

Minutes – City Academy Council

Date: 18 June 2025
Location: City Academy (CLF Institute)
Time: 5.00 pm

Present:

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| Ruth Pickersgill (RP) | Sponsor Academy Councillor (Chair) |
| Sejal Patel (SP) | Sponsor Academy Councillor (Co Vice Chair) |
| Claire Rodgers (CR) | Teacher Academy Councillor |
| Mahalah Katz (MK) | Sponsor Academy Councillor |
| Donna Taylor (DT) | Parent Academy Councillor |
| Jason Clarkson (JC) | Student Advocate |
| Leigh McKenna (LM) | Sponsor Academy Councillor |
| Leah Dowty (LD) | Sponsor Academy Councillor (Co Vice Chair) |

Attendees:

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| Ben Tucker (BT) | Principal |
| Catherine Hickey (CH) | Assistant Principal |
| Linda Corbidge (LC) | Clerk |

Apologies:

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| Kate Yedigaroff (KY) | Parent Academy Councillor |
| Kerys Taylor (KT) | Support Staff Academy Councillor |
| Tony Searle (TS) | Executive Principal |
| Abdi Mohamed (AM) | Sponsor Academy Councillor |

| Item | Description | Action |
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| 1 | Introductions | |
| 1.1 | RP welcomed councillors to the meeting. | |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest | |
| 2.2 | There were no verbal declarations of interest made for this meeting. | |
| 3 | Minutes of Previous Meeting | |
| 3.1 | The minutes of the meeting held 23 April 2025 were approved as a true copy. | |
| 4 | Matters Arising | |
| 4.1 | <i>BT will arrange for councillor information on the website to be posted in Reception following receipt of one more bio. KY will forward bio to clerk.</i> <u>ACTION BT will arrange for councillor information on the website to be posted in Reception.</u> | BT |
| 4.2 | <i>RP will follow up incorrect destination data regarding CLF Post 16 with contact. RP had followed up; data will be more accurate going forward.</i> | |
| 4.3 | <i>JC to discuss with JCA their work with the Anti Bullying Alliance - taken forward to AC6</i> <u>ACTION: Carried forward</u> | JC |
| 4.4 | <i>Complaints data to be presented to the AC at the end of the year in AC6.</i> BT reported that six complaints had been received this year, with none progressing to Stage 2. The school is now resolving complaints more quickly and informally, often preventing them from reaching Stage 1. It had been noted that several complaints could have been avoided with clearer communication around actions taken. CH highlighted that some communication issues have arisen when staff are absent; the | |

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| | academy is exploring IT solutions, such as automatic email responses, to address this. BT also noted an increase in email complaints about incidents occurring outside of school hours explaining that in such cases, the school often requests additional information to identify the students involved and contacts families, while clarifying that the incidents occurred outside of the school day. | |
| 4.5 | <p><i>RSHE Policy to be amended with correct information and brought back to the next meeting – taken forward to AC6</i></p> <p>BT confirmed that the policy had been amended; BT will share after the meeting. Discussion took place that LM and DT will contact the RSHE lead to arrange a link meeting next year.</p> <p><u>ACTION: BT will share RSHE Policy after meeting.</u></p> <p><u>ACTION: LM and DT will arrange a link visit with the Academy RSHE lead for Term 1 next year.</u></p> | <p>BT</p> <p>LM/DT</p> |
| 4.6 | <p><i>RP will discuss request for recruitment ethnicity data with CLF HR and report back after meeting.</i></p> <p>RP noted that she was aware HR were working on the data and confirmed she would follow up. BT explained that while the data is now being collected correctly, HR is currently reviewing whether it can be shared with the Academy Council. A brief discussion followed, with councillors commenting that the Academy Council should be able to receive summary-level data.</p> | |
| 4.7 | <p><i>BT will look into the best way to encourage staff to complete the staff survey.</i></p> <p>BT noted that although there had been quite a low response rate (50%) this had included all cleaning, premises and staff who run the sports hall at the weekend where it was more difficult for them to have access to the survey. Discussion followed that COAC had said 80% response rate was the target, with councillors questioning the average for secondary schools. BT reported that the response rate was just below average for secondary. BT had fed back the challenges around completion included a language barrier for some premises staff, and that you need a lot of time to complete it and can't return to it once started.</p> | |
| 4.7.1 | <p>Who provided the survey?</p> <p>It is a national survey, run by Edurio, which enables benchmarking to other secondary schools nationally.</p> | |
| 4.8 | <p><i>BT will investigate why the SEND team has moved from group meetings to drop-ins.</i></p> <p>The SENCO has responded that staff didn't want to commit to the regular sessions, staff preferred drop ins.</p> | |
| 4.9 | <p><i>BT will contact JC to request that the student voice on attendance which had been collected be shared on Governor Hub.</i></p> <p>See later item, shared.</p> | |
| 5 | Governance | |
| 5.1 | Membership | |
| 5.1.1 | <p>Upcoming changes to membership were discussed.</p> <p><u>ACTION: RP will clarify with AM in September regarding continuing for a second term.</u></p> | AM |
| 5.2 | Chair role | |
| 5.2.1 | <p>RP reported that the Trust is considering a change to the Terms of Reference for Chairs which would mean she could remain as Chair for up to another 4 years. As there had not been any interest from councillors to take on the role at the moment, she is willing to carry on for another year whilst there is a proactive search for a new one.</p> | |

