

Minutes – UVA Academy Council Meeting

Meeting Date: 31st March 2026

Location: Uphill Village Academy – in person and via Teams

Time: 4:00pm

Present:

Toby Blackburn (TB)
Caroline Jamieson (CJ)
Stewart Castle (SC)
David Croft (DC)
Ellen Williams (EW)

Chair Academy Council
 Parent Councillor
 Sponsor Academy Councillor (VC)
 Sponsor Academy Councillor
 Parent Councillor

In attendance: Sam Hodder

Principal

Minutes taken by a Cover Clerk

		Action
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	
	Sam Hodder opened the meeting at 4:00 pm with the recording on Teams starting at 4:06pm. One councillor was noted as joining late. Prevent training: It was noted that all Academy Councillors are up to date, having completed the government website refresher.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
	No declarations of interest were made	
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
	The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. No corrections or observations were raised and the minutes were approved as an accurate record.	
4	Chair's Update	
	The Chair noted the following: • COAC meeting is scheduled for the following Thursday. No outstanding items from COAC to report at this stage. • Prevent training: Councillors are considered up to date. • Re-election of a councillor was noted and congratulated. • No progress on the support staff governor vacancy at this time; this may be revisited for the following year. The Academy Scrutiny Portal was deferred to be discussed later under the Academy Council Report.	
5	Academy Council Report	
5.1	Attendance Attendance is holding up against national and local comparators, however there remains work to be done.	

	• A persistent gap exists between Pupil Premium and non-PP children's attendance, which is wider this year than the same point last year. • The trust's attendance leads (Fiona and Connor) will visit next term to conduct an audit of attendance processes and practices, triggered by trust metrics identifying the PP gap. • Recent illness outbreaks specifically Scarlet Fever, Chickenpox have particularly impacted PP pupils. • A small number of PP pupils display persistent low-level absence. The school is working intensively with these families. • Penalty notices have been issued in cases where all other avenues have been exhausted and families are unresponsive. • The school is using a new CLF Emotionally Based School Avoidance flowchart to support coded recording and case management of school-avoidant pupils. • Gate presence by senior leaders is noted as effective in improving parental engagement and accessibility.	
	Q: Is there a correlation between the general dip in attendance and the PP cohort specifically – are they more inclined to be absent for longer? A: Yes. Illness has disproportionately affected PP pupils. There are also a number of PP pupils with habitual low-level absence (specific days/patterns). The school is working to address these on a case-by-case basis. Q: At what point does escalation occur – is there a risk of damaging relationships if penalty notices are issued where the absence is wellbeing-related? A: Penalty notices are always a last resort, used only after all other options are exhausted. Where absence is connected to anxiety, CAMHS involvement, or EBSA, the school takes a pastoral approach. Penalty notices are only issued where there is persistent non-engagement, and no welfare concern prevents it. Each case is assessed individually.	
5.2	Pupil Numbers • Current roll: 308, against a Published Admission Numbers (PAN) of 315. The school is slightly below PAN in a couple of year groups. • Reception intake is full – notable given a low national birth rate year, with many schools in Bristol struggling to fill places. • Year 2 has a small number of vacancies the school would like to fill. • A number of families are moving away, and some families who have been travelling distances to attend are reconsidering due to Bristol roadworks. The summer period typically sees some movement both in and out; the school will monitor and respond as needed.	
5.3	Personal Development • Rich programme of activities this term: People Parliament, dance festivals, parent events, presentations of learning, parent book looks, and curriculum trips. • Easter bonnet event scheduled for Thursday. • A cluster-based Inset Day was held on 6 March. Two further trust Inset Days (13th and 20th March) involved staff from across the trust visiting UVA to observe practice. • Whole-staff EAL training was delivered by Mike (CLF centre) using Bell Foundation resources, responding to the school's growing EAL cohort. Task design CPD was also delivered – further detail covered under Item 7.	
5.5	Pupil Voice – Belonging Survey	

