

Minutes – The Sky Academy Council Meeting

Version: Draft
Meeting Date: Monday, 8th December 2025
Location: Online
Time: 15:00 – 17:00

Chair:

Attendees: Kate East Sponsor Councillor
 Amanda Wright Sponsor Councillor
 Emma Wykes Support Staff Councillor
 Kai Francis Staff Councillor

In attendance: Gaby Long Principal
 Fiona Barnes Assistant Principal
 Becky Lambert Vice Principal
 Tracy French Executive Principal
 Katherine Ward Observer
 Roy Jones Observer

Apologies:

Minutes

		Action
1	Introduction, Administration and Apologies	
1.1	KE opened the meeting with introductions. All attendees introduced themselves to Katherine.	
1.2	KW shared a brief personal introduction: she is the parent of a child at the academy and has four other children at home, all with SEN needs. KW is a qualified childcare practitioner with a focus on SEN.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	No declarations of interest were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising	
3.1	Minutes approved.	
3.2	<p>Item 3.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor Councillor Role: EW has contacted JC, but JC is currently away. ACTION: Follow up with JC regarding the sponsor councillor role. EduGov Access: EW reported that the Trust is reviewing access generally and exploring alternative solutions, including working with the communications team. 	EW

	<p>ACTION: EW to continue investigating EduGov access with HR and comms team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability-Related Information: TF to confirm what disability-related information academies are legally permitted to access for staff. Action ongoing as TF was not present for this discussion. <p>Item 8.2.17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biology Curriculum Plan: KE stated that she questioned why single science was being taught rather than double Science. • BL has exchanged emails with Will Davis (central science team) to explore the science curriculum, but no meeting date has been set. Action: BL to book meeting with central science team after the holidays and update AC at the February meeting. <p>Item 8.3.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anonymised Risk Assessments: KF did not have the risk assessments available. Action: KF to share anonymised risk assessments with KE during the upcoming SCR review call. <p>Item 8.3.6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Policy: Updated safeguarding policy and relationship policy will be uploaded to the Governor Hub for AC reference and approval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action: Upload Safeguarding and relationship policies to Governor Hub – now completed • KCSIE Updates: Completed. <p>Item 8.3.7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCR and Risk Register Review: SCR will be completed tomorrow. GL and the Operations Manager will manage the review meeting in EW’s absence. <p>Item 9.1.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top Sheet, AIP, and SEF: Completed and shared ahead of the meeting. 	<p>EW</p> <p>TF</p> <p>BL</p> <p>KF</p> <p>EW</p>
4	Chairs Update	
4.1	KE chaired her first Academy Council meeting.	
4.2	<p>KE and GL attended a recent scrutiny meeting and shared their reflections:</p> <p>GL noted that compared to last year, the process felt less intimidating. Questions were pertinent and helped formulate Ofsted responses, identify gaps, and support the writing of the SEF. The meeting was supportive and developmental, with no trick questions, making it a useful process. Generally, the challenge was felt to be helpful and was on areas that the headteacher and chair had discussed.</p> <p>KE agreed, adding that discussions around the AIP were particularly helpful. The activity demonstrated that participants had clearly reviewed academy information beforehand and prepared thoughtful questions. KE highlighted the value of having action points as a result, showing how scrutiny from the wider Trust drives improvement.</p>	
4.3	Q: Were there any minutes?	

