

MINUTES FROM THE SECAT CEO Q&A SESSION

Held on 30th September 2026 at 12:00pm via Microsoft Teams

Chair: Ben Stickley, CEO, SECAT

Introduction

The SECAT CEO Q&A Session was held as part of the Trust's commitment to strengthening engagement with parents and carers across all SECAT schools. Questions were submitted in advance and through the live Q&A/chat facility. The purpose of the session was to provide an opportunity for parents and carers to ask questions directly of the CEO and to follow up matters raised at the previous session.

1. Welcome, Purpose and Follow-up from the Previous Session

- 1.1 Ben Stickley welcomed attendees and thanked them for attending.
- 1.2 Attendees were reminded that the meeting was being recorded and transcribed and that a record of the questions, responses and actions would be published on the Trust website.
- 1.3 Katy Love, Governance Manager, monitored the Q&A/chat facility and supported the session.
- 1.4 The CEO provided an update on an action from the June 2026 session concerning comparison of 2026 Key Stage 2 outcomes at Thorpedene and Richmond Avenue with Porters Grange.
- 1.5 The provisional data presented showed Richmond Avenue exceeding Porters Grange across the measures presented, with Thorpedene matching or exceeding Porters Grange across the measures discussed.
- 1.6 The CEO also highlighted the outcome of Richmond Avenue Primary School's June 2026 Ofsted inspection, published in September, noting that the school achieved the expected standard in six areas and a strong standard in one area.

2. Communication and Promotion of CEO Q&A Sessions

- 2.1 Questions were raised regarding how the session had been communicated to parents and carers and whether reminders had been issued consistently across all schools.
- 2.2 The CEO confirmed that all schools had been asked to communicate the session, including through primary newsletters and My Child at School where applicable.
- 2.3 It was acknowledged that reminders had not necessarily been repeated consistently and that some parents reported not receiving information about the session.
- 2.4 The CEO agreed that future sessions should be promoted more than once and that the Trust would follow up specifically with Shoeburyness High School regarding communication to parents and carers.
- 2.5 The CEO also agreed that dates for future sessions could be maintained on the Trust governance webpage and that schools would be asked to share links to the published Q&A record following each session.

ACTION: CEO to ask Headteachers to issue reminders about future CEO Q&A sessions, follow up communication arrangements at Shoeburyness High School, and ensure links to the published Q&A record are shared with parents and carers.

POST MEETING NOTE: The CEO subsequently confirmed with the Headteacher at SHS that an email had been sent on 9 September at 3.35pm. However, participant feedback suggested that the communication had not reached all those who may have wished to attend. Further ways to strengthen the promotion and reach of future events will be considered.

3. Wraparound Care

- 3.1 A number of questions concerned the change of wraparound care provider and the timing of communication to parents.

3.2 The CEO acknowledged that communication had been later than would have been ideal and apologised for this. It was explained that the Trust had been awaiting confirmation of the final arrangements before communicating the change.

3.3 The CEO confirmed that the provision had continued, staffing and session arrangements had largely remained the same, and the new model provided greater flexibility around collection times.

3.4 It was reiterated that the previous Trust-run model had incurred significant ongoing costs and was not considered financially sustainable. The change of provider was intended to secure continued provision at the schools.

3.5 A parent raised concern that tax-free childcare could not yet be used to pay Clubs Complete. The CEO advised that he understood the provider's registration to have been completed but agreed to confirm this and ask Clubs Complete to communicate the position directly to parents.

3.6 It was also confirmed that the Trust would evaluate the new provider and seek parent feedback on how effectively the service was operating.

3.7 A question was raised regarding charging from 3:00pm at Bournes Green Junior School when the school day ends at 3:15pm. The CEO clarified that this had been an initial communication error and that charging starts from 3:15pm.

ACTION: CEO to confirm the tax-free childcare position with Clubs Complete and ask the provider to communicate the arrangements directly to parents.

ACTION: Trust/schools to evaluate the Clubs Complete provision and seek feedback from parents and carers.

4. School Meals

4.1 Questions were raised regarding the cost of school meals across SECAT compared with other local schools.

4.2 The CEO confirmed that the meal price was consistent across the Trust and explained that SECAT operates an in-house catering model.

4.3 It was confirmed that the Trust does not seek to make a profit from school meals and that income supports the catering provision and free school meal provision.

4.4 Parents provided examples of lower meal prices at other local schools. The CEO agreed to undertake benchmarking across the local area to understand whether SECAT's pricing was an anomaly and to consider the information provided by parents.

4.5 A further question was raised about whether census day lunches could be offered free of charge to encourage pupils to try the school meal service. The CEO agreed that this could be considered.

ACTION: CEO to review local school-meal pricing and benchmark SECAT's charges against comparable local schools.

ACTION: Trust to consider whether free census day lunches could be offered in future.

5. Swimming Provision and Bournes Green Pool Site

5.1 Questions were raised regarding swimming provision at Bournes Green and whether pupils were currently receiving swimming lessons.

5.2 The CEO confirmed that swimming was programmed for all SECAT schools at Shoeburyness Leisure Centre across the academic year.

5.3 It was clarified that the Trust wished to extend swimming opportunities beyond Year 6 and was exploring provision for Years 4, 5 and 6, including practical support with swimming teachers, transport and staffing.

5.4 The CEO emphasised the importance of swimming opportunities for pupils, particularly given the Trust's coastal location.

5.5 It was confirmed that contractors had been appointed to demolish and infill the former pool at Bournes Green Junior School. The intention was to develop a new sports facility on the site, with pupils to be consulted on the future provision.

