

Minutes – John Cabot Academy Council

Meeting Date: 10 July 2024
Location: John Cabot Academy
Time: 4.30 pm

Present: Linda Tanner (LT) Chair of Academy Council
 Kate Willis (KW) Principal
 Andrea Duignan (AD) Parent Academy Councillor
 Matthew Fincher (MF) LA Representative Councillor
 Simon Horn (SH) Sponsor Academy Councillor
 King Egwu (KE) Support Staff Councillor
 Nigel Eaton (NE) Sponsor Academy Councillor
 Samira Musse (SM) Parent Academy Councillor

Attendees: Wendy Hellin (WH) Clerk
 Lynne Magee (LM) Senior Operations Manager
 Gemma Read (GR) Vice Principal

Apologies: Angela Long (AL) Sponsor Academy Councillor
 Georgina Tankard (GT) Sponsor Academy Councillor
 Chris Fuller (CF) Teacher Academy Councillor
 Jon Jones (JJ) Sponsor Academy Councillor

Action Table:

Item No	Action	Owner
06.12.23 02	LT will discuss link roles for Attendance and RHSE with Georgina and Angela and email councillors regarding a link role for EDI. These are being rationalised by the central governance team and will be reviewed in September. Ongoing.	LT
01.05.24 01	KW will investigate the issues that occurred with the parent election process. This is included in the AC report and can be closed.	KW

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	
1.1	Welcome and introductions were made. Samira Musse was welcomed as the new Parent Councillor.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	There were no verbal declarations of interest made for this meeting.	
3	Governance	
3.1	SWG meeting	
3.1.1	The SWG group met on 14 June, Academy Councillors heard about the quality of education and provision for children in care. Councillors had a tour and saw some lessons which was useful.	
3.2	Governor Hub	
3.2.1	Academy Councillors were encouraged to sign up to Governor hub in readiness for the first meeting in September. Training is available online and support will be provided by the clerk to ensure everyone can access it.	
3.3	Prevent training	
3.3.1	All Councillors were asked to complete Prevent training and return certificates to the school.	

4	Minutes of the previous meeting	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting held 1 May 2024 were agreed as a true record.	
5	Matters Arising	
5.1	The action table above has been updated.	
6	Parent Councillor Election	
6.1	An explanation around the parent councillor election is included in the AC report.	
6.2	Questions from the Academy Council	
6.3	One of the ballot slips given to a student had already been used. That means a parent vote did not get included. How did this happen?	
6.3.1	It looked like a voting slip was spoiled in class, and so more likely done by a student. It was not a valid slip handed in by a parent – the voting slips had not yet been sent home. Once the academy identified the issue, staff started the process over, using Microsoft forms.	
6.3.2	KW advised that all communications from the school to parents are electronic. A discussion took place around how the academy can be aware of those families that would struggle with this form of communication. KW will consider this further.	
7	Health and Safety	
7.1	LM reported that progress was seen in the departmental Health and Safety audits; all came back strong. AL attended the academy as part of safety day and reported an issue with a corridor in the academy where there was no working light; LM reported the lighting had been checked and it had been found that the light switch had not been turned on.	
7.2	In response to some student voice collected last year, the toilets have been refurbished. This is one of the areas where students indicated they felt unsafe. Other areas included the canteen and PE store.	
7.3	Questions from the Academy Council	
7.4	There are a high number of accidents recorded in the AC report – has this been checked to the actual accident report? Is it accurate?	
7.4.1	It is. First aiders are recording every incident, including stomach aches and headaches. There is a column included in the record that shows what the incident was, and we can check that across to the report.	
7.5	Are you able to split out the information on the AC report so we can identify different types of incidents?	
7.5.1	We haven't done that as yet, but we can do so. We are able to see where it is a mental health issue currently.	
7.6	You were due to have some training from a mental health professional; has that now taken place?	
7.6.1	Yes, that has been completed. We are on a constant rolling programme of first aid training, including training around supporting SEMH students.	
7.7	If students are ill, are they given a note before they go back into lessons?	
7.7.1	Yes, they have a note. Parents are informed where it is a head bump or other serious injury.	
7.8	Are you looking at trends to see if there are problem areas?	
7.8.1	Yes, we have had a few areas come up, such as some aggressive behaviour in corridors and where that happens, we have made adjustments as a result of that information.	
7.9	How do students feel about the new CCTV that has been installed? Has it been positively received, or do they consider it an evasion of privacy?	
7.9.1	We have not yet directly asked them or told them about the new equipment. Hopefully, it will make them feel safer. We will include it in the first assembly in September with a range of other updates around work completed over the summer.	

