Minutes – Frome Vale Academy Council

Date	9 December 2025	
Location:	Frome Vale Academy	
Time:	5.00 pm	
Present:	Christian Simons (CS)	Sponsor Academy Councillor (Chair)
	Jim Mulcrone (JM)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
	Shanta Amdurer (SA)	Parent Academy Councillor
	Lori Streich (LS)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
	Maggie Mironova (MM)	Parent Academy Councillor
	Ross Fossard (RF)	Teacher Academy Councillor
	Ricki Petchley (RP)	Support Staff Academy Councillor
	Paul Stephens (PS)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
Apologies:	Phoebe Tutu (PT)	Sponsor Academy Councillor
Attendees:	Jan Saunders (JS)	Senior Principal
	Susie Weaver (SW)	CLF Director of Education
	Maria Cerepanova (MC)	Vice Principal
	Linda Corbidge (LC)	Academy Council Clerk

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	**Introductions**	
1.1	CS welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2	**Declarations of Interest**	
2.1	There were no verbal declarations of interest.	
3	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**	
3.1	The minutes of the meeting held 7 October 2025 were agreed as a true record.	
4	**Matters Arising**	
4.1	*JS requested that when councillors conduct a link visit, they discuss a particular area on new Ofsted Framework. It was noted the school have a toolkit to support the school with the Ofsted Framework.* See later item.	
4.2	*LS will discuss meeting with local councillors re possible development of Children's Centre at Frome Vale with JS and report at next meeting.* JS reported that conversations are ongoing. JS will report when there is an update.	
4.3	*JS will present Pupil Voice survey results to next meeting.* **Action: Pupil Voice survey results taken forward to next meeting.**	**JS**
4.4	*MM is meeting RF this week and will report on EDI at next meeting.* Notes of the meeting had been shared on Governor Hub.	
4.5	*JS will share progress at next meeting following the focus of speaking out.* JS updated that the initiative had now been launched.	

Item	Description	Action
5	**Chairs Update**	
5.1	CS had attended COAC and reported that additional new training will be available from January onwards, with further information to follow.	
5.2	There are no changes to membership.	
6	**Academy Council Report**	
6.1	The Academy Report and SEF had been shared.	
6.2	**Pupil Outcomes (including predictions)**	
6.2.1	JS highlighted that outcomes were still on track.	
6.3	**Quality of Education, including curriculum developments**	
6.3.1	JS reported ongoing curriculum refinements, resulting in increased independence for some children with SEND needs. Following input from the Trust SEND Lead, further adaptations and task design have improved access to the curriculum. These changes have led to notable success for children who previously struggled to keep up with peers, positively impacting both attainment and behaviour.	
6.3.2	JS highlighted that the number of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) has decreased. Previously, the school was above the national average, but it is now close to the average. SW highlighted that eligibility is measured against national data, with changes to thresholds also impacting nationally. Despite fewer families meeting the criteria, the cohort still demonstrates the same level of need. LS noted that this shift has financial implications for the school.	
6.3.3	MM mentioned a national petition to extend Free School Meals (FSM) to all families and suggested promoting it to school families. SW noted that the trust has increased the Pupil Premium (PP) allocation by 2p per meal to support eligible children. SW recommended focussing on campaigning via the local MP rather than nationally. **Action: JS will seek further advice on how best to promote the FSM petition.**	**JS**
6.3.4	**The SEF is a strong and positive document. How do we ensure we don't become complacent and ensure we continue to improve?** The SEF identifies behaviour around SEND need as a priority focus. Lesson observations show other areas are performing well. The school is taking a strategic approach with guidance from the Trust SEND Lead, starting with creating more deliberate support for SEND needs. Further discussions with SW are scheduled next week. The team remains vigilant to ensure behaviour challenges linked to SEND do not negatively affect other areas.	
6.3.5	Further discussion included whether some children should remain in mainstream education, acknowledging that they will likely stay and their needs must be met. Councillors noted the complexity of the issue and the need to be realistic about the level of provision available from BCC. SW will deliver a session in January on building inclusive provision within mainstream partnerships, commenting that partnership work is being planned, though it presents short-term challenges for schools.	
6.4	**Attendance**	
6.4.1	JS acknowledged a slight dip in attendance but stated that the school remains pleased with overall attendance levels.	
6.4.2	**What caused the blip?** The weather and flu contributed to the fall in attendance. Most days attendance is around 96%.	

