By Brook Valley Academy Trust
(Company Registration Number 8020467)
Academy Board Meeting
Thursday 14th May 2026
Via virtual conferencing facilities

Minutes

Present: Merope Sylvester (**"MS"**), Natasha Nicholas (**"NN"**), Jaclyn Cross (**"JC"**), Lisa Nicolson (**"LN"**), Craig Parrott (**"CP"**), (until 7.12pm) Martin Lowe (**"ML"**), Jenny George (**JG**), David New (**"DN"**) and (from 6.25pm) Elizabeth Gilbertson (**"EG"**),

In Attendance: Carrie Davies (Deputy Head) **("CD"**) and Michelle Hocking (Clerk) (**"Clerk"**)

Apologies: Deborah Henshall (Head teacher) (**"DH"**) and usual attendee Bronwyn Lightowler, School Business Manager (**"BL"**)

Item	Minute	Action
	Opening Prayer JC led the opening prayer	
1.	**Welcome and Apologies** MS took the chair and opened the meeting at 6.00pm. Apologies noted and accepted from DH and BL, EG running a little late – quorum present. ***Ratification of DN and ML renewal*** **The email approval of DN's and ML's reappointment immediately following termination of their previous term of office was unanimously ratified**. MS thanked them both for agreeing to continue. ***JC renewal in November*** It was noted that, in anticipation of a lengthy formal renewal process, JC had applied to the Diocese to be reappointed as a Foundation Governor upon expiry of her current term of office. **Subject only to completion of Diocesan formalities and any in-school re-appointment checks (such as DBS renewal), JC's reappointment with effect from November was unanimously pre-approved.**	**Clerk to update the records re JC's reappointment in November**
2.	**Pecuniary and Business Interests Register** No changes to interests previously declared nor interests declared in the business of this meeting.	

Roots to grow, wings to fly
growing, flourishing, soaring
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3.	**Minutes of last meeting:** **The minutes of 12 March were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of that meeting.** MS authorised the Clerk to add her electronic signature to the approved board minutes. **ACTIONS:** Clerk to add MS's electronic signature to the approved minutes and file and (as relevant) publish them. **+ matters arising not covered elsewhere: FGB Actions Log 2025 26.docx** Actions updated live in the meeting. It was noted that online safety sessions had elicited positive parental feedback.	
4.	**Finance, Premises, Staffing & HR** **Budget Monitoring** Noted that the February and March budget monitoring had been previously circulated in line with the Academy Trust Handbook. In BL's absence, MS drew the board's attention to the April budget monitoring report (spreadsheet and commentary) and invited board members to raise any questions or concerns. There were none. **Draft Budget 2026/27** Noted: • Assumptions summary circulated • Draft based on LA guidance and best estimates – although provisional draft is likely to have some changes as some information is still outstanding MS explained that BL had gone through the draft with her and highlighted: • Reasonable level of confidence for the next three years – but subject to volatility outside the school's/governors' control • Years 4 and 5 are less certain – included for compliance but subject to likely movement ***EG joined the meeting at 6.25pm*** **Q1:** A relatively high level of pupil numbers are presumed – would it be prudent to budget for lower numbers on roll (**NOR**)? A: For this September we have 28 acceptances and a couple of subsequent show arounds. NN reported that there was also an application for a Ukrainian child to join Yr1, noting: • The Yr1 class already had 30 – so admitting this child would breach the maximum infant class size (which is 30)[1] • Senior leaders were supportive of admitting and considered	

[1] The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012

	exceptional circumstances may apply (including that the child has no permanent residency yet)
	• The cohort:
	  ○ Had no particular behaviour challenges
	  ○ Included another Ukrainian child
	
	Q2: Are the relevant staff and unions happy with the proposal to admit?
	A: CD will check this
	
	Q3: Will additional costs of admitting this child be covered?
	A: In the usual manner, pursuant to the lagged funding arrangements if the child is in school at the next census date.
	
	The board were, subject to compliance with appropriate processes, supportive of admitting this child as being in line with the inclusive ethos of the school. **ACTIONS:** CD to (i) check that staff and unions are supportive of the admission and (ii) liaise with the LA to, in the best interests of the child, expedite the child's admission to the school.
	
	Assets Management Plan Update
	In BI's absence, the Clerk reported that:
	• the current reserves substantially exceeded the 7% of General Annual Grant (**GAG**) income minimum required by the current reserves policy
	• BL wished to propose that, in order to facilitate works over the summer, some reserves be committed to priority works
	The board unanimously approved in principle using reserves to conduct priority premises, and infrastructure works over the summer. ACTIONS: (i) BL to set out details of proposed works to be funded from reserves for email approval and (ii) Clerk to add ratification of email approval of reserves-funded works to the next agenda.
	
	Maximising Interest
	MS explained that BL had proposed that, given the relatively predictable and stable cashflow position, the school considers maximising interest on funds held by placing them with INSIGNIS [2] The board were supportive of these proposals in principal. **ACTIONS:** (i) BL to circulate INSIGNIS investments proposals for email comment/approval and (ii) Clerk to add ratification of interest decisions to the next agenda.
	