7.10	Do you have external providers to carry out fire risk assessments? What is their standard around damaged fire doors?	
7.10.1	It is a mix of both external and internal. We are currently waiting for BAM to provide some detailed information around this. It is a common theme across the academies, with doors regularly being damaged, some accidentally, some deliberately. There are regular checks and site walks in place, and these are often supported by Jo Rodman, academy Health and Safety Officer.	
8	Academy Council Report	
8.1	KW advised that the AC report is in a different format for this meeting. In half term, SLT met to write the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) which is an evaluation of the school against the Ofsted framework. It provides a snap shot of where the academy is and what it needs to do to improve, and so informs the Academy Improvement Plan. The draft SEF has been shared with the papers for this meeting.	
8.2	KW outlined the context of the academy as detailed at the start of the SEF and highlighted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The academy is due for inspection by Ofsted by September 2025. • JCA is unique within the trust in that it has Post 16 on its roll. • KW is meeting with JJ and the Principal of Post 16 this week to discuss how to manage the inspection together. • It would also be helpful for LT to meet with the Chair of the Post 16 Academy Council. 	
8.3	Behaviour and Attitudes	
8.3.1	This area is firmly good, with outstanding in some aspects of practice. Bullying is well managed, and relationships are strong. There needs to be some focus on suspensions. The academy is above national for suspensions and 75% of suspensions are due to 14 students in particular, and they have very significant SEND needs. SEND is increasing 10% year on year and there are now around 60% more EHCPs than five years ago. There is a high amount of SEMH need and the academy is not meeting the needs of those students at present. Attendance is at 92% which is above the CLF average and above national.	
8.4	What prevents the academy being outstanding in this area?	
8.4.1	It is those suspensions.	
8.5	Quality of Education	
8.5.1	The academy has a very well-developed curriculum. The ARV shows curriculum fidelity and that leaders can talk about the implementation and intent of the curriculum. Data looks strong and has been above national for the last two years. Disadvantaged and SEND groups typically perform above national. There are some curriculum areas where outcomes are not good enough and support is being provided to those teachers. The areas include geography, creative design and some concerns in science. There has been high turnover of staff in science. Next year is currently fully staffed with 8 lessons being taught by non-specialists. Where this is the case mathematicians will be used to teach those lessons where possible.	
8.5.2	Other areas for improvement include reading. There is a structure in place but as yet it has not been sufficiently impactful. English is also an area of focus due to a change in the Head of Department.	
8.6	Personal Development	
8.6.1	There is a comprehensive PHSE and RSE curriculum, delivered by non-specialist staff, but the same staff each year. Provision is made for their training. Drama teachers deliver this in KS3, and science staff in KS4. Safety days are good in allowing the academy to be responsive to safeguarding needs; student voice is very positive about this.	

