Minutes – Bristol Brunel Academy Council

Version:	Approved
Date	20 April 2026
Location:	Bristol Brunel Academy
Time:	5.30 pm

Academy Councillors in attendance:
Nicky McAllister (NM) (Chair) - Sponsor Councillor
Vic Boynton (VB) – Sponsor Councillor
Jade Chandler (JCH) - Academy Councillor
Jessica Cicero (JCI) – Staff Councillor
Georgina Hopkins (GH) – Parent Councillor
Sharon Porter (SP) - Academy Councillor
Tim Sanday (TS) – Support Staff Councillor

Invitees:
Jen Cusack (JCU) – Head of School
Kelly Jefferies (KJ) – Vice Principal
Tony Searle (TS) – Education Director (part)
Tom Leahy (TL) – AP, part

Apologies:
Saima Akhtar (SA) – Academy Councillor
Georgina Hopkins (GH) – Academy Councillor

Matters Arising

29.09.24 03	6.9.1	The risk register will be reviewed at the next meeting. ACTION Add agenda item on Risk Register for the next meeting. **Ongoing.**	JCU NM
01.12.25 02	8.9	JCU to check if the student voice survey included direct questions around behaviour. **Update- JCU confirmed the survey did not include direct questions on behaviour. Closed.**	JCU
09.02.26 01	9.1	Ensure any acronyms used in the safeguarding report or AC report are explained in the document. **Complete – closed.**	JCU
09.02.26 02	13.1	JCU will share the radioactive substance checklist with the AC. **Complete – closed.**	JCU

	Description	Action
1	**Introductions**	
1.1	NM welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies are recorded above and were accepted.	
2	**Declarations of Interest**	
2.1	There were no verbal declarations.	
3	**Academy Council Membership**	
3.1	There is one Sponsor Councillor vacancy remaining on the Academy Council. Discussions are underway with the Governance Team with regard to filling this vacancy. A vacancy also remains for the role of Vice Chair.	
4	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting of 9 February 2026 were agreed as accurate and approved.	

	Description	Action
5	**Matters Arising**	
5.1	The action table (above) has been updated.	
6	**Chairs update**	
6.1	NM confirmed that SP and VB have completed link Councillor visits. NM and JCH will arrange a visit with Marius via JCU. TS will arrange a visit shortly. NM noted the recent successes in work experience placement arrangements.	
7	**Area of Focus - Mock results and predictions**	
7.1	TL gave an updated on Mock 1 to Mock 2 results and action taken in the interim. Formal exams start this week. The Year 11 assembly was delivered today around exam conduct; TL provided students with an overview of a day in the life of exams.	
7.2	**Basics** • Predicted grades were shared with the AC. (The presentation slides are shared on Governor Hub) • Although English and maths have made progress, this is minimal with crossover students. • Predictions by both departments are reserved • Maths is having a greater negative impact on basics – tiering changes should support improvement.	
7.3	**Actions taken include** • Adapting intervention groups – PHSE and tutor • Ensuring classroom teachers know their key students • Contact home for key students • Paired planning of content on countdown document • Tiering changes for maths • Focus on students experiencing disadvantage • Increased QA from CL and SLT link • Awareness with staff	
7.4	**Basics – disadvantage** • The PP gap has grown from last year • 9-4 has increased slightly from Mock 1 to 2 • 9-5 has decreased slightly from Mock1 to 2	
7.5	The English department need to move less students than maths to be in line with last year.	
7.6	TL shared the results for subjects beyond English and maths. There has been progress in computer science and engineering, although it is still lower than expected and interventions are in place for both. Some decreases are that more papers were sat in Mock 2 – including history and business.	
7.7	Raising Attainment (RA) strategies in term 4 and 5 include: • Parent communications • Year 11 tutor time • Y11 PHSE intervention – maths and English • Parents evening and other guided conversations • Revision pre-exam plan • Exam Countdown document • Steps to Success document • Mock Results Day • Investigation into subjects of concern • Raising Attainment Team – regular meetings and oversight of plans in place	
7.8	**Questions from Academy Councillors**	
7.9	**What has been removed to enable these strategies to be put in place?**	
7.9.1	We did not remove much, we have just refined and grown strategies particularly for English and maths. We adapt the plan based on the cohort we have and the results we see.	

