Minutes – City Academy Council

Date 25 March 2026
Location: City Academy (CLF Institute)
Time: 5.00 pm

Present:	Ruth Pickersgill (RP)	Sponsor Academy Councillor (Chair)
	Claire Rodgers (CR)	Teacher Academy Councillor
	Sejal Patel (SP)	Sponsor Academy Councillor (Co Vice Chair)
	Donna Taylor (DT)	Parent Academy Councillor
	Joannie Nakakawa (JN)	Support Staff Councillor
	Kate Yedigaroff (KY)	Parent Support Staff Academy Councillor
	Leigh McKenna (LM)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
Attendees:	Ben Tucker (BT)	Principal
	Tony Searle (TS)	Executive Principal
	Tessa Clark (TC)	Clerk
	Abir Ahmed (AA)	Observer
Apologies:	Mahalah Katz (MK)	Sponsor Academy
	Jason Clarkson	Student Advocate
	Catherine Hickey	Assistant Principal

Item	Description	Action
	These are the published minutes of the Academy Council. Certain confidential discussions have been omitted. Full minutes are retained by the academy.	
1	**Introductions**	
1.1	The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. An observer attended the meeting and was welcomed by the Academy Council. All present introduced themselves.	
1.2	RP shared that she has been approached by an individual expressing interest in joining the Academy Council, with EAL as their area of expertise. An application is currently in progress.	
2	**Declarations of Interest**	
2.1	There were no declarations of interest	
3	**Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**	
3.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.	
3.2	**Action Update** • Item 3.1 – DT to arrange RSHE link visit and report back: Ongoing • Item 3.1 – RP to circulate Student Council notes: Complete • Item 3.1 – TS to meet with councillors on Immersion Day (09:00–11:30) to review Academy Council report scrutiny: Meeting booked. BT will prepare materials if TS is unable to attend. • Item 3.2 – Councillors to send updated profile photograph and short biography to Lucy Ware for website and reception board: Ongoing	

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	• Item 7.2 – KY to link with Azmina to draft parent survey questions: KY reported that she met with Amina and had a useful general discussion. However, there was some confusion about the intended focus of the survey. KY understood the initial focus to be communication methods, whereas the draft that emerged focused more broadly on parental experience of the school. Ofsted questions and benchmarking questions previously shared were not available at the meeting, contributing to the misalignment. It was agreed that the group would benefit from meeting together to clarify focus and develop agreed questions. **Action: Parent Strategy group to arrange a meeting to finalise survey focus and questions.** • Item 8.6.2 – Principal to ensure EDI Lead has access to appropriate peer networking and supervision: Complete • Item 10.3 – TC to ensure GovernorHub links are accessible and re-circulate: Complete • Item 13.1 – Councillors to mark remaining policies as signed on GovernorHub: Ongoing • Item 13.2 – RP to identify a small group of councillors (including MK and JN) to review the Pupil Premium Strategy Statement and meet with BT: BT to take this forward • Item 14.1 – Councillors to confirm preferred date to attend *Matilda*: Complete RP shared that her niece, who previously played Matilda in the West End, will be visiting the school to speak with students. BT shared enthusiasm for the production and reflected on curriculum changes made to expressive arts 5–6 years ago, noting strong progress and impact. JN reported that students are very enthusiastic about expressive arts. It was noted that performing arts is offered as a GCSE option, subject to student uptake.	**KY/RP**
4	**Chairs Update**	
4.1	RP provided an update, noting that key points had been covered within earlier agenda items. There was no significant new information from COAC. RP thanked councillors for keeping up to date with training.	
4.2	Admissions Panel Discussion The Chair asked whether any councillors would be interested in joining an admissions panel, as governance colleagues are seeking volunteers. The Principal outlined the role of admissions panels and explained that they operate within a legal framework to ensure decisions are made fairly and consistently. The Academy Council noted the update and discussed the benefits of an independent admissions process.	
4.3	**Q (JN): Is there access to further information regarding admissions consultations?** The Principal explained the distinction between admissions panel decisions and consultation processes for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Academy Council noted the update.	