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| 5.3 | Link roles | |
| 5.3.1 | RP requested councillors to think about taking on any of her link roles, with a view to RP supporting handover/shadowing of role during 2025-26. <u>ACTION: Councillors to contact RP re their interest in taking on any of RP's link roles, with the aim to support handover at some point during the next year.</u> | All |
| 5.4 | Link Visits | |
| 5.4.1 | Children in Care RP's link visit note had been shared and was noted by councillors. | |
| 5.4.2 | SEND RP/LM's joint link visit note had been shared. LM highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The last meeting with the SENCO before he leaves the academy had demonstrated good actions had been taken in his time at CAB, leaving the department in a much better position than when he started. The potential risks associated with the SENCO's departure at the same time as their AP line manager were discussed, and reassurance was provided that this will not pose an issue due to the capability and readiness of the successor. <p>BT explained that a handover will take place with the new SENCO who had a lot of experience, with the Deputy SENCO providing continuity. In September BT will be offering to support the new SENCO with a Masters level qualification.</p> | |
| 5.4.3 | Is that funding outside of normal budget? We will research the best option. | |
| 5.4.4 | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion SP shared highlights from her recent link visit note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rahul will be taking on the role of Assistant Principal for Attendance. It was discussed that this position will enable him to engage more deeply with EDI initiatives, particularly through data analysis aimed at preventing issues before they arise. Staff are increasingly taking ownership of EDI-related activities. CR elaborated on the literacy groups, noting strong attendance and positive engagement. The topic of cultural headwear was raised and discussed, reflecting ongoing efforts to support cultural expression within the school. Rahul expressed concerns about ongoing colourism and is actively developing resources to address this issue. SP referenced the Decolonising Network Group, which includes other Bristol secondary schools, and shared relevant assembly resources. The recent Supreme Court ruling on sex and gender was noted. This was discussed by the EDI Group and Rahul will review the implications of this ruling before taking further action. It was confirmed that schools are required to provide single-sex facilities; however, after reviewing current guidance, no changes are deemed necessary at this time. | |
| 5.4.5 | Has there been any other staff who have taken responsibility for EDI? It is early days; with further data we expect more staff to take responsibility going forward. | |
| 5.4.6 | A detailed discussion was held regarding cultural headwear and its place within the school's Uniform Policy. Following staff voice, staff opinions were evenly split and further analysis is needed. It was agreed that more weight should be given to the voices of those staff and students most directly affected by the policy. Feedback from | |

