

Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday 9th June 2026
Location: DSSB
Time: 5pm

AC Members		Attended	Apologies
Rob Gillman (RG)	Sponsor 1 (Chair)	✓	
Stephanie Martin (SM)	Sponsor 2	✓	
Vacancy	Sponsor 3		
Vacancy	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	✓	
Katherine Ogden (KO)	Senior Principal	✓part	
Ben MacKenzie (BM)	FE Lead, Bristol Robins Foundation	✓part	
Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk	✓	

Matters Arising:

ACTIONS – Boom Satsuma		
13.1.26 001	ACTION – Student destination figures to be provided to the next meeting.	TS
13.1.26 002	ACTION – ECHP figures to be provided to the Council.	TS
13.1.26 003	ACTION – Revisit and update on three priority areas - Improvements to the spaces in which programmes are delivered, improved links between FE and HE and improved safeguarding links and provision.	TS
13.1.26 004	ACTION – Copies of the slides presented to the meeting to be provided for uploading onto Gov Hub.	TS/Clerk
ACTIONS - DSSB		
13.1.26005	ACTION – Attendance spreadsheet and anonymised case studies to be shared with the Council.	SJ
13.1.26006	ACTION – Data on OSD's to be included in the Behaviour Report.	SJ
13.1.26007	ACTION – T&L framework to be uploaded onto Gov Hub for councillors' information. WH to check this	SJ/Clerk

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. Update on attendance for MP. A discussion around membership and current vacancies took place. Academy Councillors were asked to consider exploring their personal contacts and conversations will continue to take place with the central team to take this further.	
2	Declaration of Interest	

2.1	No verbal declarations were made for the agenda items for this meeting.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
3.1	The minutes of the meeting of 24 March 2026 were confirmed as a true record.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	The action table has been updated.	
5	Partnership Working Robins Foundation – Ben MacKenzie Post 16	
5.1	RG noted the extract from the minutes from the last meeting with the Robins Foundation have been shared for information on Governor Hub.	
5.2	BM shared a presentation with the Academy Council. The slides are shared on Governor Hub.	
5.3	BM provided an update on partnership working, noting: • Really strong working relationships with DSSB. • Exam co-ordination for the Level 2 sport and retakes is an embedded process. • Recruitment numbers are strong again. Discussions are underway around adding a second level 2 class to add capacity and allow further increase of student numbers.	
5.4	BM provided an update on the planned new purpose-built facility at Filton Park. An update on staffing was provided. New roles include a Deputy FE manager (who will also manage inclusion) and a new safeguarding assistant to provide additional capacity and resource to that team.	
5.5	Questions from Academy Councillors	
5.6	Is funding in place for the new site?	
5.6.1	Yes, the Chief Development Officer oversees this. There is some money from the Lansdown foundation, and some money raised through sponsorships and charity donations.	
5.7	Attendance looks strong. How far away do students travel from, to get to Robins?	
5.7.1	There is nothing in the enrolment decisions we make that target local people. We do aim to work primarily with South Bristol due to the high levels of deprivation. However, there are students from all over Bristol and from Weston-Super-Mare. Attendance has typically been strong. We have a two-teacher model for level 3 and one lecturer for level 2. This means the staff know the students extremely well. We have put together a map this year to demonstrate the catchment area. (CB) We have collected student voice recently and the students speak well of the offer, the opportunity to play football and the trips. They enjoy being part of the foundation and the opportunities they can take up.	
5.8	Is the new development in the same geographical area?	
5.8.1	Filwood playing fields are in Knowle, so still South Bristol. It is about ten minutes' drive away. Potentially we would look to keep some classes at Ashton Gate and CAB. Having facilities at Ashton Gate does influence admissions numbers.	
5.9	How would you summarise your Ofsted experience?	
5.9.1	In terms of preparation SJ has been hugely helpful and we felt well prepared. We spent some time on Fridays when the timetable is clearer to prepare for it. There is some Ofsted experience within the staff body. There was a lot of focus on PHSE, and we were well prepared for that. In terms of the inspection itself, we had a number of groups offsite on the day, but we had a level 1 class on site, so it felt like a controlled environment. The inspector was in for about 2 hours, and he spoke with me and Charlotte and then went back into lessons to see how it progressed. Sally Apps (Deputy CEO) visited during the inspection, and we talked through the Level one course. Our cohort is quite different; however, we got the sense that the inspector was ultimately impressed by what he saw and he understood our unique cohort and offer.	
5.10	How are you doing with resits?	
5.10.1	We usually see a pass rate of around 30 plus %, which is above national average. Our GCSE English tutor was previously Head of English elsewhere and is very strong. She has been excellent but is now leaving (as we knew she would) The results have significantly improved since she has been part of the team. Likewise, we have a strong functional skills teacher and a strong GCSE maths teacher, and this will provide some continuity there. There are some timetable challenges meaning we have resit	

