Minutes – Castle Primary School Academy Council Meeting

Version:	Approved (Public Version)
Meeting Date:	Thursday 29th January 2026
Location:	Castle Primary School
Time:	16:00 – 17:30

Chair:		
Attendees:	Frances Abbott	Staff (Teaching) Councillor
	Michelle Harris	Sponsor Councillor
	Charlotte Middleton	Staff (Support) Councillor
	Carolyn Tayler-Webb	Parent Councillor
	Samantha Williams	Parent Councillor
In attendance:	Steve Morton	Principal
	Laura Liddell	Senior Vice Principal and SENCO
	Tracy French	Executive Principal
	Tessa Clark	Clerk
Apologies:	David Edwards	Chair (Sponsor Councillor)

Minutes

		Action
1	**Introduction, Administration and Apologies**	
1.1	Apologies were received as above. MH chaired the meeting in DE absence.	
1.2	Introductions were made. A new parent councillor, Samantha Williams, introduced herself.	
2	**Declarations of Interest**	
2.1	No declarations of interest were made.	
3	**Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**	
3.1	Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.	
3.2	Matters Arising • **Item 3.3** – *Safeguarding Policy* TC to share the Safeguarding Policy– **Complete**. • **Item 4.1** – *Academy Council Poster* TC to amend the poster to reflect that there are five meetings per year, not six – **In progress**.	

	• **Item 5.1.1** – *SEF in AC Report* SM to include the new SEF in the AC Report for the next meeting – **Completed and included**. • **Item 5.2.3** – *Mock Data in Reports* Include all mock data from 2025 onwards in future reports – **Mock data included in AC Report**. • **Item 5.2.19** – *Early Years Progress Review* Review Early Years progress at the next data drop and report findings at the following AC meeting – **Early Years data drop and update included in AC Report**. • **Item 5.4.1** – *Attendance at Assembly* DE to attend the assembly on 05/12/25 – **Was unable to attend**. • **Item 5.6.5** – *Psychological Safety & Growth Mindset Update* Share progress on embedding psychological safety and growth mindset across all year groups, including impact on pupil confidence and attainment, at the next meeting. SM reported on this work, including: ○ Blue Monday activities signposting to health and mental wellbeing support via the CPS app. ○ Strong wellbeing measures observed around the school. ○ CM completing training to become a Mental Health Advisor. ○ Q: *"What are you being trained on?"* – Training focuses on supporting pupil mental health. SM noted that the academy is exploring staff mental health support, but only one staff member expressed interest; the current priority remains pupil support, though provision will benefit both staff and pupils. • **Item 7.6** – *Potential Councillor* Follow up to confirm interest and availability – SM reported that no communication has been received, so contact has not yet been possible. • **Item 9.1** – *Remote Learning Policy* TC to remind Academy Councillors to note the Remote Learning Policy – **Complete; policy noted.** • **Item 10.1** – *SEND Link Visit Report* CTW to share her SEND Link Visit Report. **Action ongoing**.	
4	**Chairs Update**	
4.1	No update was provided as the rearranged meeting date clashed with the Chair's holiday.	
5	Academy Council Report:	
	The AC Report was shared prior to the meeting.	
	SM explained that the whole report was reviewed through the lens of disadvantaged pupils. Due to issues with PP data tracking, the team focused on SEN pupils, highlighting mock, comparison, and attendance data.	
5.1	**Student Outcomes**	
5.1.1	*Mock Data (Year 6)* • New data is now in, with Mock 3 almost complete. • FA shared that progress is following the expected trajectory.	

	• Combined scores have improved significantly from the start of the year to Mock 2, with further improvement seen by Mock 3. • Reading has increased from 63% to approximately 78–79%. • Reading was previously stagnating but has seen marked improvement following targeted work.	
5.1.2	**Q: What is the reading data for PP pupils?**	
5.1.3	A small number of pupils are not yet meeting the expected standard, including some eligible for Pupil Premium. Their progress has been significant.	

