

Minutes – Monkton Wood Academy Council Meeting

Version: FINAL
Meeting Date: Tuesday, 9th December 2025
Location: Teams
Time: 17:00 – 19:00

Chair: Richard Bonner Sponsor Councillor
Attendees: Clare Ousley Support Staff Councillor
 Anne Guild Staff Councillor
 Laura Lewis Parent Councillor

In attendance: Hannah Jones Principal
 Cameron Shaw Executive Principal
 Debbie O’Sullivan Observer
 Amy Carden-Smith Observer
 Tessa Clark Clark

Apologies: Louise Husband
 Ian Grant

Minutes

		Action
	Pre-meeting	
	The Chair introduced himself, welcomed new members, and shared the agenda for observers without Governor Hub access. Councillors reviewed the Academy Council Report, AIP and SEF and agreed on key questions for discussion. Key areas identified from AIP and SEF: Leadership & Governance, Curriculum & Teaching, Achievement, Behaviour & Attendance. CS explained new Ofsted terminology: “Expected standard” replaces “Good”; “Needs attention” is similar to an MOT advisory—acceptable but requiring improvement before next inspection. Positive news: no areas at MOT standard. CS noted improvements since special measures and May monitoring visit. Central sessions will be provided for councillors on Ofsted language. Discussion included phonics interventions for students with low reading levels, attainment gaps, and cultural factors affecting outcomes. The Chair reminded councillors their role is strategic, not operational.	
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	

1.1	The Principal introduced herself and welcomed new members (observers). Introductions were made.	
1.2	LH (AP Pupil Outcomes) was unable to attend.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	No declarations of interests.	
2.2	Guidance on declarations was shared. New councillors will receive forms to complete.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising	
3.1	<p>Appointment of link roles:</p> <p>Debbie – Safeguarding Richard – Careers Jo and Amy – Potential SEND Anne – Disadvantaged (confirmed)</p> <p>New councillors will not start these roles until checks are complete. ACTION: Revisit link roles when all councillors are appointed.</p>	TC/RB
3.2	<p>Election of Vice Chair postponed until all checks are complete. ACTION: Elect Vice Chair when all councillor checks are complete.</p>	TC/RB
4	Chairs Update	
4.1	Chair was unable to attend COAC	
5	Academy Council Report:	
5.1	The AC Report was shared on the screen for ease of reference, particularly for those members observing who do not yet have access to Gov Hub.	
5.1.1	HJ outlined the approach taken when preparing the report. HJ noted that, following discussions with RB, the aim was to make the report more action-focused while remaining clear and accessible. To support this, a glossary section was included rather than an exhaustive list of acronyms, with terms added in the order they appear in the report.	
5.1.2	HJ confirmed that the report is currently seven pages long, including a front page and glossary, and is structured to provide a concise, top-level summary of actions taken since the last meeting. While the report focuses on actions, HJ acknowledged the importance of demonstrating impact and shared plans to develop a separate tracker aligned to the Academy Improvement Plan. This tracker would show progress against key metrics such as attendance, persistent absence, predicted grades, and suspension rates, enabling the Academy Council to monitor impact alongside actions.	
5.1.3	HJ explained that the report is structured using the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) to ensure clarity and alignment with national expectations. She noted that the Trust is exploring a common reporting template for future Academy Council reports. Until any new guidance is introduced, the current format will continue to be used to support effective governance discussions.	
5.2	Safeguarding	
5.2.1	HJ introduced the safeguarding section of the AC report and explained that the information shared was drawn from the safeguarding report submitted to the Trust by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). All sections containing	