	classes on a Friday which is not the most popular with students. In terms of exams, Kerry is well organised. They know what they are working towards and good staff are in place.	
5.11	You have referenced strong links between Bristol Robins and both CB and SJ. Are there any other links that could be made with the school to support development for both provisions?	
5.11.1	We have considered this. We pay a bit less to staff than a teaching salary, but staff do not teach as many hours. We are fortunate to have experienced teachers currently but often have young staff that may have only recently qualified. We have had some discussions with SJ about us linking with Siobhan Cole in some form or another, be it learning walks or some mentoring. We are open to have discussions about that.	
5.12	End of Questions	
5.13	VB left the meeting. Academy Councillors thanked BM and he left the meeting.	
6	Academy Council Report	
6.1	Progress Data – Year 11	
6.2	SJ presented information about progress data for Year 11. The slides are available on Governor Hub. In March last year 36% of students had achieved Basics 9 – 4 and 11% had achieved Basics 9 – 5. This translated into actual GCSE results of 46% for Basics 9 -4 and 18% for Basics 9 – 5. This year in March 28% had achieved Basics 9 – 4, and 13% had achieved Basics 9 – 5; this is less than that time last year and therefore the results are not anticipated to be quite as high as last year. Students tend to make more progress between March and the start of exams so that gap may close a little.	
6.3	SJ shared the data for individual core subjects. The school is targeting 19 students and supporting them through mentoring, work on attendance and work to support the family to try to push them over the line. If all those students make the required progress Basics 9 – 4 could be as high as 70%; whilst that is a significant challenge, all students are being supported to achieve their best possible results. It was noted that with less than 90 students in the Year 11 cohort, each student contributes over 1% in terms of those figures.	
6.4	SJ shared non-core subject data. When reviewing performance across the wider curriculum, it was noted that improvements are evident in the majority of subjects. An internal focus remains on understanding why students tend to perform more strongly in vocational subjects compared to core subjects, with curriculum design identified as a contributing factor. Most option subjects are showing improved outcomes this year, with the exception of Graphics, which has shown a notable dip compared to the same point last year. This has coincided with a change of teacher; however, confidence was expressed that outcomes will improve following the moderation process. The standard of work produced has already received positive feedback from an external assessor ahead of the formal moderation in July.	
6.5	Outcomes for disadvantaged (PP) students were strong last year, with a significant improvement in the proportion achieving grades 9–4, rising from 21% to 47% following the final push towards examinations. Current projections for this year indicate that 10% are on track to achieve grades 9–4, meaning a similarly substantial improvement will be required to secure positive outcomes for this vulnerable group by the end of the academic year.	
6.6	The data from the Business course is looking stronger; is that the course that was changed?	
6.6.1	Yes, it changed to the Business and Enterprise course. The IT course also changed; however, we are not offering that next year. Instead, we will have two classes of a new Film course.	
6.7	AI policy	
6.7.1	ACTION: This item will be carried to the next meeting.	
6.8	Careers update	
6.8.1	SM provided a careers update following a positive discussion with Jane. She noted that the current academic year had been somewhat challenging due to periods of ill health, which required prioritisation of key tasks and meant some initiatives were not delivered as thoroughly as planned. However, the value of administrative support was highlighted, enabling important activities such as work experience week to proceed successfully in her absence. The Envision programme also ran for	

