



**Abbey Academy Council Meeting
Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 12:00
Abbey School**

Those Present:	Role	Initials
Luci Windle	Executive Headteacher	LW
Wayne Askham	Head of School	WA
Rachael Kent	Parent Governor / Vice Chair	RK
Dawn Jeffery	Parent Governor	DJ
Louise Abbott	Support Staff Governor	LA
Janine Brullo	Parent Governor	JB
Ian Tankard	Chair	IT
Nicola Morris	Governor	NM
Apologies:		
Joel Hardwick	Assistant CEO	JH
Niall Horstead	Staff Governor	NH
No Apologies:		

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Actions
1.1. To receive apologies for absence Apologies were received from NH & JH.	
1.2. To accept apologies for absence Apologies were received from NH & JH.	
2. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS	
2.1 Chair to determine any items of urgent business to be considered. None.	
3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
3.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda JB noted a new position as a trustee for a charity; formal paperwork to follow. ACTION: Clerking services to send on paperwork for completion for JB. ACTION: JB to update on Governor Hub	ACTION: CLERKING SERVICES 07/07/26 ACTION: JB 07/07/26
4. ABBEY SCHOOL ACADEMY COUNCIL MINUTES	
4.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting: The minutes of the meeting held on 25 th November 2025 were approved as a true record with no amendments.	
4.2. Review of Action Tracker The outstanding actions on the action tracker were reviewed and updated.	
4.3. Matters arising from the Minutes None.	
5. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED	
5.1. Headteacher Report LW discussed pupil numbers & planned places • Current roll: 239 pupils. • Planned places increased from 170 to 230, due to Local Authority funding model changes. • Concern raised around pupils being placed over number without the base funding allocation. IT asked what is the Local Authority cut-off point for new placements? LW confirmed there is no longer a numerical cap; schools must evidence impact on	

pupils rather than cite being over numbers. Unlike previous practice, tribunals and statutory duty have become more restrictive.

IT asked can class sizes be challenged based on safety (e.g., fire risk or safeguarding)?

LW stated LA capacity guidance exists, but enforcement is inconsistent. Many special schools are already over capacity and systems are "grey areas."

LA asked what happens if a child is placed but the school believes it is not the right provision?

LW informed;

- School offers an initial term for settling.
- If not appropriate, school calls an early Annual Review and recommends an alternative placement.

LA asked how quickly can the school judge if the placement is appropriate?

LW informed typically within six weeks, based on routines, regulation, and classroom behaviours.

LA asked how long do placement-panel decisions take?

LW stated processes are frequently delayed by months due to service pressures.

LA asked is the Trust supportive in challenging placement issues?

WA expressed Yes. The Trust may challenge via the LA and, if required, escalate to the Secretary of State, although this is avoided to maintain relationships.

JB asked are AI tools GDPR compliant, and what platforms can staff use?

WA informed how they are looking how children will use and be exposed to it. The school has implemented the following safeguards:

- The school uses TeachMate AI and Microsoft Co-pilot (Trust-controlled and GDPR safe).
- Staff must not input identifiable or sensitive information into external tools like ChatGPT.

IT asked around the AI policy and is there items not allowed to use?

WA informed yes, it's set as internal not external on co-pilot and the school explains safe practice.

IT asked why is writing progress high?

WA stated;

- Strengthened phonics and foundational reading knowledge.
- Improved curriculum design and writing stamina development.

IT asked how does the school support handwriting barriers such as motor skills?

WA expressed;

- Adapted handwriting policies and structured programmes.
- Alternative methods (e.g., reader/scribe, reading pens) for pupils with significant need.
- Focus on quality over quantity.

JB asked how are exam access arrangements determined (e.g., scribes/readers)

WA explained;

- Comprehensive assessments (e.g., RAT test).
- Training for pupils on how to appropriately use a reader/scribe.
- Consideration of relationship-building to reduce anxiety.

IT asked is behaviour data related more to younger pupils?