	Catering Tender Update
	The documents circulated were noted – including that the school's current catering provider was the only tenderer. **The**
		CD
		
		BL
		Clerk
		
		BL
		Clerk

[2] Insignis savings platform - Get help buying for schools

	catering contractual arrangements were unanimously ratified. **Internal Audit (Governance) Update and Action Plan (including amendments to align);** **a. Scheme of Delegation (SoD)** **b. Financial Regulations Manual** **The revisions to the SoD and Financial regulations Manual were unanimously approved as interim versions pending further alignment changes to be brought to the next meeting (following internal audit observations). ACTIONS:** Clerk to (i) arrange for final alignment changes to SoD and Financial regulations Manual and (ii) add approval of final SoD and Financial Regulations Manual to the next agenda. **Critical Incident Policy/Plan** **Subject to update of vision & values template, the Critical Incident Policy/Plan was unanimously approved in the form circulated . ACTIONS:** Clerk to update vision & values and arrange for the approved Critical Incident Plan to be shared as appropriate. **Information Security Incident Procedure** Deferred. **ACTIONS:** (i) NN/CD/BL to ask the ICT provider to check the personalisation of the template Information Security Incident Procedure and (ii) Clerk to add Information Security Incident Procedure to the next agenda. **Estate Vision & Strategy Document** Deferred. **ACTIONS:** (i) DH/BL to draft/update Estate Vision & Strategy document and (ii) Clerk to add Estate Vision & Strategy document to the next agenda. **Debtor Management Policy and Procedures** Deferred. **ACTIONS:** (i) BL to reconsider draft based on risk and (ii) Clerk to add Debtor Management Policy to the next agenda. **Subject Access Request** **Subject to ensuring that the 'Risk Management & Insurance Team' refers to services provided by 1-West, the Subject Access request was unanimously approved in the form circulated. ACTIONS:** Clerk to (i) check that the Risk Management & Insurance Team referenced is part of services provided by 1-West to the school and then (ii) share the approved Subject Access Request with the office team as appropriate. **HR Policies:** **(a) Pay** **(b) Allegations Against Adults**	**Clerk** **Clerk** **NN/CD/BL** **Clerk** **DH/BL** **Clerk** **BL/Clerk** **Clerk**

	(c) Early Careers Teachers (ECT) **Subject to vision & values, each of the HR policies listed above were unanimously approved in the form circulated.** **ACTIONS:** (i) Clerk to update the vision statement (including in the footer) of each of the approved policies and (ii) Clerk/BL to arrange for publication of the approved HR policies to governors and staff as relevant.	**Clerk** **Clerk/BL**
5.	**Headteacher Report** Report circulated. NN highlighted: • Attendance: Minor issues with lateness are being addressed – including contacting the parents of those who are persistently late • Safeguarding: Child protection Plan meetings are taking place with NN covering in DH's absence Board members observed, whilst wealth of information is good: • more focus on trends analysis would be helpful e.g. comparative trends between the school and national data, whether certain incidents involve repeat offenders and/or are focused in specific year groups and how information is used to track trends and inform mitigations • clear tracking of attendance as it starts to decline, e.g. tracking attendance falling between 90-95% would better support addressing issues early Senior leaders present explained that persistent absences have declined. **Q4:** Is this due to a great solution being found or a short-term fix? A: A bit of both. One key initiative is that families receive attendance report three times per annum, so they are made aware of their child(ren)'s attendance before it gets low/a formal letter is triggered. In Term 1 there were 38 children below 95% and in Term 3 there were 30 children below 90%. **ACTION:** Clerk to provide updated template monitoring reports for review/further adaptation by CD/NN and JG. ***ML left the meeting at 7.12pm***.	 **Clerk** **CD/NN/JG**
6.	**Safeguarding/Single Central Record Update** JC reported that she was in email contact with NN and CD but her usual termly visit had been postponed in DH's absence. No significant points to raise.	
7.	**Link Governors Update** Noted that:	

	• Various visit reports had been completed and circulated – no queries on them • Need to continue H&S visits rota once BL back. <u>**ACTION:** MS to conduct 'catch up' H&S visit in July and report to the next meeting.</u> All were reminded to write up visit reports as soon as feasible following visits to school – including visits to parents evenings, etc.	**MS**
8.	**Climate Action Plan** JG: • Acknowledged that she held an outstanding action to sit down with DH and the head of the PTA • Had a small number of parent volunteers for field development phase 1 (taking place on Sunday) • Noted that she was keen to ensure that, following the concerted efforts to rejuvenate, the grounds are maintained moving forwards CD reported that she had discussed plans with staff and a particular staff member (who leads the Eco Warriors) had expressed an interest in supporting these developments. JG confirmed that the relevant staff member had been in touch with her.	