	The school conducted a Belonging Survey using a small-group qualitative approach with children, staff, and parents. Key findings: • Children: Overwhelmingly feel they belong. Every child asked expressed a strong sense of belonging. • Staff perception of how children feel: Strong. • Parent responses: Approximately 49% did not feel they belong to the school community – a result that appeared higher than expected and prompted discussion. Discussion noted that the 49% figure should be contextualised: parents may simply not wish to be part of the school community without this reflecting dissatisfaction; life is busy and many families now have limited capacity for school engagement. When asked about recommending the school, 90% of parents would do so. The survey achieved approximately 50 responses, distributed via the school newsletter and MCAS app. Q: Could the 49% figure reflect a communications issue – are all parents receiving survey links? A: Possible. The school has transitioned to MCAS for communications; push notifications must be actively enabled by parents, and the platform is less intuitive than the previous text/SMS system. Email communication is not limited in volume and should be explored as a supplementary route. The Chair suggested Julie (office) be consulted on whether dual-channel communication (MCAS and email) can be used for key communications. It was agreed to revisit the belonging question in future surveys, possibly reformulated to understand what parents would like rather than simply whether they feel part of the community. A short follow-up QR code survey via the PTFA was also suggested.	
5.6	Quality of Teaching and Learning Year 6 Mocks & SATs Preparation No DOIA data available yet. Year 6 mock data (Terms 1–4) has been reviewed. Term 4 mock results just received: • Reading: ~78% at expected standard (holding steady). • Maths: 88% – a strong position. • Writing: Low 80s. • Combined: ~78% at the time of the meeting. SH noted that, despite strong results, the cohort remains a cause for vigilance: • This is the highest SEN year group the school has had; a number of pupils are not sitting SATs and are receiving alternative provision. • Pupils who have not sat SATs are thriving in their differentiated provision. • Four to five pupils have shown a pattern of disengaging during mock conditions (refusing to attempt papers). Extensive pastoral support is in place, including parent contact and breakfast clubs from the first week back after Easter. • No further formal CLF mocks are scheduled before SATs (11 May); however, the school will use papers informally after Easter to maintain momentum. • A SATs briefing was held for Year 6 parents; attendance was low, reflecting the broader challenge of engaging this cohort's parents. Maths – Particular Strength • Maths results are unusually strong for this cohort, which had been a concern entering the year.	

	• The deployment of HLTA Marlene and the Year 3/4 arrangement with Tracey Owen has proved highly effective and sustainable. • The gender gap in maths has significantly narrowed, with girls performing strongly. Reading – Key Concern • Reading performance has plateaued after initial growth between Mock 1 and Mock 2. The cohort is unusual in being stronger at maths than reading. • Challenges include: limited reading stamina for sustained text; the impact of text familiarity/subject knowledge on comprehension; and some pupils with heads-down refusal on the day of assessments. • National research and the school's own Just Read data confirm a decline in reading for pleasure nationally. • The school is working to build intrinsic motivation to read, including through varied text selection, reading surveys, and classroom reading of high-quality texts. Other Data • Multiplication Times Table Check (MTC): Average score ~22.9 out of 25, up from 22.1 last year – the school's highest recorded. • Phonics: On track. • EYFS Good Level of Development: On track. • Year 5 cohort is stronger than Year 6, with less extreme SEND need, which may positively impact future outcomes. Increasing SEND identification across the school, including in younger year groups, reflects a national trend. Several new Reception children are already known to have funding in place.	
	Q: Is reading growth plateauing because of a ceiling effect or because more needs to be done? A: Maths grows cumulatively as content is added through the year; reading is more dependent on subject knowledge, text familiarity, and stamina. This cohort missed phonics during COVID and requires more intensive support to achieve reading results that previous cohorts achieved more readily. The school is providing extra groups, interventions during assembly time, and will run early breakfast sessions post-Easter. Q: Would it be worth scheduling a mock paper in the first week back after Easter to re-engage pupils? A: Pupils will absolutely be completing papers informally when they return. The CLF formal mock structure is concluded, but paper practice continues in class – this will be a priority from the first week back.	
5.7	SEND & Inclusion The Headteacher provided a brief overview of the forthcoming Government SEND White Paper, which proposes: • Every child with SEND to be educated at their local mainstream school where possible. • Increased support and funding into mainstream schools. • A review of EHCPs and their fitness for purpose. • Potential inclusion bases within secondary (and some primary) schools. • Greater investment in early local authority intervention.	
	Q: On initial view, are these proposed changes positive for schools like UVA? A: The intent is positive – the school is already highly inclusive. The concern is whether sufficient funding and infrastructure will accompany the policy. Without adequate resource, placing higher-need children in mainstream classrooms creates	

