# Minutes – City Academy Council

**Date** 08 July 2026
**Location:** City Academy (CLF Institute)
**Time:** 4.00 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 |
| | Kate Yedigaroff (KY) | Parent Academy Councillor |
| | Jason Clarkson (JC) | Student Advocate |
| | Mahalah Katz (MK) | Sponsor Academy Councillor |
| **Attendees:** | Ben Tucker (BT) | Principal |
| | Catherine Hickey (CH) | Assistant Principal |
| | Tessa Clark (TC) | Clerk |
| **Apologies:** | Joannie Nakakawa (JN) | Sponsor Academy |
| | Leigh McKenna (LM) | Sponsor Academy Councillor |
| | Tony Searle (TS) | Executive Principal |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Introductions** | |
| 1.1 | The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. | |
| 1.2 | Apologies were received from JN and LM. | |
| 1.3 | The Chair thanked SP for her contribution to the Academy Council ahead of her stepping down at the end of the academic year. Councillors recognised her commitment and valued contribution to the work of the Academy Council. | |
| 2 | **Declarations of Interest** | |
| 2.1 | No declarations of interest were made. | |
| 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**<br><br>• Item 3.2 – Parent Strategy Group to arrange a meeting to finalise survey focus and questions: Complete. The group met prior to the meeting and finalised the parent survey. It was agreed that the survey will be issued in October and responses will inform the Parent Strategy.<br><br>• Item 4.4 – Chair to explore a future agenda item with SENCo attendance: Ongoing. Councillors discussed forthcoming SEND developments and increasing EHCP numbers. | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| | **<u>Action: Chair to arrange a breakfast meeting early in the Autumn Term with a focus on SEND.</u>**<br><br>• Item 6.11 – Review statutory and trust expectations regarding a staff mental health strategy: Ongoing. It was confirmed that John James, Assistant Principal for Safeguarding and Inclusion, is the academy's Mental Health Lead. Councillors noted that staff wellbeing and mental health priorities may be incorporated within the Academy Improvement Plan.<br><br>• Item 7.3 – Principal to include a breakdown of suspension data by year group in the next Academy Council report: Complete<br><br>• Item 8.2.5 – Principal to include an update on pupil numbers, applications and projected roll in future Academy Council reports: Complete<br><br>• Item 8.3.7 – 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: Ongoing. Councillors discussed the possibility of gathering this information through a future survey.<br><br>• Item 8.5.4 – 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: Complete (covered under agenda item 12.1)<br><br>• Item 11.3 – Clerk to highlight on GovernorHub any policies requiring Academy Council approval or sign-off and ask councillors to do this electronically: Ongoing. Work is underway to review policy approval arrangements and outstanding policies.<br><br>• Item 12.1 – Chair to raise concerns regarding document downloadability with COAC: Ongoing | **RP** |
| 4 | **Chairs Update** | |
| 4.1 | The Chair provided an update on Academy Councillor recruitment. A number of opportunities to promote the vacancies had been identified, including through parent communications and local networks. | |
| 4.2 | Councillors were reminded of the governance training opportunities available through Governor Hub. | |
| 4.3 | A new councillor would join the Academy Council from September and undertake an induction programme. | |
| 4.4 | An applicant had withdrawn their application to join the Academy Council. Councillors asked that their best wishes be conveyed. | |
| 5 | **Election of Vice Chair** | |
| 5.1 | It was agreed that the election of Vice Chair, alongside the review of link roles, would take place at the first meeting of the new academic year. | |
| 6 | **Update from breakfast meeting (role of Academy Council)** | |
| 6.1 | The Academy Council noted the notes of the breakfast meeting, which had been circulated via Governor Hub prior to the meeting. | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| 6.2 | During the breakfast meeting councillors discussed the role of the Academy Council and how governance effectiveness could be strengthened. The Principal outlined proposed changes to reporting formats intended to support more strategic discussion and improve oversight. | |
| 6.3 | **Q: What is the expectation regarding attendance at Academy Council meetings?** Councillors were reminded that members who miss three consecutive meetings may be removed from the Academy Council in accordance with governance arrangements. | |
| 7 | **Equality and Diversity** | |
| 7.1 | SP reported that she had not recently met with Raul Vasile but would attend a meeting with him on 15 July. | |
| 7.2 | The Principal reported that the EDI Policy was nearing completion. Progress had also been made towards the Anti-Racist School Award, with the school currently completing a self-evaluation to assess progress against the award criteria.<br><br>**Action: Final EDI Policy to be presented to the next Academy Council meeting.** | **BT** |
