Minutes – Frome Vale Academy Council

Date	7 July 2026	
Location:	Frome Vale Academy	
Time:	5.00 pm	
Present:	Christian Simons (CS)	Sponsor Academy Councillor (Chair)
	Lori Streich (LS)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
	Maggie Mironova (MM)	Parent Academy Councillor
	Ross Fossard (RF)	Teacher Academy Councillor
	Shanta Amdurer (SA)	Parent Academy Councillor
	Jim Mulcrone (JM)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
	Susie Weaver (SW)	CLF Director of Education
Apologies:	Paul Stephens (PS)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
	Maria Cerepanova (MC)	Vice Principal
	Ricki Petchley (RP)	Support Staff Academy Councillor
Attendees:	Jan Saunders (JS)	Senior Principal
	Linda Corbidge (LC)	Academy Council Clerk
	Charity Wallis (CW)	Observer (new academy councillor, in process)

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	**Introductions**	
1.1	CS welcomed everyone present to the meeting. Introductions were made by Charity Wallis who was attending as an observer and would be joining the academy council once recruitment checks were complete.	
2	**Declarations of Interest**	
2.1	There were no verbal declarations of interest.	
3	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**	
3.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.	
4	**Matters Arising**	
4.1	*JS will approach Bristol Charities to seek interest for the Sponsor Councillor vacancy.* Completed.	
4.2	*LC will contact the central governance team re possible Sponsor Councillor vacancies from September* LC reported that the Central Governance Team has been informed of the forthcoming Sponsor Councillor vacancy from September and will forward any expressions of interest as they are received.	

Item	Description	Action
5	**Chairs Update**	
5.1	**Membership** Councillors noted: • This is Lori's last meeting, after serving almost 2 terms as a sponsor academy councillor. • Ross Fossard is leaving the academy at the end of term which will result in a Teacher Councillor vacancy from September. There had been no expressions of interest received by the deadline for this elected role. • Charity Wallis will be appointed as sponsor councillor subject to recruitment checks. • There will be one sponsor councillor vacancy from September. **ACTION: JS and MC will directly approach teachers before the end of term to promote the teacher councillor vacancy further.**	**JS/MC**
5.2	CS reported on key discussions from the recent COAC meeting, including: • A situation at another academy involving a potential conflict of interest where a teacher serving as an Academy Councillor was also participating in industrial action. Academy Councillors were reminded of the importance of being mindful of any potential conflicts of interest. • Training opportunities, including Mental Health First Aid courses. CW suggested that alternative wording be used when describing the course. • Future COAC meetings will take place three times per year, with each meeting lasting two hours. • Changes to the Academy Council agenda for 2026/27, with increased focus on the Risk Register (using a new format), Health and Safety, Finance, and statutory compliance. • The Academy Improvement Plan (AIP), with discussions centred on impact, evidence, challenge, support, and accountability.	
5.3	CS thanked MM for her recent contribution to the school newsletter. Alongside the Chair's updates at the beginning and end of the academic year, it was agreed that Link Councillors should provide a termly newsletter contribution to raise awareness of their role and work within the academy. The first contribution in Term 1 will focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). **ACTION: MM to provide contribution on EDI for Term 1 parent newsletter.**	**MM**
6	**Academy Council Report**	
6.1	**Data**	
6.1.1	Councillors noted that the Key Stage 2 SATs results had been delayed and were therefore not available for reporting at this meeting. However, the academy's available assessment data, including the Multiplication Tables Check (MTC), Phonics Screening Check and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes, showed a continued pattern of improvement.	
6.1.2	**Was the recent two-day school closure during the heatwave, where pupils worked from home, expected to have any impact on their education?** No significant impact on educational outcomes is expected due to the short duration of the closure. Pupils were provided with learning activities to complete at home in line	