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4.4	LM shared that, following a meeting with the SENCo, schools can push back if unable to meet a pupil's needs. Inclusion bases and current provision were discussed, including resource-based provision and mainstream EHCPs. Work is ongoing to improve practice. It was agreed that a future discussion on SEND reforms would be helpful once the SENCo and BT have had time to fully review changes. **Action: Chair to explore a future agenda item with SENCo attendance.**	**BT/RP**
5	**Update on Immersion Day plans**	
5.1	The Chair confirmed that the agenda for Friday's Immersion Day had been circulated via email. Breakfast will be available for councillors who wish to attend. The Academy Council discussed areas of focus for the visit. Requests included Science, Drama, Music, and core subjects. SEND practice was also highlighted, noting that a SEND review will be taking place on the same day. The Principal advised that, due to time constraints, the visit is likely to include a short learning walk and/or observation of a single lesson. Councillors were encouraged to use the Immersion Day as an opportunity to see the school in operation and engage with staff. It was noted that: • Tom will attend to provide an update on raising attainment. • The Principal will give an overview of inclusion, including the SEND White Paper and funding context. • Heads of Science, English and Maths will be available for discussion. Indicative subject focus areas agreed were: • Science • Drama • Music • Maths, English, or Humanities	
5.2	**Q: Do staff understand the purpose of the Academy Council visit and why councillors will be in school?** The Principal confirmed that staff are familiar with having visitors on site and that the Immersion Day has been communicated through staff briefings and emails.	
6	**Staffing and wellbeing**	
6.1	**Q: How is staff wellbeing currently?** The Principal reported that staff attendance remains strong and recruitment is progressing positively, including the appointment of a DT teacher for September. The Academy Council discussed staff wellbeing and the wider national context within education.	
6.2	**Q: Have there been any issues arising from staff engagement activity?** The Principal reported that staff engagement remains positive and that any concerns raised are addressed through appropriate discussion and support processes. The Academy Council noted the update.	
6.3	**Q: What internal support is in place for staff wellbeing and leadership?**	

Item	Description	Action
	Staff receive regular check-ins through line management. Supervision is available primarily in group settings, with one-to-one support offered where appropriate.	
6.4	**Q: Who provides support to you as Principal?** The Principal confirmed support through line management and leadership colleagues, noting a strong, collaborative leadership team.	
6.5	**Q: Is coaching available?** The Principal confirmed that coaching opportunities are available where appropriate and that leadership development is supported through Trust and partnership arrangements.	
6.6	JN shared feedback from support staff questioning how wellbeing is measured and what metrics are used. Discussion followed regarding staff surveys and anonymity. The Principal confirmed that CAB surveys are anonymous and aggregated, with data only shared where there are sufficient responses per role. Additional tools were noted, including annual staff surveys, which provide insight into wellbeing and culture.	
6.7	**Q: How are incidents involving harm or aggression towards staff captured?** The Principal confirmed that any such incidents are always investigated, and direct support is provided to affected staff. These incidents are extremely rare and typically only arise in the most serious behaviour cases, which may lead to PEX.	
6.8	**Q: Where is staff support formally logged?** The Academy Council discussed systems used to record and monitor staff support and noted ongoing work to strengthen processes where appropriate.	
6.9	**Q: Are we confident that incidents affecting staff are always followed up appropriately?** The Academy Council received assurance that concerns raised by staff are appropriately followed up and that support is provided where required.	
6.10	Councillors acknowledged strong examples of good practice but queried how this can be systematised, noting reliance on individual line managers. It was observed that secondary schools are expected to have a mental health strategy, particularly for support staff. JN referenced previous INSET communication where staff were encouraged to seek support, alongside challenges around support staff availability for CPD due to working hours. Leadership stability was noted as improving consistency, with trust developing over time within the Assistant Principal team. RP emphasised the importance of staff surveys to highlight variation in experience and inform improvement.	
6.11	DT raised concerns about delayed impact on staff wellbeing following incidents and whether therapeutic support could be considered. The Principal confirmed that an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is in place and does track overall usage, though individual details are not shared. Expanding supervision opportunities was noted as a future ambition. **Action: To review statutory and Trust expectations regarding a staff mental health strategy, with a view to clarifying staff entitlement to support and strengthening consistency of practice.**	**BT/RP**
6.12	**Q: What is the current position regarding maternity cover in Maths and Science?**	