| 7.3 | **Q: Are we nearly there with the Anti-Racist School Award?**<br>Good progress has been made, however there remains a significant amount of evidence to gather before the award can be achieved. | |
| 8 | **Safeguarding** | |
| 8.1 | The Academy Council received and scrutinised the end-of-term safeguarding report. Councillors discussed safeguarding trends, reporting processes, audit outcomes and safeguarding arrangements within the academy. For confidentiality reasons, the detailed discussion has not been included in the published minutes; however, a full record is contained within the Academy Council's approved minutes held by the academy. Councillors were assured that safeguarding arrangements remained effective. | |
| 9 | **Pupil Voice** | |
| 9.1 | JC shared the pupil voice report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. | |
| 9.1.1 | Councillors heard that pupil voice activities this year had included:<br><br>• Whole-school student surveys.<br>• Student meetings with Academy Councillors.<br>• Participation in trust-led workshops focusing on issues affecting young women and violence against women and girls.<br>• Student involvement in designing materials for a knife crime awareness project.<br><br>JC reported strong engagement from students and a growing willingness amongst pupils to share their views and contribute to school improvement. | |
| 9.2 | Students will be consulted on the Online Safety Policy to ensure pupil views inform its development. | |
| 9.3 | The Academy Council noted that the Healthy Schools Survey would be completed by the end of the month, with findings being used to inform PSHE planning for the next academic year. | |
| 9.4 | Feedback received through the student suggestion box included concerns about seating in some classrooms and the consistency of approaches used by supply staff. | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| | The Principal acknowledged challenges relating to cover arrangements and outlined steps being taken to increase lesson coverage by permanent staff in order to provide greater consistency for pupils. | |
| 9.5 | **Q: Are students involved in reviewing any other school policies?**<br>Staff regularly seek feedback from pupils on a range of policies and school improvement initiatives, with pupil views informing decision-making where appropriate. | |
| 9.6 | **Action: JC to identify relevant Academy Improvement Plan priorities where student voice can be sought and reported back to the Academy Council.** | **JC** |
| 9.7 | Councillors heard that students are encouraged to raise issues through the digital suggestion box and that key messages are being shared through assemblies to increase awareness of this opportunity. | |
| 9.8 | **Q: Can students see the impact of the reduction in incidents across the school?**<br>The Principal reported that staff are working hard to listen to students and respond to concerns, with the intention that improvements are increasingly reflected in pupils' day-to-day experience. | |
| 9.9 | The Academy Council noted that a Year 11 student who had recently completed her GCSEs would be joining the local Youth Council. | |
| 9.10 | **Q: Was there any update regarding the proposed House of Lords visit?**<br>No response had yet been received.<br><br>**Action: Chair to follow up regarding the House of Lords opportunity.** | **RP** |
| 10 | **Academy Council Report** | |
| **10.1** | **Quality of Education – including curriculum developments** | |
| 10.1.1 | The Academy Council noted the Quality of Education update included within the Principal's Report. No questions were raised. | |
| **10.2** | **Attendance** | |
| 10.2.1 | **Q: How were the recent hot weather closures reflected in attendance figures?**<br>The Principal explained that the day on which the school was forced to close due to excessive temperatures would not count against attendance figures. However, the school had opened on the preceding Friday and recorded attendance of 66%, which would be included in the data and had negatively impacted overall attendance. The decision to open had been the right one, but temperatures had reached unacceptable levels by late morning, requiring closure. The Principal noted that NEU guidance recommends a maximum classroom temperature of 28°C. On the day of closure, most classrooms had reached 34-35°C, with only the catering area remaining below 29°C. | |
| 10.2.2 | **Q: Although the school is not reaching its attendance target of 90%, is attendance improving compared to last year?**<br>The Principal confirmed that attendance was approximately 0.5% higher than at the same point last year. He attributed this partly to improved staffing stability and a more settled team going into the next academic year. The school recognised the need to strengthen its culture of attendance and have more robust conversations with families. He explained that regulations allow for fines to be issued where pupils are repeatedly late after registration closes, but the school had not yet utilised this approach where there were legitimate circumstances requiring support and engagement with families. | |
