

Minutes – Summerhill Academy Council Meeting

Version: Approved
Meeting Date: Monday, 26 January 2026
Location: Summerhill Academy
Time: 16:30 – 18:00

Chair: Kerry Francis (KF) Sponsor Councillor
Attendees: Luke Wilson-Reid (LW-R) Staff Councillor
 Lily Lowther (LL) Support Staff Councillor
 Mike Eatwell (ME) Sponsor Councillor

In attendance: Chris Barrett (CB) Principal
 Kirsty McLeod – Hughes (KM-H) Student Advocate
 Kate Richardson (KR) Executive Principal
 Tessa Clark (TC) Clerk

Apologies: Dominic Smith (DS) Parent Councillor
 Kate Strong (KS) Parent Councillor
 Lydia Mantle (LM) Sponsor Councillor

Minutes

		Action
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	
1.1	The Principal welcomed attendees and introductions were made. Apologies were received as noted above.	
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	Matters Arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 03.02.25–01: CB to consider introducing bar badges for library monitors. Previous update: The school is still reviewing the different pupil roles. Update at this meeting: Bar badges have now been issued for Reading Champions. 3.3 Item 22.09.25–01: Election of Vice Chair to be carried forward. ACTION: Election of Vice Chair to be carried forward to the next meeting. 	KF
4	Chairs Update	
4.1	COAC meeting scheduled for next Thursday.	

4.2	Academy Council – There are currently two Link Councillor vacancies. The Chair noted the need to continue chasing this, and there remains an outstanding action to recruit an additional councillor. ACTION: Chair to continue pursuing recruitment for the two Link Councillor vacancies.	KF
5	Academy Council Report:	
5.1	Student Outcomes	
5.1.1	Mock outcomes show improved attainment compared to last year. Greater Depth remains a focus area, alongside Age-Related Expectations (ARE). Current ARE combined outcomes look stronger. The school has begun mock week, which will feed into Teaching and Learning planning.	
5.1.2	Q: How are children feeling about mock week?	
5.1.3	LW-R: Pupils are coping well. They have extensive practice and enter mock week confidently, which helps them approach SATs week with reduced pressure and greater confidence. Children appear very confident overall.	
5.1.4	Q: Are you doing anything additional to achieve higher standards?	
5.1.5	The school continues to prioritise quality first teaching, targeted interventions, writing groups and structured meetings.	
5.1.6	Work is ongoing to build ARE and Greater Depth across year groups. This year, combined ARE expectations and Greater Depth standards have been released for Years 3, 4 and 5. The three-year average for ARE is 92%. Greater Depth attainment develops over time, but improvements are being seen.	
5.1.7	KM-H shared that during a recent professional development session, staff identified pupils likely to achieve Greater Depth. She noted that naming specific pupils helps focus teaching and support.	
5.2	Quality of Education	
5.2.1	Q: What types of achievements are shared in celebration assemblies?	
5.2.2	K M-H shared a presentation illustrating what is celebrated in assemblies. She explained that the Friday assembly is a dedicated celebration assembly where the school recognises and shares what is important to the children – <i>if it matters to them, it matters to us</i> . Celebrations include birthdays, academic achievements, social and emotional successes, and physical accomplishments. A personalised example was shared where a pupil who loved cats received a recorded message of cats singing “Happy Birthday”. This illustrates the child-centred, responsive nature of the assemblies. Children also regularly volunteer to speak about topics that matter to them, ensuring opportunities for all pupils, including those who may not access paid after-school clubs. One of the slides shown included a set of quotes that reflect the key messages that are consistently reinforced with pupils each week. KMH (Vice Principal) explained that children thrive on repetition, and using the same language helps embed the school’s values and supports the behaviours and attitudes seen across the academy. Pupils also take turns greeting the assembly in their home languages, further promoting inclusion and celebrating the school’s diverse community.	

