of data. • Finance documents had been approved. • A robust discussion around CIF bids, Health and Safety across Chancery schools and the Risk Register had taken place.
16.	**Any Other Business** There was no further business to discuss.
17.	**Date of next meeting** The date of the next meeting of the Chancery Trustees for 2025/26 was confirmed to be 28th January 2026 on Microsoft Teams. The Finance & Audit Committee meeting was scheduled to take place on 25th February 2026.

Lesley Sumner was thanked for her attendance and left. The Part One meeting closed at 18.48.