Minutes – Frome Vale Academy Council

Date	10 February 2026	
Location:	Frome Vale Academy	
Time:	5.00 pm	
Present:	Christian Simons (CS)	Sponsor Academy Councillor (Chair)
	Jim Mulcrone (JM)	Sponsor 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:	Shanta Amdurer (SA)	Parent 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 previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.	
4	**Matters Arising**	
4.1	*Update on AI use to next meeting.* RF noted that AI guidance will be incorporated in the Teaching and Learning Policy. RF is delivering AI workshops to SCITT trainees, and Frome Vale staff training is planned for the post–half-term INSET.	
5	**Chairs Update**	
5.1	CS provided feedback from the COAC meeting, noting that governor training information has been uploaded to the FVA folder on Governor Hub.	
5.2	Membership: there is currently one sponsor academy councillor vacancy.	
6	**Ofsted Guidance for Academy Councillors**	
6.1	It was noted that Maria holds the Academy nominee role for Ofsted.	
6.2	SW posted Ofsted guidance slides in FVA Governor Hub meetings folder here. **Action:** Councillors to look at the Ofsted Guidance slides before the next meeting. **Action:** SW will revisit the slides in the next AC meeting if appropriate.	**All** **SW**

Item	Description	Action
7	**Academy Council Report**	
7.1	**Quality of Education, including curriculum developments**	
7.1.1	JS reported • significant pressures on meeting pupil need, with many children still awaiting specialist provision and requiring high levels of intervention. This includes 1:1 support without funding whilst EHCP assessments are being applied which has resulted in a school savings target of £20K. • Communication has improved with the new SEND Link Caseworker, and work is underway on three priority cases. • JS is also engaging with Include Ed for support with children not in full-time education. • The complex pupil profile is creating considerable workload and challenge, and leaders are providing in class intervention support where possible. SW acknowledged the work of the leadership team in supporting the school to meet need.	
7.1.2	**Do those issues have an impact on the attendance records?** Yes.	
7.1.3	**Are these challenges because there is not enough specialist provision for those pupils?** It is a combination of system failure and lack of capacity. JS explained the extra support being given to one pupil from members of staff.	
7.1.4	**Are these challenges showing in the results?** It does not have a huge impact on the data.	
7.2	**Outcomes**	
7.2.1	JS reported that results had been received today for Year 6 mocks which were encouraging, with 100% achieving age-related expectations in the Reading assessment and 78% in Maths following a lot of work on the arithmetic paper. SW noted that the results for Year 6 are really impressive which shows the team are managing to keep focus whilst in the background thinking about supporting sustainability with high SEND need.	
7.2.2	**Were you expecting those results?** It was expected, but it is good for it to be confirmed. The focus is now on consolidating improvement, incorporating learning from last year. Thank you to Lori for helping with the reading.	
7.2.3	JS reported good progress with the enhanced learning provision, with planning completed and space now well set up. A recent visit to another CLF school with similar provision which opened in September, was described as useful, and further visits to local special schools are planned to support understanding of more complex needs. JS has attended the CLF SEND Network and is also engaging with Bristol SEND Networks, highlighting the importance of networking to strengthen practice.	
7.2.4	**Is there anything councillors can do to support the situation?** We are looking ahead to think about managing sustainability.	

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7.2.5	**Do you have the capacity to do this?** We will look at the landscape to consider whether short term or likely to be long term.	
7.2.6	**Will the DfE's commitment to fund the SEND provision shortfall help the school?** Increased Early Intervention Funding and a one off top-up are available, although this requires constant applications. A new grant fund is also open for bids, though with restrictions on usage. SW continues to work with the LA as it receives support to address its deficit. JS added that strengthening enhanced provision and staff training remains key. Two pupils are moving to The Nest around half term, easing pressure slightly.	
7.2.7	**Is there a waiting list for The Nest?** No but there is clear criteria.	
7.2.8	**Is there any news on the Children Centre?** There is a meeting shortly to discuss how we work together however it is a long-term project.	
7.3	**Attendance**	
7.3.1	JS highlighted the impact on attendance of seasonal illness and the number of children with complex needs, as discussed in earlier item.	
7.4	**Quality of Teaching and Learning**	
7.4.1	JS reported that while some children with complex needs continue to struggle to access learning, other pupils working below age related expectations are making progress, supported by ongoing adaptive practice. MC noted a positive picture for pupils with EHCPs and wider SEND cohorts. The number of pupils in Years 2–6 still requiring phonics support is now at its lowest, reflecting a positive trend across the school in closing gaps**.**	
7.4.2	LS highlighted the impact of targeted 1:1 support, and CS commented positively on the examples provided in the report and the community focused approach, including the Maths Learning Together initiative involving parents.	
7.4.3	**How is the response from the parents in the community to Maths Learning Together?** We have received positive feedback from parents.	
7.5	**Behaviour and Attitudes**	
7.5.1	JS highlighted • SEND needs continue to be met as far as possible within current financial and resource constraints. • Humphrey posters are being used to promote speaking out about unacceptable behaviour. • Pupil voice is being gathered to gain feedback from children on behaviour expectations.	
7.5.2	**Was there good engagement from parents with the digital safety online presentations?** Interest has been strongest from Year 6 parents, as seen in previous years. Recent DfE guidance on mobile phone use in school was implemented immediately, and all	