4.4	GL confirmed that a summary exists. ACTION: GL to chase the minutes or summary from scrutiny and share with AC before the next meeting.	GL
4.5	AC Membership: KE welcomed Katherine and Roy to the meeting. Both are currently observing and will become full councillors once checks are complete. ACTION: TC to organise a parent election at the start of next term.	TC
5	Academy Council Report:	
	The Academy Council report was uploaded to Governor Hub one week prior to the meeting for all members to review.	
5.1	Student Outcomes	
5.1.1	Mock Exams - This year marked the first time the academy conducted a mock trial across two levels: the GCSE Pathway group (students sat Maths and English) and other groups following NCFS. Official results are currently unavailable due to system issues, which explains some gaps in reporting. Internal procedures indicate a high success rate. A table of mock results in English and Maths was shared on screen, and outcomes appear promising. An example was provided where a student received a U grade in the English mock after choosing not to sit the paper. A backup plan is in place—this student will be entered for Functional Skills to ensure they achieve a qualification. The academy continues to monitor and balance qualifications to support all students effectively.	
5.1.2	Maths - Some students did not sit the GCSE Maths mock. Engagement has since improved, and these students will complete a mock after the holidays. Those working at a lower level will sit a Functional Skills paper.	
5.1.3	BL reported that Year 11 students are feeling positive and motivated following their mock results.	
5.1.4	Praise for Progress - KE commended the team for successfully completing CATs, generating predictive grades, and now delivering mocks. This is a significant move forward and not only allows SLT and teachers to assess progress but counsellors to challenge where appropriate. All agreed that the CAT scores were impactful. BL highlighted the benefits of having specialist teachers. KE agreed, noting the importance of subject leadership, particularly in English, and praised the strong leadership in these areas.	
5.2	Attendance	
5.2.1	Q: It was noted that whole-school attendance is 64.29%. What are you doing around that?	
5.2.2	KF reported an overall decline in attendance, although the approach to improving attendance has strengthened. Strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortnightly meetings with FI, SENCO, and the pastoral team to identify targeted interventions. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily rota for staff to visit students refusing to attend in the mornings, reinforcing that non-attendance is not an option. • Parent engagement, with KB meeting parents to discuss attendance and collaborate on solutions. • Implementation of a new template: a one-page document tracking all attendance-related interventions for each student. • Analysis of attendance data for students newly enrolled this year, noting significant progress for some despite historically low attendance (e.g., one student with a combined two-year attendance of 16%). • Meetings with key workers to review their impact and strengthen relationships with parents. • Engagement with Somerset’s new advice-line system for educational support, replacing previous UHA processes. Four referrals have been made; three students have been approved for funded alternative provision, though KF noted inconsistencies in the system. <p>The meeting noted a range of robust approaches already or in the process of implementation. It was noted that some pupils with very low attendance have remained on roll at the request of the LA. The data should be presented in two groups.</p>	
5.2.3	KF emphasised the need to develop a culture of attendance among parents, acknowledging that staff mindset has shifted positively, with increased monitoring and follow-up.	
5.2.4	Students have been RAG-rated, with all below 85% identified. Focus is on targeting “amber” students, who present the greatest opportunity for improvement.	
5.2.5	Q: Is there anything significant happening in Year 9? Those figures dip. Also, Year 7 and 11?	
5.2.6	KF explained that many “stuck students” are concentrated in these year groups, skewing figures. FB added that, statistically, Years 7 and 9 show lower attendance across all settings, including mainstream.	
5.2.7	<p>Actions Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next AC meeting to include a dedicated focus on attendance, with KF presenting comparative data. • EW and KF to prepare an attendance report before February, potentially creating a template for all special schools. • TF suggested reviewing attendance year-to-date; this was agreed as a useful focus. • Present the February comparative data in two groups – take out the pupils on roll at request of LA but with minimal attendance. Present as two groups. 	<p>KF</p> <p>EW & KF</p>
5.2.8	Q: What system do you use?	
5.2.9	KF confirmed the use of Bromcom , supplemented by CLF and internal data analysis to identify patterns, with plans to improve data presentation.	

	ACTION: look at how a bromcom report can be set up to simplify reporting process.	KF
5.2.10	Q: On the AIP, there's a target of 100% attendance – would it be better to have a 20% increase for each child, something more achievable?	
5.2.11	TF agreed that 100% is unrealistic if any absence occurs. GL confirmed the current target is 85% for this year. Consider the concept of an % increase for all children.	
5.3	Quality of teaching and learning	
5.3.1	BL led the discussion on this section.	
5.3.2	BL reported on the first ARV, which included a review of curriculum documents. The review highlighted the need to strengthen connectivity between upper and lower school. Work is ongoing with middle leaders to ensure progression from Year 5 to Year 11. The documents are lengthy, so the next stage will involve creating summary sheets to accompany them.	
5.3.3	BL shared the Teaching and Learning Framework, which was displayed on screen (previously embedded link was inaccessible to AC members). The framework, agreed during a staff meeting, sets out non-negotiables for teaching and defines what effective teaching and learning should look like, including explanation, modelling, assessment, and practice. All areas are personalised for Sky Academy. Teachers retain creative flexibility (deliberate differences) within the curriculum.	
5.3.4	BL attended a Train the Trainer – Adaptive Teaching course, with the first seminar taking place earlier today. BL noted the course was highly valuable and will use insights gained to strengthen practice.	
5.3.5	Q: Who delivers the course?	
5.3.6	Ambition Institute. BL commented that the training provided fascinating insights.	
5.3.7	Marking and feedback were introduced as a target area at the start of the year. Staff have contributed their views on what effective feedback should look like, and student voice has also been gathered to ensure feedback is meaningful for learners. Comments from both groups have been reviewed and fed back to staff.	
5.3.8	BL outlined plans for lower school to introduce phonics and literacy interventions for all students. A 20-minute daily slot has been identified, with more intensive interventions for those with lower reading levels. ACTION: Next meeting to include a focus on reading (phonics), reviewing the cohort of students without age-appropriate reading levels and the interventions in place. Provide data on pupils with low reading ages and the range of interventions to support improvement.	BL
5.3.9	BL confirmed the phonics programme IN USE is Read, Write, Inc. KE asked that the phonics is regularly checked so that it is addressed across the curriculum.	
5.3.10	BL concluded by stating that the term will end with tangible evidence demonstrating that current strategies are having a positive impact.	
5.4	Pupil Premium and LAC	
5.4.1	The Pupil Premium and LAC section can be read in the report. This was noted by the Academy Council.	