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6.4.3	**Why is Year 1 amber?** Year 1 is flagged amber due to one persistently absent child; JS explained the context and confirmed escalation regarding specialist provision needs to the Director of Education. MC added that a holiday taken by one pupil in Term 1 also impacted attendance but has been addressed and should improve going forward.	
6.5	**SEND**	
6.5.1	JS reported an increase in the needs of SEND pupils, creating staffing challenges and a projected budget deficit. Previous adaptations are no longer sufficient, prompting requests for outreach/inreach support and submission of extensive documentation, including an Educational Psychologist report. Finance has been given a clear rationale for extra spending, with SW supporting the request for an additional adult. Two recent short suspensions due to behavioural needs were noted, and one child is on an adaptive timetable.	
6.5.2	**Will converting the office into the intended provision space create additional challenges due to improved competence in supporting SEND needs?** The extra provision is necessary to meet needs going forward.	
6.6	**Staffing**	
6.6.1	**Will the resignation of the member of staff on long-term sickness leave help with staffing going forward?** Yes. The HLTA has been replaced with a teacher working two days a week and a TA covering mornings, which will provide additional support.	
6.7	**Behaviour and Exclusions**	
6.7.1	JS reported that two children had received half-day suspensions. All appropriate processes were followed, including return-to-school meetings and family support. Ongoing reviews and adaptations have been implemented, with additional assistance from Lansdown and the NEST. JS emphasised the importance of the school maintaining behaviour expectations.	
6.8	**Quality of Teaching and Learning**	
6.8.1	JS highlighted: • Significant work is taking place on teaching and learning, focusing on adaptive tasks for children who are able to access the class setting. • Oracy is a major focus; the school aims for Centre of Excellence status this year. Professional development (PD) sessions are ongoing in class, plus an Oracy Day to plan next steps. • Book looks are generally positive, though some inconsistencies remain; these will be addressed through PD next term. • Assessments continue to be based on Year 6 mock exams. • Multiplication Tables Check (MTC) progress: average score improved from 17.3 to 19.8 this term—this is on track and pleasing. • Term 1 phonics mock data is included in the report. • Term 2 data shows Reading is stronger with a 79% pass rate in the recent mock: Maths scores to follow.	
6.9	**Pupil Premium and Looked After Children**	
6.9.1	JM will visit in the new year to review Pupil Premium with MC and provide an update on the Pupil Premium Report at the next meeting. JM stressed the importance of	

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	councillors understanding the tipping point related to the budget deficit caused by reduced Pupil Premium funding.	
6.10	**Estates and Health & Safety**	
6.10.1	RP reported that health and safety was in a good position.	
6.10.2	RP reported that he was pleased with the new kitchenette which is now finished and has now been officially opened. Ten families visited after school last week with Crunch to use the kitchen. The Principal's office is also being converted into a learning provision space, with the Principal relocating to a smaller office on the ground floor.	
6.10.3	**Will the new space for the Principal's office be adequate for meetings?** JS confirmed that other meeting space is available emphasising that the priority must be the high SEND need in the school.	
7	**Community**	
7.1	JS reported that there are two main strands in the community section of the AIP, focusing on projects that will impact families and engagement: • To devise a booklet/resource to direct families to support they may need. Bristol Charities are supporting with writing the booklet. The aim is to increase engagement, with a target of supporting thirteen families this year (same as last year). • Provision of kitchen - RF is leading this community initiative. Crunch, a new Bristol-based charity, supported a recent event where Pupil Premium families were given priority (limited to ten families). The cooking and community element was successful, and further events are planned involving families, culture, and community. JS explained that this is part of a list of ten projects with Bristol Charities. JS will join their board, and they will collaborate with the school to strengthen links. A partnership page will be added to the school website to showcase partnerships, including Bristol Charities. This fulfils the final Ofsted action to utilise the building for community events.	
7.2	**Is the objective for cooking in the community to develop skills for whole families?** We are hoping over time to build a recipe book. This links with oracy and 'Time to Talk'.	
7.3	**Are there extra risk assessments needed?** Yes, everything is in place. The new kitchenette also supports more cooking activities in the school.	
8	**Link Reports**	
8.1	PT had shared her Music Visit Report which was noted.	
8.2	PS referred to his SEND visit report, highlighting that TA provision is currently under strain.	
8.2.1	**Has the recent staff resignation made TA staffing more challenging?** Yes, we have had to rely upon supply TAs which has led to inconsistent quality.	
9	**Safeguarding,** including link role and Termly Report check	
9.1	LS provided highlights from her link visit reports: • Reviewed the Single Central Record (SCR); handover to Maggie will continue in January.	