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| | staff voice has highlighted a need for CPD. BT noted that discussions with union representatives have revealed differing perspectives, particularly between union positions and staff with lived experience. | |
| 5.4.7 | Are students permitted to wear items over their uniforms? Staff have questioned whether the principles of the Halo Code should be extended to other cultural or religious expressions. CH clarified that the school adopted the Halo Code 6–7 years ago to prevent discrimination based on hair, particularly Afro hair, and that this has informed the allowance of items like durags. Political symbols, such as the Keffiyeh, are not part of the Uniform Policy and must be treated separately to maintain the school’s political neutrality. | |
| 5.4.8 | What are the implications for the academy for making decisions on uniform within CLF? The school has autonomy to make decisions that are right for its context. | |
| 5.4.9 | Will Rahul have less time for EDI work following his new Assistant Principal role? Rahul will continue in the EDI role, which is also now linked to attendance, reinforcing the importance of belonging as part of the school’s wider strategy. | |
| 5.4.10 | <u>ACTION: It was agreed that a proposal on cultural headwear within the Uniform Policy would be brought to the Academy Council once further work has been done</u> | BT |
| 6 | Feedback from Breakfast Meeting | |
| 6.1 | Notes and presentation from the breakfast meeting which had focussed on leadership had been shared | |
| 6.2 | RP reported that following the meeting, councillors had requested to look at the Academy Improvement Plan in more detail. <u>ACTION: RP welcomed all councillors to attend a meeting on 11 July at 11.30am with the Principal to look at the AIP for next year, including actions around leadership and management in more detail.</u> | All |
| 6.3 | Councillors noted that the presentation shows clear development of leaders. | |
| 7 | Staffing and Wellbeing | |
| 7.1 | CR provided feedback regarding recent behavioural incidents, noting that the majority of staff involved felt supported and appreciated the outcomes, which reflects positively on the support systems in place. CH added that most of the staff involved in the incidents were in leadership roles. | |
| 7.2 | BT explained the context around the recent incidents, where the original incidents were responded to and dealt with quickly. BT emphasised the thoroughness of the process and follow up support for both staff and students. | |
| 7.3 | How is the school and community now? There are ongoing issues within the community. BT referenced that a contextual safeguarding report had been completed following the incidents, expressing recognition of effective follow up work. | |
| 7.4 | Further discussion focused on how best to support affected students moving forward, including engagement with the Somali Forum and exploring opportunities for student volunteering. RP suggested implementing preventative measures before the end of term, and CH agreed to liaise with the Family Support Team, acknowledging the significant time which had been invested in return-to-school meetings. RP also proposed a focus at a community engagement meeting and exploring available support offers from external providers. | |
| 7.5 | BT noted that while nationally few schools report ideal behaviour, benchmarking through the Edurio survey shows that City Academy’s behaviour scores have improved | |