	significant pressure on teachers. The school will await detailed implementation guidance before forming a final view. Q: Does a higher SEND cohort in mainstream classrooms impact non-SEND pupils' learning? A: The school's philosophy is that well-designed, inclusive teaching benefits all learners. Low-floor, high-ceiling tasks and universal design for learning mean that adaptations for SEND pupils often improve the experience for all. Where funding and support are adequate, the model works well.	
6	Safeguarding	
	The CLF whole-day Safeguarding Audit took place on 16 March. • UVA scored 75% overall. Having reviewed 20–25 out of 36 schools, UVA was among the top-performing schools. • The audit has become more rigorous: previously yes/no questions are now rated on a 1–10 scale with evidence required. • Main development area: CPOMS record-keeping. The school uses CPOMS intensively and well, but consistency of follow-up documentation needs tightening. Training is already embedded in the annual action plan. SH and Toby noted the following from the term: • Early Help: A concern was raised that the 6-week Early Help cycle may result in families being repeatedly placed on and off the system, potentially leading to disengagement. The school will continue to monitor and advocate for continuity. • Bullying incidents in Year 3/4: Language-related incidents have been addressed through individual conversations, family contact, and reactive PSHE. Monitoring continues. • Year 6: Two incidents involving external influences causing conflict between groups of pupils – both have been resolved. • Increase in anxiety, bereavement reactions, and low mood across the school – partly attributable to the recent loss of a member of the school community (Archie). • Prejudicial incidents: A small number of isolated incidents (no theme or pattern). No Outsiders work has been deployed; the school continues to work with specific families around language used at home. It was also noted that several parents have proactively contacted councillors to express appreciation for the teaching team's handling of what has been a challenging term. This will be fed back to staff.	
	Q: How does the school follow up on incidents involving discriminatory or prejudicial language? Do pupils understand the impact of the language they are using? A: All incidents are recorded on CPOMS with required follow-up actions. Follow-up includes: individual work with both the person using the language and the recipient; family contact for both parties; reactive PSHE at class level; ongoing monitoring by the safeguarding team (who are on duty every lunchtime and break). Children and families are actively encouraged to report further incidents and know who their trusted adult is. Q: Where external services have been involved and parents became unhappy with the school's referral, how does the school maintain the child's trust? A: This is a recognised and difficult challenge. Where a child has disclosed and services have not acted, and the parent has reacted negatively toward the child for disclosing, it becomes harder for that child to trust the school again. The school is aware of this and continues to work with the family. It is an issue seen more broadly in the system.	