	children’s names had been removed, but HJ acknowledged that the report still contained a large amount of operational detail and may not yet be at the right level for Academy Council purposes. HJ confirmed that this will be reviewed at the next strategic safeguarding meeting, where the format of future reports will be considered to ensure they are more concise and top-level.	
	HJ provided an overview of the safeguarding report submitted to the Trust. She noted that the document reflects the breadth of safeguarding activity undertaken by the academy and the importance of maintaining strong systems, oversight and responsiveness in this area. The Council received assurance that statutory responsibilities continue to be met and that safeguarding practice remains a priority. Leaders confirmed that future reports will continue to present safeguarding information in a high-level format appropriate for governance monitoring.	
5.2.2	Q - It would be useful to understand what “good” looks like—not that we want any cases, but is there a way to compare either across the Trust or nationally? Comparing against the school’s own trajectory is helpful, but benchmarking might give a sense of what’s expected.	
5.2.3	HJ explained that safeguarding data is complex and influenced by national guidance and recording practices, but agreed that exploring high-level comparisons through the Trust network would be useful. The Council received assurance that the focus remains on strong safeguarding systems and timely responses ACTION: DSL to discuss benchmarking with the DSL network and report back in AC4.	HJ
5.2.4	LL reflected on the importance of understanding safeguarding responsibilities within the wider context of the school community.	
5.2.5	HJ provided assurance that safeguarding systems are well established and continue to be strengthened through ongoing leadership and staff training. She noted that recent developments have supported further refinement of safeguarding processes and reinforced a strong safeguarding culture across the academy. The Council received assurance that the academy has appropriate capacity and structures in place to manage safeguarding effectively.	
5.2.6	Q – Do you feel you are in a good place for safeguarding at the moment?	
5.2.7	HJ assured the Council that safeguarding remains a high priority and that leaders are confident in the robustness of current systems. She emphasised that safeguarding practice is continually reviewed and strengthened, and the Council noted the ongoing commitment to maintaining strong safeguarding culture and oversight.	
6	Self Evaluation Form (SEF)	
6.1	The Council reviewed the self-evaluation document to support understanding of the academy’s current priorities and to inform subsequent discussion of the Academy Council Report.	
6.1.1	HJ explained that work to refresh the Academy Improvement Plan is underway to ensure it remains closely aligned to current priorities. A revised version will be brought to the next meeting for Councillors to review. ACTION: HJ to share revised AIP at next AC meeting.	HJ

6.1.2	HJ explained that the self-evaluation is a working document that is updated regularly to ensure it reflects the academy's ongoing development work.	
6.1.3	Q - Councillors asked about how the document is used as part of wider quality assurance processes.	
6.1.4	HJ confirmed that the self-evaluation supports strategic planning and provides an overview of strengths and areas for development. She emphasised that leaders continuously review and refine the document to ensure it remains accurate and reflective of improvement priorities.	
6.1.5	RB encouraged leaders to continue highlighting both strengths and areas where further development work is underway.	
6.1.6	HJ noted the key themes within the self-evaluation and advised that future Academy Council meetings will continue to explore these areas to support effective governance scrutiny. ACTION: AC members to remember the three areas for improvement identified in the SEF.	ALL
6.2	Leadership and Governance.	
6.2.1	HJ introduced the leadership and governance section of the self-evaluation. She noted that the Academy Council continues to strengthen its governance practice as new members join and undertake link roles. The Council discussed the importance of maintaining effective governance oversight, including link visits and engagement with school priorities. ACTION: Organise link visits once the Academy Council is fully constituted.	TC/RB
6.2.2	Q -The report states that overall leadership is strong and improvement priorities are clear. How do you evaluate that? What is the evidence?	
6.2.3	HJ explained that the evidence base for leadership includes improvement plans produced by senior leaders, heads of department, and team leaders. For governance, the primary evidence comes from minutes of Academy Council meetings and link councillor visits. HJ acknowledged that some leadership interactions, such as regular meetings between the Principal and the Chair, are not formally minuted but would be discussed with inspectors if required. She confirmed that these meetings take place fortnightly and cover strategic matters. HJ emphasised that governance is supported not only by the Academy Council but also by the central governance team, which provides compliance oversight and policy support.	
6.2.4	Q – Does the central governance team provide that support?	
6.2.5	HJ confirmed that the central governance team provides strong support in areas such as policy, admissions and data protection. She emphasised the importance of continued robust governance challenge to support ongoing school improvement.	
6.3	Inclusion – SEND and Pupil Premium	
6.3.1	HJ introduced the inclusion section and noted that the academy continues to focus on ensuring strong support for pupils with additional needs. She highlighted ongoing work to develop provision and ensure that systems and practices remain effective. The Council discussed the importance of maintaining high-quality inclusive practice across the curriculum.	

