

Minutes – MWA Academy Council Meeting

Version: Final
Meeting Date: 12th May 2025
Location: Monkton Wood Academy
Time: 5pm

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

In attendance: Hannah Jones (Principal)
 Dan Allsayce (Assistant Principal)
 Ian Grant Vice Principal
 Tessa Clark Clerk
 Cameron Shaw Executive Principal

Apologies: Alison Watson Parent Councillor
 Richard Bennett Sponsor Councillor

Minutes

		Action
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	
1.1	Richard Bonner introduced himself to the Academy Council as it was his first meeting. Academy Councillors introduced themselves. Alison Watson and Richard Bennet were not in attendance. The meeting was quorate.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	There were no declarations of interest.	
3	Academy Council Membership	
3.1	The link roles were updated. Disadvantage – Laura Lewis Careers – Richard Bonner SEND – Richard Bennet Safeguarding – Clare Ousley The Principal advised that the safeguarding link role was a priority.	
4	Minutes of Previous Meeting	

4.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.	
5	Matters arising	
5.1	Action: to appoint link roles when RB is present. – Complete.	
5.1	<p>Action: Data to show what proportion of EHA applications are from disadvantaged students.</p> <p>EHA – elective home education is a significant issue for us and a particular issue in Somerset.</p> <p>Why is that?</p> <p>I don't know - I don't think there has been any research into it. We are in line with other secondary schools in the area. Since start of academic year 20 children have been removed from our role to go into elective home education. Of those 20 we have raised concerns about all of them. We have concerns about the education they will be given. Concern is normally because the families have not been able to explain what the home education look like.</p> <p>The vulnerable groups are overrepresented in these groups. The Principal talked through the vulnerabilities of the group and explained they are very concerned about the education of these children.</p> <p>Have raised the issue at a head teacher briefing with the education safeguarding service as a number of year 9 children have asked about elective home education. Think is because the local college offer a pre-GCSE course in Maths and English of 2 hours a week, only for home education children.</p> <p>Some families are struggling with the system, some of it is about attendance and uniform. Where there are concerns are about friendship groups we try and work with them to resolve.</p>	
5.3	<p>Action: Obtain update on accepting offers.</p> <p>We have 270 offers made – 27 have been added as late applications after the 30th April. We are at PAN for the year. Somerset County Council are not asking families to accept, only to decline. 2 families have opted to remain in independent sector, 2 have chosen elective home education, 7 have made a change of preference, 16 were removed from list and no reason given - this was because their catchment school agreed to go over PAN to accept them.</p>	
5.4	<p>Why have they changed the need to accept?</p> <p>There are capacity issues at Somerset County Council. They have to assume that everyone is accepting. There are 2 schools in Taunton that are oversubscribed and 2 schools are under subscribed so only reason to not accept is if choosing to home educate or take your child out of area.</p>	
5.5	<p>Unisex Toilets discussed last time. Has the court ruling on gender affected this?</p> <p>No - they are unisex toilets and anyone can use them. We have some temporary toilets whilst others are closed for refurbishment, and there has been no issue with them using these.</p> <p>When we can engage the children in conversation, they are quite open minded, but did find it curious and interesting when we said toilet behaviour</p>	

	<p>gets better when you have unisex toilets. Think the newly refurbished toilets will be very popular.</p> <p>DA – we will have gender specific and unisex toilets available so students will have both options.</p>	
5.6	Risk register – The trust are developing a new template and it will be rolled out from September.	
6	Achievements and Standards	
6.1	DA talked through the structure of behaviour and ethos team. IG stepped in as safeguarding lead from January to March whilst there was a vacancy.	
6.2	<p>What are the plans to fill the Pastoral Learning Mentor vacancy?</p> <p>Depends on budgeting. Looking at a restructure for next year, and how we can move staff around.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big focus on attendance, we have a senior attendance lead and attendance team. • Behaviour policy written in 2024. Have a student friendly version as well. • Previously every half-term teachers would deliver the same presentation looking at expectations but it was taking too much classroom time so now have separated it out into what the classroom teacher does and what tutors do. • Learning modes are key and shared in classroom. Common language around school so students understand expectations. • Quality assured by another Trust school and they were pleased with it said there was consistency in staff using learning modes. Have used feedback in CPD planning going forwards. • Statutory policies are all in place. 	
6.3	<p>Which is the hardest policy to implement?</p> <p>Behaviour and suspensions and exclusions are linked – we need to ensure that we are being fair. Spend time making sure we are compliant.</p>	
6.4	<p>DA continued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocus room help students to get back on track • Truancy on site is a problem we can refer them to Refocus room to work with them. • Expectation in the Refocus room is that they need 2 successful sessions. • DA talked through what these sessions looked like and how it was resourced, and the training for staff to help them support the expectations in the Refocus room • Monitoring systems include class charts, and giving out reward points to motivate behaviour. There are also negative points that can be given. • Have separated behaviour from consequence so we can better monitor behaviour 	
6.5	<p>How long have you had this in place?</p> <p>This version we launched in September and refined in October.</p>	

