

# Minutes – The Brook Academy Council

**Version:** FINAL  
**Meeting Date:** Monday 7 October 2024  
**Location:** The Brook Academy  
**Time:** 15.30-17.30

**Chair:** Gus Grimshaw (Chair) Chair of Academy Council  
**Present:** Kay Sarpong (KS) Principal  
 Danielle Harrison (DH) Teaching Councillor (now Holyfield)  
 Polly Pick (PP) Sponsored Councillor  
 Helen Bond Parent Councillor

**In attendance:** Jackie Friday Interim Clerk  
 Sally Apps Executive Principal  
 Emma Wykes Observer

**Apologies:** Andrew Charsley Staff Councillor  
 Kelis Cornock Staff Councillor  
 Vani Unny Sponsored Councillor

## Minutes

Item	Description	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Introductions &amp; Administration</b>	
1.1	Introductions were made. Councillors were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
1.2	KS left the meeting at 15.46 during the introductions and returned at 15.49.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
2.1	There were no declarations of interest.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Academy Council Membership</b>	
3.1	The parent who had expressed interest in becoming an AC has now withdrawn. The principal is speaking to other parents about becoming an academy councillor; there may be two or three possible interested parties. <u><b>ACTION – Principal to liaise with parents regards becoming and Academy Councillor. Principal to ask clerk to send further information and application form to parent(s) when required.</b></u>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	
4.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
5.1	The local sports council has now been established.	
5.2	TBA will be hosting its first conference on 15 November 2024.	

5.3	<b>Have you got any speakers attending the conference?</b>	
5.4	Yes – there will be keynote speakers and a draft plan/agenda is in place. This conference will follow on from the CLF conference on 24 October. ACs and Exec. Principal may be invited to attend.	
5.5	<b>Are representatives from Glos. Council being invited to this conference?</b>	
5.6	No. This is a CPD opportunity for trust staff at all the special schools within CLF. It will be similar to the meeting last year which was held at the CLF Institute.	
5.7	The principal confirmed that a new Pastoral Lead Safeguarding manager has been appointed and will be joining TBA from the start of Term 2. She is a strong appointment and will bring a lot of experience to the role. Her required checks are ongoing and she will be visiting TBA on 15 October.	
5.8	One new female pupil has started in Year 8; there are a total of 9 female pupils as at the date of the meeting. The different challenges between female pupils and male pupils were discussed. Ongoing work throughout the cohort is needed, particularly with regards to managing emotions.	
<b>6</b>	<b>Mentoring Update</b>	
6.1	One pupil has been discharged from TMS as the mentoring service could not manage the very complex challenges and needs of that pupil. On 10 October the principal will be meeting a potential in-house mentor (i.e. a potential new member of staff). Funding previously used to pay for external mentoring will cover the cost of an in-house mentor.	
6.2	TMS & Bridge are the current external mentors used by TBA. TBA staff will be undertaking regular quality assurance reviews at both TMS and Bridge.	
6.3	<b>Is there a qualification you need to be a mentor?</b>	
6.4	Some mentors have a youth qualification; some are former sports personnel or social workers. Mentoring organisations also employ staff who have maybe undergone similar experiences to the young people they are looking after. It is important there is a two way relationship between the mentor and the pupil.	
6.4	<b>What are the benefits of a mentor being part of the school team?</b>	
6.5	The pupils will be able to spend more time in school with the mentor and it will be easier to gradually start to introduce periods/days for the pupils to attend school without their mentors – particularly the year 11 pupils.	
6.6	<b>Will external mentoring continue?</b>	
6.7	Discussions would be held with pupil/family/social workers regards mentoring and what would be the most appropriate to best meet the pupil's challenges and needs.	
6.8	<b>Are pupils only referred for when all else has failed?</b>	
6.9	It depends on each individual young person and their needs. Some pupils have mentoring before they start at TBA. Sometimes mentors will also come and visit the pupil whilst they are attending TBA.	

