

## Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

**Meeting Date:** Thursday 3 July 2025  
**Location:** DSSB  
**Time:** 5.00pm

AC Members		Attended	Apologies
Rob Gillman (RG)	Sponsor 1 ( <b>Chair</b> )	✓	
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			
Chris Ballard (CB)	Principal	✓	
Kath Cooper (KC)	Senior Principal	✓	
Simon Jones (SJ)	Vice Principal	✓	
Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk	✓	
Charlotte Plumb (CP)	Bristol Robins Foundation	✓part	
Ben Mackenzie (BM)	Bristol Robins Foundation	✓part	

### 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. <b>Ongoing</b>	AM JM
16.07.24 002	MP to link with PS to discuss resources that might be open to the academy around mental health. <b>Ongoing</b>	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. <b>Ongoing – to action in September. Staff will talk to the new Y10 parents at the upcoming open event.</b>	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. <b>Ongoing</b>	RG CB LF
10.02.25 003	The list of acronyms at the end of the AC report will be updated. <b>Ongoing</b>	CB WH
10.02.25 005	RK to get in touch with Caroline Goh. RK will email SJ to arrange that. <b>Ongoing</b>	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. <b>Ongoing</b>	CB

### Minutes

Item	Description (Questions from Academy Councillors unless otherwise stated)	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Introductions, Administration, Apologies</b>	
1.1	RG welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies are recorded above.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made for the agenda items for this meeting.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Academy Council Membership</b>	
3.1	As detailed in the action table above, a parent election will take place in the new academic year. Following Russ Gallon's sabbatical, he has now decided to resign from the Academy Council with the view of potentially rejoining in a year's time.	

<b>4</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting of 29 April 2025 were confirmed as a true record.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
5.1	The action table above has been updated.	
<b>6</b>	<b>AC report</b>	
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Partnership working - Robins</b>	
6.1.1	Charlotte Plumb, Head of Education, and Ben Mackenzie, Further Education Manager from Bristol Robins Foundation, joined the meeting to give an update on partnership working. CP advised that Polly Wardle is now Head of Operations for the Robins Foundation. RG advised that the meeting notes from the last meeting attended by Bristol Robins Foundation were included in the meeting papers for this meeting for reference.	
6.1.2	CP and BM provided updates on leadership changes, youth work projects, courses offered this year and next, retention and recruitment, attendance and safeguarding. The slides have been shared in the meeting folder on Governor Hub.	
6.1.3	<b>Q: Is that a need from a growth perspective?</b> Yes, some of our students are based at Beacon Centre, CAB and some at Ashton Gate. The Ashton Gate facility is quite small, and we cannot run all provisions from that site.	
6.1.4	<b>Q: Is funding in place?</b> Quite a lot is in place. It will cost in the region of £15m.	
6.1.5	<b>Q: In terms of the numbers of students on roll, at the last meeting where we had a presentation from the Bristol Robins Foundation, the numbers on roll were much higher – is that incorrect or have the numbers changed?</b> These figures are just DSSB, the overall picture includes students from other provisions.	
6.1.6	<b>Q: How many students are free school meals. With those, where they are on bursary, how are they funded at partnerships and through DSSB?</b> FSMs are funded through the bursary. The students buy lunch offsite.	
6.1.7	<b>Q: In last couple of years, we have worked harder on all the partnerships in establishing more regular contact and ensuring we are providing the support and meeting the compliance strands. Who is responsible for safeguarding at Bristol Robins?</b> We have our own DSO that oversees safeguarding over the whole of the foundation and a DSO in the education team. They work closely with Phil and Adele. There is good information sharing. We log things on CPOMs ourselves. (CB) It is a very collaborative approach around practice. PS supports where needed and works closely with the DSL in each of the partnerships. The Robins scored slightly higher in the CLF safeguarding audit than DSSB.	
6.1.8	<b>Q: DSSB have had some issues in terms of recruitment and retention for Esports – is that right?</b> Yes, there has been some. Art and media are more favourable. However, there are quite a lot coming through in Y10. It is changing to be a bit more creative, with a focus on designing games. There is no official training for Esports teacher so we have to recruit someone with a passion for the subject that can teach it to the high standard required.	
6.1.9	<b>Q: How easy to you find managing the resits for GCSEs in terms of student attendance?</b> It is a challenge. This is the first year we have used our own staff. We have some great teachers with us who have confirmed they are staying next year. We have two members of staff who are TAs in our BTEC provision, and they know and understand the students well and have good relationships with them. This makes lessons more effective and helps with attendance. Attendance has been strong this year.	
6.1.10	<b>Q: Have you had to do anything tactical, in terms of timetabling, to encourage the students to attend resit lesson?</b> They are always on a Friday; we are a bit restricted. The new facility may open up opportunities to review that.	
6.1.11	<b>Q: Do your safeguarding practices, procedures and culture support just the DSSB students or are they used more widely, supporting students from other provisions?</b>	