Item	Description	Action
	with the school's remote learning plans. It was noted that, should a longer period of closure be required, the school's Long Term Absence Policy would be implemented. JS also confirmed that practical adjustments, such as relocating classes to cooler areas of the building, would be considered to help manage the impact of extreme temperatures.	
6.2	**Attendance**	
6.2.1	**Why is one year group data low compared to other years?** The data is largely impacted by one ongoing pupil attendance case, which has significantly affected the overall figures for the year group. While this makes the attendance profile appear lower than expected, it does not reflect a wider issue across the cohort.	
6.2.2	**The attendance data shows only small percentage changes across most cohorts. Does this indicate any wider concerns, and is any additional support available?** Attendance data had recently been reviewed with Bristol City Council, which concluded that the academy's attendance challenges are not systemic and that appropriate interventions are already in place. The LA felt the school had taken all reasonable steps to support attendance and was unable to provide any further support measures. Changing pupil needs, particularly in relation to SEND, may require more creative approaches in future. Further discussions will take place with SW, and an update will be provided at the next meeting. **ACTION: Update on approaches to support attendance and SEND to next meeting.**	**JS**
6.3	**Pupil Premium and Looked After Children**	
6.3.1	JM provided an update on the Pupil Premium strategy, which was reported to be stable and continuing to have a positive impact. JM noted that future reporting should increasingly focus on pupil progress and longer-term trajectories alongside attainment data. Discussion also highlighted the wide range of enrichment and extracurricular opportunities available to pupils.	
6.3.2	JS reported that, while funding is not always available for additional targeted support, recognition had recently been gained through an Oracy Award. Investment in professional development remains a key priority. The school does not generally spend beyond its allocated training budget as it is able to deliver much of its professional development programme through in-house expertise and established professional development cycles.	
6.4	**Area of Focus - Curriculum Development**	
6.4.1	JS reported that the curriculum is reviewed and refined annually to ensure it remains well sequenced and continues to meet the needs of pupils.	
6.4.2	**Will the staff changes having any impact on curriculum leadership or delivery?** RF advised that curriculum leadership responsibilities are being supported internally while the newly appointed Early Career Teacher (ECT) develops into the role of Maths Subject Lead. RF provided assurance that the academy has a well-established curriculum and robust systems in place to ensure continuity and consistency in curriculum delivery, irrespective of staffing changes. Councillors noted this assurance and agreed that ongoing scrutiny of teaching and learning, alongside the support and professional development of new staff, should remain a key priority for the Academy Council during 2026/27.	

Item	Description	Action
	ACTION: Include a focus on the continued scrutiny of teaching and learning, together with the support and development of new staff, within the Academy Council's 2026/27 annual agenda plan.	**JS/CS/LC**
6.4.3	**Is AI being used to support teaching, and is it helping to reduce workload?** RF reported that AI is increasingly being used by staff to support teaching and learning, particularly for repetitive and administrative tasks. Staff confidence in using AI tools is growing, and it is helping to improve efficiency and free up time for more complex activities.	
6.4.4	**Can the impact of AI on workload be measured?** RF advised that its impact could be measured through staff feedback and workload monitoring. While no formal evaluation has been undertaken, there has been no noticeable increase in staff concerns about workload, suggesting that AI is having a positive impact. AI is regularly discussed through Trust networks and professional development sessions. JS noted that the standardisation of lesson design has also had a positive impact on workload.	
7	**Staffing**	
7.1	JS reported that recruitment had been extremely challenging this year due to the lengthy recruitment process, although all vacancies have now been filled. JS will reflect on the recruitment process over the summer and feedback to the Trust regarding the need for a quicker process. It was also noted that two Early Career Teachers (ECTs) have been successfully recruited for next year.	
7.2	**Will there be opportunities to support and develop the new staff?** Yes, a lot of time is given to developing staff.	
7.3	**Will that increase SLT workload?** It will increase workload however experienced staff are in place to provide the support.	
8	**Health and Safety**	
8.1	The Health and Safety Annual Report had been shared with councillors and was noted.	
8.2	**Were there any significant health and safety incidents or risks identified?** There were no significant incidents. JS advised that a new risk register template will be introduced from September, with relevant risk information subsequently reported through the Academy Council.	
8.3	JS reported that a number of site-related issues had been raised with the Trust and action had been taken in response. Planned works over the summer include improvements to kitchen facilities and adaptations to doorways and learning spaces to ensure provision in the downstairs area is fit for purpose and better meets pupils' needs.	
8	**Equality and Diversity**	
8.1	MM provided an update on equality and diversity across the academy, noting the wide range of activities and celebrations taking place, including Culture Day and other events that recognise and celebrate the diversity of the school community. MM highlighted the importance of ensuring that all members of the community feel included and able to celebrate the school. It was noted that the academy's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is deeply embedded within its day-to-day practice and culture. Councillors	

Item	Description	Action
	were advised that the weekly reports continue to demonstrate the breadth of activity taking place across the academy in this area. CS noted that in the recent Ofsted report, there was a comment that parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school.	
8.2	**Does the academy deliver a Pride assembly?** The academy does not currently deliver a dedicated Pride assembly. Pride and LGBTQ+ themes are addressed through the Relationships curriculum, Jigsaw programme, assemblies and library resources as part of the academy's wider commitment to promoting equality, inclusion and all protected characteristics. It was noted that this approach has been considered by the Senior Leadership Team and discussed with Bristol Metropolitan Academy, which adopts a similar model. The academy recognises the importance of ensuring that provision is appropriate for its diverse community and that any changes would require careful engagement with families. The academy will continue to review its approach to ensure learning remains inclusive, age-appropriate and reflective of the needs of all pupils. CS highlighted the academy's British Values information on the website, which reinforces the key messages of respect, tolerance and embracing diversity. JS welcomed the challenge and confirmed that the academy continually reflects on how protected characteristics are discussed and promoted across the school. *(SW left the meeting)*	
8.3	SA commented that the recent Culture Afternoon had been a positive event that brought the school community together. JS advised that the academy intends to continue holding the event annually and may combine it with other themed celebrations in future.	
8.4	The Council discussed the declining number of PTA members as children move on from the school. A suggestion was made to include a request for new PTA members in the academy newsletter. JS acknowledged that parents are often very busy and advised that participation levels would be reviewed next year. JM suggested encouraging parents to support specific events and activities.	
9	**Rising SEND Need** (standing item)	
9.1	The SEND Link Report was noted.	
9.2	JS reported increasing pressures in relation to SEND provision: • A number of pupils have now been approved by the specialist panel; however, none have yet secured specialist placements, requiring the academy to continue meeting their needs within existing resources. • It was noted that the Trust has approved the conversion of the classroom/meeting room as additional space within the school to support SEND provision. • JS highlighted the academy's commitment to inclusion, including MC completing the National SENCo Qualification. • The number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has continued to rise.	