6.4	Quality of Education – Curriculum and Teaching	
6.4.1	HJ provided an overview of the quality of education, noting the continued focus on ensuring consistently strong teaching and high expectations across all subject areas. She highlighted ongoing work to support staff development and maintain a cohesive curriculum approach.	
6.4.2	Q: Councillors asked about how the academy ensures that teaching quality is sustained across the school.	
6.4.3	HJ confirmed that leaders maintain a strong focus on developing excellent teaching and learning. Professional development, collaborative planning and subject leadership all contribute to supporting high-quality practice.	
6.4.4	Q: How do you measure consistency?	
6.4.5	HJ explained that leaders use a range of quality assurance approaches to gain a rounded view of teaching and learning. These processes support both celebration of strengths and identification of areas for further professional development. ACTION: Report on staffing and impact measurement.	HJ
6.4.6	Q: What helps move practice from “generally strong” to “consistently strong”?	
6.4.7	HJ emphasised the importance of leadership, ongoing professional development and alignment of expectations across departments. She noted that planned training will continue to reinforce high standards and support staff in their roles.	
6.4.8	Q: How is staff development supported across different contract types?	
6.4.9	HJ confirmed that the academy supports all staff through established processes to ensure continuity of learning for pupils. Leaders monitor staffing patterns to ensure that provision remains stable and effective. ACTION: HJ to report on vacancy rates and long-term sickness at the next meeting.	HJ
6.4.10	Q: A councillor asked about how the academy manages unexpected staffing changes.	
6.4.11	HJ explained that leaders have clear systems in place to manage short-notice changes and to prioritise continuity for pupils. She noted that senior leaders support this process and that monitoring arrangements ensure consistency in provision.	
6.5	Achievement	
6.5.1	HJ provided an overview of current achievement priorities and outlined the academy’s continued focus on raising attainment for all groups of pupils. She highlighted the work taking place across subjects to strengthen curriculum delivery and support progress over time. Leaders continue to monitor outcomes closely and are implementing actions aligned to the Academy Improvement Plan.	
6.5.2	Q: Councillors asked about differences in progress between different pupil groups.	
6.5.3	HJ explained that leaders analyse outcomes for all groups to ensure that appropriate support and challenge are in place. She outlined the academy’s ongoing work to strengthen provision and enhance the impact of teaching,	

	assessment and targeted support. The Council discussed the importance of maintaining high expectations for every pupil.	
6.5.4	Q - When will we see the 2025 national average?	
6.5.6	CS noted that headline national information is released annually and that leaders will update the Academy Council once validated comparisons are available.	
6.6	Attendance and Behaviour	
6.6.1	HJ provided an overview of attendance and behaviour, noting that both areas remain key priorities within the Academy Improvement Plan. She highlighted that leaders continue to focus on ensuring consistent expectations and a positive climate for learning. Attendance has shown improvement across several measures, and the academy continues to work with families and staff to sustain this progress. Leaders will bring updated attendance information to future meetings to support ongoing monitoring by the Council. ACTION: On the impact, share attendance data and include details on students with 0% attendance (currently 15–20 students).	HJ
6.6.2	Q: Councillors asked how the academy strengthens consistency in behaviour expectations and how this is monitored.	
6.6.3	HJ explained that professional development, clear policy expectations and ongoing support for staff all contribute to promoting consistency across the school.	
6.6.4	Q: How does the academy support staff in maintaining consistent behaviour expectations?	
6.6.5	HJ confirmed that leaders support staff through training, coaching and regular reinforcement of expectations. The aim is to ensure that all pupils experience a consistent approach across subjects while maintaining a supportive working environment for staff.	
6.6.7	Q: How does the academy understand and address reasons why some pupils may struggle to attend or engage in certain lessons?	
6.6.8	HJ explained that leaders monitor patterns of pupil engagement and work closely with pastoral and inclusion teams to identify and address barriers. This includes working with families and external partners where appropriate.	
6.6.9	Q: How does the academy monitor instances where pupils are not attending lessons as expected?	
6.6.10	HJ responded: Leaders monitor patterns of lesson attendance and engagement to help identify where additional support or follow-up may be needed. The academy uses its internal behaviour and attendance systems to ensure that any concerns are picked up promptly and addressed in partnership with pastoral and inclusion teams. ACTION: Add truancy data and analysis (including push/pull factors) to attendance metrics for future reporting.	HJ
6.7	Personal Development and Well-Being	
6.7.1	HJ reported that personal development and well-being remain secure areas of the school's provision. She highlighted the broad range of pastoral support and extracurricular opportunities available to pupils, and noted that student feedback continues to be positive. Councillors will receive the latest student newsletter showcasing recent activities and achievements.	