5.4.2	<p>GL reported that the report was slightly tweaked following the recent ARV. GL reviewed the three-year action plan with the Director of Education for the Trust who was positive overall. Adjustments focused on fine-tuning attendance targets and using more precise language to make the plan more deliberate and targeted.</p> <p>GL highlighted that a significant proportion of students are eligible for Pupil Premium, which makes the data appear more generic. The strategy is to clearly demonstrate how Pupil Premium funding is spent and how this links to the Academy Improvement Plan (AIP). The meeting agreed with this approach. GL expressed satisfaction with the plan, noting that the Director of Education was also pleased. Aspirations for targets were discussed.</p>	
5.4.3	Q: In terms of ARV, what happens - are there notes? Are they shared with the AC?	
5.4.4	<p>Yes, there are notes, and these can be shared.</p> <p>ACTION: GL to share ARV notes with the Academy Council.</p>	GL
5.4.5	<p>GL confirmed that typically two ARVs are scheduled each year, but a third has been booked to allow for additional feedback and scrutiny. An action plan has been developed from the ARV, which GL will also share.</p> <p>ACTION: GL to share the ARV action plan with the Academy Council.</p>	GL
5.5	Staffing	
5.5.1	Q: Leads in Art, English, Maths, PSHE, and Science—are they QTS specialists?	
5.5.2	<p>GL confirmed that all leads are QTS specialists, with the exception of one. GL noted that a strategic move was made in September 2024 to implement specialist teaching across subjects to improve outcomes in all areas. This approach has worked well and supported by the meeting.</p>	
5.5.3	Q: What is your lowest age range?	
5.5.4	<p>GL reported that there are currently three students in Year 5 and two in Year 6, with the majority in Years 7–11.</p>	
5.5.5	Q: Do you have a primary lead?	
5.5.6	<p>GL explained that the site is split into upper and lower school. A curriculum coordinator oversees all curriculum from Year 5 to Year 11, with input from upper school for KS3 to ensure cohesion and progression into Year 9 pathways.</p> <p>GL shared that a recent meeting with the LA indicated a strategic model moving away from specialist placements for KS1 and KS2. However, consultations continue, and the LA suggests primary schools with on-site provision should accommodate younger learners.</p>	
5.5.7	Q: It was said before the meeting that Sky feels like a different school, more positive—do you have any staff surveys you can share?	
5.5.8	<p>GL confirmed that data is available from scrutiny. Key points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant reduction in staff absence due to personal stress between 2023–24. • Improved recruitment and a stronger team of TAs, many with degrees and relevant experience. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement in a CLF wellbeing project, with Helen Heatherington delivering a CPD session tomorrow. Staff are encouraged to create individual wellbeing plans. <p>TF noted the introduction of new Ofsted staff questions and plans to work through these with staff, comparing responses to the previous Endurio survey, which was less positive. Concerns were raised about staff understanding of survey terminology.</p> <p>GL added that conducting discussions in team meetings (upper school, lower school, and base) will provide context-specific insights. GL highlighted the importance of reinforcing responses with data, such as reductions in restraints, to support balanced feedback.</p> <p>ACTION: GL to share feedback from the Ofsted wellbeing questions with the Academy Council.</p>	GL
5.6	Health and safety	
5.6.1	EW led this section. EW reported that an internal health and safety audit was recently conducted by the Deputy Health and Safety Manager. The audit identified several good and outstanding elements. Work is ongoing with the Deputy to improve communication regarding offsite activities, associated risks, and health and safety considerations. Once these improvements are implemented, the academy expects to achieve an outstanding rating and will review the audit accordingly.	
5.6.2	EW noted that accounts run from September to August. As the year is still in its early stages, a detailed review of budgets and forward projections will take place after Christmas and at the end of next term.	
5.6.3	Q: Are you allowed to keep the surplus?	
5.6.4	EW confirmed that a bid was submitted and approved, allowing the academy to retain a surplus of £25,000. This will be used to update the CCTV system. While a full replacement is not possible, the plan is to work with the IT team to replace core elements, address gaps, and gradually repair and replace components to create a cohesive system.	
5.6.5	Q: Is £25, 000 enough to make it safe?	
5.6.6	EW confirmed that the funding will allow for a single core system and filling gaps. Additional adjustments will be carried out by subcontractors rather than a complete system replacement.	
5.6.7	GL reported that recent drainage improvements have had a significant positive impact on engagement and safety, reducing damage and injuries to staff. The removal of old drains, which had been in place for 14 years, has contributed to a calmer environment.	
5.6.8	EW shared that Sky Academy recently hosted a specialist conference, which was featured in CLF Heartbeat and on the academy website. The event included eight workshops providing positive CPD opportunities for staff from specialist provisions.	
5.6.9	EW reported ongoing discussions with the principal of another academy regarding a proposal to use additional space. The academy is working with the LA to align with their SEN strategy priorities. The LA has expressed strong support and indicated that if Sky provides details of required adaptations, the LA will lead the process using their funding pot rather than Sky's resources.	

