

# Minutes – Castle Primary School AC Meeting 4

**Version:** Final  
**Meeting Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
**Location:** Castle Primary School  
**Time:** 5:30 - 7:20pm

**Chair:** David Edwards (DE)  
**Attendees:** Carolyn Tayler-Webb (CT) Parent Councillor  
 Lee Churchill (LC) Parent Councillor  
 Francis Abbott (FA) Staff Councillor  
 Michelle Harris (MH) Sponsor Councillor

**In attendance:** Steve Morton (SM) Principal  
 Tracy French (TF) Executive Principal  
 Tessa Clark (TC) Clerk

**Apologies:** Gemma Whitehead (GM)

## Minutes

		Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction, Administration and Apologies</b>	
1.1	SM opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Academy Council.	
1.2	Apologies were received from Gemma Whitehead.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
2.1	There were no declarations of interest made.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Academy Council Membership</b>	
3.1	MH appointed as the disadvantaged link role.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	
4.1	The minutes of the last meeting were approved.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
5.1	<b>ACTION – SM to highlight changes on Castle anti-bullying, child-on-child abuse policy and send to DE</b>	SM
	<b>Academy Council report</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	
6.1	SM explained that the current attendance rate is 94.5%, slightly above the national average, reflecting some fluctuations throughout the year.	
6.2	DE observed a morning at the school, noting its happy atmosphere and how keen the children’s enthusiasm to attend.	

6.3	<p>SM outlined the key attendance strategy changes implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A consistent presence at the gate, unless meeting a parent, with purposeful greetings that include comments, compliments, and smiles. This approach targets key individuals and helps manage late arrivals, aligning with the academy improvement plan.</li> <li>- Notably, the departure of Year 6 students, now Year 7, has positively impacted attendance.</li> </ul>	
6.4	SM advised that it is still a challenge with pupil premium children.	
6.5	SM reports a decrease in persistent absenteeism, currently below 15.8%. The school continues to engage with families, challenging and supporting them to improve attendance further.	
6.6	From the safeguarding audit, a new and improved home visit procedure has been implemented, ensuring compliance with government expectations. Thus far this year, no home visits have been required, which is reassuring.	
6.7	<b>Q – How many pupils are persistently late?</b>	
6.8	SM advised 7 children, 4 are people premium.	
6.9	<b>Q – Have you issued any fines?</b>	
6.10	SM responded that no fines have been issued. Following CLF approved guidance.	
6.11	<b>Q- With persistent absentees do you log a daily reason?</b>	
6.12	SM confirmed that he is consistently aware of daily attendance, noting absences and their reasons. The attendance officer maintains a detailed log, with SM meeting her bi-weekly, or more frequently during spikes. For seven children tracked closely, the principal personally contacts families if they are absent.	
6.13	<b>Q – do they respond to that phone call?</b>	
6.14	SM confirmed that families respond to phone calls regarding absences, often citing child-centred, genuine reasons for their children's time off.	
<b>7</b>	<b>Safeguarding</b>	
7.1	SM advised that they have completed their safeguarding audit for somerset county council.	
7.2	SM advised that since this report, they have conducted the safeguarding audit from CLF.	
7.3	<b>Q - When is the next safeguarding audit?</b>	
7.4	The school conducts termly checks and, at each term's conclusion, compiles an end-of-term safeguarding report. An acknowledged report by the Academy Council results in an additional 1%.	
<b>8</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	
8.1	<p>SM reported on writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The 'Writing Lead' is in a good place with teaching since returning to work.</li> <li>- SM has recalibrated and realigned their three-part writing process, emphasising the importance of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.</li> <li>- New trackers, such as Big Write and Rag rating, have been implemented. The reading/writing lead will conduct clinics on 1st</li> </ul>	

	<p>April, aiding there two-term efforts to support borderline children in writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CLF is moving away from 'best fit' for moderation; the reading/writing lead's earlier pilot allows those previously labelled as best fit to go back one stage for better baseline tracking.</li> <li>- Children will undertake an independent write four times a year, informing planning and assessment, but not serving as sole assessment.</li> </ul>	
8.2	DE shared insights from his meeting with Year 6 pupils, noting their comfort with daily arithmetic and the daily 44, indicating they were not burdened by these activities.	
8.2.1	<b>Q- How are those children achieving full marks in daily arithmetic being appropriately challenged in their learning?</b>	
8.2.3	<p>FA advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The average time taken by children to complete 44 questions is approximately one minute.</li> <li>- While students engaged with Teacher Rock Stars achieved full marks, they faced challenges when asked questions in real-life.</li> <li>- Utilising the concept factor, factor, product has proven beneficial.</li> <li>- Even lower attainers demonstrate improved fluency, completing 40 questions within two minutes.</li> </ul>	
8.2.4	SM advised that Year 6 data from their second mock aligns with predictions of a combined score in the 60s, nearing 68.	
8.2.5	SM reported that the current weekly arithmetic papers show a 67% pass rate in question accuracy.	
8.2.6	FA expressed that weekly arithmetic exposes gaps, which will then be addressed through starters, smaller group interventions, and additional strategies.	
8.2.7	LC reported that children working on the arithmetic paper display strong confidence, taking pride in their progress, even when achieving lower scores, as they develop test coping strategies.	
8.2.8	SM highlighted their aim to instil resilience in students regarding their approach to tests.	
8.2.9	FA explained that children now recognise the importance of personal improvement over comparisons with peers.	
8.2.10	TF noted that the systems and processes implemented by FA are exemplary, commending the incredible job FA has accomplished.	
8.3	Curriculum changes were outlined due to identified gaps in mathematical understanding, leading to Year 3 being taught by one teacher and Year 4 by another, using the White Rose framework.	
8.4	<b>Q Will this influence your decision with classes for next year?</b>	
8.5	SM advised that it will be a factor; for some children, separate year groups will be beneficial.	
8.6	<b>Q - Will you split by age?</b>	
8.7	SM suggested considering age for class splitting rather than attainment, alongside personality dynamics. A more refined proposal will be presented at	

