

Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

Meeting Date: Wednesday 1 October 2025
Location: DSSB
Time: 5.00pm

AC Members		Attended	Apologies
Rob Gillman (RG)	Sponsor 1 (Chair)	✓	
Stephanie Martin (SM)	Sponsor 2	✓	
Vacancy	Sponsor 3		
Rebecca Kemp (RK)	Sponsor 4		✓
Lewis Wild (LW)	Sponsor 5	✓	
V Balasco (VB)	Support Staff Councillor	✓	
Ashley Williams (AW)	Teacher Councillor	✓	
Matt Pincott (MP)	Parent Councillor		✓
Vacancy	Parent Councillor		
Invited attendees			
Simon Jones (SJ)	Head of School	✓	
Tony Searle (TS)	Education Director	✓	
Gareth Williams (GW)	Senior Leader, Outcomes	✓part	
Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk	✓	

Matters Arising:

Date/No	Action	Owner
20.02.24 001	AM and JM to meet offline to discuss further possible employer links, including with Bottle Yard Studios and through the Careers Hub. Update: AM has now left the AC. CB will email him to check if he is happy for JM to contact him to discuss employer links. Update 1 Oct 25 Action closed, no longer relevant.	AM JM
16.07.24 002	MP to link with PS to discuss resources that might be open to the academy around mental health. Ongoing	MP
08.10.24 003	VB to instigate the teacher and parent election process. AW is now in post. The parent election process will take place in September when some new families have joined the DSSB community. Update 1 Oct 25 Election process started. Action closed.	VB
10.02.25 002	An AC meeting will be planned to take place at the Bottle Yard. Update: CB confirmed this can happen but requires some planning due to access requirements at the Bottle Yard. It will be proposed next time Boomsatsuma are invited to attend an AC meeting. Ongoing -Action reassigned to SJ	SJ
10.02.25 003	The list of acronyms at the end of the AC report will be updated. Update – New acronym list in newly issued Councillor handbook. Action closed.	CB WH
10.02.25 005	RK to get in touch with Caroline Goh. RK will email SJ to arrange that. Complete/closed	RK
29.04.25 001	A comparative picture of contextual attendance data from other studio schools will be shared in the term 1 meeting of the next academic year. Update 1 Oct 25 – Action reassigned to SJ	SJ
03.07.25 001	CB will provide information on the Edurio staff survey results at the next meeting. Update 1 Oct 25: The survey results were positive overall, with some issues raised around staff workload. SJ will provide a breakdown of results at the next meeting.	SJ

Minutes

Item	Description (Questions from Academy Councillors unless otherwise stated)	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	RG welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies are recorded above. It was noted that before the meeting, non-staff Councillors present completed their annual training. Any non-staff Councillor absent will be invited to a training catch up session.	
2	Declaration of Interest	

