



St Anthony's and St Walburga's Catholic Primary Schools'

Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

MINUTES			
Title of meeting	Academy Council meeting		
Date	28 April 2026	Time	6pm
Chair for meeting	Kath Spillane	Location	St Walburga's

Academy Council			
Name	Present/ Apologies	Name	Present/ Apologies
Ashley Wilkinson	Present	Elizabeth Fearnley	Present
Kath Spillane	Present	Nick Connor	Present
Fiona Hahn	Present	Carol Armitage	Present
Maud Halstead	Present	David Hutton	Present
Barbara Kelly	Apologies	Fr. Kieron Walker	Apologies
IN ATTENDANCE			
Wendi Thompson	Present		

The Meeting opened at 6pm

Minutes		
1	Opening Prayer	The meeting opened with a prayer led by Liz Fearnley.
2	Welcome, apologies for absence, declarations of interest and approval of agenda	Attendance (Clerk to confirm this has been recorded) - o Completed. Accept or decline apologies. - o Fr. Kieron Walker and Barbara Kelly who are both on a religious retreat. Any declarations of interest - o None to declare. Approval of agenda - o Agreed.



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Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		Reminder of the confidentiality of all agenda items ○ Agreed. Any other business ○ Nursery provision at St Anthony's. ○ Letter from Mrs Khadipa. ○ Trust Conference.
3	Minutes	• The previous minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2026 were approved. • Proposed by NC; seconded by AW.
4	Matters Arising	• There were no outstanding actions not otherwise covered within the agenda. • SEND related questions raised previously were noted as being addressed within the headteacher report.
5	Correspondence & Chairs update	• All Diocesan updates had been shared with governors and are issued monthly. • SBM resignation – EF shared a letter from Laura Long, SBM at St Walburga's, confirming her resignation in order to take up the role of Central Finance Assistant within the Trust. Laura's final day in post will be 7th June 2026, although her last working day in school will be 21st May 2026. Governors formally noted the resignation with thanks for Laura's service over the last ten years. The advert for a replacement has been released and interviews are planned for the final week of the half term and governors may be required for interviewing. Likely start date for a new postholder is hoped for 22nd June 2026. Laura will complete the school budget and support the transition before leaving. The Trust CFO has agreed to release Laura to support the budget process if required. Q – Will the new appointment create a cost saving? <i>A – No, the role has expanded to four days per week due to increasing demands across finance, HR estates, and H&S.</i>
6	Finance summary	KS confirmed that the Finance Committee had met recently and reviewed: • Current in year budget position. • Staffing costs, including supply expenditure. • Budget pressures linked to staffing absence. • Forward planning in light of pupil number fluctuations. • Governors discussed the financial impact of staff absence, noting:





St Anthony's and St Walburga's Catholic Primary Schools'

Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		○ St Walburga's has incurred approx. £20k in staff sickness costs, with a further £5k linked to additional support. ○ Long term sickness cases are being managed in line with Trust HR procedures. ○ Use of supply staff remains necessary to maintain safeguarding, SEND provision and operational viability. ● KS confirmed that the Finance Committee minutes were available to view on Governor Hub.
7	Premises, Health & Safety	Covered in item 9.
8	Catholic Life & Mission	St Walburga's ● EF and FH provided a detailed update covering: ● Ash Wednesday service marking the start of Lent. The focus throughout Lent was Hope & Renewal, and a focus on spiritual renewal through prayer, which is linked to Pope Leo's 2026 message. ● St Walburga's Feast Day Mass on 25th February 2026. ● Spring Children's Mass on 15th March 2026. ● Lenton prayers took place through Lent where small groups of children through school volunteer to lead prayers on a Tuesday morning. ● There were four celebrations of the Word – Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. ● Reconciliation service led by Year 5 and 6 faith leaders on 24th March 2026, where they led the examination of conscience. ● Father Kieran Walker visited and heard confessions. ● First reconciliation took place on 17th March 2026. ● Holy Week and Easter liturgies. ● Lenton fundraising activities: ○ £452 raised for the Good Shepherd Appeal and St Vincent de Paul. ○ £269 raised by Mini Vinnies for Easter baskets – 21 baskets produced. ● First Holy Communion preparation underway; service scheduled for 13th June 2026. ● Headteachers Wellbeing Day took place with EF, AW, FH and Father Kieron attending. All enjoyed a walk on Ilkley Moor and a meal afterwards. ● First Holy Communion preparation is taking place with a date of 13th June 2026. St Anthony's AW reported similarly strong Catholic Life: ● Lent and Easter celebrations across school. ● Lenton fundraising, raising in excess of £300. ● AW, as RE Lead, has attended a number of network meetings working