9.	**Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) Working Party**
	DN reported that an initial meeting of the MAT working party had taken place – focused on designing MAT specification
	
	EG left the meeting at 7.20pm
	
	DN explained that the working party had:
	• Decided to draw up a MAT specification against which existing MATs could be assessed to see whether they fulfil By Brook Valley's criteria
	• Weighed up pros and cons, noting:
	    ○ Financial and continuity vulnerabilities of a stand-alone academy trust (**SAT**)
	    ○ Potential decline in autonomy and focus on children in the school when part of a MAT
	• Focused on the desire to retain control – 'best not to appoint than appoint the wrong person (MAT' approach
	
	Q5: How are you coming up with what is important to the school?
	A: Structure, degree of autonomy, vision & values and composition are all key to the school. Specifications are currently categorised as 'essentials' and 'desirables' but these are all subject to further discussion and can be switched around – a draft will be made available for governors' input.	

	ACTION: DN to circulate draft MAT specifications document for input from governors.	**DN**

10.	**Foundation & Ethos/Curriculum, Teaching & Learning Combined Committee Report/Minutes – including:**
	• **Complaints Procedure**
	• **Learning Outside the Classroom Policy**
	• **Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy**
	Minutes and documents circulated.
	JC explained that:
	• Both committees dealt with similar items, such as subject areas, policies, and wellbeing
	• To reduce duplication and time spent (particularly for DH who attends all committees' meetings), it was proposed that the committees:
	  o Combine their meetings
	  o Conduct four meetings per annum (two chaired by JC and two chaired by DN)
	• It was proposed that foundation governors continue to meet with the headteacher for additional specific things such as SIAMs
	• It was anticipated that combining the committees' meetings would help support a greater understanding and meaningful strategic monitoring of the School Improvement Action Plan (**SIAP**) and Self-Evaluation Form (**SEF**)
	ACTION: DH to bring the SIAP to the July FGB meeting.
	
	Each of the Complaints Procedure, Learning Outside the Classroom Policy and Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions Policy were, subject to updating dates and vision statement, unanimously approved in the form circulated.
	ACTION: Clerk to (i) update the dates and vision statement on each of the Complaints Procedure, Learning Outside the Classroom Policy and Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions Policy and (ii) arrange for filings and publication of these policy documents as approved policies and procedures.
		DH
		
		Clerk

11.	**Governor Training & Participation: Brochure on Teams + Cascaded training materials:** Noted – together with ongoing action for all to book training via the Clerk.	
12.	**Chair's Update** **(a) Risk Management Protocol**	

	Deferred. **(b) Governors' website page Website govs page.docx (all to provide bios please)** Noted. **(c) Communications/Marketing Plan Update** MS explained: • Plans for a targeted campaign to recruit new governors – and also a general governors' newsletter after half term **ACTION:** MS to draft post-half term governors' newsletter. • She had met with the chair of the pre-school – very positive meeting with lots of ideas, enthusiasm and proposals for joint initiatives discussed – including Yr5/pre-school buddy system (for which board members immediately expressed support) - he was keen to attend the July board meeting to introduce himself **ACTIONS:** (i) MS to introduce the chair of the pre-school to CD to facilitate commencement of the buddy system next term and (ii) Clerk to invite the chair of the pre-school to the July board meeting and add his introductory presentation to the beginning of the July agenda. **Q6:** Do we track the throughflow from the pre-school to reception and is it a high proportion? A: Yes and yes – although precise figures are not to hand this evening. **ACTION:** NN to provide pre-school throughflow figures for last 2 years **(d) Recruitment Update** Noted above. **(e) Parent Governor Nomination Process (three vacancies)** Noted above. **(f) Other Recruitment Opportunities** The board briefly discussed distributing promotional flyers to pre-schools, playgroups, and other venues in the community.	**MS** **MS/CD** **Clerk** **NN**
13.	**AOB** LN reported that she had attended school that morning to conduct a Standard Assessment Tests (**SATs**) monitoring visit: • Amazingly run • Calm, smooth and well-regulated • Written report to follow **ACTION:** LN to produce written report of SATs visit.	**LN**
14.	**How have we contributed to the vision of By Brook Valley C of E Primary School today?** • Commenced trial of new governance structure (combined committees' meetings) • Reviewed finances and policies • Considered increase in children on roll (including	

	accommodation of additional child in need) and boosting governance capacity through recruitment. MS extended thanks to all.	
15.	**Date of next meeting:** **Thursday 16 July 2026 at 6.00pm in school**	**Note**

The board discussed appropriate spread of meetings in the next academic year, noting:

- Key administration – including recruitment to roles (chair, link governor, etc) could be conducted in the July meeting in readiness for the next academic year
- Historically the September meeting had been administration focussed with little to report between July and September
- Ideally July meeting should review progress against SIAP foci/targets over the course of the preceding year and consider the draft SIAP for the following year (including any rolled forward objectives)
- Committee meetings should continue to focus on and be scheduled around key data drops
- November meeting should be retained for AGM and audited accounts presentation, approval, and timely submission

Approved next meetings:
26th November 2026
FEBRUARY TBC
21st January 2027
11th March 2027
13th May 2027
15th July 2027
ACTION: Clerk to propose appropriate February meeting date.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.00pm

Signed……………………………….. Date…………………