| 10.2.3 | **Q: If the school is working with families, does it still issue fines where there are known circumstances affecting attendance?** | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| | The Principal confirmed that the school has discretion and is not required to issue fines in every case. | |
| 10.2.4 | **Q: Does the school intend to implement fines moving forward?**<br>The Principal confirmed that fines would be used where appropriate, supported by clear communication with families. Parents would be informed when they were at risk of receiving a fine to ensure that enforcement did not come as a surprise. | |
| 10.2.5 | **Q: Are fines only used for lateness?**<br>The Principal advised that fines may also be issued for unauthorised term-time holidays and extended absences. The school writes to parents, considers individual circumstances and applies discretion where appropriate. | |
| 10.2.6 | Councillors discussed the importance of understanding the root causes of absence and ensuring resources were directed towards addressing barriers to attendance. The Principal agreed that while fines alone were unlikely to solve attendance issues, it was important that the school consistently followed all available processes and interventions. | |
| 10.2.7 | **Q: Does the school know how many fines could have been issued but were not?**<br>The Principal estimated that there were at least 50 cases involving persistent lateness where fines could potentially have been considered but had not been issued. | |
| 10.2.8 | **Q: Has the reduction in suspensions contributed to improved attendance?**<br>The Principal reported that suspensions had reduced from the equivalent of approximately 1% of attendance last year to 0.3% this year. While this had made a positive contribution, it was not the sole reason for improved attendance. He also highlighted progress in reducing unauthorised holiday absences (G codes) through stronger communication with families and clearer expectations around returning to school promptly after travel abroad.<br><br>RP highlighted the importance of identifying attendance concerns early, particularly in Year 7, and building strong relationships with pupils and families. The Principal noted that increased attendance capacity and closer involvement from pastoral teams would support this work. | |
| 10.2.9 | **Q: Are the three attendance posts new roles?**<br>The Principal confirmed that the attendance team would consist of a Designated Attendance Lead, a full-time Attendance Officer and a new Attendance Administrator. John James would line manage the team, with ongoing oversight from the Principal. | |
| 10.2.10 | **Q: In light of recent discussion around outcomes for White British boys, is there any city-wide work taking place in response to this issue?**<br>The Principal advised that Bristol schools and the Local Authority were exploring educational outcomes across the city. He referenced the Bristol Futures project, led by Sir Jon Coles, which aims to support collaboration between schools. Particular concerns had been identified regarding outcomes for White British pupils in some areas of the city. The school would continue to engage with emerging learning from this work. The Principal also noted attainment gaps between boys and girls and within disadvantaged pupil groups. | |
| 10.2.11 | **Q: What is the school's thinking regarding support for different ethnic groups and addressing variations in outcomes?**<br>Councillors discussed the range of factors that may influence educational outcomes for different pupil groups, including community and family support networks. The Principal emphasised the importance of understanding the factors driving outcomes and ensuring that any interventions are evidence-based and responsive to pupils' needs. | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| 10.2.12 | Councillors discussed attainment data for disadvantaged (PP) and non-disadvantaged pupils across different ethnic groups. It was noted that attainment patterns varied across cohorts, with some disadvantaged groups performing better than their non-disadvantaged peers. Councillors agreed that further analysis was required to better understand the factors contributing to these patterns. | |
| 10.2.13 | The Academy Council discussed local demographic trends and the impact of surplus school places across Bristol. The Principal highlighted ongoing challenges relating to pupil numbers, and councillors noted the importance of monitoring this as a long-term strategic issue. | |
| 10.2.14 | The Academy Council noted the modest improvement in attendance compared with the previous year and welcomed the increased attendance capacity planned for September. Councillors requested continued monitoring of attendance, persistent absence and the impact of any enforcement measures. | |
| **10.3** | **Quality of Teaching and Learning** | |
