

Minutes – Monkton Wood Academy Council Meeting

Version: Final
Meeting Date: 08TH July 2025
Location: Monkton Wood Academy
Time: 17:00 – 19:00

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

In attendance: Hannah Jones Principal
 Tessa Clark Clerk
 Ian Grant Vice Principal
 Nicola Towell (Safeguarding Lead) Observer

Apologies: Cameron Shaw Executive Principal
 Richard Bennet Sponsor Councillor
 Alison Watson Parent Councillor

Minutes

		Action
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were accepted as above.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	There were no declarations of interest.	
3	Academy Council Membership	
3.1	There is currently 2 sponsored councillor vacancies as per Governor Hub at the date of meeting.	
4	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
4.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, with the following amendments: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addition of AG as Health and safety representative. AG was confirmed and added as the designated Health and Safety Representative. 2. Apologies. Apologies were received from the following members: Richard Bennet and Alison Watson. 3. Add ACTION: TC to pass on feedback to CLF regarding item 8.1 	TC
5	Presentation: Safeguarding annual audit.	

5.1	<p>Safeguarding Presentation Summary</p> <p>Presenter: NT – Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Associate Assistant Head, and Science Teacher</p> <p>NT led a safeguarding presentation, beginning with a handout of safeguarding acronyms. The session focused on the meaning of safeguarding, the recent audit, and a brief overview of the Term 4 report.</p>	
5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. • The Safeguarding Hub consists of 7 staff members. • Pastoral Leaders are trained to Level 3. • The Wider Safeguarding Team includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Bullying Coordinator • Mental Health Lead • E-Safety Lead • Staff trained to Level 3 wear safeguarding lanyards. 	
5.3	<p>Safeguarding vs. Child Protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding is proactive and broad. • Child Protection is reactive, focused on those at immediate risk. 	
5.4	<p>Key Issues Highlighted (not exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) • Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) • Child-on-child abuse • Local exploitation concerns (discussed with police during CLF day) 	
5.5	<p>Procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise, Respond, Report, Record, Refer (referrals)– with an added emphasis on Reflect. • NT is working to ensure staff respond appropriately before reporting. • CPOMS is used for safeguarding concerns; Bromcom for behaviour and communication. • Pink Forms are used for urgent disclosures (e.g., child at risk of harm). 	
5.6	<p>Audit and Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLF Audit (April 2025): Score improved from 34% to 53%. • Target: 100% by next audit (April 2026); realistic goal is 80s. • Key Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NT’s induction • CPOMS category alignment with CLF • Staff training for consistent data entry • Strategic safeguarding meetings and bi-weekly briefings • Updating the Vulnerable List using CPOMS data 	
5.7	<p>Data Insights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals: Spike in Term 4, now reducing due to better categorisation and staff training. • Child-on-child abuse: Decrease in uncategorised and physical abuse incidents. • Mental Health: Reduction in incidents across the year. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prejudice-related incidents: Overall drop; slight rise in religious belief category (possibly due to re-categorisation or repeated incidents by one student). 	
5.8	<p>Challenges and Improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable list not always matching CPOMS – NT is reviewing and aligning. Weekly reviews of the vulnerable list now in place. Staff encouraged to contact vulnerable students before summer holidays. Awaiting updated Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance to finalise training and policy updates 	
5.9	<p>Alternative Provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OFSTED praised the school’s quality assurance for alternative provision placements. 	
5.10	<p>Safeguarding Culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on embedding safeguarding as a “golden thread” throughout the school. OFSTED noted that safeguarding arrangements are effective, robust, and well-managed, alongside multiple other positive observations. 	
5.11	<p>Leadership and Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition from previous DSL handled well by IG. KB, though not a DSL, brings extensive multi-agency and exploitation experience. Recognition of the complexity of safeguarding in a diverse school community. 	
5.12	<p>Safeguarding Training and Accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KB – Not a DSL but brings a wealth of safeguarding experience. All Academy Councillors (ACs) are required to complete safeguarding training. There was a suggestion that ACs should be more informed about safeguarding themes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What issues have shifted from red to amber Emerging patterns and concerns How safeguarding data is being interpreted and acted upon <p>RB noted that understanding the school’s safeguarding targets helps ACs track progress and support effectively.</p>	
5.13	<p>Data Transparency and Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NT shared that CLF requested more detailed breakdowns in CPOMS to identify patterns more clearly. Currently, safeguarding data is not widely published across schools, except in the context of staff training. NT mentioned a recent assembly on sexual harassment led to a spike in student disclosures, particularly around inappropriate behaviour (e.g., boys pulling down shorts). This highlights how raising awareness can increase reporting, not necessarily incidents. 	
5.14	<p>Understanding Safeguarding Data Trends</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HJ emphasized that safeguarding data is cyclical and context-dependent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, divorce rates spike after Christmas, and domestic violence increases around major sporting events. A decrease in reported incidents isn't always a positive sign—it may reflect underreporting rather than a safer environment. The goal is to understand the narrative behind the data, not just the numbers. <p>“Sometimes we get more reports because we are teaching the children to recognise and speak up.”</p>	
6	Academy Council Report	
6.1	There's an increased focus on inappropriate language—whose focus is this and what does it involve?	
6.1.1	<p>The Principal clarified that this is a shift in daily practice aimed at improving consistency in how verbal abuse and inappropriate language are logged. Previously, incidents were recorded with varying interpretations, leading to discrepancies in staff tolerance levels. Some incidents of swearing were logged as “inappropriate language” when they should have been classified as serious verbal abuse.</p> <p>The focus involves recognising when staff may have become desensitised to abusive language and re-establishing high standards. The school is investing in CPD to help staff confidently challenge inappropriate language and to avoid conflict. This includes training in micro-scripting techniques so staff know what to say in response to different behaviours and can log both the incident and its severity appropriately.</p> <p>The discussion also highlighted problematic sexualised behaviours, noting the importance of distinguishing between sexual harassment and behaviours pupils may not fully understand. Staff will be equipped with strategies to address these incidents with clarity and consistency.</p> <p>The Principal emphasised that verbal abuse often arises from dysregulation, but there's a growing trend of casual use of inappropriate language by pupils who are not dysregulated. This shift further underlines the need to reassert behavioural expectations.</p>	
6.2	<p>Staff raised concerns about misogynistic behaviour affecting both pupils and staff. The Principal confirmed it's linked to patterns seen in inappropriate language logs, with some female staff being targeted. SLT reviews such incidents and completes risk assessments.</p> <p>There's a need for staff training to help all colleagues—regardless of gender—identify and respond to misogynistic behaviours. Not all staff recognise when it happens, which can hinder reporting and response. Creating an open culture is essential.</p>	