5.6 Schools would communicate with parents regarding when swimming would take place for relevant year groups.

ACTION: Schools to communicate swimming arrangements for relevant year groups as plans are confirmed.

ACTION: Bournes Green pupils to be consulted on the proposed new sports provision for the former swimming-pool site.

6. SEND and Mental Health Support

6.1 A question was raised regarding SENCO capacity at Bournes Green Infant and Junior Schools and whether the current allocation was sufficient.

6.2 The CEO explained that SENCO staffing and the level of resource allocated were matters for individual school leadership teams to determine through their staffing structures and budgets, based on need.

6.3 It was noted that schools also receive support from the Trust's Inclusion Lead and can access external specialist support and training where required.

6.4 A further question concerned mental health support for children. The CEO confirmed that the Trust hosts an NHS Mental Health Support Team at Richmond Avenue Primary School and that schools can refer pupils for appropriate early intervention support.

6.5 Parents were advised to speak directly with their school where they had concerns about an individual child requiring support.

7. Academy Committees and Governor Recruitment

7.1 Questions were raised regarding the recruitment process for Academy Committee governors and the appointment of Academy Committee Chairs.

7.2 It was confirmed that Claire Patel had been appointed Chair of the Bournes Green Academy Committee following ratification by the Trust Board earlier that week.

7.3 The CEO and Governance Manager explained that recruitment to Academy Committees takes place on a rolling basis where vacancies exist and that Bournes Green continued to have vacancies following the recent appointment of a new community governor.

7.4 Where there are more candidates than available parent governor places, a parent election would be held. The Chair of an Academy Committee is appointed through the governance arrangements rather than by a wider parent vote.

7.5 Parents interested in governance were encouraged to contact the school or Governance Manager for further information.

7.6 The CEO agreed that Academy Committee vacancies could be promoted again through school communications.

7.7 The role of the Academy Committee was discussed. It was explained that Academy Committees provide local oversight and challenge, monitor school improvement priorities and provide an important link with the school community, with assurance and relevant themes feeding into the Trust's wider governance arrangements.

7.8 It was confirmed that Academy Committees operate under agreed Terms of Reference.

ACTION: Schools/Trust to re-promote current Academy Committee vacancies through appropriate communications.

8. School Drop-off, Collection and Risk Assessments

8.1 A question was raised regarding drop-off arrangements across the Trust's primary schools and where parents could find the relevant information.

8.2 The CEO explained that arrangements differ between schools because of differences in site layout, access, parking and local circumstances. Parents should contact their individual school for clarification where required.

8.3 Staff are briefed on the relevant arrangements through induction and staff briefings. Schools also respond dynamically to changing circumstances, such as road closures, staffing issues or temporary changes to access.

8.4 A related concern was raised regarding communication at Bournes Green about approved adults collecting children. The CEO confirmed that authorised contacts are recorded within the school's management information system and agreed that the school should provide further clarification to parents.

8.5 Parents also asked about access to school risk assessments. The CEO advised that requests for specific information should be made to the school office and would be considered in accordance with the relevant information access legislation.

ACTION: Bournes Green to review and clarify communication to parents regarding authorised collection arrangements.

9. Sports Funding

9.1 A question was raised regarding perceived reductions in the Bournes Green sports budget and reliance on parent association fundraising for sports facilities.

9.2 The CEO stated that there had been no Trust reduction to the Bournes Green sports budget.

9.3 The CEO advised that national primary PE and sport funding arrangements had changed and that schools were awaiting further clarity regarding replacement funding.

9.4 The Trust would continue to seek clarity and provide feedback regarding the impact of national funding changes.

10. Educational Outcomes, Literacy and Disadvantage

10.1 The comparison of Thorpedene and Richmond Avenue outcomes with Porters Grange prompted further discussion about literacy outcomes, disadvantage and the importance of ensuring pupils reach expected standards by the end of primary education.

10.2 A parent emphasised that comparison with schools serving similar communities should not lessen the ambition to improve outcomes and highlighted the importance of literacy in addressing longer-term inequality and disadvantage.

10.3 The CEO agreed that further improvement remained necessary and reiterated the Trust's commitment to raising outcomes.

10.4 The CEO highlighted improvement at Thorpedene during the previous year, including stronger mathematics outcomes and progress in writing, while acknowledging that further work was required particularly in reading.

10.5 It was noted that Richmond Avenue was broadly in line with national averages across its measures and that the Trust's ambition was to continue improving outcomes beyond comparison with similar schools.

10.6 A concern was also raised regarding pupils leaving Richmond Avenue. The CEO advised that he understood schools generally to ask why pupils leave and agreed to look further at the specific concern raised.

11. Staff Retention

11.1 A question was raised regarding how the Trust was seeking to retain good teachers and other staff.

11.2 The CEO reported strong staff retention across the Trust during the previous year, with relatively few vacancies requiring recruitment over the summer period.

11.3 Staff benefits and support arrangements were outlined, alongside the Trust's approach to reviewing reasons for staff departures and identifying opportunities for improvement.

11.4 The CEO expressed appreciation for the contribution of staff across SECAT schools.

12. Closing Remarks and Publication

12.1 The CEO summarised the commitment to strengthen communication around future Q&A sessions and maximise opportunities for parents and carers to participate.

12.2 It was confirmed that the questions, responses and actions from the session would be published on the Trust website and that schools would be asked to signpost parents to the published record.

12.3 The CEO thanked attendees for their questions, feedback and engagement and reiterated that effective communication with the community was important to the Trust's continuing improvement.

12.4 The meeting closed at 12.45pm.