	ACTION: HJ to ask SF to send the student newsletter magazine to all councillors.	HJ
6.7.2	Q: Councillors asked how leaders gather views from staff and students to inform improvement work across the school.	
6.7.3	HJ explained that leaders use a range of staff and student voice activities to gather feedback and support continuous improvement. Pupil leadership structures enable students to contribute to decision-making, and leaders regularly review feedback to inform development priorities.	
6.8	Sixth Form	
6.8.1	HJ provided an overview of sixth form provision, noting that outcomes remain strong and the curriculum continues to offer a broad and inclusive range of opportunities for students. Leaders are continuing to develop aspects of the provision to ensure it remains ambitious and responsive to students' needs. The Council acknowledged the strengths of the sixth form and discussed ongoing areas for development.	
7	Policies	
7.1	AC members are reminded to review policies on Governor Hub, specifically in the "Policies to be Ratified" section. ACTION: All AC members to catch up on outstanding policies and mark as read on Governor Hub.	ALL
8	Link Reports	
8.1	The process for link visits and link reports will be discussed in more detail at the next AC meeting, once more members have completed all required checks and are confirmed as full Academy Council members. ACTION: Discuss the process for link visits and link reports in detail at the next Academy Council meeting	TC/RB
9	Matters for the attention of the board/COAC	
9.1	No matters for the attention of the board/COAC.	
10	Any other business	
10.1	No other business.	
11	Date of next meeting	
11.1	Tuesday, 27 th January 2026	

ACTIONS

3.1	ACTION: Revisit link roles when all councillors are appointed.	TC/RB
3.2	ACTION: Elect Vice Chair when all councillor checks are complete.	TC/RB
5.2.3	ACTION: DSL to discuss benchmarking with the DSL network and report back in AC4.	HJ
6.1.1	ACTION: HJ to share revised AIP at next AC meeting.	HJ
6.1.6	ACTION: AC members to remember the three areas for improvement identified in the SEF.	ALL
6.2.1	ACTION: Organise link visits once the Academy Council is fully constituted.	TC/RB
6.4.5	ACTION: Report on staffing and impact measurement.	HJ
6.4.9	ACTION: HJ to report on vacancy rate and long-term sickness at the next meeting.	HJ

6.6.1	ACTION: Share attendance data and include details on students with 0% attendance (currently 15–20 students).	HJ
6.6.10	ACTION: Add truancy data and analysis (including push/pull factors) to attendance metrics for future reporting.	HJ
6.7.1	ACTION: HJ to ask SF to send the student newsletter magazine to all councillors.	HJ
7.1	ACTION: All AC members to catch up on outstanding policies and mark as read on Governor Hub.	ALL
8.1	ACTION: Discuss the process for link visits and link reports in detail at the next Academy Council meeting	TC/RB