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	The Principal provided an update on staffing arrangements and ongoing recruitment activity to ensure appropriate curriculum provision. The Academy Council noted the update.	
7	**Safeguarding**	
7.1	The Academy Council received and scrutinised the safeguarding report. Governors received assurance regarding safeguarding arrangements, trends and actions being taken by the academy. Full safeguarding discussions are recorded in the confidential minutes.	
8	**Academy Council Report**	
8.1	**Student Outcomes**	
8.1.1	The Principal reported on outcomes from the recent mock examinations. Overall results are approximately 1% below the same point last year. A notable proportion of students are currently achieving a Grade 3 in either English or Maths; it is anticipated that with targeted support and small gains in specific subjects, many of these students may secure a Grade 4. The Principal shared an expectation that the academy could achieve around 60% combined outcomes should students make progress in forthcoming assessments. Students have been identified and grouped into Gold, Silver and Bronze categories to support targeted intervention. Targeted support measures were outlined, including the use of external providers where appropriate and invitation-only Easter revision sessions. LM noted interest from Year 11 students regarding revision arrangements. The following support programme was confirmed: • A Year 11 assembly will be held on Friday to reinforce expectations and support. • Ongoing revision provision in the library. • Additional revision sessions on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, with access to teachers across subjects. • Thursday sessions focused on Mathematics. The Academy Council received the update and noted the structured approach to examination preparation and intervention.	
8.2	**Quality of Education**	
8.2.1	The Principal reported that the academy currently has 970 students against a PAN of 975. Recruitment into Year 7 remains ongoing. At the time of the meeting, 173 offers had been made, with an additional 30 pupils with EHCPs expected above PAN. If all offers were accepted, this would result in a cohort of approximately 186 students. The academy is actively contacting families to encourage responses. It was noted that following a previously larger cohort, pupil numbers across the city have now reduced in line with wider birth-rate trends. A new secondary school opening locally is expected to admit approximately 180 students, contributing to surplus places, particularly across South and East/Central Bristol. While CAB's first- and second-preference applications have remained stable, there are currently more secondary school places than pupils overall.	

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8.2.2	**Q: Are proportions of EAL and Pupil Premium pupils higher in Year 7 than in other year groups, and is this part of a wider pattern?** This may reflect normal cohort variation. The academy has admitted pupils from feeder schools such as Greenbank and Whitehall who arrived with relatively strong average points scores on entry and are making good progress. Positive parental experience and reputation may be influencing current application patterns.	
8.2.3	An observer shared community insight that some families, particularly those new to the UK, may find PDF-based admissions information difficult to navigate and may prefer more accessible online processes.	
8.2.4	**Q: Should the academy consider increasing numbers and gathering feedback about why families choose not to apply to CAB?** Discussion followed regarding patterns of movement between feeder schools and secondary providers, including whether CAB loses pupils to particular schools and gains from others. It was noted that some local schools have undertaken significant promotional activity, which may influence parental perception and choice.	
8.2.5	**Q: With surplus places across the city, why are targets not adjusted accordingly?** It was noted that pupil place planning sits primarily with the Local Authority, including catchment arrangements, which the academy cannot change independently. The Academy Council agreed that student numbers should continue to be monitored closely due to the impact on funding and long-term sustainability. **Action: Principal to include an update on pupil numbers, applications and projected roll in future Academy Council reports.**	**BT**
8.3	**Attendance**	
8.3.1	The Principal reported that overall attendance has decreased by approximately 0.7% since the previous reporting period.	
8.3.2	Leadership arrangements for attendance were discussed, including planned staffing changes for September.	
8.3.3	**Q: What is currently working well in relation to attendance, and what is not?** Suspension rates have reduced, representing positive progress. However, attendance remains inconsistent, with progress often disrupted by short periods of decline. While relationships with pupils and families are generally strong, there is a need to strengthen systems and consistency, particularly around response to absence. This includes how quickly families are contacted, how meetings are arranged, and ensuring attendance is prioritised alongside other pastoral needs. The pastoral team has been asked to review attendance practice, recognising that where pupils have multiple needs, attendance can sometimes receive less focus. This position is similar to that seen in other schools. Work is underway to identify specific actions that will strengthen practice and improve consistency.	
8.3.4	**Q: How does attendance for Pupil Premium pupils compare?** The Principal reported that the academy is currently third out of 25 schools locally for Pupil Premium attendance, reflecting strong relationships and positive in-school experience for these pupils. In contrast, attendance for non-Pupil Premium pupils is weaker and remains an area of concern.	
8.3.5	**Q: What actions are being taken to improve attendance for particular pupil groups, including White British, Black Caribbean, dual heritage and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils?** The Principal explained that the academy is analysing data on severely absent pupils to identify common factors and evaluate which strategies are effective. There was discussion about whether a sharper focus on pupils missing around one day per week may yield the greatest impact. It was acknowledged that prioritising this group creates	