	the fifth consecutive year and, despite resourcing challenges, remained impactful. Key learning included the need for a dedicated member of staff to oversee the programme from start to finish; reduced staff availability this year contributed to lower completion rates, although those students who completed the programme demonstrated increased confidence. SM also reported on Enterprise Week, delivered at the end of Term 4 over four days, which was generally well received. Feedback indicated that concentrating all activities into a single week felt intensive for some students, with a number expressing anxiety about missing a full week of lessons. In response, a revised model is being explored with her line manager for next year, proposing one collapsed day per term, each with a distinct focus (e.g. life skills, business skills, creative activities), which is expected to improve engagement and balance.	
6.8.2	Year 10 work experience is scheduled to take place from 6–10 July, with approximately half of students having secured placements to date. Further efforts to increase uptake are planned through targeted promotion during tutor time. For those not undertaking external placements, an in-school programme is being developed and progressing well; this includes the opportunity for students to gain the HSBC Money Skills certificate. Additionally, Year 10 students have been offered the option to complete a second work experience placement where it does not conflict with exams or key school events, and a number have successfully taken up this opportunity. The Year 10 digital work experience programme was also completed this year, with strong levels of student engagement reported.	
6.8.3	For Year 12, work experience remains optional and uptake has been limited. University visits have also seen mixed engagement, with a planned visit to UWE cancelled due to low student participation. It is felt that peer influence may have contributed to this. To address this, the benefits of work experience and wider enrichment opportunities will be more actively promoted through tutor time, and the approach will be reviewed to strengthen participation in the next academic year.	
6.8.4	SM provided the following further updates: • Apprenticeships: A continued focus for Year 12 students, supported by a targeted input from Apprenticeships West to raise awareness and understanding of available pathways. • Green Skills Employability Day: 15 students attended an event at UWE focused on sustainable careers, which was well received. A follow-up session is scheduled, and a new partnership is being developed with COWI, who delivered input at the event. COWI has offered two work experience placements, and an office visit will be arranged. • Employer Partnerships: DSSB is strengthening local partnerships, including with Amazon, who have offered six work experience placements for students. • Student Destinations (Year 11): The majority of Year 11 students have submitted at least one post-16 application. Approximately 20 students currently have no confirmed destination; however, it is expected this will be resolved by GCSE results day. A summer support programme is in place to assist, with 5–6 students already referred. • Gatsby Benchmarks: Changes to the benchmarking process now require a more in-depth review. Some Compass reviews, including the Easter submission, were not completed due to capacity constraints. Work is ongoing with the Careers Hub Co-ordinator to complete the next review cycle.	
7	Review of AIP	
7.1	ACTION: This item will be carried to the next meeting.	
8	Ofsted inspection	
8.1	CB reported on the Ofsted inspection that took place on 6–7 May 2026.	
8.2	The school had anticipated the visit and undertaken preparatory work in advance. It was the first secondary school in the trust to be inspected under the new Ofsted framework. Notification was received on the Tuesday following the bank holiday, with inspection days on Wednesday and Thursday.	

8.3	From the outset, the school clearly articulated its context as a studio school, including its post-16 partnerships and strong vocational offer. Inspectors were directed to visit partnership provision on the first day. The inspection was adapted to reflect this context, with inspectors open to dialogue about how best to showcase the school's work.	
8.4	Four inspectors were involved initially (two focusing on partnerships and two on-site), reducing to three on the second day. A range of meetings and deep dives took place, with ongoing dialogue during key inspection team (KIT) meetings. Inspectors were clear about evidence requirements and the school responded promptly to provide this. The new framework places emphasis on securely meeting criteria in all areas to achieve higher judgements.	
8.5	The school was identified as demonstrating strong practice in two areas: inclusion and post-16 provision, with all other areas judged as meeting expected standards. As a result, overall performance is considered broadly equivalent to "good," with "strong" aligned to "outstanding" under the revised framework. CB noted that achieving an "exceptional" judgement represents a very high bar nationally and will be a future ambition.	
8.6	The final report was received, published, and shared with parents. CB expressed delight at the outcome, highlighting it as strong validation of the school's work, particularly its inclusive ethos and provision tailored to its context. Pride was noted in the achievements of staff and the wider trust, especially as the school marks ten years since opening, and as one of few schools locally to achieve recognised areas of strong practice. Particular thanks were given to staff involved in preparing for the inspection, including senior leaders, and to the support provided by the trust. The Academy Council formally recognised and commended the work of all staff.	
8.7	SJ echoed CB's view and noted that he was particularly pleased that the school's strong inclusion work was recognised. SJ also noted that some parts of the report will be used to consider next steps, confirming that many of the areas for consideration were already a work in progress by the academy.	
8.8	Questions from Academy Councillors	
8.9	It sounds like the inspection was quite a smooth process. Was there anything you learned along the way, particularly around the specific context of a studio school and the different challenges that can bring?	
8.9.1	The inspection process confirmed many of the school's anticipated strengths and challenges, with no significant surprises arising. A key focus was attendance, which remains below the national average; however, inspectors were receptive to the school's contextual narrative as a studio school. This included consideration of the high proportion of students with complex backgrounds, including those with poor prior attendance and contextual safeguarding factors. We were able to evidence strong and improving practice through detailed case studies, demonstrating a relational and inclusive approach to removing barriers and working effectively with external agencies to improve student outcomes. The inspectors provided robust but fair challenge, seeking clear evidence through case studies, students' work and triangulation of practice. By the second day, many aspects of the school's inclusive provision had been recognised as meeting or exceeding expectations, with similar strengths evident in post-16 provision. The strength of the PSHE curriculum was also highlighted. I feel that the final report accurately reflects the sustained work undertaken in recent years and I recognise that further development is needed in literacy, which is already in progress. Our only reflection was that we maybe could have been more ambitious in pressing for an "exceptional" judgement in inclusion.	
8.10	What was your experience of the inspection, from a teacher's point of view Ashley?	
8.10.1	The inspection prompted consideration of what "exceptional" practice in literacy would look like, particularly given that no school with similarly low starting points has yet achieved this judgement. I have been thinking about how literacy provision might develop over time, comparing the current position with aspirations for the next four years to help guide improvement.	