5.1.4	*EYFS Data*
	• Term 2 shows marked improvement in literacy.
	• Many children are young for the cohort, now reflected in the DfE tracker.
	• Staff reviewed progress child by child and observed significant gains.
	• Notable developments include:
	  ○ Increased engagement with storytelling and role play
	  ○ Boys independently choosing writing activities
	  ○ Improved fine motor skills and writing confidence
	• As expected, EYFS literacy data typically accelerates after Term 2.
	• The cohort is of a similar structure to Year 6.	

5.2	**Quality of Education**	
5.2.1	LL shared an update on the quality of education across the school. A wide variety of enriching events for pupils have taken place, such as the annual pantomime trip and the school nativity. For the first time, the school also took part in the village Christmas lights switch-on, which was incorporated into a wider carol and craft event. This collaboration with the local community was very positive, and the school hopes to continue building on this.	
5.2.2	A significant focus across Terms 1 and 2 was Parliament Week. The school again borrowed resources from Parliament, enabling pupils to explore democracy in an accessible and engaging way. As this is the third year the school has run the event, the process was smoother, and older children confidently supported younger pupils as they moved around activities such as the mock polling station. MH shared that her own school had received a video message from their local MP. FA noted that, despite several attempts to make contact, the school's MP had not responded — an unfortunate missed opportunity for engagement. The Council celebrated the fact that these events allow every child to participate meaningfully, demonstrate strengths, and experience learning beyond the classroom. Staff highlighted that the process supports independence, ownership, and agency, giving pupils the opportunity to plan, lead, take part, and see activities through from beginning to end.	
5.2.3	**Q: Is the pantomime trip subsidised?**	
5.2.4	Yes. FOX funded the coach, which significantly supports disadvantaged families, as transport is the most substantial cost. The school reinforced that it will never segregate pupils based on ability to pay — all children attend. While	

	pupil premium is used effectively elsewhere, it cannot be used for this purpose.	
5.3	**Attendance**	
5.3.1	Attendance currently stands at 95.4%, in line with national averages. Persistent absence has decreased compared with last year and is now 12.1%, with no pupils in the severely absent category. The school continues to work closely with families where attendance remains a concern, maintaining strong communication and offering tailored support. LL noted that some pupils within the persistent absence figures are experiencing complex circumstances, and additional support is being put in place. SM outlined the current persistent absence profile: • A small number of pupils are in lower attendance ranges. Some pupils have dipped temporarily due to holidays, but overall patterns show improvement. Year 6 comparison data demonstrates progress above national averages, reflecting the long-term impact of the school's attendance strategy. Proactive measures —including targeted support to help pupils attend school regularly— have been effective. Analysis from Week 5 of Term 2 shows: • Pupil Premium attendance remains just below whole-school levels but close to national averages • Whole-school PP attendance: 94.5% • FSM attendance: 94.7% • SEND attendance: 93.3% The school reiterated its ambition for all children to attend full-time wherever possible, while continuing to recognise and support families facing genuine challenges.	
5.4	**Quality of teaching and learning**	
5.4.1	Curriculum development continues to progress positively. FA has been refining the science curriculum in collaboration with the CLF Science Lead, ensuring that planning balances knowledge with the development of scientific skills and enquiry. They reviewed progression in questioning and ensured that units emphasise depth rather than attempting to cover overly broad content. Feedback from the Science Lead was extremely positive, noting that the school's science provision is rich and, in some cases, exceeds what some Year 7 cohorts receive. FA will share key updates with staff next week. FA also shared an example from the classroom involving an extended science investigation with water, sugar and a balloon. Although simple, the activity	