St Anthony's and St Walburga's Catholic Primary Schools'

Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		with FH and the Diocese. • PTFA Mother's Day stall provided gifts for pupils on Mother's Day. • Food Bank donations through Magic Breakfast surplus. • Lots of entries were received for the Easter Bonnet and Gardening Competitions. • Strong parental attendance at liturgies. • Year 1 children led Palm Sunday liturgy. • Year 2 and 3 children have led Stations of the Cross. • Year 4, 5 and 6 have led the Crucifixion of Christ and Resurrection. • Community engagement has taken place at Windhill Community Centre, liaising with the police and local residents • Six Year 6 pupils preparing for Holy Communion. • Positive Pupil Voice findings around Faith & Mission. Governors noted challenges around engaging non Catholic families in parish based events and discussed the importance of school based liturgies.
9	Head Teacher's Report	St Anthony's Admissions • Catholic Numbers are continuing to decrease. • Current pupils on roll: 104. • 14 reception offers for September 2026 (projected 10). • 13 confirmed acceptances; one potential appeal case pending. • Noted continuing decline in Catholic intake, though some families are in sacramental preparation. • KS and the central team have posted leaflets in the local area. • There has been a decrease in numbers on roll with 4 pupils leaving the school recently. Two have chosen to be electively home educated with one receiving an EHCP and one on the suspension data. • One child in Year 2 who was an EBSA and significantly impacting the attendance, has now come off roll as the parent decided to electively home educate. • Two siblings in Reception and Year 4 have moved out of the locality recently. • One Year 1 child has also left the school this year. • One new child has joined the school recently and several prospective parents have visited for in year transfers. Q – How many Catholics will be joining the school in September? <i>A – There are currently no Catholics on the list, however 2 of the families on the list have siblings that currently attend school which may be Catholics but this has not been confirmed yet.</i> Attendance • PA remains a key issue although it has decreased since January. • Attendance has improved and this is accessed through the new Trust data dashboard. This highlighted a higher absence rate due to the





St Anthony's and St Walburga's Catholic Primary Schools'

Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		different holiday structure at Easter and siblings at other schools. Q – Was there an impact on staffing due to the different Easter holidays? <i>A – No, it did not appear to have an impact and non-Catholic teachers realise that it is important to be in school.</i> • 41% of pupils have excellent attendance; approx. 40% fall into concern/persistent categories. • Fridays are identified as the weakest attendance day. • Actions include targeted meetings with families, use of fines where appropriate (£60 per child, escalating for repeated cases) and attendance are celebrated in assemblies. Q – What is Magic Counselling? <i>A – Magic is an abbreviation for Managing Anxiety and Goals for Increased Confidence. It is Bradford and Craven Mental Health Support and charity funded by Youth Mind to support children aged 5 – 11 who struggle with anxiety. There are two children in school who are accessing the support for anxiety and emotions.</i> Staffing & Staff Absence • 53 days were lost to illness which is broadly in line with previous years. • One member of the cleaning team is on long term sickness which is not work related (mental health). AW will meet with the staff member at the end of May. • Interim cover arranged via a zero hour contract (Trust approved and ethically reviewed). • Supply is used for safeguarding meetings to fill the gaps. Standards • RE standards remain strong and in line with English and other core subjects. • Year 6 projected outcomes revised from 77% to 71% due primarily to pupil attitudes to learning, particularly in a small group of boys. • Interventions implemented include targeted academic support, inspirational visitors (including an ex professional boxer) and enhances transition work and mentoring. • Outcomes in the majority of classes remain on track to reach class targets. • MTC scores is an area of focus and predicted to be lower than other Trust schools, due to PA. Q – How do you ensure that staff are not de skilled using Olex AI? <i>A – Olex AI is used selectively (1-2 times per half term) in Year 3 – 6. This method supports marking analysis and planning and does not replace teacher judgement.</i>
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St Anthony's and St Walburga's Catholic Primary Schools'

Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		<i>Governors were reassured that staff are not being de-skilled and Trust policy is followed.</i> St Walburga's Admissions • School numbers are much healthier overall. • Current pupils on roll: 234. • Reception, Year 1 – 6 have stable numbers. • Preschool is now full, with 8 additional children. • In year transfers achieved in Year 3 and 5. • One Year 4 pupil left to return to Poland. • No children are currently on the waiting list. • One child with an EHCP has moved to Hollybrook RP. • Another child with an EHCP (with more severe needs and non-verbal/non-toilet trained/requires a buggy/very limited diet – toast and pasta only) is expected to join the school after May Bank Holiday. The child was previously at Shipley Primary School preschool and briefly in reception class and only ever attended up to 3 hours a day. The child has not attended school since February 2026. They are not being electively home educated and parents are currently going through tribunal process, seeking specialist provision. No specialist place is available and the child will attend St Walburga's. The child was noted as being smiley, responsive, enjoys sensory sounds and is similar to another reception child already in school. SEND • Previously, high needs children required separation due to violent behaviours. Currently no violent behaviour in the new cohort. • Increasing complexity of need on roll. • Lighthouse provision has reopened and is used as a group working space with flexible grouping depending on child needs and daily capacity. This includes reception children, new incoming reception pupil, and 6 pupils from Year 2 and 3 working below curriculum level. • One EHCP pupil moved to specialist provision; another due to join post bank holiday. • Careful management of staffing ratios within legal guidance and available funding. • EHCP ratios vary – commonly 1:3 or 1:12. 1:1 when required, especially during crises. • Funding constraints include 11 EHCP pupils and £66k shortfall if all were supported 1:1. • Crisis support includes ratios that may temporarily increase (e.g. 2 adults:1 child). These impact staffing elsewhere in school. • Older high needs pupils – Year 6 (non-verbal, awaiting tribunal for specialist provision), moved to Nurture Nest, with a safe, designated space and initial adjustment issues and now settled. • Overall impact, positive socialisation, and appropriate spaces
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Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		improve regulation and engagement. • The SEND register continues to grow. • 4 EHCPs now agreed (previously one outstanding). Potential further 4 EHCPs with some pupils with additional needs remain in mainstream classrooms. Attendance • Attendance around 96% which is slightly lower than last year. reasons for this are due to illness (including sickness & diarrhoea outbreaks), increased term time holidays, and medical appointments especially in reception (due to many pupils with significant needs and absences often due to monitoring requirements at home). • Friday absences were again highlighted. Q – What processes are in place to help pupils catch up on missed learning due to absence? <i>A – Support varies depending on length of absence, child health, and the impact on future learning. Strategies include:</i> • <i>Sending work home if appropriate and requested.</i> • <i>Focus on practising known skills, not new teaching.</i> • <i>Reading/arithmetic practice.</i> • <i>Teachers revisit missed learning in class.</i> • <i>Intervention groups – phonics, maths, reading.</i> <i>If learning is not immediate required for future units, gaps may be addressed in later years. Phonics gaps are addressed via daily phonics sessions and additional interventions. PA are supported through home contacts, attendance interventions, and engagement with families. The emphasis is that parents are not trained teachers and emotional re-engagement is prioritised before academic pressure.</i> Staffing • Approx. £21,000 cost to date for staff sickness, plus additional cover costs with an additional £5,000 on associated costs • Overall, school budget forecast shows a £25,000 deficit. • Long term absence includes SEN TA specialist has been absent since before Christmas and requires supply cover to maintain provision. SLT acknowledged the balance between managing cost and supporting staff wellbeing. • HR involvement recommended neutral handling and legal compliance which removes pressure from SLT. • Return to work meetings held for all staff. • Formal trigger system followed by stage 1, stage 2, stage 3 processes. • The current situation includes one staff member on stage 2 and improved attendance has been noted. • Trust support is used for complex cases and governors may need to be involved in escalated cases.