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	some concern about pupils with attendance below 50%, but may represent an important next step.	
8.3.6	**Q: Is there a single point of accountability for attendance?** The Principal explained that attendance is managed collectively across the attendance team, pastoral staff and safeguarding, with each pupil allocated a responsible staff member. Attendance concerns are discussed with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) where appropriate. The local authority has encouraged schools to use fixed penalties for repeated unauthorised absence (e.g. frequent late marks). While the effectiveness of fines is unclear, letters have been issued to families to outline concerns, offer support, and explain potential consequences.	
8.3.7	**Q: Is there analysis of how far pupils travel to attend the academy, and whether transport is a contributing factor?** The Principal confirmed that the academy holds detailed attendance tracking data for individual pupils, including actions taken. Councillors noted that some pupils actively choose to travel further to attend CAB. It was agreed that further analysis of travel distance and transport issues (e.g. bus reliability) would be helpful in understanding barriers to attendance. **Action: Principal to provide a summary breakdown of pupil travel distance and transport factors, and the potential impact on attendance, in a future Academy Council report.**	**BT**
8.4	**Quality of teaching and learning**	
8.4.1	The Academy Council noted the update as set out in the Academy Council report. No questions were raised.	
8.5	**Behaviour and Exclusion**	
8.5.1	The Chair noted that suspension rates are reducing, which is positive and visible across Terms 1, 2 and 3. However, it was acknowledged that overall suspension levels remain high and require continued focus.	
8.5.2	**Q: What is the rewards trip based on?** The Principal explained that the current rewards trip is linked primarily to attendance. He acknowledged that the process this year has lacked clarity and transparency, and that the scale of eligibility means the academy cannot afford to take all students who have met the criteria. It was agreed that the current approach has not worked as intended and requires review.	
8.5.3	**Q: Where suspension numbers remain high, are they mainly linked to physical assault against pupils or staff?** The Principal explained that physical assault is a clear red line and will lead to suspension. He reported that the academy is no longer seeing regular fights. This was supported by staff presence and rapid intervention. NT added that staffing levels are now sufficient to intervene early and prevent escalation. LM noted that the consistent expectations around non-physical intervention are well understood by students. While not always popular, this consistency has contributed to reduced incidents.	
8.5.4	The Academy Council discussed the possible introduction of Yondr pouches as part of the academy's mobile phone strategy and requested a further update on implementation and support for families. **Q: Has implementation at other schools negatively impacted attendance?** It was reported that there is no evidence of negative impact on attendance, and that some schools have seen improved behaviour indicators.	