8.6.2	There is a thorough tutor programme to cover aspects of spiritual, moral and social education, including British Values and reading. This is the main mechanism for developing reading beyond those students that need specific intervention and this system is improving.	
8.6.3	Careers is measured by the Gatsby Benchmarks and look to be in a strong position. One area of weakness is in the experience of workplaces. There was going to be a trial for a small number of children going out on work experience, but this has grown to 47 students. The rest of the year group have an extremely strong week of careers programme in school, with external providers coming in daily. JCA now has South West Green Champion status for careers and is one of the few schools collaborating with Deloitte.	
8.6.4	The academy has thought carefully about the intent of the extra curricular offer. There are now 32 clubs, including sports clubs, performing arts and student led EDI groups as well as academic support. The quality is high, and the uptake is good and is typically representative of the cohort of the school.	
8.6.5	Areas for development include character development and the academy is using its vision and motto to drive that. Further work needs to be done on mental health and the academy continues to prioritise training for non-specialists.	
8.7	How do students feel about the reading programme in tutor time?	
8.7.1	We have not yet asked students this, but there is less truancy in tutor time, which is a positive sign.	
8.8	Have you done any proactive work to get increased numbers of PP students into clubs?	
8.8.1	Not so much this year. We do subsidise trips for PP students and also music tuition. We purposefully chose to spend money on high quality music tuition in school because we know it has a significant impact on students. It is good to see many clubs are student led.	
8.9	Safeguarding	
8.9.1	This year there has been a focus on process and on tracking students. Next year the plan is to build on those systems. The safeguarding audit was completed and there was a 10% improvement on last year. Communication has been strengthened. It can be confusing working across two different Local Authorities and the clarity provided has been helpful. The areas for improvement are relatively minor compared to last year. The academy needs to recruit a new DSL, and this will continue to be a non-teaching role. Further work will take place around how to protect students online.	
8.9.2	The PHSE curriculum starts with the topic Living in the Wider World and supports all students, but particularly those Year 7s that might be getting their first smart phones. The aim is to support them to use them safely. Safety days have been successful and safety messages continue to be drip fed through the briefings, newsletters and assemblies.	
8.9.3	A wide range of training has taken place during inset days, in response to concerns from CPOMs, the community and Local Authority updates. The academy has worked hard to support the students to speak up and report all incidents. Normalised behaviours are now called out. Complaints from students and parents have reduced.	
8.9.4	The South Gloucestershire wellbeing survey is a key piece of student voice that is carried out. Various different year group councils also feed through to the executive council who meet with KW to pass that feedback on. Parent voice is collected after every parents evening; 20-30% responded to the survey, on average. Of those parents, 90% say the students feel safe and 85% say the students are happy. AD and SM provided some positive feedback about the last parents evening. AD suggested having someone on the door to collect parent view on the way out and offered to attend to do that. Staff voice is collected via anonymous surveys; this is used to steer conversations with staff during staff meetings.	
8.9.5	The DfE has clear guidance on how to manage staff workload, and the academy has implemented each of those strategies over time. These include having sensible data inputs across the year, providing analysed data rather than raw data and appropriate marking policies	

	in place. Areas for improvement include further work on EDI and character education, the refinement of staff voice and parent voice and some work around reducing suspensions.	
8.10	Staffing - cover	
8.10.1	The teacher recruitment crisis is impacting JCA through the quality of the cover staff colleagues. This is impacting on behaviour in class. Student voice says that students do not currently like cover lessons. A large number of students are being sent out of class, often SEND students. There is a plan in place to change the way lessons are covered. GR outlined the proposal which will see up to 3 different classes grouped together in one large room that will be staffed by Cover Supervisors. The students will have cover work (maths, English and science) and will work under exam-like conditions with booklets to complete. There will also be a member of duty staff in that space. Having regular staff will mean they know the students well, but also know the SEND students and are aware of the support they need. Year 11 will run independently of the proposed system, and possibly Year 10 too. It is hoped to introduce this system in January or February of next year.	
8.11	Psychological Safety	
8.11.1	Work started in this area earlier in the year and has been very impactful. This will continue into next year, with a focus to particularly support pupils with mental health issues to come to school. Work on character is very explicit, and includes post prejudicial support for staff and students. The academy is working with Representation Matters who will deliver some of that work to staff and students. KW invited one or two members of the Academy Council to take part in the planning for that work in September; AD and NE volunteered.	
8.12	EDI	
8.12.1	Diversity of the staff body has increased over the last 5 years, but there is still a disparity and further work to do. The academy works with outside agencies such as Integrate Youth Concern and the basketball mentoring scheme that has been hugely impactful on students. The Equality Council has brought about significant change in the academy. Staff have completed a range of training and CPD opportunities. Last year's Show Racism the Red Card training was very impactful. All members of staff undertook four sessions and as a result of it, the academy changed five of its policies. Staff voice was collected before and after the training and there were clear developments around the understanding of protected characteristics and the recognition and handling of racial incidents.	
8.12.2	The EDI Lead from South Gloucestershire LA, Josiah Chudleigh has attended to complete an EDI audit and to provide an excellent session on micro aggressions and use of racial language. The academy is seeking to achieve the South Gloucestershire Equality Mark. It was noted that children of mixed heritage have lower attendance and the academy needs to understand the reasons for this. Likewise, these children have weaker GCSE results than the rest of the academy and parents of these children can struggle to engage with the school.	
8.12.3	Bullying is monitored across every term, and the data is shared with the LA. There have been relatively few prejudicial bullying incidents or safeguarding incidents of a prejudicial nature. The data is indicating that there is significant under-reporting across the academy. For this reason, proactive education around racial, homophobic and safeguarding incidents and support post incident is on the AIP for this year.	
8.13	Given the perception in the wider community around bullying at JCA, will you be detailing on the website the work you are doing in this area?	
8.13.1	We spoke to the CLF marketing team who said it is best not to put anything about bullying on the website as this will keep it in people's minds. They suggest the academy publishes lots of positive messages and good news stories about the academy, and about what a lovely place it is to attend. I am continuing to get out to the primary schools to build relationships with them and drop flyers and chat to the Heads.	

