Minutes – Castle Primary School Academy Council Meeting

Version:	Approved (Public Version)
Meeting Date:	Thursday 18th June 2026
Location:	Online
Time:	16:00 – 18:00

Chair:	David Edwards (DE)	Chair (Sponsor Councillor)
Attendees:	Frances Abbott (FA)	Staff (Teaching) Councillor
	Michelle Harris (MH)	Sponsor Councillor
	Charlotte Middleton (CM)	Staff (Support) Councillor
	Carolyn Tayler-Webb (CT-W)	Parent Councillor
	Samantha Williams (SW)	Parent Councillor

In attendance:	Steve Morton (SM)	Principal
	Laura Liddell (LL)	Senior Vice Principal and SENCO
	Tracy French (TF)	Executive Principal
	Tessa Clark (TC)	Clerk

Apologies:

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
	The published version of these minutes has been redacted where necessary to protect confidentiality. The full discussion is recorded in the internal minutes.	
1	**Introduction, Administration and Apologies**	
1.1	The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.	
1.2	It was noted that Steve Morton and Tracy French attended for part of the meeting. Samantha Williams joined after the start time. No formal apologies were recorded.	
2	**Declarations of Interest**	
2.1	No declarations of interest were made.	
3	**Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**	
3.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved.	
3.2	It was confirmed that actions from the previous meeting had been completed, including:	

	• Ensuring greater depth targets are included in reports • Providing additional analysis of pupil wellbeing • Reviewing the impact of scheduling events earlier in the week on attendance • Updating the Council on leadership structure arrangements	
4	**Chairs Update**	
4.1	The Chair did not provide a formal update; however, it was noted within later agenda items that councillor engagement with the school has increased significantly, including visits, participation in SATs week and involvement in recruitment processes.	
5	Academy Council Report:	
	The Council noted that the Academy Council Report does not fully align with the current agenda, as it follows a newly introduced format. Leaders confirmed that the report has been redesigned to align more closely with the Ofsted framework, and agreed to present it sequentially by section.	
	Leaders reported that the revised format is clearer and more straightforward, supporting councillors to better understand key priorities and areas for monitoring.	
	The headline dashboard reflects leaders' current self-evaluation of the school, which they consider accurate. There are signs of improvement in some areas, particularly in achievement, where phonics outcomes are showing a positive upward trajectory. Other areas remain stable, with high standards being maintained. Leaders expressed the intention to secure stronger "expected" judgements in additional areas, including Personal Development, over the next academic year.	
5.1	**Quality of Education including curriculum developments**	
5.1.1	Leaders provided an update on curriculum development, noting continued progress in aligning the school's curriculum with the CLF "I Am A…" curriculum statements. This work has been undertaken deliberately over time to ensure alignment meets the needs of pupils and supports staff to deliver the curriculum effectively, particularly within the context of mixed-age rolling programmes.	
5.1.2	Significant progress has been made, with the history, science and geography curricula now aligned. The English curriculum is also securely in place and aligned with partner schools through the use of shared high-quality texts. In PE, Real PE provides a consistent foundation aligned with Trust schools; however, leaders acknowledged that teaching of team games remains an area for development and will be supported through further professional development.	
5.1.3	Leaders reported that focus is now turning to foundation subjects that are taught less frequently, particularly computing. Work is underway in collaboration with a Trust colleague (based at a partner school) to support curriculum alignment and strengthen delivery. This will include reviewing how computing can be effectively delivered within a rolling programme.	
5.1.4	As part of this work, an audit of computing provision will take place before the end of the summer term. This will include evaluating staff confidence, current resources and equipment, and identifying priority actions. The	