5.2.3	As part of the drive for attendance, each year group gives a Friday summary of their learning, highlights, and what they are looking forward to the following week.	
5.2.4	Big national and global events are celebrated. This Friday, the school will be marking World Hijab Day.	
5.2.5	The school also delivers whole-school themed assemblies linked to the “I am a Citizen” curriculum. Examples include Children in Need, Refugee Week, and LGBTQ+ awareness events. This list is not exhaustive.	
5.3	Attendance	
5.3.1	Attendance remains reasonably strong. Comparative data from 20 schools indicates good performance. Compared with last year and local schools, this school ranked highest. While performance is positive, the school aims to meet its attendance targets and continues active work in this area. Attendance is monitored through the SEF.	
5.3.2	ME noted that the data is encouraging: similar schools average 95.5%, the national average is 95.7%, and the school is close to these benchmarks.	
5.3.3	The Principal commented that the school aims to be above national averages and is already above in many areas. Sickness impacted attendance in the final two weeks of term but improved significantly in the first three weeks. Overall, attendance is strong given contextual factors.	
5.4	Quality of teaching and learning	
5.4.1	A question was raised regarding School of Sanctuary. The Principal credited the Safeguarding Lead, who is leading the work. An in-depth audit is underway and actions are being completed. A parent volunteer who has trained with School of Sanctuary has supported the school in identifying evidence and shaping actions.	
5.5	Behaviour and Exclusion	
5.5.1	Behaviour is strong overall. A small push is underway to ensure pupils feel engaged in the culture and ethos.	
5.5.2	Q: What is the current number of pupils with EHCPs?	
	The Principal shared the following update (prepared with the SENCO): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 3: No EHCPs; 1 EHCNA (speech & language). Infant schools rarely secure EHCPs before transfer. • Year 4: 1 finalised EHCP; 2 further EHCNAs (SEMH and speech & language). • Year 5: 1 EHCP (SEMH). • Year 6: 3 EHCPs. One pupil’s EHCP has been recently updated following work with the LA and Educational Psychologist. The LA will consult on alternative provision due to significant needs. The pupil currently receives extensive 1:1 support. 	
5.5.3	Q: Are there more EHCPs than in previous years?	
5.5.4	The Principal explained that funding changes by Bristol City Council mean that top-up funding (previously available without an EHCP) has ended. Now, children generally require an EHCP to access funding. Needs are increasing and identification levels have risen.-up funding (previously available without an EHCP) has ended. Now, children generally require an EHCP to access funding. Needs are increasing and identification levels have risen.	

5.5.5	Q: Is the process easy?	
5.5.6	The Principal confirmed that an emergency process does exist.	
5.6	Finance	
5.6.1	The school is not in deficit and is working toward next year's budget. The savings target is £13,000. Much of this has been identified already. A key financial variable is EHCP funding—particularly for pupils who may move to specialist provision. Funding fluctuations can be significant.	
5.6.2	Q: Is the staffing structure lean?	
5.6.3	<p>Yes. Due to the transition to a two form entry structure, recruitment decisions are being carefully managed. The school maintains appropriate capacity while ensuring budget sustainability.</p> <p>Pupil numbers at the junior school remain relatively strong compared with other local schools. It was noted that Reception and Year 1 numbers at the infant school are full—with Reception also having a waiting list. Although this refers to the infant setting, it provides a positive indication for future junior school cohorts.</p> <p>Mobility remains high, but younger children appear more settled, allowing for more reliable projections in future years. The school continues to receive a number of in-year transfers, often pupils who have experienced challenges in previous settings.</p>	
5.6.4	The school continues to generate additional income through SCITT activity (four trainees this year), engagement with the Maths Hub (including hosting 20 maths leads), paid conference presentations, and funding from the Molton Trust.	
5.7	Staffing	
5.7.1	Q: Given the lean staffing structure, what measures are in place to ensure capacity is manageable?	
5.7.2	<p>The Principal shared that the academy benefits from strong experience across the team. Staffing is stable, and ECTs receive effective development. Several staff hold Trust wide responsibilities. The Principal has taken on some additional raising attainment and line management responsibilities within existing expertise.</p> <p>The Vice Principal (KM-H) has taken on additional operational responsibilities, such as overseeing cover and supporting day today organisation.</p> <p>Supply usage this term has been minimal (two days). Strong behaviour, routines and systems help maintain smooth running. Weekly learning walks continue to demonstrate consistent strength. Leadership capacity remains strong.</p>	
5.7.3	ME commented that the school is in a strong position, with systems and processes embedded well enough to ensure stability regardless of leadership presence.	