LW stated Yes. Holds mainly occur in the lower school due to developmental regulation and new routines.

IT asked how is attendance being improved?

LW expressed;

- Introduction of A-Star Attendance system.
- Automated alerts, letters, home-visit prompts, and pattern recognition.
- Certificates sent to parents showing appreciation for strong attendance.

IT asked how do national attendance comparisons work for special schools?

LW informed;

- Comparisons displayed for primary, secondary, and special separately.
- Special school comparison is broad and includes a wide range of SEND provisions.

IT asked How does the Trust support leaders who work across multiple schools?

LA stated;

- Strong access to CEO support.

- Clear systems allow senior leaders to balance responsibilities across sites effectively.

Inclusion

- Ongoing concerns regarding social isolation; many pupils attend school then go home with limited community activity.
- School continues strong engagement with Youth Sport Trust, work experience, and enrichment activities.

Curriculum, Teaching & Learning

- Significant investment in AI tools, digital literacy, and new IT resources.
- Writing is a strength; ongoing moderation.

Attendance

- Attendance tracking significantly improved through A-Star Attendance.
- Early warning indicators and automated communications having measurable impact.

Behaviour

- Incidents largely concentrated within a small cohort.
- No suspensions.
- Some community-related behaviour among older pupils; monitored closely.

Personal Development

- School won a national Youth Sport Trust award for leadership work.
- Inclusive sports and leadership projects underway (Disney Shooting Stars, fencing, Special Olympics work, I Am Festival).

Leadership & Governance

- Implementation of structured conversations with parents to reduce conflict, improve relationships, and ensure shared understanding.

Safeguarding

- Key risks:
 - Online behaviour, including image-sharing and unsafe contacts.
 - Neglect and inconsistent engagement with outside services.
- Current RAG:
 - 4 Red pupils

• 18 Amber pupils • Strong weekly review system in place. <u>Post-16 Provision</u> • Three pathways with emphasis on employment skills, independent living, and further study. • Many pupils transfer to external colleges where broader Level 2/3 courses are available.	
5.2. School Dashboard Summary A document was provided for information and a brief overview was given during the meeting.	
5.3. Budget Report The budget report was discussed and provided for information. • Forecast year-end surplus: £121,000. • Planned capital works include external tarmacking, Horizon building heating repairs, and routine maintenance. • Gas bill still pending due to billing issue; funds allocated to cover expected costs. Recruitment underway for: • Attendance Lead • Behaviour team role (Mark's replacement). ACTION: LW to get budget clarification and investigate and provide details on the other premises cards and report back to governors.	
5.4. School Calendar Document was shared for information. • Calendar for next academic year approved. • Two November INSET days (27th & 30th) welcomed by staff.	
5.5. Pupil Premium • Rate increased; now 52.3% of pupils eligible. • Spending aligned to curriculum aims and cultural capital. • Strategy published and monitored for impact.	
5.6. Cabinet Member and MP's Feedback from Pupil Parliament • Community and curriculum visits remain high. • Dance and poetry festivals successful in enhancing confidence and reducing isolation.	
5.7. Skills Audit – Governor Self Assessment	

- Governors to complete Microsoft Forms skills audit within two weeks of receipt. - Used to inform training plans and summer meeting reporting. ACTION: All Governors to complete and return Skills Audit to clerking services by Friday 27th March 2026.	ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS 27/03/26
6. TRUST MATTERS	
6.1 Trust Verbal Update of Key Issues - Nexus confirmed as preferred sponsor for Stubbing Wood. - Willow Park also receiving Trust support. - Awaiting finalisation of Seven Hills joining process.	
7. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS	
7.1. To consider any other urgent business agreed by the Chair None.	
8. CONFIDENTIALITY & RISK	
8.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting None.	
9. DATES OF NEXT MEETING	

Tuesday 7 July 2026	12:00 – 14:00	Abbey School
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Minutes approved

CHAIR	SIGNATURE	DATE