	the next meeting. <b>ACTION – SM to share a plan on how the classes might be split at the next meeting.</b>	SM
8.8	SM advised that the team continues to collaborate on the teaching and learning framework with Dr Chris Baker. Staff have reached consensus on their school model processes and are now engaged in identifying 'active ingredients' in lesson planning and delivery.	
8.9	SM advised that the handbook is on track to be completed by the end of the year.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Behaviour and exclusions</b>	
9.1	SM advised that they are now logging behaviour on CPOMS and BROMCOM.	
9.2	SM shared that they are focused on analysing behavioural patterns among children and within school areas, cross-referencing findings with accident logs, and increasing utilisation of BROMCOM for enhanced monitoring and insights.	
9.3	SM shared that from today, playtime and lunch have been realigned, with an additional adult overseeing extra on-playground activities, fostering greater child engagement through things such as, sports and construction on designated outdoor rugs.	
9.4	<b>Q – Are you going to have a re-investment in stuff for the playground?</b>	
9.5	SM advised that they have made an investment in equipment including skipping ropes, bum boards, role-play clothing, and balls.	
9.6	SM explained that the next initiative involves painting and marking the playground, with quotes currently being obtained for designated areas.	
9.7	DE requested more detail in the report regarding wider school activities, rather than just classroom specifics.	
9.8	SM agreed that adding images to the report would enhance its effectiveness; will include in next report. <b>ACTION – SM to add a photo gallery to the next report.</b>	SM
<b>10</b>	<b>Finances</b>	
10.1	SM advised that they are currently in the red, although an improvement since the start of the year. Collaboration with CLF helped to clarify unattainable targets. SM expressed It is essential to prioritise curriculum spending and reassured the AC that children were not missing out.	
10.2	<b>Q - How is the national insurance contribution affecting everything?</b>	
10.3	SM advised that the government has introduced a funding injection, estimated at a lower assumption of 1.5%, aimed at supporting schools. Budget planning is currently underway, with the intention of developing a first draft by the month's end for ratification.	
10.4	<b>Q - With the increase in staff salaries funded within schools, will this have a significant impact?</b>	
10.5	SM advised that he believes it would have an effect at some point in time.	
10.6	<b>Q- Will it result in anyone having to lose their job?</b>	
10.7	SM advised that this hasn't been a conversation anyone has considered entertaining at this point.	
10.8	TF explained that centrally they are assessing the impacts, having reduced the top slices for primary from 5% to 3% due to secondary schools' greater income.	
10.9	SM has advised that they are collaborating with the finance team, who are well-versed in the necessary procedures.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Health and Safety</b>	

11.1	LC reported that the meeting with the Head of Health and Safety was highly productive; his expertise was evident, and he committed to addressing SM's concerns.	
11.2	SM explained that their rating is now good with elements of outstanding.	
11.3	<b>Q – Is the drainage sorted?</b>	
11.4	SM advised that cameras are coming in during the holidays to do the whole drainage survey properly.	
<b>12</b>	<b>Policies that require review</b>	
12.1	All policies have been signed off, with the exception of the castle anti-bullying, child-on-child abuse policy, which remains to be noted. The following policies were approved: health and safety, complaints, exclusions and suspensions, expenses, Sponsorship and Ethical Fundraising and the RHSE policy.	
<b>13</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
13.1	<p>SM expressed heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming support during Jake's bereavement, particularly thanking DE for his immediate assistance. LC's contribution in the nursery was appreciated, alongside the council's unwavering support and the backing from local services and the trust.</p> <p>SM shared initiatives to honour Jake's memory, including an annual ice cream van, as this was one of his favourite treats. Additionally, a rainbow friendship band made from recycled plastic will be created, reflecting his inclusive nature. Efforts to fundraise for a bench with a plaque are also underway.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 19:20</p>	
<b>14</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
14.1	Meeting date changed to Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> 4pm.	

### **ACTIONS**

5.1	SM to highlight changes on Castle anti-bullying, child-on-child abuse policy and send to DE	SM
8.7	SM to share a plan on how the classes might be split at the next meeting.	SM
9.8	SM to add a photo gallery to the next report.	SM