2.1	No verbal declarations were made for the agenda items for this meeting. Academy Councillors were reminded to complete their annual written declarations on Governor Hub.	
3	Academy Council Membership	
3.1	There are 2 vacancies: 1 sponsor Councillor and 1 parent Councillor. The parent Councillor election process has begun.	
4	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting of 3 July 2025 were confirmed as a true record.	
5	Matters Arising	
5.1	The action table above has been updated.	
6	AC report	
6.1	Summer results – GW (Questions from Academy Councillors)	
6.1.1	Overall, this year's KS4 results dipped slightly on last year's outcomes but are improved compared to the 2023 data. The results at KS5 are very strong.	
6.1.2	KS5 Overall KS5 results were very positive. KS5 courses are spread over several different centres. Some are very small cohorts (particularly where students have been moved from a higher to lower level within the course). The results from the Bristol School of Acting are outstanding, with the value added for students being higher than expected over three qualifications. Of the KS5 courses held at Digitech, media was particularly strong. Esports was weaker but still shows some positive progress. The qualifications with Bristol Robins were slightly weaker this year.	
6.1.3	Q: Can you explain how the value-added measure is calculated? It is a progress measure. Zero represents the expected amount of progress over 2 years. Anything positive shows accelerated progress with 0.5% being around a grade higher per entry than anticipated. For all courses it is benchmarked from the student's GCSE results.	
6.1.4	Re-sits There were strong successes for the GCSE resits with 31 students passing maths or English across the centres.	
6.1.5	KS4 results GW shared results by each of the three buckets and explained how the bucket system worked. Bucket 1 is English and maths. English is counted as the best result of English Language or English Literature. The best English result then counts as double in the APS as does maths. Bucket 2 is science, modern foreign languages (MFL) and humanities. Students at Digitech always study double science so will always be one option block short. Bucket 3 contains the remaining subjects.	
6.1.6	Positive areas Overall, students experiencing disadvantage (PP students) did well compared to all students. In English the results were very close for PP students vs all students, especially in literature. PP students did well in maths and graphics. The data implies that where the gap is small, there is evidence of strong teaching. The cohort is small, so the gap does vary between subjects, especially in music and Esports. In general, music did well, especially at the top end, with 31% of students achieving a distinction. Lots of students also gained the higher qualification for media. All students passing Esports gained 1.5 GCSEs for that course. Overall, vocational courses did very well, with close to a 100% pass rate.	
6.1.7	Areas of focus Art was weaker than anticipated. We have a new Head of Art in place now and have made some positive changes to the course and structure and should see some strong performances this year. There are some concerns around the Business course. The course does not feel the right fit for the students we have, and we are considering a change to an RSL course; if this does not show improvements we may need to stop offering Business as a course. There were some issues with the vocational IT course. We changed the course at the start of Year 11 and are predicting stronger results for the Year 10 cohort coming through.	
6.1.8	Q: What does the asterisk denote by the Esports course?	

	This shows the course is equivalent to 1.5 GCSEs.	
6.1.9	Celebrating successes There were a variety of grade 9s achieved by students in GCSEs as well as a good number of distinctions achieved for vocational subjects. GW shared some case studies demonstrating progress and achievement for some individual students.	
6.1.10	Looking Ahead The predictions for this year for basics 9 to 5 are 20% and for basics 9 to 4 are 36%. The results from the mock assessment at the end of Year 10 was largely similar, however, the cohort is complex and has some challenges. The results for maths and English were significantly lower and where we would have expected some students to achieve a grade 3, they actually achieved a grade 2 in the mocks.	
6.1.11	There will be a challenge ahead to ensure progress and attainment for this cohort. In 2025 there was a boy heavy cohort, and the results were as anticipated with girls doing better in English and boys performing better in maths and science. This year it is still a boy heavy cohort (64 boys / 27 girls); however, the girls are doing much better than boys almost everywhere except games and media and this presents a challenge. There is a strong top set of all girls. The other classes are boy heavy and are not achieving as well; there is a huge job ahead to accelerate progress for boys.	
6.1.12	In addition, there is an ever-increasing number of students with SEND. Last year there were around 8 EHCPs in Year 11 (around 2 per class). This year there are 16 students with EHCPs, so a lot of support is needed in class. There needs to be a balance between the focus on supporting boys and supporting SEND.	
6.1.13	Q: How are you going to manage with an increased number of students with SEND in addition to the boy heavy cohort? Do you have a plan in place for that? The need has been increasing year on year for a number of years. By Christmas we had 24 EHCP consults, and the number continues to grow. Unfortunately, we are not always fully funded for these students, for various reasons. We are having ongoing conversations around how to best support those students. We cannot control the boy/girl ratio. The girls we have are also high-achieving girls, so this widens the gap further. The top sets are dominated by girls, and we need to consider how the teaching and learning in class is meeting the needs of those boys.	
6.1.14	Q: There was a comment in the report that the Year 10 summer mocks were relatively weak across the federation. Is that right? Why is that? Yes, the results were slightly depressed right across Year 10. We do not know why, as yet. There is an upturn in the number of students with EHCPs right across the trust, but in two local authorities in particular – South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. Both are involved in the safety valve project which affects funding. In North Somerset it is not unusual to have around 60 EHCPs in a year group, so 18 is not particularly high as a number, however, it is high as a percentage of the cohort where the cohort is just 91 students.	
6.1.15	Q: The report references bigger groups in period 7, what is the reason for that? There are more groups running this year, they are not bigger groups in terms of the number of students in the group. We have been able to benefit from the time of an English specialist to support us this year so have put on an extra group to ensure the cohort is getting what they need from period 7. There is an average of 8 – 10 students in each group.	
6.1.16	Q: You have mentioned that predictions are less comfortable in the middle grades; are you referring to grades 3 and 4? Yes, when making predictions there can be more movement in the middle grades; they can go up or down by a big margin. We need to work with those students to make sure we push the grades up.	
6.1.17	Q: Over the years students have come to Digitech for a variety of reasons, but often because KS3 has not been successful for them elsewhere and you have had a big job to do to help those students to progress. It is interesting that there has been a slight shift, and you now have a further maths group running. What do you do for those higher achievers to ensure they meet their aspirations? There are not many grades of 7 – 9 being achieved in our core subjects and we want to improve this. One of our key aims is to ensure all students achieve the best possible outcomes and that they have	