	Principal also noted that some existing technology is no longer fit for purpose, and the audit will inform future resource planning and potential sharing or procurement of equipment across schools.	
5.1.5	**Q: The Chair asked about the timescale for the computing audit.** Leaders confirmed that the audit will take place before the summer break, with findings collated in September to inform planning and budget decisions at the start of the new financial year.	
5.1.6	**Q: The Chair asked whether a report on the audit could be brought back to the Council in Term 1.** The principal confirmed that an update, including findings and next steps, will be shared at a future meeting. **Action:** TC to include a computing audit update on the Term 1 agenda.	**TC**
5.1.7	Leaders provided an update on the school's focus on oracy as a key teaching and learning priority. This forms part of the school's wider teaching and learning framework, with recognition that high-quality talk underpins learning.	
5.1.8	Using the Oracy 21 framework, leaders have prioritised the social and emotional pillar as the initial focus. This decision followed visits to Trust schools identified as centres of excellence. Staff development and protected curriculum time have supported the embedding of consistent approaches, including structured strategies such as Think, Pair, Share and the use of visual cues to support pupils in building, agreeing, challenging and extending ideas.	
5.1.9	Leaders reported that oracy is now increasingly embedded within classroom practice. Pupils are demonstrating improved confidence, greater use of precise and subject-specific vocabulary, and increased participation, particularly among those who were previously less confident.	
5.1.10	Pupil voice activities have highlighted a notable shift in attitudes. Pupils are now able to articulate the value of speaking and listening, with one pupil commenting that they "feel more heard." Leaders noted a clear difference from earlier baseline assessments, where pupils viewed talk in more functional terms.	
5.1.11	Teachers and subject leaders are now planning how oracy will be embedded within subject action plans for the next academic year, identifying subject-specific opportunities to develop talk, such as reasoning in science.	
5.1.12	Leaders also noted that improvements in oracy are contributing to wider outcomes, particularly in writing. Pupils are using more ambitious vocabulary and demonstrating stronger engagement in peer discussion and editing, supported by improved listening skills.	
5.1.13	A parent councillor shared feedback regarding their own children, noting a noticeable improvement in articulation and vocabulary.	
5.1.14	Leaders emphasised that this is part of a longer-term (three-year) strategy; however, early impact is evident in both pupil engagement and outcomes.	
5.1.15	**Achievement Update (FA)** • Reception GLD is projected at 65%, slightly below national. Leaders explained the context for this cohort and the factors influencing outcomes.	

	• Year 1 phonics outcomes are **84% meeting the expected standard**, now **above national**. • KS2 SATs have been completed; results are awaited. Based on internal data, outcomes in **RWM combined are projected above last year's national average (68%)**. • Writing outcomes (externally moderated) show **84% at ARE/GD**, with an increase in **Greater Depth (21%)** compared to last year. • Year 4 multiplication check outcomes were reported and discussed by the Academy Council. • Reading remains a priority area, with leaders outlining actions to strengthen fluency and assessment across the school.	
5.1.16	**RSHE Curriculum Update (LL)**	
5.1.17	The Council received an update on the RSHE curriculum. Supporting documents, including the policy, overview and parent guidance, had been shared in advance via GovernorHub. Leaders confirmed that a parent consultation will take place over the coming weeks prior to implementation.	
5.1.18	Leaders outlined that updates to the curriculum include increased focus on online safety (including gaming, scams and AI), mental health, respectful relationships and inclusion, including teaching about different family structures. It was noted that primary sex education remains non-statutory, although the school will continue to deliver this in Years 5 and 6 in line with guidance.	
5.1.19	The school will move from SCARF to the Jigsaw scheme, aligning with Trust practice. Leaders advised that Jigsaw offers a broader range of resources, including outdoor learning, assemblies and a parent portal to support transparency.	
5.1.20	**Q: The Chair asked whether any parental concerns were anticipated.** Leaders advised that significant concerns are not expected, as processes remain largely unchanged. However, some discussion may arise, particularly around aspects such as same sex relationships, where withdrawal is not permitted under statutory relationships education. Leaders emphasised the importance of clear communication and transparency with parents.	
5.1.21	**Q: The Chair asked why the school is moving to Jigsaw.** Leaders confirmed that the scheme is widely used across the Trust, provides more extensive resources, and supports delivery across a wider range of contexts, including assemblies and outdoor learning.	
5.1.22	**Q: The Chair asked how parents will access materials.** Leaders confirmed that materials will be shared through consultation and on request, and that the Jigsaw scheme includes a parent portal for accessing resources. It was noted that clear communication will be important to ensure all parents are aware of how to access materials.	
5.1.23	**Q: SW asked how pupils who miss key content will be supported.** Leaders confirmed that key content would be revisited where necessary and highlighted that the curriculum is spiral in design, meaning key themes are revisited and built on over time.	
5.1.24	Leaders emphasised that RSHE is delivered as part of a wider school culture, not only through discrete lessons, and contributes to pupils' understanding of relationships, wellbeing and personal development.	

