

Minutes – Monkton Wood Academy Council Meeting

Version: Approved (public minutes)
Meeting Date: Tuesday 17th March 2026
Location: Monkton Wood Academy
Time: 17:00 – 19:00

Chair:	Richard Bonner (RB)	Sponsor Councillor
Attendees:	Clare Ousley (CO)	Staff (Support) Councillor
	Anne Guild (AG)	Staff Councillor
	Debbie O’Sullivan (DO)	Parent Councillor

In attendance:	Hannah Jones (HJ)	Principal
	Cameron Shaw (CS)	Executive Principal
	Ian Grant (IG)	Vice Principal
	Amy Carden-Smith (AC-S)	Observer
	Tessa Clark (TC)	Clerk

Apologies:

Minutes

	Pre-Meeting Discussion (Principal not present)	Action
	Before the formal meeting began, the Chair invited councillors to raise any initial questions arising from the papers. The Chair also noted a small amendment to the agenda order, with Ofsted readiness now appearing as item 5 and the Academy Report as item 6. Councillors discussed the Behaviour Policy, noting that the version circulated contained errors and therefore had not been signed off. This would be raised with the Principal during the main meeting. Councillors expressed disappointment that mock examination results were not yet available, as they had only recently been uploaded to the system. A link visit update was shared, with one report still to be uploaded. A councillor queried whether the recent parent questionnaire had been sent to all parents, as one councillor had not received it. Councillors discussed the importance of ensuring wide distribution to maximise meaningful feedback.	

	Councillors reviewed the attendance and behaviour section of the report and noted the increase in the number of pupils involved in truancy, despite a reduction in serious behavioural incidents. Councillors wished to explore the impact of the new truancy policy and trends over time. Councillors also discussed mental-health support referenced in the report and wished to understand who is delivering current interventions and whether these could be expanded. Councillors raised questions around revision and exam preparation, including how revision skills are taught, and the balance of support across KS3 and KS4. A councillor highlighted from a link visit discussion the importance of earlier intervention with disadvantaged pupils. A request was made for feedback from the recent safeguarding audit to be brought to a future meeting, along with year-on-year suspension data for context.	
	Questions Agreed for the Principal (for the main meeting) From the pre-meeting discussion, councillors agreed to ask the Principal: 1. Parent Engagement & Communication Has the parent questionnaire been shared with all parents, and how is the school ensuring broad and representative feedback is gathered? 2. Attendance & Truancy What is the school's evaluation of the impact of the new truancy policy, and why might the number of pupils involved not yet have reduced? 3. Curriculum & Pupil Support How is revision and exam-readiness being supported across both KS3 and KS4, and what plans are in place to strengthen earlier intervention, particularly for disadvantaged pupils?	
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	
1.1	No apologies were received. IG would be joining slightly later due to leading an SLT meeting.	
1.2	The Principal joined the meeting at 5:25pm, following the pre-meeting discussion.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	No declarations of interest were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising	
3.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record, with no concerns raised.	
3.2	Update on Actions	
3.2.1	Item 1.3 - Election of vice chair Carried forward to the next meeting, pending completion of councillor appointments.	
3.2.2	Item 3.2 – Link Role Visits Councillors continue to arrange link visits directly with SLT. CO completed a safeguarding link visit and uploaded the monitoring checklist AG completed a disadvantaged link visit today and will upload her report. RB has a careers link	

	meeting scheduled for next Friday. DO will arrange to meet with the safeguarding lead within the next two weeks.	
3.2.3	Item 3.3 – Sponsor Recruitment Governance team continues to pursue sponsor recruitment; noted that the small community creates challenges where many potential candidates are already parents.	
3.2.4	Item 5.1.1 – Safeguarding Summary Completed and uploaded to GovernorHub.	
3.2.5	Item 5.1.18 – AP Processes Scrutiny DO will review alternative provision as part of her safeguarding link visit.	
3.2.6	Item 5.2.2 – Peer Review Shared with the Academy Council	
3.2.7	Item 5.6.2a – Internal Truancy Tracking Update included in the Principal's report	
3.2.8	Item 5.8.2 – Ofsted Readiness Agenda Item Added to the agenda as requested	
3.2.9	Item 5.8.4 – Safeguarding/ Site Walk Notes CO will complete and upload the link visit notes to GovernorHub; the safeguarding checklist has been added.	
3.2.10	Item 6.1.1 – Student Voice Summary Rolled forward to the next meeting. Principal reported that recent student work linked to DfE uniform guidance was prioritised this term; some student voice feedback was included in the stakeholder document on GovernorHub.	
3.2.11	Item 7.1.2 – Behaviour Policy Update (Mobile Phones) Completed and updated in line with previous discussion.	
3.2.12	Item 8.2 – Link Visit Notes Submission Mostly complete; remaining notes to be added ahead of the next meeting.	
4	Chairs Update	
4.1	No COAC meeting had taken place since the previous Academy Council meeting; therefore, no update was provided.	
5	Ofsted Readiness	
5.1	The Principal introduced the Ofsted readiness item, noting that a full discussion was not required unless councillors had specific questions. She referred to the Ofsted toolkit and the section outlining how leadership and governance are evaluated during an inspection. Although the CLF Board is the responsible body for MWA, the Principal emphasised that the Academy Council forms a key part of governance and will be included in scrutiny of leadership and management. The Principal highlighted the section of the framework relating specifically to governance and encouraged councillors to use it to self-evaluate their knowledge of statutory duties, effectiveness of challenge, and engagement with link roles. She noted the importance of link visits in ensuring councillors can demonstrate strong oversight across areas such as safeguarding and SEND.	