	The DSO has a wider remit than just education. The strong safeguarding practices will naturally filter out to support wider safeguarding practices across the foundation and over into other partnerships. We are trying to find ways to streamline our work across all provisions, including collecting data at key points that support all provisions.	
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Progress data</b>	
6.2.1	CB provided an update on Year 11:	
6.2.2	The exam season was successful. There was good attendance and good provision in place in terms of exam access arrangement. The revision and toast it sessions were good. Student attitudes towards the exams were strong for almost every student. A couple of students could not access them due to their own contextual reasons. CB noted that it was the best exam series he has seen at DSSB and that leaders are optimistic for a good set of results in the summer. Attainment will be a challenge, but there are high expectations around basic data.	
6.2.3	SJ provided an update on Year 10: The mock period has been successful. Occasionally, Year 10 students can be young and immature in their approach to exams, however, in the main, they have not been. Some of the students have struggled to get into the exam room or stay in the room, and those students were very well supported. On the back of the mocks, there is a parents evening in two-weeks' time. Staff will also look at class changes and period 7 groups. Based on how well the series has gone, there should be some positive data in the summer.	
6.2.4	CB reported that there is a good method and process around exams at DSSB now. It is well versed, the teachers, SLT and students know what to do and are well held to get there. RG confirmed that this reflects what he has seen over the last 2 or 3 years in school. It is consistent and is having impact.	
6.2.5	<b>Q: What takes place in period 7?</b> It is the whole group. We utilise any staff that can teach English maths and science. For instance, the SENCo teaches English during period 7. Year 10 and 11 teachers lead very small groups; the children are divided up into subjects they need the most support with. We focus on those striving for higher attainment as well as those on the grade 4 borderline. They have 2 lots of half hour sessions a week. It is a factor in the higher grades some students achieve. It has been running for around a year and a half.	
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Review of AIP 2024/25</b>	
6.3.1	The AIP spreadsheet has been included in the papers.	
6.3.2	<b>Q: There are no areas that are red. How would you characterise where you have got to? What are the wins and what is lagging?</b> It varies year on year. We always try to raise attainment around Eng and maths. We have had stability in English this year; the curriculum and teaching are strong. There has been consistent staffing. One of the pieces of work that has been done well is our focus on literacy and the literacy strategy that has been introduced. Some students have made 3 years of progress over the course of a year, due to the targeted actions put in place. We are starting to see better literacy taught across the school. Other successes include the behaviour system, which works well and is driving the culture of the school. We need to make sure we are continually reviewing that, particularly around how behaviour aligns with SEND need. The SENCo has been a key part of this. Attendance processes are strong here and are held together by a team around the child approach. Students get what they need quicker, and this keeps the school settled and allows the learning to take place in the classroom. The next iteration is around how we drive that into Post 16, which is not quite aligned from a systems perspective. We have started to look at that, so from September there should be the same processes within Post 16 to ensure we are operating fully as a 14 to 19 school.	
6.3.3	<b>Q: Despite the processes in place, and the huge impact it has had on individual students, attendance remains a trail. How confident are you that you can close down that trail when Ofsted visit?</b> We are confident that we can evidence the strength of the systems, procedures and culture that we have in place. We have a range of case studies that we can share that will show huge impact on	

	certain students. The headline data will open up some questions; we are not where we want to be and not in line with the national average, but we are almost in line with KS4 data.	
6.3.4	<p><b>Q: Are you able to work out the data in terms of student attendance before and after joining DSSB? Is that something you can gather from other provisions?</b></p> <p>Yes, we have done a lot of work around improving the transition process to gather data for students, including attendance. That will be a huge part of the narrative for us, and we will do that mapping exercise so that we can demonstrate our impact. We have 3 children joining in September, from a school outside of the trust, and between them their average attendance is 8%. This is reflective of the type of complex cohort we have. We are starting to get that data, and it will help us tell the story of what we do here.</p>	
6.3.5	<p><b>Q: I have seen a reference to the DfE sending out a report that compares school attendance to similar settings nationally. Have you heard anything about that?</b></p> <p>Not as yet. We have been reaching out to other studio schools to start to build up a picture of what KS4 attendance looks like.</p>	
6.3.6	<p><b>Q: Behaviour is something you are always thinking about, and I can see you have changed the structure in place, with the pastoral team. There have been no permanent exclusions, although there are some unfavourable trends, such as a rise in suspensions for students with PP. The number of 3s for lesson scores has gone down significantly, while the number of 4s and 5s has increased. What is happening there? Are teachers being too quick to send students out of class without issuing a further warning (3) or is it a lack of recording?</b></p> <p>It is a combination of those things. There is a staff training need. It goes back to the consistency of expectation in every classroom. We have an upcoming inset day where we have planned some work on this.</p>	
6.3.7	<p><b>Q: The Academy Council have previously heard about a group of students that were struggling to settle. Now that we are into July, how are those students getting on?</b></p> <p>We have re-set the classes, making a smaller cohort so that the students are able to have more adult support. Things are much improved. The students are going to lessons and working with TAs and starting to make some progress. Some are still getting it wrong, but this is happening far less. Needs assessments have taken place for them; one now has an EHCP.</p>	
6.3.8	<p><b>Q: From being in school, my impression is that the number of students who are prone to low level disruption has reduced. Is that the case?</b></p> <p>Yes, I would agree with that. The number has reduced, although there is still a very small core group that disrupt things. We have some plans in place for all those students. One has an EHCP in place. We are looking at a college placement for another. Some are in alternative provision placements and are thriving.</p>	
6.3.9	<p><b>Q: What will next year's AIP look like?</b></p> <p>It will not be radically different. We will include something around Post 16 systems, as well as behaviour and culture, and attendance. SEND and disadvantage will filter through all of the areas. We are looking at the line management structure for Post 16; it will be led by ME (Assistant Principal) going forwards. He is also responsible for the line management of careers, which will tie in well.</p>	
6.3.10	End of questions	
6.3.11	RG noted how impressed he was around how leaders have built the culture and substance of the school, with things such as the house system, Duke of Edinburgh award and the football team. These are all part of the cultural fabric of the school, and the team has worked hard outside of the core areas to put these things in place for the students. CB noted that music has also brought much to the school through the live lunches and Digifest; it has added a huge amount to the culture of the school.	
7	<b>Careers</b>	
7.1	RG confirmed that the Academy Council is required to have a link for careers. This was previously Russ Gallon. RG confirmed he is happy to step into this role until it can be filled permanently. RG confirmed he met with the careers lead, JM, last week to go through some updates, following her presentation to the AC in February 2024. The main update was around the progressive careers plan,	