	During the inspection itself, I feel that staff felt well supported, with a strong network in place. Although there was some nervousness in staff, we felt prepared overall. (CB) SJ and I tried to model confidence and calmness during the inspection, which helped to reassure and steady staff throughout the process.	
8.11	Is there a potential link between disadvantaged students and those that have secured a destination?	
8.11.1	Yes, there could be and it is worth exploring further. It can be both ways – if a student secures a place and it is not dependent on results they may lose motivation.	
8.12	End of Questions	
8.13	RG congratulated CB, SJ and the entire staff team, on behalf of the Academy Council on the fantastic result and all the work completed that contributed to it. RG noted that the governance section of the report praised the link roles fulfilled by Academy Councillors and the fact that Councillors get in to school to see provision a number of times across the year. CB noted the final report was a credit to staff and to the student body. Parent voice was strong with 93% of those that completed the survey indicating they would recommend the school. CB confirmed there were around 80 responses which is reasonably strong given the size of the cohort.	
9	Safeguarding	
9.1	Lewis Wild provided a safeguarding update. LW met with Phil De Scossa (DSL) last week and had a discussion around the Ofsted Inspection. The CLF Safeguarding audit had taken place. The process has changed from last year and it is now considered more challenging. DSSB scored 58.8% which was a reduction from last year. The partnerships receive individual safeguarding audits, and they also go through the audit process with the other provider they are linked with.	
9.2	Safeguarding data from Term 4, prepared by PDS, is included within the Academy Council report, with a Term 5 update to be shared when available. Recent incidents have included cases of substance misuse, with some students referred to YPDAS for support. There has been one child protection case involving multi-agency working, as well as a peer-on-peer incident involving the sharing of nude images, which was appropriately referred to both social care and the police. PDS will continue to provide updates on the safeguarding audit and associated action plan. Work is also underway to develop a standardised pro forma to enable partners to contribute to a termly safeguarding report. Current reporting arrangements focus primarily on students at DSSB, and this development will broaden oversight to include partner provision.	
9.2	Is the Safeguarding audit result of 58% in line with other schools in the trust?	
9.2.1	Yes, it is broadly in line.	
10	Attendance	
10.1	Can you give an update on attendance? It seems to have dipped recently during the hot weather. In previous meetings the Academy Council has heard that students joining DSSB often have very low attendance in their previous settings. It would be helpful if case studies focused on how much improvement is made when students transition to DSSB.	
10.1.1	Year 10 remains a challenge in terms of attendance. There are occasions where we struggle to reach 70% and this will impact on our overall attendance data and on outcomes. There is a bigger piece of work underway to consider this in detail and it will be a feature of the AIP next year. Case studies will be essential so that we can demonstrate progress on an individual basis; these were hugely helpful during the recent Ofsted inspection. Attendance remains a challenge across the trust and nationally.	
11	Outlook for next academic year	
11.1	This item will be carried to the next meeting. CB highlighted that there is some recruitment that will be needed ahead of next year and a potential restructure of leadership. The school values and mission will also be reviewed.	
12	Matters for the Board or COAC	
12.1	No matters for the board were raised.	

13	AOB	
13.1	No further business was reported. The meeting closed at 7pm.	
13.2	Dates of future meetings: TBC	

Matter's Arising

ACTIONS – Boom Satsuma		
13.1.26 001	ACTION – Student destination figures to be provided to the next meeting.	TS
13.1.26 002	ACTION – ECHP figures to be provided to the Council.	TS
13.1.26 003	ACTION – Revisit and update on three priority areas - Improvements to the spaces in which programmes are delivered, improved links between FE and HE and improved safeguarding links and provision.	TS
ACTIONS - DSSB		
13.1.26005	ACTION – Attendance spreadsheet and anonymised case studies to be shared with the Council.	SJ
13.1.26006	ACTION – Data on OSD's to be included in the Behaviour Report.	SJ
09.06.26 01	The AI policy will be considered at the next meeting.	CB RG
09.06.26 02	The AIP will be reviewed at the next meeting.	CB RG