MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHANCERY BOARD OF TRUSTEES HELD ON MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 28TH JANUARY 2026 at 17.30

Name	Designated Role	Attendance
Ann Kowalska	Chair of Trustees	Present
Maria Stelmach	Vice Chair of Trustees	Apologies
Louise Gohr	Trustee & CEO	Present
Chris Bell	Trustee	Present
Ros Caulfield	Trustee	Present
Karen Fuller	Trustee	Present
Louise Gibson	Trustee	Apologies
Amanda Mellor	Trustee	Present
Paul Tomkow	Trustee	Apologies
Simon Varo	Trustee	Present
Adrian Veale	Trustee	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 Chair welcomed CMAT Trustees to the meeting which was quorate and started at 17.31. Apologies received from Louise Gibson, Paul Tomkow and Maria Stelmach were accepted. No additional items of Part One business were requested.
2.	**Conflicts of Interest** Trustee declarations were up to date on GVO, and no other interests or conflicts with the business of the meeting were declared.
3.	**Chair's Action** The Chair reported no actions on behalf of the Board.
4.	**Changes of Membership** No new appointments had been made since the previous meeting.
5.	**CEO Report - Part One**

	Data headlines and analysis of groups Absence **Q: Have reasons had been found for the increase in the persistent absence rates at most schools?** A: Attendance across the trust at 95% and above is strong and consistently above the national level which is to be celebrated. The group of pupils with persistent absence is the most vulnerable group and the focus for improvement; however, the group data remains better than national from a persistent absence perspective. Some families have continued to find the return to full time schooling routines after Covid very difficult. National figures for persistent absence stand at 17% to 20% with Chancery standing at 8% to 10%. Nevertheless, this is an area to develop and strengthen across the trust but is not a weakness on the part of Chancery. **Q; How easy is it to show improvement in schools?** A: Once the new data tracking system, in place from September 2025, has been embedded, further comparative data will be available. An update on attendance will be brought back to the summer meeting of the board and a visible improvement is expected. **Q: How aware are the trust / schools of the circumstances / reasons behind persistent absences?** A: The individual cases discussed by Headteachers (HT) which may reveal common themes such as the mental health needs of parents or the need for children to come to school not being enforced. Systems are in place to target the groups of children; however, relationships with families are key. Schools have case by case evidence, and the work of the trust continues. **Q: Does Cheshire East (CE) provide support on attendance?** A: All schools have an attendance check carried out by CE, during which random cases are selected, analysed and discussed. School is required to demonstrate its endeavours, and whilst CE provides challenge to schools, understanding is also demonstrated e.g. cases of pupils with medical needs whose absences can be evidenced. All Chancery schools are following their processes. **Q: Is the trust aware of how many persistent absences are for legitimate reasons and how many for non-legitimate reasons?** A: This level of detail could be obtained from schools. However, this is part of the remit of the LGBs who receive an increased level of data which is discussed at LGB meetings. Trustees noted that conversations around persistent absence were taking place at LGB level, HTs were aware of the data and reasons and schools would be prepared for an Ofsted visit. Trustees noted the swift and accurate access to precise data now permitted by the new data tracking system which lent itself to easy interrogation.

	Attainment **Q: What is the reason for a greater number of pupils showing in lower bands in Autumn 2025?** A: All year groups now have more pupils with Special Educational Needs and / or Disability (SEND). This is not cohort specific and is a similar picture across the nation. Discussion ensued on the value of trustees digging deeper into elements of data at each meeting e.g. the impact of the Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) project, and it was agreed that it would be possible. It was agreed trustees would request areas for in depth analysis prior to each meeting.
6.	**Management Accounts** Latest set of management accounts (December 2025) Trustees noted the latest management accounts and responses to questions given on GVO. Greater detail on accounts would be provided in the February Finance and Audit Committee meeting. All schools were likely to end the year with a minimum of 5% reserves. **Q: Is the trust secure in its cash flow?** A: Cash flow is being monitored outside the PS Financials system. No problems have been experienced since monies have been placed on deposit. The amount on deposit is constantly monitored and consideration given to increasing it if appropriate in order to maximise trust income. Trustees approved the December 2025 Management Accounts.
7.	**Equality and Diversity** Annual equality information report As part of the public sector equality duty, trusts had to publish equality information on pupils, staff and governors / trustees on an annual basis. There had been no significant changes since the previous year, and the trust was aware of the demographic the schools reflected in data for staff and governors. Recruitment of trustees and governors was open to every background and ethnicity, and governors from different backgrounds or ethnicity would be welcomed. **Q: The governing bodies and trustees are predominantly white British? Is this usual?** A: Yes. Recruitment for governors and trustees makes it clear that applications are welcome from different ethnicities. Schools have some mixture of ethnicity, although it would be good to reflect the demographic of the region.

	Trustees had no further questions. **Q: Does this reflect the demographic in the local areas?** A: It could be possible to compare the trust demographic with that of Cheshire East. TASK: To explore availability of equality and diversity of data across Cheshire East for comparison purposes. (JW)
8.	**Trust Governance** Governance activities since the previous meeting had comprised: • Spring 1 meetings of the Willaston and Elworth Hall LGBs had taken place. • A productive Chairs' meeting had taken place at the start of the year. Willaston had a new Chair and the Vice Chair at Pikemere had attended due to the current Chair vacancy. The five chairs were regularly communicating and overall were more engaged with the trust. It had been reassuring to see that Chairs were bringing Chancery discussion to their meetings and that dialogue was ongoing between schools. **Q: What is the situation with the appointment of a new Chair at Pikemere?** A: Conversations are underway between the GCL and the HT, and Jenny would be meeting with interested governors to discuss the Chair role. • Training had been shared on GVO and trustees were requested to contact JW if more information was required. • The date of the summer term Governance Forum was confirmed as Friday 12th June 2026 possibly at TBA. TASK: To add Friday 12 June 2026 to diaries for the summer term Governance Forum. (All)
9.	**Policies** The proposed Equality and Diversity Policy and Objectives document had been updated but remained similar to the previous one. HTs had worked together on a review of the equality objectives as required every four years. The few changes made were clearly identified in the document. KF joined the meeting at 17.53. Trustees welcomed the opportunity to discuss equality and diversity which would be evidenced in the minutes. The board actively aimed to recruit the required skillset and demographic. **Trustees approved the Equality and Diversity Policy and Objectives.**

10.	**Cheshire East (CE) Director of Children's Services Report** The Spring 2026 report would be circulated with a summary as soon as possible.
11.	**Minutes of the previous meetings / matters arising and task review** The meeting **confirmed** that the Part One minutes of the meeting on 10th December 2025 on GVO were an accurate account. Lou Gibson had agreed to join the sustainability / environmental working group together with a governor from The Berkeley Academy, and a meeting would be arranged shortly. Outstanding tasks were reviewed and agreed to be ongoing. Trustees were requested to read any documents flagged up in the Every weekly email as the trust would be shortly moving to a new compliance system.
12.	**Any Other Business** There was no other business for discussion.
13.	**Date of Next meeting** The date of the next meeting of the Chancery Trustees was confirmed as 11th March 2026 on Teams at 17.30. The Chancery Finance and Audit Committee meeting would take place on 25th February on Teams at 17.30.

Part One of the meeting closed at 18.06.