	Educating pupils around respectful language and gender-based discrimination is seen as key to improving the overall environment for both students and staff.	
6.3	The academy improvement plan mentions responding to student voice—what does this involve?	
6.3.1	<p>The Principal explained this is part of a wider strategy focused on increasing student representation, such as strengthening the school council and expanding extra-curricular opportunities.</p> <p>It was noted that students from the Gens Club responded very positively to the experience. However, Year 11 pupils expressed disappointment at not having a showcase opportunity, which made their involvement feel less impactful. The academy is now exploring ways to highlight extra-curricular activities through performance and display.</p> <p>The Principal acknowledged that the club evolved organically in a cultural direction, initiated by Nigerian pupils keen to understand social norms. Although a showcase hadn't been planned, there's now recognition that future activities should be better prepared to celebrate this growth—such as scheduling performances during open evenings or involving wider student groups.</p>	
6.3.2	LGBTQ+ Day was celebrated positively, with many pupils expressing themselves freely through their clothing choices.	
6.3.3	<p>The conversation then turned to non-uniform days. The Principal shared that she prefers not to hold them, as some pupils may not have appropriate clothing, making the day inequitable. She emphasised that uniform helps protect dignity by removing visible socio-economic differences.</p> <p>An Academy Councillor raised the point that children who consistently follow uniform rules should be recognised. The Principal responded that she avoids reinforcing a visual notion of "good behaviour," to prevent stigma or exclusion.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about pupils bringing expensive items to school. The Principal reiterated that a consistent uniform policy helps limit comparison and potential discomfort—particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. She noted that non-uniform days can unintentionally highlight inequality.</p>	
6.3.4	Why isn't the school uniform policy consistently applied?	
6.3.5	The Principal explained that inconsistent support from families and competing priorities, such as improving attendance, have impacted enforcement. If forced, some pupils may leave rather than comply. Uniform lending is available but often declined.	
6.3.6	Is the goal for all students to wear school uniform? Is there a plan to achieve this?	
6.3.7	Yes. While uniform is a target in the Academy Improvement Plan, enforcing it without tolerance may lead to increased suspensions. The school is committed	

	to maintaining high standards in uniform, behaviour, and attendance without compromising on any one.	
6.3.8	Should leadership prioritise enforcing uniform more consistently?	
6.3.9	The Principal agreed consistency is key and that tutors and SLT must uphold expectations regularly. A past initiative had impact but lacked follow-up.	
6.3.10	Do SLT challenge students in non-uniform when they walk past their offices?	
6.3.11	Yes, students are challenged, but follow-up varies depending on staff workload and numbers.	
6.3.12	Is there evidence that strong uniform standards link to better outcomes?	
6.3.13	Research shows schools with high standards often achieve better pupil outcomes, though causality isn't definitive. Willingness to follow uniform expectations may reflect trust and school belonging.	
6.3.14	How does uniform affect vulnerable students?	
6.3.15	Enforcement can be complex. For some pupils facing hardship, items like trainers are tied to self-esteem. Removing them may do more harm than good.	
6.3.16	Is a relaxed uniform approach the same as non-uniform?	
6.3.17	The Principal disagreed and reaffirmed that decisions are made in pupils' best interests, not popularity.	
6.3.18	Is leadership committed to the uniform policy?	
6.3.19	The Principal said more consistency is needed and acknowledged concerns about unclear culture and standards.	
6.3.20	<p>Enrichment and Equity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern over elitism in extra-curricular offer and trips. • Plans to broaden access and reduce negative impact on teaching time. • Paris trip altered for equity (e.g. ferry over flights, aligned with curriculum). • Prefect role designed to be inclusive. <p>Democratising Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term 2 to focus on student leadership, voice, and widening participation. • Club opportunities to expand beyond small elite groups. <p>ACTION: Staff to explore ways to establish inclusive clubs (e.g. debating society).</p> <p>ACTION: Add student voice and enrichment strategy to Term 2 agenda.</p>	HJ TC
7	Any Other Business	
7.1	CO has been regularly attending strategic safeguarding meeting, acting as the designated link governor for each session.	
8	Date of Next Meeting	
8.1	Strategic meeting – Wednesday 24 th September 5-6:30pm AC1 – Tuesday 23 rd September.	

ACTIONS

4.1	ACTION: TC to pass on feedback to CLF regarding item 8.1	TC
-----	---	----

6.3.20	ACTION: Staff to explore ways to establish inclusive clubs (e.g. debating society).	HJ
6.3.20	ACTION: Add student voice and enrichment strategy to Term 2 agenda.	TC