7	Update on new Ofsted Inspection framework	
	An overview of the new Ofsted framework was given and it was noted that UVA is not in the inspection window (expected window: 2028–29). • No overall single-word judgement. Schools will receive a 'Report Card' with ratings across seven evaluation areas. • Five-point grading scale: Exceptional / Strong / Expected Standard / Needs Attention / Urgent Improvement. • Evaluation areas: (1) Safeguarding (met/not met), (2) Inclusion, (3) Curriculum and Teaching, (4) Attendance and Behaviour, (5) Personal Development, (6) Leadership and Governance, (7) Early Years and Post-16. • A secure fit model replaces best fit: schools must evidence every bullet point in the Expected Standard toolkit before being considered for Strong Standard. • School profiles are expected to be 'spiky' – i.e. different ratings across different areas, even for high-performing schools. • HMI-led: All inspections now led by an HMI. Schools of UVA's size receive 3 inspectors on day 1 (HMI + inspectors). • Inspection days: Always Tuesday and Wednesday, with the school call on Monday morning (by ~9:30am). • Inspectors on site 8am–5pm. Every learning walk must be accompanied by a senior leader who can articulate what is expected and observed. • Significantly more case sampling: Inspectors follow the experience of vulnerable/SEND learners through the day. • A school nominee (typically VP/Deputy) must be able to substitute for the headteacher throughout the inspection. • Resources and toolkits are publicly available – a transparent framework. • The trust is supporting schools in the inspection window with group preparation. UVA has begun using a Self-Evaluation document (CE) aligned to the new framework bullet points. One primary school in the trust was inspected under the new framework in the week prior to this meeting. Learning from that inspection will be shared at a trust meeting the following day.	
	Q: Given that UVA was previously rated Outstanding in all areas, what profile is it likely to receive under the new framework? A: Outstanding schools will not automatically achieve Exceptional under the new framework. The expectation is a mixed/spiky profile, with some areas at Expected Standard and others at Strong. The secure fit model means that a single missed bullet point in a toolkit prevents a Strong rating for that area, regardless of overall strength. This is a recognised challenge for high-performing schools.	
7	Input on Task Design	
	SH presented work undertaken this term on task design in foundation subjects (History, Geography, RE, Science), focusing on deepening pupil thinking beyond knowledge recall: • Tools in use include: Hexagons (making links between concepts), Zones of Relevance, Three Heads / Odd One Out (evaluative thinking), and scaffolded paragraph frames. • The same models are used from Reception to Year 6 to build pupil familiarity, reducing cognitive load around the task format itself. • Humanities books are described as looking 'brilliant'. The approach is being extended into Science and RE. • This work is being led by the Headteacher across the trust as well as within UVA. Books were available for councillors to view at the meeting.	

8	Staffing and Wellbeing	
	A number of changes in staffing was noted with: • Heather Maynes (class teacher) is retiring this summer. • Sam Darby (HLTA, Foundation/Early Years) is leaving at Easter to a new post. • Three members of staff currently on maternity/paternity leave to return on 30 July Recruitment: The school is not actively recruiting at this stage; staffing decisions for September will be informed by pupil numbers and funding position over the coming weeks.	
7	Policies	
	A typo was noted in one policy document (reference to 'buggy system' – confirmed to be a typographical error). No policy approvals were formally required at this meeting beyond noting the document. Full policy reviews to be confirmed at the next meeting.	
8	Matters For The Attention Of The Board	
	• Attendance gap between PP and non-PP pupils – CLF audit visit arranged for next term. • New Ofsted framework overview shared with Academy Council; no immediate escalation required. • Safeguarding audit outcome (75%, top quartile of schools reviewed) to be noted positively. SEND White Paper: The school will continue to monitor developments.	
9	Any Other Business	
	No other business or additional items were raised.	
10	Close of Meeting	
	The Chair thanked all attendees and closed the meeting at 5:32pm	

ACTIONS

1	Discuss dual-channel communications (MCAS and email) with Julie to ensure key information, including surveys, reaches all parents.	SH
2	Explore reformulation of the Belonging Survey parent question to better understand what parents would like from the school community (consider QR follow-up via PTFA).	SH
3	CLF attendance audit to review PP attendance gap and school processes; report findings back to Academy Council.	SH
4	Implement post-Easter SATs support plan: informal paper practice from week 1 back, targeted breakfast club sessions for priority pupils, parent contact re: homework.	SH
5	Share learning from trust primary school Ofsted inspection (new framework) with Academy Council at next meeting.	SH
6	Complete Self-Evaluation document (CE) aligned to new Ofsted framework evaluation areas, ready for inspection window (2028–29).	SH