| 10.3.1 | The Academy Council noted the Quality of Teaching and Learning update included within the Principal's Report. No questions were raised. | |
| **10.4** | **Behaviour and Exclusion** | |
| 10.4.1 | Councillors noted that the suspension rate had reduced from 8.2% in the previous year to 5.8%.<br><br>**Q: What has contributed to the reduction in suspensions?**<br>The Principal reported that significant work had been undertaken by the pastoral team to reduce suspensions through a range of interventions. Whilst pleased with the progress made, leaders recognised that further work was required, particularly around supporting students to successfully reintegrate into school following suspension. This remains a focus within the Academy Improvement Plan. | |
| 10.4.2 | **Q: Student Council feedback suggested that detentions do not always change behaviour. How is the school addressing this?**<br>Leaders explained that the detention system is being further developed to increase opportunities for reflection and restorative conversations. Additional staff involvement will support students to better understand the reasons for their detention and consider alternative choices. | |
| 10.4.3 | **Q: Have teachers been asked to supervise detentions?**<br>Leaders clarified that detentions continue to be led by the pastoral team and senior leaders. Teachers will not supervise detentions but will have opportunities to engage with students to discuss the behaviours that resulted in the detention and support restorative conversations. | |
| 10.4.4 | All teaching staff have allocated time within their directed time budget to support this approach. Leaders reported that increasing teacher involvement in follow-up conversations is intended to strengthen relationships, improve understanding of behaviour incidents and support more consistent behaviour management. | |
| 10.4.5 | **Q: Have staff provided any feedback on the proposed approach?**<br>The Principal reported that the approach had not yet been fully implemented. However, they were confident in the rationale behind the model and would monitor its impact once introduced. | |
| 10.4.6 | **Q: Why have suspensions reduced significantly in Year 8?** | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| | CR reported that a consistent and proactive approach to behaviour management had contributed to this improvement. Leaders also noted that some students with identified SEND needs had successfully moved into alternative provision that better met their needs, reducing the likelihood of suspension and enabling specialist support to be targeted more effectively. | |
| 10.4.7 | **Q: If this approach has been successful, can the learning be shared more widely?**<br>Councillors welcomed the reduction in suspensions and encouraged leaders to share successful practice. The Principal highlighted CR's significant contribution to this improvement, noting her proactive leadership in developing an effective team, supported by robust systems, ongoing professional development and staff stability. | |
| 10.4.8 | **Q: Is data available on overturned detentions and how frequently this occurs?**<br>Leaders reported that this information was not currently available through existing systems, as removed detentions are deleted from records. The Principal agreed to investigate whether this data could be accessed and reported in future.<br><br>Councillors noted that this data could help evaluate the impact of increased teacher involvement in detention and restorative conversations, and whether the approach is contributing to improved behaviour outcomes.<br><br>**Action: Principal to investigate whether data relating to overturned detentions can be captured and reported to the Academy Council.** | **BT** |
| 10.4.9 | **Councillors received an update on the school's response to a significant behaviour incident and the support provided to students and families.**<br>The Principal reported that extensive work had been undertaken with students and families following the incident. Return-to-school meetings focused on accountability, reflection and repairing relationships. Families were engaged throughout the process to ensure students understood the seriousness of their actions whilst identifying any support required moving forward. | |
| 10.4.10 | The Principal provided an update on the introduction of mobile phone pouches. Councillors noted that the rollout had been carefully planned and communicated over a six-week period. Initial compliance had been strong, with only a small number of suspensions issued for breaches of the new expectations. | |
| 10.4.11 | Leaders reported that the removal of phones during the school day was already creating more opportunities for students to interact socially and engage positively with their peers. Early observations suggested increased face-to-face communication amongst students and fewer issues linked to phone use during the school day. | |