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| | since the previous survey two years ago. Although progress is evident, further improvement remains necessary. | |
| 9 | Student Voice | |
| 9.1 | <p>BT provided highlights from the staff survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload scored well above average, reflecting effective timetabling at City Academy, including group planning and scheduled assessment time—positively received by staff. Staff retention rates are strong and encouraging. • Staff noted some concerns around pupil behaviour and wider community issues. Follow up actions will include obtaining further voice from groups about behaviour. • Lower scores were reported on staff engagement with the Trust. BT commented that he viewed reduced visits from the Executive Team as a sign of confidence in the school, feeling reassured that support is available if needed. CR added that the central team does not seem to be promoting Trust values as actively as in the past. • Communication – further exploration will take place into communication as this will help with every answer. | |
| 9.2 | <p>Did the question on behaviour relate to behaviour in the classroom or everywhere? Plans are in place to issue a more nuanced follow-up survey, including specific questions on behaviour. The school continues to embed its focus on culture and ethos, with recent efforts addressing mobile phone use and improving classroom entry and exit routines, as well as toilet visits.</p> | |
| 9.3 | <p>BT praised the pastoral team’s effective handling of behaviour and suggested that better communication of this work may be needed. It was noted that behaviour has significantly improved in the Academy and Ofsted had judged behaviour as good. DT highlighted the distinction between behaviour policy and individual student relationships. Both SP and LM noted their observation of good and improved behaviour on their recent visits. It was suggested that further exploration through targeted questions or focus groups would help deepen understanding.</p> | |
| 10 | Student Voice | |
| 10.1 | <p>JC circulated a paper with student voice on leadership, emphasising the importance of creating a space for all students to be heard and helping them understand equity. Comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students want more leadership roles. JC is supporting them to understand the opportunities for leadership development already in place such as sports leaders or other roles without leader in the title. • The importance that leaders are fair, genuinely caring with lack of bias. • Next year, re-election will be after Term 3. To support students to better understand the working world plans are to encourage students to help in the kitchen, participate in school plays, and exploring apprenticeships. • A virtual suggestion box was proposed, with one idea being a cheerleading club. • Students noted a decline in positive points as they get older – possibility of reviewing attendance rewards. • Changes to classroom entry/exit routines planned, noting the importance of explaining the reasons for changes to students. • Comments made about noise levels throughout the school, with a request for quiet spaces at lunchtime. Focus will be on finding a space which remains calm as more students join. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of students said they want macaroni and cheese back – this week macaroni and cheese returned, demonstrating an action from voice. | |
| 10.2 | RP supported the need for a quiet space next year, particularly with the increasing neurodivergent student population. | |
| 10.3 | <p>Why didn't the Year 9 football team have any fixtures this year and will this change next year?</p> <p>There have been difficulties in arranging matches with other schools, many of which did not fulfil their own fixtures. A new senior leader is taking on the role of Head of Sport, which is expected to have a positive impact next year. Enrichment activities will be receiving increased focus next year, following feedback from Ofsted.</p> | |
| 10.4 | <p>Do we use Rose Green Cricket Club?</p> <p>There are only ten grass pitches in Bristol; we try to work with Pak Bristolians.</p> | |
| 11 | Academy Council Report | |
| 11.1 | Attendance | |
| 11.1.1 | BT highlighted that attendance dropped as a result of EID, however the DfE are now providing data that allows comparison to similar schools. As a result, we are in the top quartile, although it is recognised that this is not particularly helpful as attendance is not good enough. | |
| 11.1.2 | <p>Why does attendance appear low across all of our secondary schools, with most reporting figures at or below 90%?</p> <p>Secondary school attendance is a recognised challenge across the Trust. In response, each secondary school now has an Attendance Lead in place. An Attendance Lead and Attendance Administrator have recently been appointed at City Academy with the possibility of also recruiting an attendance worker to support family engagement. Additionally, the Education Welfare Officer has advised focusing on prosecuting cases where attendance is around 80%, as this is seen as an area which may have greater impact compared to cases of severe absence.</p> | |
| 11.1.3 | <p>What strategies has the Attendance Lead planned for next year, for example a focus on students' sense of belonging?</p> <p>Initially, an audit of data recording has been conducted to clarify responsibilities and ensure systems are functioning effectively. Strategies will focus on creating a safe and positive school experience, including access to quiet spaces when needed, as these elements collectively contribute to better attendance outcomes.</p> | |
| 11.2 | Exams | |
| 11.2.1 | <p>BT commended the good behaviour and exam routines demonstrated by the Year 11 students, who completed their GCSEs earlier today. Special recognition was given to Tom McGuinness and Sylvie Jacob for their support around exams. The exams were reported to have gone smoothly, with positive feedback from the Exam Inspector, who found no issues and praised the school. RP highlighted that the absence of anxiety spikes suggests strong processes and support systems are in place. The Pastoral Team and Exams Officer were praised for their exceptional performance, and the consistency of Exam Invigilators was noted as a contributing factor.</p> <p>Overall, there is optimism about reaching national average performance levels in the near future, with top sets showing remarkable progress.</p> | |
| 11.3 | Personal Development | |
| 11.3.1 | BT reported that numerous student trips had taken place but raised concerns about one particular visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum, where students had a negative experience and BT plans to submit a formal complaint, supported by staff statements | |