8.14	You mentioned under reporting of incidents. Is there a feeling that there is under reporting by girls, about boys using unacceptable language or behaviour? Is it felt that there is no point in reporting it?	
8.14.1	Yes, there is a lack in confidence of reporting, and we have a gender equality group looking at this issue. This means there is a group that can report things that they hear, on behalf of others.	
8.15	Why has the academy made the decision to dismiss the use of the anonymous safeguarding reporting system?	
8.15.1	It was trialled at Bristol Brunel Academy. Unfortunately, the students flooded the system with false reports. This overwhelmed the capacity of staff to work through these to identify any that might be actual issues. This is very detrimental to safeguarding teams but could also lead to a genuine safeguarding issue being missed, due to the false reporting. Not enough work was done with students prior to the launch of the system, and it has been taken down. It will not be used until staff are confident that it does what it should and will not lead to a missed disclosure. Staff have worked with girls around protecting and supporting each other, and as a result reports have gone up around 50%. This is not unusual at the end of the academic year. These are from friends worried about their friends but also that are a bit worried about themselves. There has been progress with the Year 10 girls, and they are quite an influential group so this will have a ripple effect on lower year groups.	
8.16	Is there a concern that boys can behave in a certain way, and get away with it?	
8.16.1	We have been blunt with them, and talked about the harmful behaviour and what it means, and what is legal and what is not. The police have been into school to do some workshops too. Things change rapidly, especially with social media and it can catch parents unaware. Information is regularly put in the newsletter, and we need to increase the readership of that. We have invited parents in for various internet safety awareness sessions but have had a low response rate.	
9	Safeguarding	
9.1	This has been covered. No significant safeguarding concerns were reported to the AC.	
10	Staff Wellbeing	
10.1	KW shared some of the staff voice collected about the description of the school, and around the support they have in school, and the friendly place it is to work at. This is indicative of staff wellbeing. Staff have been involved in various working parties to develop the strategic plan for next year and have a group looking at recognition. This is a leadership issue, and it will be discussed in various line management meetings.	
11	Governance	
11.1	Link Councillor reports have been shared where they have been completed. AD has met with JJ to discuss pupils in care and will visit the academy during term 1 to meet with some students.	
11.2	There are some changes proposed by the central governance team, around the size and remit of the Academy Council. Further details will be confirmed during term 1.	
12	Policies	
12.1	The Academy Council noted the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection Policy • Information Security Policy • Records Retention Policy • Modern Slavery Statement 	
13	Health & Safety	
13.1	This has been covered within the AC report.	
14	Matters for the attention of the Board /COAC	
14.1	No matters for the board or COAC were raised.	

15	Any Other Business	
15.1	LT advised that Kingswood Town Council has recruited a community and events person and suggested KW links with them.	
15.2	GW reported that the students had taken part in a school general election process and announced the results.	

The meeting closed at

Actions carried forward:

Item No	Action	Owner
06.12.23 02	LT will discuss link roles for Attendance and RHSE with Georgina and Angela and email councillors regarding a link role for EDI. These are being rationalised by the central governance team and will be reviewed in September. Ongoing.	LT

Next meetings:

AC1	25-Sep-2024	5-8pm (Board and AC results review) online
AC2	Thurs 24-Oct-2024	4.30-6.30pm
AC3	Mon 9-Dec-2024	4.30-6.30pm
AC4	Weds 5 Mar-2025	4.30-6.30pm
AC5	Weds 30-Apr-2025	4.30-6.30pm
AC6	Weds 25 Jun-2025	4.30-6.30pm

Strategic Working Group meetings (8 - 10 am, Board Room at John Cabot Academy)
TBC