	Description	Action
7.10	**How about in terms of teaching teams, and their wellbeing?**	
7.10.1	Through curriculum teams there is more support in place for newer staff and existing staff.	
7.11	**To what extent are you sure that the individual teachers are very clear about what needs to be done and what needs to be prioritised?**	
7.11.1	The Head of English completed the final countdown and talks it through with staff. We use websites dedicated to predicting what subjects will appear in the maths paper in the final exam. Paired teaching is key – in each group there is an experienced member of staff to ensure the right topics are covered at the right time.	
7.12	**How were the Easter programmes? How did you prioritise PP?**	
7.12.1	We changed the start time for some children. This allowed those students to come in as they pleased and for some students it meant we saw them for at least part of the day. We prioritised PP students, sending invites to those families. The different start times increased attendance for the cohort as a whole. We are still collecting feedback from students to gather their views, but anecdotally it was a success.	
7.13	**Will the results in the summer be better than last year?**	
7.13.1	No, we are not predicting that currently.	
7.14	**How are you managing the pre-release for Geography?**	
7.14.1	Staffs have had time during FNN to discuss it. We have a lot of experience of that in the department. Staff are confident.	
7.15	**You felt more confident about pairing the right students and subjects in the options next year. Will the choice of options affect some of the outcomes? How much does attendance affect the outcomes?**	
7.15.1	Attendance is very challenging. Teachers meticulously plan the lessons, and some students turn up to school to truant. It is a big struggle for us. We need to change how parents and students feel about school. Year 11 students will truant certain lessons. We are walking them to lessons and staying with them until they settle, sometimes multiple times in each lesson. That is particularly challenging for coursework subjects.	
7.15.2	VB noted that in her link Councillor meeting, she had asked what would make the biggest difference to outcomes, and the answer had been attendance.	
7.16	A discussion took place about the importance of maths leadership going into next year. JCU noted that results in geography have stagnated a little, despite strong leadership.	
7.17	**How do the BBA geography results compare to academies across the trust?**	
7.17.1	The trust average grade for geography is 3.84. BBA in comparison is at 3.51. Academies with strong geography data are BMA, CAB and HPA.	
7.18	TS suggested leaders may wish to look to those schools to see the practice and provision there.	
7.19	NM noted that the Academy Council knows how hard staff are working and asked that their thanks are passed onto the staff body.	
8	**Academy Council Report**	
8.1	The Academy Council report was circulated in advance of the meeting.	
8.2	**Questions from the Academy Council**	
8.3	**How are things? Have there been any further repercussions re the situation re Damian Egan and has the whole incident had an effect on the Academy's reputation?**	
8.3.1	No not necessarily. In terms of the staff body, they are united in what they think, whilst being politically impartial. The decision was taken by trust leaders in good faith to protect the MP, students and staff, and that was not portrayed in the media.	
8.4	**Dame Joan's review is due to be published in the next few days, and we understand you have seen the recommendations. What are the implications of these for the academy?**	
8.4.1	The main recommendation was around creating a due diligence policy or procedure. We had done this but did not research DE as an MP, who had already visited other CLF academies. Going forwards we will ensure we are doing our due diligence. It may not have changed the outcome in this instance, but we will take that learning on board.	

	Description	Action
8.5	**Were there positive things that came out of the review?**	
8.5.1	Yes, lots. It is not a negative report. The content and recommendations were in line with the thinking of the leadership of the academy. (TS) There are lots of positives in there and it confirms the decision was made in the interest of the safety of the students and of the MP in question.	
8.6	**You say you are going to invite external scrutiny re suspensions, particularly Years 7 and 8. Who will do this and when will it be completed?**	
8.6.1	This relates to Fresh Start, not suspensions. Fresh Start is like a mini-ALP (alternative learning provision), and we changed the programme of how we run it. In terms of who will provide the scrutiny, we are thinking of approaching Paul Todd, Principal of Lansdown Park Academy.	
8.7	**Could you explain more about the School of Sanctuary?**	
8.7.1	An application was submitted before Easter. It is an award where you share three principles about people who are refugees or seeking asylum. It is about extending a welcome to all students and staff regardless of what their status is. We need to send some further evidence through to the awarding body but are making very good progress.	
8.8	**Like similar schools, the Academy is facing challenges in terms of Attendance much of which requires work across agencies. To what extent do other agencies provide support/resources currently, is there any hint this may increase, and have you identified other trusts that may be able to share good practice?**	
8.8.1	Attendance does not necessarily enable us to access an external agency. It is often a secondary problem, with mental health or anxiety as a first problem. We are finding that anxiety is becoming normalised. It is our experience now that students, and families are more fragile; society has changed. There is no external agency support that deals with attendance specifically (unless medical) it is the other need that results in cross agency working, such as mental health.	
8.9	**Tony, what is your perspective on attendance trust wide, and nationally? Is it a similar story to that happening at BBA?**	
8.9.1	Yes, it is a challenge in secondary academies across the trust. Other agencies are being pushed forward. There is some research that has been completed through the behaviour and attendance hub work. Attendance remains incredibly stubborn in the secondary phase; the biggest thing we can do is provide a great experience for students when they are in school.	
8.10	**The 3-day absence home visits appear to have some impact. It would be useful to hear more about parental responses, especially for pupils with PA. Can you explain the PA data on page 13 of the AC report?**	
8.10.1	The parental feedback has been mixed. It has definitely had impact.	
8.11	**What is the success rate of the home visits?**	
8.11.1	Some parents respond positively and then send their child to school. Coupled with attendance letters and fines, the home visits are definitely having impact. We do have some children that turn up to school and then truant the lessons.	
8.12	**Do hard to reach parents attend attendance meetings?**	
8.12.1	Some do. We continue to consider how to engage those harder to reach parents. We have an attendance link worker in place, and this is a key role for the academy. We take a multi-pronged approach to attendance, using a nurturing approach, the human tough and also the legal process.	
8.13	**You report on increasing student and parental mental health issues. Will the move in KCSIE from Early Help to Family Help address these needs in any way?**	
8.13.1	No, as a school we are expected to take more responsibility for this. The thresholds have risen steeply and are now higher than ever before. It is extremely challenging.	
8.14	A discussion took place about the various government strategies in place, including the potential re-introduction of early help centres (such as was provided by Sure Start). NM reminded Academy Councillors that key issues can be fed back up to the board and asked if they felt this was a topic that should be highlighted at that level. The Academy Council agreed. **ACTION: NM will raise a discussion with the board about the challenges faced by academies when looking to secure external support for their most vulnerable students.**	**NM**