| 10.4.12 | The Academy Council noted that the next phase of the initiative would focus on helping students develop positive social and communication skills. Leaders recognised that some students had become heavily reliant on mobile phones and would benefit from support and opportunities to build social confidence and strengthen interpersonal relationships. | |
| 10.4.13 | Leaders confirmed that a consistent approach to the policy would be maintained, recognising that any exceptions could undermine its effectiveness. | |
| 10.4.14 | **Q: How was the mobile phone pouch initiative funded?**<br>The Principal reported that external grant funding of approximately £7,000 had been secured, with the academy contributing additional funding. All current students have | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| | been provided with a pouch, and incoming Year 7 students will receive one free of charge. Damaged pouches are replaced at the family's expense.<br><br>The Academy Council noted that many students have chosen not to bring phones into school following the introduction of the new system. | |
| **10.5** | **Pupil Premium and CIC** | |
| 10.5.1 | The Academy Council noted the annual Children in Care report, which had been circulated via GovernorHub. | |
| 10.5.2 | The Chair thanked Joanna Eveleigh for the comprehensive report and recognised the significant work undertaken in producing it. | |
| **11** | **Risk Register** | |
| 11.1 | The Academy Council considered risks associated with extreme weather events and reflected on the school's response to the recent heatwave.<br><br>The Principal reported that there had been limited national guidance available to support decision-making and that the trust had therefore been required to determine its own approach. Councillors noted that some students had become unwell during the period of extreme temperatures. | |
| 11.2 | Councillors discussed the balance between keeping students safe during extreme heat and the wider risks associated with school closures, particularly for vulnerable students.<br><br>The Principal reported that, should similar circumstances arise in future, consideration would be given to opening the school for vulnerable students. Staff had indicated a willingness to support such arrangements if required.<br><br>Councillors also discussed longer-term mitigations, including the feasibility of air conditioning and alternative approaches to the school day during periods of extreme heat. The Principal confirmed that options were being explored as part of future planning. | |
| 11.3 | The Academy Council received an update on the budget position and noted that the academy had achieved a position compliant with trust business rules, although financial challenges remained for the next financial year.<br><br>Councillors discussed the trust's central funding allocation and how academy contributions are calculated. It was noted that the contribution supports trust-wide services and central functions.<br><br>**Action: Tony Searle to provide further information on the trust's central funding allocation model at the next Academy Council meeting.** | **TS** |
| 12 | **Link Reports** | |
| 12.1 | The Academy Council noted the link visit reports which had been uploaded to Governor Hub prior to the meeting. | |
| 13 | **Policies** | |
| 13.1 | The Academy Council reviewed the CLF Mobile Phone Policy, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that the policy would require approval through the trust's governance process before adoption. | |

| Item | Description | Action |
|---|---|---|
| | Councillors noted the strong implementation of the academy's mobile phone procedures and the high levels of student compliance achieved to date. | |
| 13.2 | The Academy Council reviewed and approved the Taxi Policy.<br><br>Councillors noted that discussions were taking place with external transport providers to ensure expectations and procedures were aligned with the policy. | |
| 13.3 | The Academy Council reviewed the SEND Policy, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.<br><br>The Chair reported that she had met with the SENDCo and the CLF SEND Lead to review the policy. Amendments had been made following feedback received and councillors were satisfied that the policy accurately reflected current practice and trust expectations.<br><br>The Academy Council approved the SEND Policy. | |
| 14 | **Matters for the attention of the Board/COAC** | |
| 14.1 | There were no matters to be brought to the attention of the Board or COAC. | |
| 15 | **Any Other Buisness** | |
| 15.1 | The Academy Council discussed and agreed the meeting arrangements for the next academic year. It was agreed that Academy Council meetings would change to 4.30pm to 6.30pm and that breakfast meetings would commence at 9.00am. | |
| 16 | **Date of next meeting** | |
| 16.1 | Wednesday, 14 October 2026 | |

The meeting closed at 18:00

**Meetings for 2026-27**

| CAB | 4:30-6:30 pm |
|---|---|
| Term 1 | Wednesday 14TH October |
| Term 2 | Wednesday 2ND December |
| Term 3 | Wednesday 3RD February |
| Term 4 | Wednesday 24th March |
| Term 6 | Wednesday 30TH June |