6	Safeguarding	
6.1	LM met with the Safeguarding Lead to review the safeguarding report. Everything was in order, and no questions were raised regarding safeguarding.	
7	Areas of Focus Identified in Agenda Planning – Ofsted Readiness	
7.1	The Principal shared a presentation outlining the new Ofsted inspection system and updated framework, he felt it important for the Academy Council to be aware of the changes. He confirmed that the school's last inspection was in March 2022 and stated that the school is prepared should an inspection be announced.	
7.1.1	The Principal explained that the new framework introduces a new grading system. There is no longer a single overall grade; instead, each school receives a report card with separate grades for different areas. This means a school may be strong in one area and require support in another — and this will be clearly reflected. Each area is graded on a five point scale:-point scale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional • Strong Standard • Expected Standard • Needs Attention • Urgent Improvement 	
7.1.2	Q: Have they mapped the existing standards to the new standards?	
7.1.3	The Principal explained that the new system cannot be directly compared to the old one. Ofsted has stated that Expected Standard is a high bar, reflecting strong provision. Under the old system, “Outstanding” aligns most closely with “Strong,” while “Exceptional” is above the previous “Outstanding.” The previous framework used a “best fit” model; the new one uses a secure fit approach, meaning every element must be met to achieve the grade. Inspections are expected to be more rigorous and forensic.	
7.1.4	The Principal then shared descriptors from the Ofsted toolkit that are relevant to governance. A discussion took place about these descriptors and the ways in which the Academy Council is already meeting them. Examples included the Chair and councillors regularly challenging leadership and receiving clear responses, ME attending every Academy Council meeting (and the upcoming ARV), and LM (Safeguarding Link Councillor) meeting regularly with the safeguarding team and scrutinising the termly safeguarding report. The Chair has served on the Council for seven years, providing strong continuity. In terms of developing constructive relationships with parents, the AC already monitors how effectively the school communicates with families, understands the local community, and ensures safeguarding remains robust.	
7.1.5	The Chair agreed they are meeting the standards but noted that Link Councillors could increase the frequency of their visits to the school. ACTION: Arrange link visits or drop-in days for the Chair.-in days for the Chair.	CB/KF
7.1.6	Q: Where are you aiming under the new framework?	
7.1.7	The Principal described the inspection process and explained that inspectors ask leaders where they believe the school currently sits. He stated that they are aiming for Strong in all areas, with the potential for Exceptional in some.	
7.1.8	ME commented that the school appears to be in the right place, and this is reflected in leadership reports and the information shared at Academy Council meetings.	