	Description	Action
8.15	**Do we have the staffing/resources to meet the needs identified here as well as the 57 EHCP students?**	
8.15.1	We are fortunate to have a strong SEND team, with a SENCo, Assistant SENCo and a SENCo in training. Through timetable manipulation we have been able to reduce the teaching load of that leadership SENCo team. That is unusual; it is not always possible in an academy. Student need is increasing at a significant rate. Funding is reducing. We will need to review our staffing structures as a result, as we do each year. We have a great learning support team, who are not necessarily specialists, but who are very skilled. We are doing the very best we can, with resources we have at this time.	
8.16	**What did the Safeguarding Audit reveal?**	
8.16.1	This will be our focus moving into the next two terms. One focus is around how quickly we are actioning reports on CPOMs linked to bullying. The pastoral teams are picking up instances regularly, but we need to make sure the loop is closed on CPOMs. There is also a piece of work to do around recording the decisions we make from a safeguarding point of view. Further work needs to be completed around the S175 audit, and that is ongoing.	
8.17	**The report refers to some concerns about Year 7 progress. Are there any particular reasons for this?**	
8.17.1	It was across lots of subjects, not just one. Luke has done some research around how staff come to the DOYA grades and found at BBA there is a huge variety of how staff are grading students. This opened further questions for particular departments. We will now look at this and hopefully understand why progress is so varied in Year 7. **ACTION: An update on year 7 progress and how staff are grading students will be provided at the next meeting.**	JCU
8.18	**What 'good things' and 'what needs to be improved on' have been identified from Learning Walks?**	
8.18.1	We have changed the lesson walk throughs. This term and next term the focus is around checking for understanding. We are looking at three things – hinge questions, mini whiteboards and cold calling. Across the academy, there is inconsistency in these areas. We are pleased that we are seeing much better scaffolding; this has been noted in class visits.	
8.19	**Cover costs have dropped considerably. How have you manged this? What might be the full implications of the budget reduction?**	
8.19.1	Cover has dropped term on term. The biggest drop is from term 1 this year, compared to term 1 last year. We have managed this through not getting cover when LSAs are absent. We moved away from the idea that the same adult will always support the same child; this does not allow children to build relationships with other adults. We have carefully considered how we have arranged cover supervisors. Next year we will align more with the CLF employment manual, and this will result in less discretion around leave; there may be more unpaid leave.	
8.20	**Finance**	
8.20.1	JCU provided an update on the budget for next year. This continues to be a significant concern as the academy was predicting a £500K deficit before the funding letter arrived. Now that the funding has been allocated, this has been reduced to a predicted a £280k deficit. Since the letter arrived outlining the funding, this has been further reduced to £100K deficit. JCU noted this was very encouraging and suggested there may yet be further savings that result in a final predicted deficit of £60k.	
8.21	**Does that mean options choices will be slightly different?**	
8.21.1	Not for the coming Year 9. We are seeing less take up in modern foreign languages (MFL) and some reduction in music so there may be some decisions to be made there about what the offer looks like.	
9	**Safeguarding**	
9.1	This has been covered through the AC Report.	
10	**Staffing and Wellbeing**	
10.1	This has been covered through the AC Report and through questions from Councillors. NM reiterated that the Academy Council is aware of how hard everyone is working; this is demonstrated	

	Description	Action
	through the AC report and the responses to questions and shows that everyone is working hard to provide the best possible experience and outcomes for the students. NM thanked JCU and the staff body on behalf of the AC.	
11	**Policies that require review**	
11.1	KJ advised that she would share some policies for review with the Academy Council shortly via Governor Hub.	
12	**Matters for the attention of the Board or COAC**	
12.1	N/A	
13	**AOB**	
13.1	No further business was reported.	
13.2	The meeting closed at 7.05 pm. The next meeting takes place on 13 July 2026.	

ACTIONS:

29.09.24 03	6.9.1	The risk register will be reviewed at the next meeting. ACTION Add agenda item on Risk Register for the next meeting. **Ongoing.**	JCU NM
20.04.26 01	8.14	NM will raise a discussion with the board about the challenges faced by academies when looking to secure external support for their most vulnerable students.	NM
20.04.26 02	8.17.1	An update on year 7 progress and how staff are grading students will be provided at the next meeting.	JCU

Link Councillors as of April 2026:

AIP - NM
Safeguarding – NM
Disadvantage and Looked After Children – GH
T&L – VB
EDI - SP
Careers - TS
SEND – NM and JCH
Policy committee – JCH, SA, KJ