	which JM is now tweaking. JM was keen to talk about the Envision programme for disadvantaged students. This involves working with a group of students who then go and present to three or four other schools. DSSB has won 4 out of 5 of those presentations. This is very helpful in terms of building speaking skills and confidence for those students. Work experience is taking place next week, with 53 placements confirmed so far and another 10 in progress. The Gatsby Benchmarks remain high.	
7.2	RG advised that at a previous meeting; a discussion had taken place around the need to provide 3 years' worth of destinations details for students. The LA has now acknowledged this is a challenge and will change. The number of students leaving to take up apprenticeships is increasing. JM would like a broader range in place, rather than them mainly being in social care. RG advised that it was a pleasure to meet with JM who is very passionate and positive about her work and also noted that she is very well supported by SJ and the wider team.	
<b>8</b>	<b>GDPR</b>	
8.1	LW provided a presentation on data protection for the Academy Council. The slides are available in the meeting folder on Governor Hub.	
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Q: V, as the Operations Manager, does data protection cause you any particular difficulties?</b> No. I would let LW or GW know if there was a breach. We have received SARs, which can be time consuming. We have a new approach to filing, where everything will be scanned on to the system so we can run a paperless system; this will help with future requests for information. We have put this system in place with careful consideration of the Retention Policy.	
<b>9</b>	<b>H &amp; S, Finance and Estates</b>	
9.1	CB advised that for this academic year, the budget will finish on a small surplus due to some additional SEND funding and some success in clawing back some funds owed from the LA. Going into next year there is a deficit and the SLT are working with KC and the finance team to consider how to reduce that through savings. KC advised that all Post 16 provisions received additional GAG (general aggregated grant) funding. For DSSB this was around £32k. This came in too late to utilise for the work going on for KS5 this year and will sit in the budget contributing to the surplus. The Post 16 funding paper has now been released, and it looks as though there will be some additional funding to cover the pay award. It is worth noting this for the partnerships.	
<b>10</b>	<b>Outlook for next year</b>	
10.1	The numbers of students joining year 10 in September are still fluctuating but will likely be on PAN at 90. There were around 130 applications in total. From the first round offers 85 places were offered in addition to a number of EHCPs. There are around 36 applications for Year 12, and we predict, after results day, we are likely to have around 30 students joining. This is similar to current numbers and a huge increase on the situation 3 or 4 years ago.	
10.2	CB provided an update on staffing for next year. The position looks good. There is some vulnerability in art with several members of the team leaving, but some good recruitments have been made.	
10.3	The curriculum offer remains largely the same. The performing arts course will not run due to a lack of uptake. The ESports course is changing to have more of a focus on game design.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Safeguarding</b>	
11.1	Safeguarding information has been included in the AC report. In RK's absence, an update from the Link Safeguarding Councillor will be provided at the next meeting. VB confirmed RK has visited and has completed a check on the SCR.	
<b>12</b>	<b>Policies</b>	
12.1	The Academy Council noted the Freedom of Information Policy VB confirmed there are a number of trust policies that have recently been updated and approved by the board. These will be shared via Governor Hub for Academy Councillors to note.	
<b>13</b>	<b>Matters for the Board or COAC</b>	
13.1	No matters for the board were raised. CB thanked the Academy Council for their support over the last year. RG thanked CB, SJ and the wider team for the work they do to support students at DSSB.	
<b>14</b>	<b>AOB</b>	

14.1	<b>ACTION: CB will provide information on the Edurio staff survey results at the next meeting.</b>	CB
14.2	No further business was reported. The meeting closed at 7pm.	
14.3	Dates of future meetings: board strategic review Wed 24 September 2025, 5pm online.	

### Matter's Arising

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03.07.25 001	CB will provide information on the Edurio staff survey results at the next meeting.	CB