5.6.10	AW noted that the trajectory of positive developments is encouraging.	
5.7	Risk register	
5.7.1	EW reported that she will review the risk register with KE prior to next meeting in Feb 26.	
5.7.2	Current items on the risk register include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handrails: Plans to remove handrails are under review, with consideration of health and safety requirements and suitable alternatives. • Drains: Drains remain on the register despite improvements, as some areas require regular tightening and monitoring. 	
5.7.3	Q: Filtering systems – what system does CLF use? What does it give you?	
5.7.4	KF confirmed that CLF uses Meraki and SENSO. All staff are trained on SENSO, which allows staff to monitor and control student screens when logged into academy systems. The system flags high-risk activity, inappropriate sites, and concerning keywords, which are escalated to GL and the safeguarding team. Examples of banned sites include “Corn Hub” (appearing as a cooking site) and “Crop.com.” KF noted that while students occasionally attempt to find loopholes, these are quickly identified and addressed.	
5.7.5	Q: Is this just a risk, not an issue that people are getting around the filter?	
5.7.6	KF confirmed that the main risk is students attempting to use VPNs, which is a national issue. This occurs rarely as phones are not permitted in the academy. A whitelist of banned sites is maintained. ACTION: Update the wording in the AC report to reflect that systems are in place to support filtering and monitoring.	EW
5.7.7	EW noted that compliance issues are being addressed in collaboration with the CLF team. Beck Hawkins and EW are working to ensure the contract meets academy needs, although it remains challenging.	
6	Safeguarding	
6.1	Q: Anything we should be aware of?	
6.1.1	KF reported a recent spike in HSB (harmful sexualised behaviour) and an increase in ISB (inappropriate sexualised behaviour) within a small cohort. These cases are being closely monitored. It was noted that this was discussed in detail with the safeguarding counsellor at a previous meeting. KF also noted a previous spike in prejudice-related incidents, which has since reduced following targeted interventions by the pastoral team. Two new members of the safeguarding team have completed training.	
6.1.2	KF confirmed that Section 175 has been completed and emailed to KE today. The document has been updated since the initial version was sent. ACTION: KF to send the updated Section 175 version to KE. KE reviewed in December 25 and emailed to KF.	KF
6.1.3	KF shared that safeguarding questions were asked of all staff to review previous training and identify areas requiring additional support. One key area highlighted was domestic abuse, leading to further training being delivered.	