5.2.	**Attendance (SM)**	
5.2.1	The Principal reported that overall attendance remains strong at 95%, which is above the current national average (93.23%).	
5.2.2	Persistent absenteeism, previously a key challenge, has improved significantly and is now well below national averages. Leaders are currently working closely with a core group of pupils/families, using targeted support and monitoring.	
5.2.3	The Council heard that the school continues to implement a rigorous and supportive approach, including regular communication with families, personalised support, and practical interventions where needed. This consistent approach is having a positive impact.	
5.2.4	Leaders meet weekly to review attendance data and track individual pupils. The Local Authority Attendance Officer has reviewed the school's processes and confirmed that all appropriate actions are in place, with no additional recommendations.	
5.2.5	Leaders reported that minor strategic changes have had a notable impact, particularly moving events (e.g. non-uniform days) to the start of the week, when attendance is typically lower. Comparative data shows improved attendance on these days.	
5.2.6	A continued focus will be placed on further improving attendance, particularly aiming to increase overall rates into the higher 90s, and strengthening engagement with families where attendance remains a concern.	
5.3	**Quality of teaching and learning**	
	Inclusion (LL)	
5.3.1	The Council received a detailed update on inclusion, reflecting a changing SEND profile within the school.	
5.3.2	Leaders reported that the proportion of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) is currently around 3%, which is below average; however, this is expected to rise significantly from 4 to 9 plans by the next academic year. This increase reflects both newly identified need and ongoing delays within local authority processes, with some applications taking over a year to progress despite a statutory 20-week timeframe.	
5.3.3	**Q: The Chair asked for clarification regarding the increase from four to nine EHCPs and whether this was due to a combination of new pupils and existing pupils being diagnosed.** Leaders confirmed that this reflects both newly identified pupils and existing pupils whose needs are now being formalised. It was noted that delays in the local authority process mean that some pupils who would already have plans are still awaiting them. Leaders noted that delays in the local authority process mean that some pupils who would already have plans are still awaiting final EHCP decisions. Additional applications are also due to be submitted imminently.	
5.3.4	Leaders highlighted that this changing picture presents a number of challenges, particularly around the early identification of need, which remains a priority for both the school and the Trust. There has been an increase in pupils joining the school with additional needs, requiring timely assessment	

	and appropriate support. Councillors were assured that processes are in place to identify and meet pupils' needs effectively.	
5.3.5	In response, leaders have strengthened capacity and are refining roles. FA is currently undertaking the SEND NPQ and is beginning to take on increased responsibility. Going forward, it is anticipated that she will lead more on pupils at SEND Support level, enabling senior leaders to focus on pupils with more complex needs and navigate local authority systems more effectively.	
5.3.6	Leaders discussed a complex inclusion case and the support that has been put in place to meet a pupil's needs. The Council was assured that appropriate provision and external support were being secured.	
5.3.8	In relation to disadvantaged pupils, leaders reported that outcomes are strong across the school, particularly in Key Stage 2, where attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is positive. Writing outcomes have been externally moderated and confirmed as secure, with leaders noting the positive impact of the school's focus on oracy.	
5.3.9	Phonics outcomes were highlighted as a particular strength. Pupil Premium pupils in Year 1 are on track to achieve a 100% pass rate, with most pupils achieving scores well above the expected threshold.	
5.3.10	**Q: The Chair asked for clarification on the phonics scoring and pass mark.** Leaders confirmed that the expected pass mark is 32 out of 40 (subject to confirmation), with only one pupil scoring close to the threshold and the majority achieving significantly higher scores, including some full marks.	
5.3.11	In Early Years, 50% of Pupil Premium pupils achieved a Good Level of Development, which is below national averages. Leaders identified this as an area for further development next year.	
5.3.12	Overall, leaders emphasised that, while the inclusion landscape is becoming more complex, systems and capacity are being strengthened to ensure that pupils' needs are identified early and supported effectively.	
5.4	**Pupil Premium and LAC**	
5.4.1	Covered in other areas, no further questions.	
5.5	**Leadership and governance (LL)**	
5.5.1	Leaders reported increased engagement from Academy Councillors, including participation in school visits, SATs week support and staff recruitment processes. This enhanced involvement has strengthened understanding of school priorities and practice.	
5.5.2	It was noted that councillor involvement in staff interviews has been particularly valuable, contributing to both effective recruitment and governor development.	
5.5.3	Leaders invited councillors to participate in upcoming SEND LSA recruitment, noting this as an opportunity for further engagement.	
5.5.4	**Q: Clarification was sought on the experience and qualifications required for SEND LSA roles.** Leaders advised that while experience is desirable, recruitment focuses on a combination of values, aptitude and potential, including resilience, reflective practice and commitment to supporting pupils with complex needs.	