6.6	DA talked through an example day for a student on class charts. They are reviewed and monitor trends in behaviour. Parents can see class charts as well.	
6.7	Is it applied consistently or is adapted for students with passports or SEND? We are monitoring it to make sure we can adapt it to those students. Key is understanding the students and what the expectations are for them. We know students with ADHD struggle and we don't want them to be in the Refocus room because they have struggled.	
6.8	Pastoral team meet as a team each day and review the Refocus room, how successful it has been and if students have been successful in there. We review the serious incidents and identify what follow up steps are needed. Staff feedback was that they didn't feel communication was great and they didn't always know what follow up action was. We are now feeding that back to staff. HJ and IG also attend meetings. It is really useful as can make decisions around who is going to communicate back to parents etc.	
6.9	Do you feel it is working? Yes. It is about the culture. The culture of the meetings isn't where we want it yet but we get the outcomes for the students that we want.	
6.10	Has it improved since you started? I think what we have now is far more accountability for those members of staff, we know which member of staff is going to do that. It is improving, and think staff feel communication is better. The Principal advised she is content with process in place, and they have got better. Previously they had a rapid change when they brought in a new behaviour policy and a pastoral team, and then it levelled off. Had feedback from staff and trust colleagues it is good and getting better. Suspension process is now not as reactive, we can unpick incidents and understand how we go to that point. Had incidents of physical aggression but by looking at bigger picture can see there was other things going on in the background that led to the situation. The behaviour is still not where we want but the system is understood, and we can make tweaks and changes. But we still have a group of children that are stuck in repeating behaviour.	
6.11	How do you measure improvement? We have number of incidents we look at. Previously we would have had 15-20 serious incidents a day. Some of those incidents I wouldn't have considered serious. We did some CPD at the start of the year, and over the course of the last 3 weeks don't think we have had 6 or 7 serious incidents in a day as staff are understanding who the students are and developing a relationship with the students and giving them more time. We need to continue with that work and give them a sense of belonging at the school.	
6.12	The Principal advised that serious incidents where they wouldn't classify them as serious, would be where truancy is always flagged as a serious incident. Or instead of third warning someone has been sent to the Refocus room. We don't want to miss serious incidents so review them all.	
6.13	Is it staff not understanding serious incidents? Next CPD session we are looking at how we are classifying incidents and what actions we want to see.	

6.14	DA talked through the reasons a child can be suspended. The one used the most is persistent disruptive behaviour. Have looked at strategies for this and how students can correct this behaviour. Have looked at what strategies we have in place.	
6.15	Where are the students whilst that is taking place? They may have been taken to the Refocus room. Need to look at how we make decisions swiftly to minimise disruption and without over suspending students.	
6.16	DA talked thought the suspension tracker, logging details of the suspension and the time they were sent etc. This is then used to send the letter to parents explaining what has happened.	
6.17	How many of those happen in a day? It can vary- some days there are none, and today I think was the most we have had at 16 for persistent disruptive behaviour.	
6.18	Is it often worse on a Monday? Tuesday tends to be the worst day.	
6.19	What about after a holiday? After a holiday tends to be fewer, there will be some students who find it difficult coming back but pastoral team will pick those up.	
6.20	The Principal advised that it is the battle between keeping standards high and suspension low. We are an inclusive school and want to keep children here. We know that suspensions don't often change behaviour.	
6.21	We have integration meetings following a suspension. It is important to get student voice at these so we can understand what has happened. Pastoral team work with those that have had more than one suspension to try and support them. We talk to them about what they can do if they are having a bad day but try not to change targets for those children.	
6.22	Is there national evidence base so schools know they are using everything they can for reducing suspension? There isn't, we are an inclusive school and we are proud of that. We are not at a position that we are happy with where it is, but we know what we are doing and the students we are working with.	
6.23	Is that something CLF can help with? They Principal confirmed they do. A lot of the support is around meeting need. If a child has been suspended but there is an element of discriminatory language then we would suspend but also refer to the pastoral team for an education element. We work with different teams and other provision to provide support. Where it is more behaviour defiant rather than meeting need, the CLF was part of the nation behaviour hub and we benefited from that before the funding was stopped. We had academy review visits and DA was working with a counterpart from another school. The behaviour lead for the trust we might ask to conduct a review as well, as it can be helpful to have that external view point.	
	DA talked through Trust data on suspension and how MWA compared noting that we tend to suspend for more days than some schools, so looking at that to make sure we are getting students back into to school as soon we as we can.	