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	• Significant reduction in causes for concern this year, with a notable fall in recorded incidents.	
9.2	Discussion followed around the reason for the reduction in recorded concerns. JS noted that the reduction is partly due to the cohort and the systems adopted, such as weekly triage, improved playground behaviour, and early intervention, which appear to have been effective. Training is required to support interventions which has caused challenges from TA supply cover. Moving forward, a different model will be implemented: a two-day teacher to cover PPA and a TA to support children. An additional adult is required in Year 2; as no staff are available in-school and supply is being used. The school is hopeful the new supply will be effective and bring SEND knowledge.	
9.3	**How are supply TAs sufficiently briefed on SEND provision?** We meet with supply TAs to brief them on the support needed for individual children. However, the lack of a consistent person has made this approach less effective.	
9.4	**Would these issues be found in other schools?** Yes, agency supply teachers/TAs are often inconsistent quality. We were fortunate last year, however this year been more difficult.	
9.5	**What is your expectation for the additional TA support needed?** We wouldn't get financial approval to employ an additional TA.	
9.6	**Could you use AI to support SEND provision?** RF responded that the DfE have online training materials which includes an AI procedure document to use in school to support teacher and some free learning resources/training from Oak Academy.	
9.7	**Is there a management framework to govern how AI is used?** Oak Academy have their own AI service, signed off at DfE level. SW noted that the Trust also provide guidance for using AI.	
9.8	**Are you seeing the benefit from AI use?** Yes, it is allowing us to adapt resources more efficiently. MC noted the different levels of confidence amongst staff when using AI and further PD will be provided in January.	
9.9	Is the aim of increased AI proficiency to ease more pressure on teaching staff and not an expectation of increased work. **Action: Further update on AI use to next meeting.**	**RF**
10	**Equality and Diversity**	
10.1	MM had shared notes from her recent EDI visit and expressed that she was very impressed. MM highlighted the wide range of offerings, including assemblies and celebrations of all religions and had noted that pupils feel free to express themselves. All staff have received training, and relevant policies are available on the website.	
11	**Ofsted**	
11.1	JS updated councillors on the new Ofsted Framework, including the notice period and two days full inspection JS explained the slightly different approach of tracking and interacting with pupils looking through the lens of disadvantage, SEND and LAC. JS confirmed the inspection window for Frome Vale is 11 January 2026 – 20 July 2027. Reports of inspections already completed under the new framework will be released on 15 January. SW advised that the trust has provided guidance to schools and CS added that Ofsted training for councillors is available on Governor Hub.	

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	JS recommended councillors read Simon Botten's recent blog of his experience of a recent Ofsted inspection at his school. https://southgloshead.wordpress.com/2025/11/28/what-we-learned-about-ofsted-part-1/ **Action: SW to present an update at the next meeting specific for Academy Councillors.**	**SW**
12	**Academy policies that require review**	
12.1	None.	
13	**Any Other Business**	
13.1	None	

The meeting closed at 7.00pm

Next meetings:

FVA 5-7pm	
Term 1	Tuesday 7th October
Term 2	Tuesday 9th December
Term 3	Tuesday 10th February
Term 4	Tuesday 31st March
Term 6	Tuesday 7th July