6.10	<b>Does this mentoring process work?</b>	
	Yes. For example TBA pupils may attend the Aston project, and if so, their external worker will come into school to see the pupil and liaise with TBA staff to ensure the pupil's challenges and needs are being met. Referrals to the Aston Project or other external projects such as Youth Justice are being made without cost to TBA.	
6.11	<b>How is parental engagement and communication with families?</b>	
6.12	Staff contacted every child in their classroom to enable families to update them as to how the summer holidays had been. Parents are generally pro-active in contacting staff with regards to their children. There seems to be increased parental engagement this year e.g. higher attendance at coffee mornings; feedback from families is also more forthcoming. Newsletters regularly emphasise the importance of sharing information. Parents are becoming more open and willing to share information with staff and are understanding that they can approach the school and communicate with us without feeling judged.	
6.13	<b>Are staff aware of these successes?</b>	
6.14	Yes. Feedback is provided to all staff regularly. In addition, at the beginning of term, staff wrote down 'Whys' - words/phrases to remind them what they are doing and 'Why' and every morning we share one with each other which opens the opportunity for staff discussion.	
6.15	At the end of the day staff are also encouraged to share how their days have been with colleagues and to focus on something positive/significant that has happened during the day.	
6.16	We are mindful that staff are on a journey. It is easy to share negatives but much healthier to share positives. Debriefs used to be predominantly for offloading but now we are trying to focus on positives as well as negatives. Staff can talk to colleagues/ask questions at a pastoral clinic at the end of each day. Every Friday, staff phone all our parents to update them and they now try and start the conversation with a positive, which seems to have helped in improving relationships with our families.	
6.17	We are aware that parents need to feel listened to and are not always able to instigate conversations. Relationship building with parents/carers is key to facilitating good communications and outcomes, as is language – changing the narrative from positive/negative to what is working well/what could be improved. Parents are part of the solution and managing the child's needs.	
6.18	<b>Can you therefore summarise what has been the impact of summer holidays on pupils?</b>	
6.19	It has a significant impact which varies for every family. Some pupils have had a positive break; some have had a very challenging break with regards to family relationships and/or activities entered into. It very much depends on the child, their needs and the family situation. Sleep can be an issue once term begins again, as is the general change to their routines. Signposting families to support is important. Transport is also an issue if families are unable to travel to obtain available support.	
6.20	TBA staff are assisting parents/carers to try and enable them to access transport which they are entitled to apply for.	

	<b><u>ACTION – Principle to liaise with HB regards assisting families to fill in forms.</u></b>	
6.21	<b>Is the new pastoral lead a teacher? Will that person be able to offer support during the summer break?</b>	
6.22	They are a non-teaching member of staff and we are looking at them being available during the summer break.	
6.23	<b>Could mentoring continue throughout the summer?</b>	
6.24	We are looking into as many opportunities as possible but there is a huge demand for mentoring services. In-house mentoring will be a massive asset if implemented in school but we have to ensure that mentoring is not perceived as a 'jolly' and that written reports are provided so we can ensure the programme is being used to benefit/support the pupil's needs and bring them back into education.	
6.25	The meeting noted that TBA facilities are now being leased for external activities.	
6.26	SA left the meeting at 16.34	
<b>7</b>	<b>Academy Council Report – Progress Update</b>	
7.1	EW introduced a Data Notification sheet as part of the Academy Council Report which will be updated for every Academy Council meeting.	
7.2	Trends are difficult to identify in the 2024-2025 data as we have only been back a few weeks so far. In 2023-24 we had 48 students and 27 staff; in 2024-25 we have 64 students and 29 staff (with 3 staff vacancies).	
7.3	<b><u>ACTION – EW to amend staff figures for future reports to clearly show the number of staff in role in comparison with the total number of positions available.</u></b>	EW
7.4	Growth is ongoing; there will be 80 students in 2025-2026.	
7.5	<b>The national target for attendance is 95%. Is this achievable for a special school such as TBA? No.</b>	
7.6	<b>Is that target for special schools?</b>	
7.7	No – it is for mainstream schools. It's difficult to compare like for like due to the demographics of academies even within CLF. We are intending to look at primary and secondary levels which can be pulled out and noted on the tracker.	
7.8	<b>Can we have a column included for CLF schools which we can compare our data with?</b>	
7.9	There could be a number of reasons for non-attendance; this data could be shown as a sub-set of the main data. Also, attendance improvement could be pulled out; this is going to be picked up by the pastoral lead in due course.	
7.10	<b><u>ACTION – Data to include comparatives with national averages and CLF schools in the next meeting's update. Data to include dates between which the relevant data has been collected. Data to also include planned absences for contextual purposes.</u></b>	EW
7.11	The Principal confirmed that a Plan showing foci for the year has been uploaded onto Governor Hub.	
7.12	Staff from the leadership team will also be invited to attend meetings to provide relevant data and information to ACs.	