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	Councillors raised the importance of supporting families who may struggle with the cost. The Academy Council confirmed its expectation that financial support would be provided where needed. There were no objections from councillors to continued exploration of the Yondr pouch system. **Action: Principal to update the Academy Council on the outcome of mobile phone policy exploration, including cost, implementation considerations and support for families, at a future meeting.**	**BT**
8.6	**Pupil Premium and LAC**	
8.6.1	The Academy Council noted the update as set out in the Academy Council report. No questions were raised.	
9	**Student Voice**	
9.1	CR shared an update from Jason, noting that there are currently around 100 Year 10 students undertaking work experience placements. The Chair added that Aisha had previously delivered a presentation on the work experience programme, at which point 95 students were confirmed. It was reported that work is ongoing against the Gatsby Benchmarks, including a project focused on introducing work-related learning opportunities for Year 8 students. The Chair referred to Jason's written report, which included updates on: • student leadership and weekly student council meetings • safeguarding meetings • student elections • participation of a group of female students in a multi-school conference hosted by Avon and Somerset Police, focused on addressing violence against girls Councillors noted that student voice feedback, including from the previous Academy Council and student council meeting, highlighted themes around homework and marking. It was confirmed that homework expectations have been discussed at SLT level in response. Councillors also raised a specific student query regarding homework detentions, including whether pupils are required to sit in silence without completing work. It was advised that pupils are not required to sit in silence, and that staff provide mentoring and support during such sessions. He acknowledged that feedback suggests some inconsistency and confusion in pupils' understanding of expectations. This has been raised with SLT and followed up through middle leadership. The Academy Council noted the update and welcomed the continued use of student feedback to inform improvements.	
10	**Link Reports**	

Item	Description	Action
10.1	A careers update was provided, noting continued work to secure work experience placements for students. Councillors were invited to recommend potential placements through their own networks. **Q: Is there a clear window and deadline for submitting work experience opportunities, and would it be helpful to receive an email prompt?** It was agreed that a clear deadline and guidance would support engagement. CR confirmed that work is ongoing and that opportunities should continue to be shared directly with her. It was noted that, to date, there have been no applications from CAB students to the University of Bristol offer shared with the academy. This opportunity had been circulated via Aisha/Ms McBean. Councillors queried whether further guidance was available to help students understand expectations. It was confirmed that: • Clear guidance is available via a shared spreadsheet, outlining requirements and expectations. • A broader email regarding community engagement and careers support has already been circulated. The Principal confirmed that Aisha would be invited to attend the Immersion Day to provide further insight and updates to councillors.	
10.2	SEND and careers link reports were noted. There were no additional questions from the Academy Council.	
11	**Policies**	
11.1	The Chair stated that she was not satisfied with aspects of the SEND Policy and Accessibility Policy and confirmed that she has already raised these concerns with CLF. She noted that feedback from Trust colleagues had been received and was constructive, and that further discussion between relevant Trust leads was ongoing. The Chair emphasised that these concerns were not a criticism of CAB, but related to Trust-level documentation, particularly the need for clearer reference to the Disability Equality Duty as it applies to adults, including staff, councillors and visitors. It was agreed to pause approval of the policies pending further clarification and alignment at Trust level.	
11.2	**Q: What provision is in place to support adults with SEND, including reasonable adjustments?** It was noted that reasonable adjustments for adults were not clearly referenced within the documentation reviewed. The Academy Council recognised this as an area requiring further clarification at Trust level.	
11.3	It was noted that a check of the current policies would be helpful to identify which require Academy Council approval or sign-off. **Action: Clerk to highlight on GovernorHub any policies requiring Academy Council approval or sign-off and ask councillors to do this electronically.**	**TC**
12	**Matters for the attention of the Board/COAC**	

Item	Description	Action
12.1	The Chair noted an issue regarding the ability to download documentation. It was agreed that this should be raised for consideration at Trust level. **Action: Chair to raise concerns regarding document downloadability with COAC.**	**RP**
13	**Any Other Business**	
13.1	There was no other business raised.	
14	**Date of next meeting**	
14.1	Wednesday 1st July 2026	

The meeting closed at 19:00

Meetings for 2025-26

CAB	5-7pm
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