5.1.1	The Principal referred to the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR), which had been uploaded to GovernorHub prior to the meeting. Inspectors will have access to the IDSR and publicly available information before arrival. The Principal had provided councillors with a narrative summary, outlining key areas highlighted by the IDSR and the actions being taken by the school in response. This will support councillors in understanding areas likely to be explored during inspection. She summarised contextual factors inspectors can access, including national teacher pay and conditions documentation and historical inspection findings. The school continues to work on areas identified in previous inspections, and monitoring visits since have noted improvements. The Principal stressed the importance of the school's self-evaluation in readiness work, as inspectors will test the school's accuracy in identifying strengths and areas for development. She also noted that the Chair of the Academy Council will be asked to contribute during inspection, and inspectors recognise that AC members are volunteers and apply scrutiny fairly but rigorously.	
5.1.2	Q: Based on this, where are your biggest concerns?	
5.1.3	The Principal explained that, while inspection outcomes can vary, the school remains focused on delivering the priorities identified within the School Improvement Plan and ensuring that staff feel prepared and supported.	
5.1.4	Q: What are you doing to prepare staff?	
5.1.5	The Principal reported that work is ongoing with middle leaders, noting typical levels of fatigue at this point in the year. Staff are being supported to focus on consistency and clarity of practice. Adjustments have been made to improvement planning where necessary, and leaders continue to prepare through briefings and reflective discussions.	
5.1.6	Q: Are you receiving support from the main board?	
5.1.7	The Principal confirmed that the academy is part of an Ofsted preparation cohort within CLF, benefitting from shared learning and experiences from other schools recently inspected. Local heads have also provided insight.	
5.1.8	Councillors discussed recent inspections across the local area, noting varied experiences and the importance of maintaining focus on continual improvement rather than inspection outcomes. The Principal emphasised the need to balance emotional responses related to the school's improvement journey with confidence in the progress already made. Councillors shared observations from recent visits and tours, highlighting improvements in culture, staff commitment, and pupil pride. The Principal reflected on the positive shift in stakeholder voice, with younger year groups showing increased confidence and a growing sense of pride in the school. Staff governor AG reported that staff responses vary, with experienced staff typically feeling confident in their practice. The Principal added that recent frameworks reduce the likelihood of surface-level preparation, placing emphasis on sustained practice and consistency.	

	The Executive Principal noted that inspection provides an opportunity to validate the school's progress and communicate the journey since the last full inspection. Councillors reflected on the importance of messaging to the community, ensuring that while inspection is a formal process, the focus remains on supporting pupils to feel proud of their school.	
6	Academy Council Report:	
6.1	Safeguarding	
6.1.1	Q: The Academy has introduced Mental Health Support (MHS) sessions for Year 11 pupils. Is there a cost to the school, and could this support be extended to younger year groups to help develop wellbeing and revision skills earlier, particularly for pupils who may not have support at home?	
6.1.2	The Principal confirmed that the Mental Health Support (MHS) provision is delivered through the NHS and therefore does not incur a cost to the school. The Academy has been part of the MHS programme for some time. The Year 11 exam-stress groups are small but receive targeted and high-quality support. Leaders are considering how this work might be broadened, while also ensuring that pupils understand that some level of exam stress is normal and manageable, and identifying pupils for whom anxiety may be escalating into a mental-health concern. The Principal outlined wider work taking place to support pupils with revision and exam readiness. Senior leaders monitor pupils who are "crossover" in English and Maths and have identified that some require focused help with revision techniques. A learning mentor recently delivered a whole-year revision workshop, introducing strategies for preparing and organising learning. Further support for Year 11 has included two parent/carers evenings following the mock exams and online guidance for families. Attendance at the online sessions has been variable. Subject teachers are also sharing guidance on how revision approaches differ across disciplines. Leaders continue to build revision skills gradually from Year 7 onwards through assemblies, assessment points, and messaging on Bromcom. KS3 assessment remains holistic (DOYA), and care is taken not to create unnecessary exam pressure at this stage. The Principal noted the logistical challenges associated with running full mock examinations for Year 10, including space and invigilation costs. However, pupils do receive structured introductions to exam conditions. IG confirmed that Year 10 will have "taster" experiences in the sports hall to support confidence and familiarity ahead of Year 11.	
6.1.3	The Principal provided an update on a safeguarding matter involving enhanced risk-management arrangements. Councillors received assurance that measures are proportionate, regularly reviewed and agreed with the relevant	