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| | <p>detailing the incident. The matter was discussed further, and councillors unanimously agreed that a complaint should be pursued.</p> <p>RP commented that Lord Rees had also invited a group of City Academy students to the House of Lords in September.</p> | |
| 11.3.2 | <p>Are a wide range of students going on the trips?</p> <p>We are trying to explore this as much as possible by subsidising some students.</p> | |
| 11.3.3 | <p>Are there any charities who can support some students to go on trips?</p> <p>Staff often use their own budgets to cover trip costs to ensure all students can participate, often making use of free trips where possible. Teachers are encouraged to actively seek out external funding opportunities to support wider student access.</p> <p>MK added that parents with children at other Bristol schools have commented that they are impressed with the number of trips at CAB. BT suggested the possibility of exploring voluntary contributions for trips.</p> | |
| 11.4 | <p>Budget</p> | |
| 11.4.1 | <p>BT explained that there were ongoing challenges in balancing the school's budget, highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from the Catering and Events Manager and her team, through the rental of school facilities, has helped ease financial pressures. • Continued investment will be made in personal development, particularly in drama and performing arts, noting the success of the recent production <i>Annie</i> and a significant increase in student interest. • Increasing teacher allocation which remains the lowest in Bristol was expected to lead to staff reductions; however, most teachers have remained delaying anticipated savings. Once realised, these savings may be redirected toward pastoral care or trip funding. • The school is currently meeting business rules for the next financial year, despite needing to fund a 1% portion of the 4% teacher pay rise—an estimated £50,000 impact. <p>RP noted the value of comparing per-pupil and pastoral costs with other schools, highlighting CAB's strong investment in support staff, aided by a £500K Pupil Premium grant.</p> | |
| 11.4.2 | <p>Is there potential for contributions from local businesses?</p> <p>While some businesses have donated items like books, contributions tend to be transactional with expectations to publish on social media.</p> | |
| 11.4.3 | <p>Is there funding in the budget for a Careers Advisor?</p> <p>Funding for a Careers Advisor is not yet in the budget but is a target for the next savings round, with plans to explore the Apprenticeship Levy to fund a full-time role.</p> | |
| 11.4.4 | <p>Why do supply costs remain high compared to other CLF schools?</p> <p>There is a need to address quality and costs of supply, reducing reliance on agency staff, particularly use of AWS which is used across CLF. It was noted that under-allocated teachers could be utilised to cover lessons internally, which would reduce costs and help with behavioural issues. Plans are being looked at to timetable three main scale teachers to provide regular cover lessons as part of this strategy.</p> | |
| 12 | <p>Policies</p> | |
| 12.1 | <p>The following reviewed policies were</p> <p><i>Noted:</i> CLF Freedom of Information Policy</p> | |
| 13 | <p>Safeguarding</p> | |

| Item | Description | Action |
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| 13.1 | <p>RP highlighted key discussion points from her Term 5 Link Visit Report which had been shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP will be supporting with re-writing the Safeguarding Policy for the Trust. • New Assistant Principal John James appointed • Recent incidents referred to earlier in meeting • Need a focus on Previously Looked After Children to ensure they receive the same level of support that Children in Care receive. • Positive meeting with Assistant Principal Safeguarding – with agreement on issues. • Prejudice related incidents around racism are lower • Child on child incidents lower - very positive • Sad losing Hannah (Deputy DSL), with safeguarding experience and good knowledge of contextual safeguarding . | |
| 14 | Matters for the attention of the Board/COAC | |
| 14.1 | RP reported that the strategy for CLF is being renewed, about Equity through Education, although still disadvantage lens. This will be a focus at the next meeting in October. | |
| 15 | Any Other Business | |
| 15.1 | RP thanked all Academy Councillors and staff who give up their time after a day at work. | |

The meeting closed at 7.00pm

Meetings for 2025-26 to be confirmed shortly.

Wednesday 24th September 5.00pm - 6.30pm - Annual Strategic Briefing Meeting.

| CAB | 5-7pm |
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| Term 1 | Wednesday 1st October |
| Term 2 | Wednesday 3rd December |
| Term 3 | Wednesday 4th February |
| Term 4 | Wednesday 25th March |
| Term 6 | Wednesday 1st July |