	encouraged rich vocabulary and held pupils' attention for a sustained period, reinforcing how valuable it is to slow down and allow pupils time to explore concepts thoroughly.	
5.4.2	Work continues to develop with geography and history. During the ARV, children spoke confidently about their learning, demonstrated strong recall of prior lessons, and used subject vocabulary with understanding. A pupil commented that learning about slavery was important "so history does not repeat itself," reflecting the school's focus on helping pupils understand the world and develop as courageous advocates.	
5.4.3	The school has welcomed a specialist singing teacher from Somerset Council to lead CPD for staff. This work explores the role of singing across the curriculum, including the science of how singing supports memory and behaviour. More CPD is planned, and this work is becoming a valuable "golden thread" through the curriculum.	
5.5	**Behaviour and Exclusion**	
5.5.1	This item was covered within the safeguarding section of the meeting.	
5.6	**Pupil Premium and LAC**	
5.6.1	The AC report included combined Term 2 data for disadvantaged pupils across reading, writing and maths. The school continues to ensure that disadvantaged pupils maintain strong progress through a rich and responsive curriculum designed to support both catch-up and keep-up approaches.	
5.6.2	The report now includes greater depth analysis for disadvantaged pupils. While raising attainment for those below expected standards remains a priority, the school is also committed to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are represented within greater depth outcomes. **ACTION:** Provide deeper analysis at the next meeting, outlining which pupils may move into greater depth and how they are being supported. **ACTION:** Include clear greater-depth targets within future reporting.	**SM** **SM**
5.6.3	PPMs now include a focus on pupils who could reach greater depth, particularly in Year 6. In some year groups, no pupils are currently assessed at greater depth; the school is reviewing whether these pupils showed earlier indicators of high potential and whether the curriculum is providing appropriate ongoing challenge.	
5.6.4	MH noted that while she is familiar with data, it would be helpful to have a clear key to support interpretation of the AC report data. She also asked for clarification on the term "deepening." **ACTION:** Refine and simplify future data presentation, including incorporating a key.	**SM**
6	Safeguarding	
6.1	A half-term safeguarding update report was submitted to the central safeguarding team. DE, the Safeguarding Link Councillor, reviewed the report and confirmed sign-off via email.	
6.2	The school continues to prioritise capturing pupil voice in safeguarding. Leaders are exploring the introduction of a pupil safeguarding questionnaire and have reviewed examples used by other local schools.	

6.3	The school continues to manage safeguarding incidents in line with statutory guidance. Where required, appropriate actions are taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils, with external support engaged as needed.	
7	Areas of focus identifies in agenda planning – Disadvantaged	
7.1	The entire AC Report was presented through the lens of disadvantaged pupils. No further questions were raised.	
8	Student Voice	
8.1	Student voice was strengthened during the ARV and is reflected throughout the report. Leaders emphasised that increasing the presence and influence of pupil voice remains a key priority.	
9	Early Years Progress Update	
9.1	The Early Years update is included within the Outcomes section of the AC Report.	
10	Policies	
10.1	The Remote Learning Policy was reviewed and approved by the Academy Council.	
11	Link Reports	
11.1	SEND Link Councillor CTW provided an update. She is scheduled to return for another visit on Thursday. CTW reflected on her previous visit, which included observing support across all year groups and meeting with a panel of four pupils who spoke confidently about their experiences. The visit lasted two hours and helped CTW build a clearer understanding of how the school supports pupils with SEND. LL noted that the action-plan focus identified in their earlier meeting had since been observed in practice during the learning walk.	
11.2	SM spoke with the new Parent Councillor regarding the expectations of a link role. A question was raised about whether Tiny Tots is included as part of AC discussion. SM confirmed that Tiny Tots is included; however, the data available at this point in the year is limited because the first assessment stage focuses on early developmental milestones. Nevertheless, Tiny Tots was included within the ARV, and pupil interactions were observed as part of that process.	
12	Any Other Business	
12.1	It was noted that the review will be scheduled later in the academic year. The school's previous outcome indicated strong performance.	
12.2	The Academy Council discussed current leadership arrangements and capacity. It was confirmed that appropriate structures are in place to ensure the effective running of the school, and that leaders are working collaboratively to maintain high standards. Ongoing review of leadership arrangements will continue, with updates provided at future meetings.	
12.3	There was no other business	
13	Date of Next Meeting	
13.1	Thursday, 5th March 2026	

ACTIONS

5.6.2	Provide deeper analysis at the next meeting, outlining which pupils may move into greater depth and how they are being supported.	**SM**
5.6.2	Include clear greater-depth targets within future reporting.	**SM**
5.6.4	Refine and simplify future data presentation, including incorporating a key.	**SM**