	parties. Leaders confirmed that safeguarding approaches are risk-based and not routinely applied across the wider pupil population.	
6.2	Inclusion	
6.2.1	This was covered within the Principal's report; no further questions were raised.	
6.3	Curriculum and teaching	
6.3.1	Q: A councillor asked whether the current focus on Year 10 and 11 disadvantaged pupils risks missing opportunities for earlier intervention lower down the school. She noted that the loss of a KS3 mentor and the historic need to prioritise KS4 may have limited the school's ability to address gaps earlier. She asked whether longer-term planning should consider increased investment in KS3 to prevent gaps widening by Year 10.	
6.3.2	The Principal agreed that sustainable improvements in outcomes rely on strengthening provision earlier in the school journey. While some strategies benefit all pupils, many have been designed specifically to close attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils, such as the reading strategy and work to improve consistency in teaching and learning. The Principal explained that the Raising Standards Leader's primary role is to identify attainment gaps and plan targeted interventions, although pastoral needs can sometimes draw capacity away. Work is underway to refine focus and ensure maximum strategic impact. Leaders have scrutinised KS3 setting approaches, noting that decisions based purely on attainment can inadvertently widen gaps. Early attainment data upon entry already shows variation, but current progress is improving due to strengthened teaching and learning frameworks and consistent work on attendance, which remains central to the disadvantaged strategy. The Principal acknowledged that financial resource is a significant consideration when planning earlier intervention. Councillors discussed recent years, noting that staffing challenges required a degree of "firefighting" and that a longer-term view may now be possible. Councillors asked to hear more in future about how the school intends to strengthen KS3 provision for disadvantaged pupils so they can maintain oversight and reflect on progress. The Principal provided contextual information about changing demographics and rising levels of disadvantage within the cohort. The proportion of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium has increased and is now above the national average. Leaders have also observed that more late admissions come from families facing challenges, which shapes the intake and may influence the level of support required. ACTION: The Principal will ensure that the disadvantaged strategy and impact for all year groups — not only Year 11 — is made explicit within the	HJ

	Achievement Report, with a clear trail available for the Academy Council to monitor. Regular link visits will support ongoing oversight.	
6.3.3	Councillors acknowledged evidence of improved teaching consistency and agreed to continue monitoring the impact of strategies through link visits and future reports.	
6.4	Achievement	
6.4.1	This was covered within the Principal's report; no further questions were raised.	
6.5	Attendance and Behaviour	
6.5.1	Q: Councillors noted that suspensions remain high, although serious incidents have reduced. A councillor asked whether a comparison with the same period in 2024/25 could be provided at a future meeting.	
6.5.2	The Principal explained that comparisons across years have been challenging historically due to changes in the behaviour system and the management information system. Prior to September, the school was not using Bromcom, and categories differed, but data is now structured in a way that will allow consistent year-on-year comparisons moving forward. Leaders acknowledged that improving attendance and reducing truancy remain key priorities, and a significant proportion of suspensions for persistent disruptive behaviour are linked to truancy-related issues. Leaders are also exploring the concept of "lost learning," particularly for pupils who spend extended time in the refocus room or who repeatedly cycle through truancy, refocus, and lesson refusal. This pattern can lead to escalation, including verbal abuse, which has implications for staff wellbeing. The Principal emphasised that suspensions are not used as a behaviour-improvement strategy but as a measure to protect learning and maintain a safe environment. For some pupils, suspension does not act as a deterrent, and change is expected to take time as pupils develop confidence and self-regulation. Leaders are working to strengthen the graduated response, noting that pupils with entrenched truancy patterns often require more intensive or specialist support.	
6.5.3	Q: Why is truancy not changing?	
6.5.4	The Principal explained that while the report does not display full Term 2 data, truancy is still lower than earlier in the year but has plateaued. Given the habitual nature of the behaviour and the complexity of underlying needs, leaders did not expect rapid improvement. Some pupils are opting for suspension rather than attending lessons, and the school currently has limited graduated response options beyond existing interventions. Work continues with families to improve consistency and routines. Family intervention referrals have been effective, especially where boundary-setting challenges contribute to escalating behaviour. The Principal noted that development of the academy's inclusion provision is underway and will support future improvements.	
6.5.5	Q: Is the current process for suspensions and reintegration meetings effective?	