Item	Description	Action
9.3	**The SEND Green Paper referred to additional funding for SEND provision. When is this funding expected to reach the school?** JS reported that the Mainstream Funding is estimated at between £5,000 and £10,000, however, this won't be sufficient to meet the increasing level of SEND need. Schools will continue to face significant challenges.	
9.4	**The concern is that schools are being asked to think more creatively about SEND provision without any significant change in support or policy. Is there any potential relaxation of policy or additional route?** The reality is that schools must continue to respond to growing levels of need within existing systems.	
9.5	**Is the increasing level of SEND need likely to impact the quality of teaching and learning?** Dedicated spaces rather than being in a classroom are being explored for pupils whose needs are significantly different from those of their peers.	
9.6	**Would the dedicated provision be teacher-led, and how would the curriculum be delivered?** The provision would be teacher led at the start of the week then supported by a teaching assistant. Pupils would follow the same curriculum themes as their peers, but more adapted to early years provision.	
9.7	**Has there been any progress in exploring the use of the Children's Centre space to support SEND provision as we have the space which is part of the solution?** The main barrier remains funding for staffing. While the available space could potentially form part of the solution to increasing SEND need, any decision regarding its future use would be led at Trust level.	
9.8	**What will be the impact of any reduction in SEND funding?** Reduction in SEND funding would create significant challenges for the school, particularly given the increasing complexity and range of pupil needs anticipated from September.	
9.9	**Have there been any instances where the school has said it is unable to meet a pupil's needs?** JS confirmed that in a number of consultation cases the school has advised that it may not be the most appropriate placement and noted that as the complexity of need continues to increase, the rationale underpinning such decisions has become stronger.	
10	**Safeguarding,** including link role and Termly Report check	
10.1	The Safeguarding Link Report had been shared and was noted.	
10.2	LS provided highlights from the Link Report. She advised that a handover process is currently underway, with Maggie taking over the role. LS also reported that statutory services are undergoing a degree of restructuring, which it is hoped will streamline processes and make referrals easier. The excellent support provided by Bristol Charities was recognised and praised, with LS noting that this contribution had also been highlighted positively within the recent Ofsted report.	

Item	Description	Action
10.3	**What does the Term 6 safeguarding data show?** LS reported that safeguarding concerns have generally reduced during Term 6. While the figures can appear high, this is largely due to the academy's relatively small size. Overall, safeguarding across the school remains strong, supported by a significant amount of early intervention and preventative work. LS also advised that, following a change in procedure, the police are now routinely providing schools with feedback on domestic incidents, helping to strengthen information sharing and support for pupils.	
10.4	JS reported that there were several updates to DfE guidance coming into effect from September. The necessary updates will be completed by the academy, and any associated staff training will be delivered through the Trust's INSET programme. JS also noted that the academy already demonstrates the requirements outlined within the updated enrichment guidance.	
10.5	**What are the key priorities within the Academy Improvement Plan (AIP) for the coming academic year?** The academy's current and emerging priorities include Early Years, where the academy is a DfE Lead School, SEND, and curriculum refinement. It was noted that curriculum refinement will be a particular focus within the 2026/27 Academy Improvement Plan. JS noted the continued focus on the quality of education, people and inclusion.	
11	**Link Reports**	
11.1	No further reports were shared.	
12	**Academy policies that require review**	
12.1	There were no policies for review.	
13	**Any Other Business**	
13.1	The Chair thanked Ross and Lori for their dedicated service as Academy Councillors and for their commitment and valuable contribution to the academy during their time on the Academy Council.	

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

Next meetings:

Wed 23rd September 2026 – CLF Annual Strategic Briefing (Teams 5pm - 6.30pm)

FVA 5pm-7pm

Tues 6th Oct
Tues 8th Dec
Tues 9th Feb
Tues 23rd March
Tues 6th July