	what they need in order to progress to their next steps in further education or in the workplace. We do this through ensuring high quality teaching and high-quality environments and we use period 7 well in terms of targeting high performing students.	
6.1.18	Q: We know that nationally, the re-sit success rate is quite low. How damaging is it for students not to achieve basics? There are 2 main types of students taking re-sits. There are those that did not put in the effort at the right time that can do better, and the re-sit presents a second opportunity to achieve that. There are then those students who struggle to achieve a grade 4 in English or maths or both. For those students they may need to take the re-sit several times and this can lead to a spiral of failure and leave them in a negative place. There are things we do to mitigate this, such as the use of functional skills for those that are achieving grade 2. For those that are at grade 3 level, we continue to support them to follow the GCSE resit path. It can take a lot of time and effort for the students to pass but it is very rewarding when they do.	
6.1.19	Q: We know there is a strong link between attendance and attainment. How does the attendance for the current Year 11 compare with their attendance when they were in Year 10? Attendance ended around 86% last year. This was low and was a concern. We have ensured we have hit the ground running with Year 10 this year and have additional rigor around attendance processes. We know our students often have very low attendance in Year 9 (in other provisions) and we have a huge focus on improving that once they are at Digitech. The current Year 11 cohort is at around 85.5%.	
7	Review of AIP for 2025/26	
7.1	SJ confirmed that AIP is being finalised and will be shared once complete.	
7.2	Q: How would you characterise how the AIP is different to last year? There is a big focus and streamlining on what matters in the core areas of: • attendance and attainment, • classroom practice, particularly for literacy and numeracy, • culture: setting and holding conditions. There is less content, and the actions are tighter and more precise.	
7.3	Q: The report says that improvements in basics will drive improvements elsewhere. I have not seen that written as explicitly before. We will have a focus on literacy which will impact on English but also on the writing elsewhere through to media and other wider subjects; reading is the focus to unlock improvements elsewhere. The lower reading ability is often a trait where students have not had the best KS3 provision or have gaps in their learning.	
7.4	Q: In the current draft AIP it details that high quality teaching is not yet universal. How big is that gap? It is not huge. Largely teaching is strong. There is some work taking place to ensure we recognise and replicate the bright spots of teaching and ensure where it is weaker we match those staff members up with some appropriate coaching. Teaching is not weak. We do have some areas of risk coming up where we are temporarily losing 50% of the English teaching team and are working on a plan for that.	
7.5	Q: How many of the incoming cohort were previously educated at home? There were around 20 students joining Year 10 from EHE for various reasons.	
8	Safeguarding	
8.1	Safeguarding information will be included in the next AC report.	
9	Policies	
9.1	The Academy Council noted the following policies: • CLF Charging and Remissions policy • CLF Data Protection Policy	

	• CLF Online Safety Policy • CLF Remote Learning Policy The Academy Council approved the following: • DSSB Attendance Policy • SEND Policy and information report.	
10	Matters for the Board or COAC	
10.1	No matters for the board were raised.	
11	AOB	
11.1	No further business was reported. The meeting closed at 7.05pm	
11.2	Dates of future meetings: Meeting 2 – 11 November 2025 – 6pm teams Meeting 3 – 13 January 2026 – 5pm in school Meeting 4 – 24 March 2026 – 6pm teams Meeting 5 – 9 June 2026 – 5pm in school	

Matter's Arising

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