7.1.9	<p>The Principal shared that, the school has recently revisited key foundational expectations. During the January INSET day, staff revisited and strengthened the school’s core values and wider school culture to ensure consistency across all classrooms. Expectations around uniform were reinforced, and additional uniform items were purchased so that pupils who need support can meet these expectations.</p> <p>The school also reinforced its focus on “healthy bodies and healthy minds,” including healthy snack expectations, and revisited the Summerhill Standards. Work has continued on curriculum enactment, including presentation and handwriting, to ensure high standards are consistently maintained.</p>	
7.1.10	<p>The Principal explained that the SEF has been rewritten entirely in line with the new framework. The SEF was produced collaboratively and is supported by a detailed Excel grid that breaks down each statement and the evidence underpinning it.</p> <p>ACTION: Principal to share the SEF with the Academy Council.</p>	CB
7.1.11	<p>A question was raised about what Ofsted might ask the Academy Council. It was discussed that inspectors may wish to speak with the Chair about their role and how they meet the descriptors, as well as identify any perceived gaps.</p>	
7.1.12	<p>The Principal explained that, under previous frameworks, inspectors often conducted deep dives in areas such as reading, maths or history. Under the new model, they undertake case sampling: selecting six vulnerable pupils and reviewing their education, classroom experience, breaktime experience and overall knowledge. A case sampling tool has been created for staff.</p>	
7.1.13	<p>Q: What is the criteria for selecting vulnerable children?</p>	
7.1.14	<p>Vulnerable pupils include those who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil Premium • Previously known to social care • Looked After Children • Free School Meals • Refugees and asylum seekers • SEND <p>This represents approximately half of the school cohort.</p>	
7.1.15	<p>Q: How are these case studies being framed with the children?</p>	
7.1.16	<p>It was explained that pupil voice activities take place so regularly that children are used to being asked such questions.</p>	
7.1.17	<p>The Principal shared that the information presented to Councillors mirrors what was delivered to staff during the January INSET day. Prior to that, Ofsted had not been discussed widely with staff outside SLT. The rationale for preparing staff in advance is to make the inspection less stressful — mirroring the approach taken to prepare Year 6 pupils for SATs.</p>	
7.1.18	<p>Q: Are you shielding colleagues who are not SLT to support wellbeing?</p>	
7.1.19	<p>The Principal explained that the approach mirrors the school’s SATs preparation model: without preparation, staff would feel pressure and stress during the inspection. The goal is a balance — providing enough familiarity to reduce anxiety without creating unnecessary pressure.</p>	
7.1.20	<p>ME noted that systems in the school are well embedded and that investment in teaching has created strong, sustainable outcomes.</p>	
7.1.21	<p>Q: Do you feel part of the community? What is the current activity of the parent association?</p>	

7.1.22	It was shared that when the school talks about community, they refer to the school community, which pupils strongly identify with. Children articulate pride in their achievements and in being part of the school. The Chair observed that one of the biggest changes over her seven years has been the significant improvement in oracy — pupil voice has strengthened, and confidence has grown.	
7.1.23	Q: What are parents currently doing — for example, Friends of Summerhill?	
7.1.24	It was reported that Friends of Summerhill have been actively fundraising. Recent purchases include rising sit/stand tables, which have greatly supported some pupils' concentration. One child in particular has benefited significantly despite not having a formal diagnosis. Additionally, for the second year in a row, funds have been used to ensure that high quality storybooks were gifted to children at Christmas.-quality storybooks were gifted to children at Christmas.	
7.1.25	Friends of Summerhill are also contributing to the ArtSmart Gold Award (the school currently holds Silver), linked to their investment in the studio. The school aims to involve them in long-term projects to strengthen their connection with the school.-term projects to strengthen their connection with the school.	
7.1.26	Q: How are parents being thanked for fundraising?	
7.1.27	Thanks are communicated through newsletters and regular posts on Class Dojo. Parents also engage informally with staff on the playground, particularly on Friday mornings before the nearby coffee shop opens at 9am, providing opportunities for informal conversations with leadership.	
9	Policies	
9.1	ACTION: The Chair will share the relevant policies with councillors for approval.	KF
10	Link Reports	
10.1	LM continues to visit regularly as part of her Link Councillor role.	
10.2	ME is scheduled to visit in February to review Inclusion and SEND.	
11	Any Other Business	
11.1	KR left the meeting early. Before leaving, she asked if anyone had any questions. The Chair confirmed that the COAC meeting is not until Thursday, so there were no questions at this stage. KR advised that the Chair should contact her via Teams after the COAC meeting if any questions arise.	
11.2	No further business was raised.	
12	Date of Next Meeting	
12.1	6 March 2026, 4:30pm	

ACTIONS

3.2	ACTION: Election of Vice Chair to be carried forward to the next meeting.	KF
4.2	ACTION: Chair to continue pursuing recruitment for the two Link Councillor vacancies.	KF
7.1.5	ACTION: Arrange link visits or drop-in days for the Chair.-in days for the Chair.	CB/KF
7.1.10	ACTION: Principal to share the SEF with the Academy Council.	CB
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