	The academy is now targeting areas where staff feel less confident and organising CPD accordingly to strengthen safeguarding knowledge.	
7	Areas of focus identifies in agenda planning – Ofsted Readiness	
7.1	Next Focus: Attendance (previously planned focus on Disadvantaged has been changed to Attendance). Attendance: Review strategies and present attendance data in a clearer, more accessible format.	
7.2	Self-Evaluation Evidence: Consider Ofsted readiness. It was agreed this would not form part of the AC meeting but instead be delivered as a briefing/training session. Proposed timing: end of January (from 22nd onwards, subject to KE's availability). ACTION: TC & GL to agree a date for councillors to meet online to discuss Ofsted readiness. ACTION: Explore the toolkit in more detail and prepare for discussion.	TC & GL ALL
8	Equality and Diversity	
8.1	EW reported that the recent conference hosted by the academy focused on Equality and Diversity. The EDIB (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging) lead for the Trust attended and delivered three sessions: Race Equality LGBTQ+ Adultification EW confirmed that these sessions will continue, with another conference planned for April to further embed these themes. The Trust's focus is on investing in people and recognising the global majority within the workforce, making EDIB a key priority.	
8.2	AW asked: In terms of staffing structure, we previously discussed diversity at an AC meeting. Do we have an update on where this sits now? For example, staffing establishment by job title—such as the four TAs recently appointed—are these from supply, and are they in upper or lower school? If we are looking at EDI, it would make sense to have a session with more granular detail.	
8.3	GL confirmed that the academy's Top Sheet includes a global majority target aligned with CLF objectives. Recent recruitment rounds have included appointments from a wider ethnic background. ACTION: Include updated staffing diversity data in the next AC meeting. TF noted that the central team is producing this data and will provide it for the academy. KE requested that data reflect the Taunton area rather than Bristol for accurate comparison. EW noted that previous reports showed the academy was above the county average for diversity.	TF/GL
9	Policies	
9.1	The Behaviour Policy is available on Governor Hub. The Safeguarding Policy will be uploaded for reference but does not require signing. Both reports approved by KE.	

10	Link Reports	
10.1	<p>Proposed Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding: KE • SEND: KE (<i>may change</i>) • Careers: Roy (<i>to confirm if he would like this role</i>) • Disadvantaged: KE (<i>may change</i>) • Wellbeing: AW <p>It was noted that link councillors should complete three visits per year related to their link roles. At least one safeguarding link visit is required each term. A Visit Note should be completed after each visit using the template available in the Governor Hub meeting folder.</p> <p>KE has arranged a visit on 4 Feb 2026.</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding link councillor roles; however, roles are not yet confirmed.</p> <p>ACTION: TC to coordinate by emailing councillors to confirm who would like to take on each link councillor role.</p>	TC
11	Matters for the attention of the Board/COAC	
11.1	No matters were raised for the attention of the Board or COAC.	
12	Any Other Business	
12.1	No additional business was discussed.	
13	Date of Next Meeting	
13.1	<p>The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 9th February 2025.</p> <p>ACTION: TC to explore changing the meeting time to better accommodate work commitments. A suggestion was made to alternate meeting times between 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM.</p>	TC

ACTIONS

3.2	Follow up with JC regarding sponsor councillor role	EW
3.2	Continue investigating EduGov access with HR and comms team	EW
3.2	Confirm what disability-related information academies can legally access	TF
3.2	BL to book meeting with central science team after the holidays and update AC at the February meeting.	BL
3.2	KF to share anonymised risk assessments with KE during the upcoming SCR review call.	KF
3.2	Upload safeguarding and relationship policies to Governor Hub COMPLETE	EW
4.4	GL to chase the minutes or summary from scrutiny and share with AC before the next meeting. COMPLETE.	GL

4.5	TC to organise a parent election at the start of next term.	TC
5.2.7	Next AC meeting to include a dedicated focus on attendance, with KF presenting comparative data (<i>Present the February comparative data in two groups – take out the pupils on roll at request of LA but with minimal attendance. Present as two groups</i>).	KF
5.2.7	EW and KF to prepare an attendance report before February, potentially creating a template for all special schools.	EW & KF
5.2.9	ACTION: look at how a bromcom report can be set up to simplify reporting process.	KF
5.3.8	Next meeting to include a focus on reading (phonics), reviewing the cohort of students without age-appropriate reading levels and the interventions in place. Provide data on pupils with low reading ages and the range of interventions to support improvement.	BL
5.4.4	Share ARV notes with AC	GL
5.4.5	Share ARV action plan with AC	GL
5.5.8	Share feedback from Ofsted wellbeing questions	GL
5.7.6	Update the wording in the AC report to reflect that systems are in place to support filtering and monitoring.	EW
6.1.2	KF to send the updated Section 175 version to KE. KE reviewed in December 25 and emailed to KF.	KF
7.2	TC & GL to agree a date for councillors to meet online to discuss Ofsted readiness.	TC & GL
7.2	Explore the toolkit in more detail and prepare for discussion.	ALL
8.3	Include updated staffing diversity data in next AC Meeting.	TF/GL
10.1	TC to coordinate by emailing councillors to confirm who would like to take on each link councillor role.	TC
13.1	TC to explore changing the meeting time to better accommodate work commitments. A suggestion was made to alternate meeting times between 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM.	TC