	Candidates are assessed against clear criteria during shortlisting and interview.	
5.5.5	Leaders confirmed that appropriate training, support and team-based approaches are in place for SEND staff, recognising the complexity of individual pupil needs and the importance of ongoing development.	
5.5.6	Leaders outlined updates to the leadership structure, confirming that current arrangements will continue into the next academic year.	
5.5.7	It was reported that LL will move to full-time at the school, providing increased consistency and enabling a clearer distinction between strategic and operational leadership responsibilities.	
5.5.8	**Q: It was asked whether any feedback had been received regarding this change.** Leaders confirmed that no concerns or negative feedback had been received following communication with parents.	
5.5.9	The Council noted positive informal feedback regarding the school's calm and supportive environment, reflecting well on leadership and culture.	
6	Safeguarding	
6.1	6.1 Councillors received an update on safeguarding arrangements and recent safeguarding developments within the school. The Academy Council was assured that appropriate systems, processes and improvements are in place to support effective safeguarding practice. *Note: The full safeguarding discussion is recorded in the confidential/internal version of the minutes.*	
7	Equality and Diversity (LL/ FA)	
7.1	The Council received an update on equality and diversity, including planned activities to promote inclusion across the school.	
7.2	Leaders reported that a Pride event will take place later in the term, building on the success of the previous year. The event will celebrate "love in all its forms" and provide an opportunity for pupils to recognise and appreciate different family structures and identities.	
7.3	It was noted that the event supports the school's wider aim of ensuring all pupils feel included and represented, alongside participation in a broader national initiative.	
7.4	Leaders shared outcomes from a recent pupil wellbeing survey, which indicated: • High levels of pupils reporting they feel safe (94%) and get on well with staff (94%) • 82% of pupils feel they belong at school • The majority of pupils reported positive behaviour, with most indicating they do not experience or engage in negative behaviours	
7.5	Leaders highlighted that while findings were broadly positive, 36% of pupils reported feeling lonely 'a little', which has been identified as an area for further exploration.	
7.6	**Q: It was queried how the question relating to loneliness should be interpreted.**	

	Leaders noted that the question was broad and may reflect different contexts (e.g. at school or beyond), and further work is required to understand pupils' perceptions and respond appropriately. **ACTION:** Leaders to further explore pupil responses relating to loneliness and identify any required actions.	**SLT**
7.7	Leaders also identified the need to strengthen pupils' understanding of bullying, to ensure clarity in how it is recognised and reported.	
7.8	It was noted that future surveys will be refined, with fewer and more targeted questions, to ensure more reliable pupil responses.	
8	Policies	
8.1	There were no policies presented for review or approval.	
9	Link Reports	
9.1	No link reports.	
9.2	A Parent Councillor indicated an interest in SEND. Link Councillor roles and councillor preferences will be revisited at the Term 1 Academy Council meeting. **ACTION:** Review Link Councillor roles and responsibilities at the Term 1 Academy Council meeting	**TC/DE**
10	Matters for the attention of the Board/COAC	
10.2	No matters were raised for the attention of the Board/COAC.	
11	Any Other Buisness	
11.1	The Council was informed that the school's PTA (FOCS) is at significant risk of ceasing to operate without increased parent engagement.	
11.1.1	It was noted that without sufficient support, the PTA may be unable to continue, which would have a significant impact on enrichment opportunities, including events and activities funded for pupils.	
11.1.2	Councillors discussed the importance of improving communication with parents, particularly in relation to: • The impact of PTA fundraising • The benefits provided to pupils • Opportunities for flexible involvement	
11.1.3	Leaders and councillors recognised that participation has declined due to reduced capacity and lack of visible coordination, rather than lack of willingness from the wider parent body.	
11.1.4	A councillor confirmed their intention to take an active role in supporting and revitalising the PTA, including encouraging wider parent engagement.	
11.1.5	It was confirmed that an AGM will take place in September, at which key roles (Chair and Treasurer) will need to be filled in order for the PTA to continue. **ACTION:** PTA/school to issue clear communication to parents outlining the current position and opportunities to support.	**SLT**
	Safeguarding – Sports Day	
11.2	**Q: SW requested sight of the Sports Day risk assessment, particularly in relation to safeguarding and emergency procedures.**	
11.2.1	Councillors received assurance that appropriate risk assessments and safeguarding arrangements were in place for Sports Day and that supporting documentation had been reviewed.	

12	Date of Next Meeting	
12.1	TBC	

ACTIONS

5.1.6	Action: TC to include a computing audit update on the Term 1 agenda.	**TC**
7.6	Leaders to further explore pupil responses relating to loneliness and identify any required actions.	**SLT**
9.2	Review Link Councillor roles and responsibilities at the Term 1 Academy Council meeting	**TC/DE**
11.1.5	PTA/school to issue clear communication to parents outlining the current position and opportunities to support.	**SLT**