	More suspensions were drugs and alcohol related than other schools. This is because we suspend for vaping and it is classed as drug and alcohol. We know students go to toilets to vape so we are staffing toilets during social time. We have PCSO's coming in fortnightly. We have nursing teams come in with safety information about vaping.	
6.24	How do you decide if something is serious incident or persistent behaviour? Persistent behaviour is not a one-off incident, it is not going to lessons, not following instructions etc.	
6.25	Are you still reporting racist behaviour to county? Yes	
6.26	How does this compare this to last year? The number of suspensions for us is similar, the other schools in the trust are higher now.	
6.27	DA talked through the number of suspensions in each term, noting the work in term 3 to try and reduce the number of suspensions. The feedback was that behaviour got worse. Need to work on how we reduce suspensions but keep expectations high. Staff survey had gone out in term 3 and staff reported behaviour issues.	
6.28	The Principal advised she had to accept the challenge but help our executive team understand why we need a higher suspension rate to maintain standards. Brining suspension down by choosing not to suspend is not going to help us get to where we are. It is delicate balance between standards and suspension. Families understand suspension. If we don't suspend over something that is clearly unacceptable then we lose the confidence in parents in our decision making. We only ever suspend for a serious incident and have looked at other options, but we can't use these if it is at risk of students feeling safe in school.	
6.29	DA talked through data on behaviour categories noting that we know the students, focus is on what we do for them.	
6.30	DA talked though the student focus inclusion group. Have worked really hard on bringing these teams together, as these are the people that will make an impact on students. They meet regularly and discuss students with low attendance, safeguarding concerns etc. Look at what we have done for them and what we need to do going forward for them. Hold the meeting fortnightly and give staff actions to go and do and report back at the next meeting. Options include making referrals for these students, looking at relationship with students and staff, how successful the plan is for the student, BOXALL assessments, SEND review. We can follow up the actions and make sure they are taking place for the students. We tend to have a focus at each of the meetings for instance one might be on attendance, safeguarding, behaviour etc.	
6.31	The staff councillor noted that there had been a lot of change over the last 3 years, the work DA was doing was now bringing all those systems together.	
6.32	It is good to see the data and that we are tracking it. DA it is about looking at where we are, but understanding the students behind the data.	
6.33	DA talked through Alternative Provision. Spent a lot of time reviewing it, didn't feel that all of it had clear targets and entry back to school. Been looking at	

	<p>how the Alternative Provision sets children up to return to mainstream. That may not be possible for all children, but it needs to be the objective. We use Reach, which has a lot of youth workers and days out. We have asked them to come and work in school, so the child is building resilience and coming into school. Continue to work on objectives and ensuring we are getting value for money in light of reduced budget.</p>	
6.34	<p>Ongoing challenges are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student lesson refusal/truancy • Capacity/staff absence in the pastoral team • Consistency • Raising standards • Perception of staff and parents • Time for actions to take affect 	
6.35	<p>How do you engage with staff about their confidence and ability to manage behaviour?</p> <p>We have been given some tools from CLF. We are trying to get out into lessons to see how staff are working with line management process, are they reflective. Staff are vocal and give feedback on behaviour. Reiterating message that everyone has a role to play in behaviour.</p>	
6.36	<p>Do staff feel safe to say I don't think I can manage this?</p> <p>Staff councillor advised she is the union rep as well and if she gets fed that back she can bring it to discussions. There will always be people that will feel it will reflect badly on them.</p> <p>The Principal advised we don't have an appraisal policy, we focus on professional development. Hope that staff feel they can talk to their head of department if they are struggling cause then we can do something about it. SLT still have teaching timetable so they are seeing the behaviour as well.</p> <p>Full inclusion and low suspension means you are pushing up standards in all areas, we are adding SEMH interventions to our offer in September, we have to keep nudging it up in all areas. You can't fix behaviour without improving all aspects of provision. We work hard on belonging and wanting them to not misbehave but it takes time for this to embed with some children.</p> <p>There is also a generational change, previous Ofsted report had a massive impact on what parents expected of the school and had a massive ripple effect across the community.</p>	
7	Policies	
7.1	<p>Admissions</p> <p>HJ talked through year group numbers for the following year, noting that planning is done on multiple of 30s. Numbers do vary as we get over 150 in year admissions each year.</p> <p>Planning for next year is based on: Year 7 - 270 Year 8 - 210 Year 9, 10 and 11 - 240.</p>	

8.1	<p>I sat on a suspension review recently – but the student hadn't been invited to attend. It was included in the letter but not very clear. The parent weren't clear on the student being invited.</p> <p>That is not our intention – the invitation is sent by the clerk and then the Executive Assistant follows up with a phone call to make sure they have all the information and usually asks if the student attending. If they are not we normally try and get their voice. It is never our intention to leave out their voice.</p>	
9	Date of Next Meeting	
9.1	8 th July 2025	

ACTIONS

7.6	Action: SENCO and Senior Ops Manager to be added to the column.	HJ
7.7	Action: Wording around this item to be clarified and it if is in relation to advertising of extracurricular activities.	HJ
7.8	Action: The following policies to be brought back to the next meeting Accessibility Plan Homework RE	HJ
7.9	Action: The new DSL to be invited to the next meeting to discuss the Safeguarding Audit	HJ