6.5.6	IG explained that Heads of House do not ordinarily lead all reintegration processes for truancy-related suspensions. Leaders have identified a group of pupils with high levels of behavioural incidents but no suspensions, and work is underway to meet with families and Heads of House to understand barriers at subject level and target support more effectively. This personalised approach is expected to have long-term impact. The Principal reported improved re-engagement from families and highlighted the need to break cycles where pupils repeatedly return from suspension and immediately fall back into truancy patterns. Leaders continue to refine approaches to ensure that interventions are meaningful and preventative rather than reactive. ACTION: The Academy Council will continue to monitor truancy trends and review progress at future meetings.	ALL
6.6	Post-16 Provision	
6.6.1	This was covered within the Principal's report; no further questions were raised.	
6.7	Leadership and governance	
6.7.1	This was covered within the Principal's report; no further questions were raised.	
7	Staffing and wellbeing	
7.1	Q: A councillor queried why only 60 staff members completed the recent staff survey and whether this response rate affected the reliability of the results.	
7.1.1	Councillors reviewed staff survey outcomes, participation levels and key themes. Leaders outlined actions taken in response to feedback and reported that staff continue to engage openly with school improvement priorities.	
8	Policies	
8.1	Behaviour Policy Councillors noted that the Behaviour Policy required updating to reflect recent amendments to behaviour procedures and associated guidance materials, specifically references to "Behaviour and Learning" and expectations such as making eye contact. The Vice Principal confirmed that this language has been removed from posters following previous feedback and will also be removed from the policy to ensure consistency. IG clarified the reference to "rebuids" in the behaviour system. This is currently under review between senior leaders. While some pupils may be redirected early and later reintegrated, leaders believe reintegration remains an important component of the behaviour approach and are working to ensure clarity for staff. AG noted that some elements of the behaviour system—particularly rebuilding conversations—can be challenging for staff to implement consistently due to time pressures. The Vice Principal acknowledged this and explained that clearer short-term guidance is being developed, for example ensuring pupils do not	

	immediately return to the refocus room, while the longer-term system continues to be refined. ACTION: The Behaviour Policy will be updated so that it aligns fully with current practice and the recently amended poster content.	HJ
9	Link Reports	
9.1	Safeguarding Link Visit The safeguarding link councillor (CO) uploaded the completed safeguarding checklist to GovernorHub ahead of the meeting. Councillors noted that the document was comprehensive and helpful in clarifying key responsibilities. A small number of actions were identified within the checklist for leaders to follow up on. Councillors briefly discussed the distinction between governance responsibilities (such as oversight of safeguarding, Equality Act compliance, and data protection principles) and operational elements that sit with staff and academy leaders. Councillors were satisfied that the checklist provides clear assurance and will support the annual safeguarding monitoring cycle. The Principal confirmed that responsibilities for data protection and safeguarding remain clearly allocated within the academy leadership structure. ACTION: Leaders to address the actions flagged in the safeguarding checklist and update the Academy Council at the next meeting.	SLT
9.2	Councillors noted that additional link reports are still being completed and will be presented at the next Academy Council meeting.	
10	Matters for the attention of the Board/ COAC	
10.1	There were no matters raised for the attention of the Board or COAC.	
11	Any Other Business	
11.1	There was no other business.	
12	Date of Next Meeting	
10.1	The meeting scheduled for Tuesday 23 June 2026 was noted to coincide with prom night. It was agreed that an alternative date would be identified and confirmed.	

ACTIONS

6.3.2	The Principal will ensure that the disadvantaged strategy and impact for all year groups — not only Year 11 — is made explicit within the Achievement Report, with a clear trail available for the Academy Council to monitor. Regular link visits will support ongoing oversight.	HJ
6.5.6	The Academy Council will continue to monitor truancy trends and review progress at future meetings.	ALL
8.1	The Behaviour Policy will be updated so that it aligns fully with current practice and the recently amended poster content.	HJ
9.1	Leaders to address the actions flagged in the safeguarding checklist and update the Academy Council at the next meeting.	SLT