7.13	The meeting noted there has been a significant improvement in attendance and suspensions/exclusions in 2024-25 compared to the same period in 2023-24. Greater reference is being made to the Attendance and the Suspensions and Exclusions policies and incidents are being dealt with more in school.	
7.14	<b>Is this improvement due solely to change in policy?</b>	
7.15	It is partly a change in policy and narrative, but it is also down to staff training and improved communication and interaction with pupils. Suspension/exclusion is a last resort.	
7.16	The principal also communicates with drivers and works with them and the transport team to improve how drivers can manage situations which may arise during journeys to/from school.	
7.17	<b>What does the data show about staff wellbeing?</b>	
7.18	Staff sickness/absence data will be tracked and a more informative set of data will start to be built throughout the year; the comparative data will then also improve. EW will be monitoring staff absences across the Trust. The data for TBA for the current year so far appears to show a significant increase in staff absence but the discrepancy is due to changes in the way absence is now being reported. Long term absences (>15 days) are also now logged.	
7.19	Staff now have designated people that they can talk to about any health/absence issues. The principal runs an open-door policy and encourages staff to come and discuss any concerns they have with him.	
7.20	H&S and Compliance – manual Intervention. All staff are Team Teach trained which is 95% focused on de-escalation. Manual intervention is a last resort. There has been an increase in reports of manual intervention compared to the same period last year.	
7.21	<b>Why have incidents of manual intervention increased?</b>	
7.22	All staff are now trained in manual intervention and are more confident to intervene to keep others (staff and pupils) safe.	
7.23	<b><u>ACTION – EW report data at next meeting to show termly breakdown.</u></b>	EW
7.24	The meeting discussed the data in respect of accident reports. EW has requested further information to be able to provide a more definitive breakdown of reportable incidents to ACs. There has been one reportable incident this year.	
7.25	Data was also presented to the meeting regards compliance with food safety, audit/risk assessments (H&S and FRA) etc. The meeting acknowledged the importance of kitchen and site staff and the relationships that the pupils build with them	
7.26	The meeting acknowledged that CLF did not have special schools within the trust until recently and acknowledged the importance of other staff who build relationships with pupils, such as kitchen and site staff. It was noted that at special schools every single adult relationship is really important, every single person is a role model and is part of the school community and if students build relationships with all staff, they are more likely to take greater care of themselves and of school property.	

7.27	<b><u>ACTION – Chair to write to designated staff and thank them for their work at the school.</u></b>	
7.28	The meeting noted that special schools’ voices are becoming more prevalent within CLF and were referenced specifically at the recent strategic review meeting.	
7.29	The meeting noted that the H&S audit had 51 actions but that the areas it reviewed are different to those reviewed under Learn Mat. Of these actions, only 3 items are outstanding.	
7.30	The first H&S internal review will take place on 4 December 2024. EW and TBA staff will ensure any actions are resolved as soon as possible thereafter. Fire wardens are due to be trained; all staff will be encouraged to undertake first aid training. Admin of meds training will be implemented as required. Lockdown and fire drills are in place and will be held at regular intervals throughout the year.	
<b>8</b>	<b>Staff Update</b>	
8.1	The SENDCo role needs resolving. CLF is providing intensive support to a member of staff who has expressed an interest in the role but an external advert for the SENDCo position is now live. The staff member was informed as appropriate.	
8.2	An external advert for a teacher is also now live.	
8.3	The existing admin assistant is receiving significant support from CLF to enable her to apply for the senior admin assistant position in due course. There is an agency staff member currently covering reception which is working well.	
8.4	<b>Is one SENDCo going to be sufficient given the increased student numbers forecast for next year?</b>	
8.5	Yes – as long as the SENDCo has the required abilities and experience to be able to meet the needs of the role, with assistance from CLF/other colleagues as required.	
8.6	The principal is continuing to meet with Gloucestershire County Council to discuss funding for TBA and in particular the banding. An emergency meetings has been requested as the Council provided assurance that no pupil would have less than a band 5 banding but some pupils are band 4.	
8.7	PP left the meeting at 17.44.	
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Policies that Require Review</b>	
9.1	To be reviewed at a meeting to be arranged by the clerk via TEAMS. <b><u>ACTION – Clerk to arrange TEAMS meeting to sign off policies.</u></b>	
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
10.1	There being no other business, the meeting ended at 17.45	
<b>11</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
11.1	5 December 2024	

**Actions summary:**

3.1	<b><u>ACTION – Principal to liaise with parents regards becoming and Academy Councillor. Principal to ask clerk to send further information and application form to parent(s) when required.</u></b>	KS
6.20	<b><u>ACTION – Principle to liasie with HB regards assisting families to fill in forms.</u></b>	KS/HB
7.3	<b><u>ACTION – EW to amend staff figures for future reports to clearly show the number of staff in role in comparison with the total number of positions available.</u></b>	EW
7.10	<b><u>ACTION – Data to include comparatives with national averages and CLF schools in the next meeting’s update. Data to include dates between which the relevant data has been collected. Data to also include planned absences for contextual purposes.</u></b>	EW
7.23	<b><u>ACTION – EW report data at next meeting to show termly breakdown.</u></b>	EW
7.27	<b><u>ACTION – Chair to write to designated staff and thank them for their work at the school.</u></b>	Chair
9.1	To be reviewed at a meeting to be arranged by the clerk via TEAMS. <b><u>ACTION – Clerk to arrange TEAMS meeting to sign off policies.</u></b>	Clerk