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	phones are now handed in on arrival, meaning no phones are permitted in school. Pupils have responded very well to these expectations.	
7.5.3	**Are the school continuing to support general online safety?** The school is taking all reasonable steps to promote and maintain online safety.	
7.6	**Pupil Premium and Looked After Children**	
7.6.1	JM reported on his review of the data and confirmed it was helpful for analysing trends and ensuring effective use of Pupil Premium funding. Discussion took place on PP numbers, strategies used, and the importance of identifying eligible pupils at the admissions stage. MC noted a dip in Year 2 eligible pupils but expects this to level out; overall PP numbers are gradually decreasing.	
7.6.2	**Are the Pupil Premium numbers reducing because the criteria have become tighter?** Yes, although the change is also influenced by a shift in the Reception intake profile over recent years, however, there has also been a significant increase in SEND.	
7.6.3	JM noted that PP funding is supporting initiatives such as Forest School and teacher-led provision. The link between SEND and PP was discussed, with data reflecting overlap and the continued need to focus on closing gaps. JM confirmed he was reassured that the current strategy is effective and highlighted that the data is useful and shared with other schools.	
8	**Pupil Voice**	
8.1	JS shared the recent survey results and outlined how pupil voice was gathered: an online survey for KS2 and a collective discussion approach with cartoons for KS1, which proved very effective. The new campaign encouraging pupils to speak out has been developed in response to this feedback.	
9	**Rising SEND Need**	
9.1	JS noted that the challenge relates not to the number of SEND pupils, but to the increasing complexity of individual cases.	
9.2	**Is there a reason why the complexity has increased?** Several pupils who should be in specialist provision require significant intervention, including pupils needing 1:1 support in a small school context. The children that should be in specialist provision draw a significant amount of intervention support from others to meet need. SW highlighted factors contributing to rising need, including parental preference for mainstream, national policy encouraging mainstream access, and reduced early-years healthcare post-Covid which is similar picture across other settings. Financial pressures mean the school must consider different approaches moving forward. MC noted that Frome Vale Ward ranks among the highest areas in Bristol for SEND need. The school's reputation also influences the level of need it supports. Councillors reviewed local SEND data for Frome Vale and discussed the impact of high need in a small school and comparisons with nearby schools.	
9.3	**Is a proactive application process driving the numbers?** SW noted that the good reputation of the school will play a role in the number of applications. Also, the small size and scale of the school means impact is felt keenly.	

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	JS noted that Frome Vale works hard to secure appropriate provision. CS praised the school for its understanding of pupil need.	
9.4	Discussion took place on the importance of having Frome Vale recognised as a high-need area alongside others in Bristol already identified for additional support. Although local charities offer help, further city-wide strategic focus is needed. Councillors noted that enhanced provision will require funding for staff training, including staff in specialist roles.	
10	**Link Reports**	
10.1	The SEND and Disadvantage Link Reports had been shared and were noted.	
11	**Safeguarding,** including link role and Termly Report check	
11.1	LS provided highlights from her safeguarding link visit, noting: • Systems for managing safeguarding incidents and concerns are developing well. • Termly safeguarding reports may appear to show spikes, but actual case numbers remain small. • Actions and interventions are having a positive impact.	
11.2	JS reported difficulty securing external speakers for primary-age safeguarding and knife-crime education. Referrals to Bristol services have not resulted in support for speakers. Bristol Charities assist families where possible. SW noted that there is a focus at the upcoming CLF Leadership Away Day on evidence-based practice - prevention work, the Area Leaders Programme is an organisation supporting across Bristol. Violence prevention resources are accessible, with work taking place with the Young Endowment Fund the following day. **Action:** SW will update the council at the next meeting on CLF Leadership Day focus on evidence-based practice – prevention work. **Action:** LS will raise the issue of finding suitable external speakers on knife-crime education with one of the local councillors.	**SW** **LS**
12	**Health and Safety**	
12.1	RP provided an update • Recent Health & Safety Assessment/Audit rated all areas as good or outstanding. • A recent H&S walk identified no actions required. • The newly refurbished kitchenette has been officially signed off, allowing the Cooking Club to start next term.	
13	**Ofsted (Standing Item)**	
13.1	JS reported that ongoing daily preparation continues, with evidence being gathered and refined. Professional development is focused on ensuring classroom provision is as strong as possible. A key area of work is demonstrating clear impact through robust tracking of individual pupils and ensuring that CPOMS accurately reflects this evidence.	
14	**Staff Wellbeing**	
14.1	Staff wellbeing remains positive. A staff questionnaire will be carried out shortly, with leaders continuing to check in regularly and celebrate staff weekly. The school remains mindful of the current challenging context.	

Item	Description	Action
15	**Academy policies that require review**	
15.1	**Action:** Councillors to review and approve the 2027–28 Admissions Policy on Governor Hub by **Friday 20 February**. Full details are available on Governor Hub.	**ALL Councillors**
16	**Any Other Business**	
16.1	None	

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

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