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Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		Q – Should staff be made aware of financial impact? <i>A – Care is required to balance transparency with staff wellbeing. HR support will be sought to manage messaging appropriately.</i> - Staffing updates include: - Breakfast club – new staff member Michelle Ashton. - TA hours – Gemma Ellis reduced to 10 hours a week due to family needs. - Learning Mentor – Fixed term role, Becky covering maternity leave (Amy). Strong impact reported. Drawing therapy and play therapy is being used. - Wellbeing provision is seen as cohesive and effective. Health & Safety - Boundary fence completed and secured in the woodland area. - EYFS outdoor soft surface has been replaced (trip hazard removed). - Fire risk assessment ongoing. - Identified site issues include uneven path near car park which has been referred to the Trust and wall/tree growth affecting neighbours, a tree surgeon has been engaged. - Annual tree maintenance is now a budgeted requirement. GDPR - No data breaches. - FOI request received regarding halal provision levels and is being handled with DPO guidance. - Subject Access Request received with a deadline of 21st May 2026. RE Q – How is the new RE scheme being implemented and how is it progressing? <i>A – Scheme 'To know you more clearly- is a Diocese scheme. Currently implemented in EYFS and KS1. Key strengths are deeper faith knowledge, children making strong theological links, improved vocabulary and understanding of Mass, Scripture, and liturgy. Challenges include high content volume, initial adjustment period for staff and KS2 resources only released 17th July. EYFS and KS1 staff to support KS2 rollout and training in staff meetings/inset. Mixed age planning challenges were noted and reception pupils engaging meaningfully with Scripture and Gospel links.</i> Standards Q – Are pupils on track to meet end of year targets? <i>A – Overall the majority of pupils are on track. Very few are off track out of 200+ pupils.</i> <i>Year 6: reading – 2 pupils just below expected and both exceeding KS1 predicted outcomes.</i> <i>Year 6: writing – all achieving expected or above.</i> <i>Year 6: maths – 1 pupil progressing significantly despite being below expected.</i>
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		<i>Barriers include emotional wellbeing impacting attainment for some pupils. SEND: remains a concern for higher needs pupils in mainstream.</i> Enrichment • Educational visits: ○ Y1 – 2 visited Eureka. ○ Y3 – 4 visited Ingleborough Cave. ○ Y5 went to Nell Bank. ○ Year 6 have visited Robin Wood. • Leadership roles: ○ School council. ○ Digital Leaders. ○ Faith Leaders. ○ Wellbeing Ambassadors. ○ House captains. ○ Playground Leaders. Safeguarding Q – Why is St Walburga's reports approx. double the number of accidents and incidents compared to other schools in the Trust? <i>A – This is not due to the school being unsafe. The higher figure reflects strong and thorough reporting practices.</i> <i>The majority of reports relate to incidents rather than accidents. Many incidents involve pupils with high level SEND needs who may nip, bite, scratch and have physical outbursts or dysregulated behaviour. these behaviours are linked to the child additional needs and situations where needs are not fully met (not through fault of the staff).</i> <i>Staff morale had previously been quite low and significant time and energy has been invested in staff mental health and wellbeing providing visible guidance and support around school.</i> <i>The school displays posters about what good practice looks like in the classroom, clear guidance on what to do if a child is in crisis and what staff should do for themselves when supporting a child in crisis.</i> <i>Staff are strongly encouraged to report incidents, especially when they are injured or hurt at work or they are struggling in high pressure situations.</i> <i>Reporting ensures staff voices are heard and acknowledged, flags concerns to the Trust/Bradford Council/Unions/SLT. Reports do not stay hidden or filed away; they are actively used.</i> <i>Data from incident reports is shared with Bradford Council, is visible at Trust level, is reviewed at headteacher briefings, sometimes presented comparatively across schools. These discussions look at trends across the Trust and any patterns, particularly incidents involving pupils with additional needs.</i> <i>Unions are supportive of high reporting levels and there is a clear message that it is not acceptable for staff to come to work and be hurt, reporting helps ensure safeguarding, accountability, and support.</i>
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		<i>Incidents involving pupils must be reported, be followed through and lead to updates in risk assessments/provision or support strategies where required. Higher reporting figures indicate a transparent safeguarding culture, commitment to staff safety, pupil needs, and accountability. Issues are being escalated appropriately beyond the school.</i>
10	Trust update	Governors noted continued strong support from the Trust, particularly in relation to: • Finance and budget planning • HR advice and case management • Estates and H&S matters • Recruitment and staffing transitions The Trust has taken an active role in supporting both schools, particularly following the resignation of the SMB at St Walburga's.
11	Subject leader reports	Governors agreed that from September 2026, a subject leader presentation rota will be introduced at LAC meetings. This will enable governors to engage more closely with curriculum leadership, support informed challenge and strategic oversight, and ensure balanced focus across all curriculum areas over the academic year. The rota will be planned to avoid overloading meetings while ensuring appropriate curriculum coverage.
12	Safeguarding update	Included in item 9
13	Risk Register update	EF confirmed that Risk Register Attendance data is on the new data dashboard. Training is taking place to understand who is at risk of attendance, safeguarding (including accidents), and health & safety.
14	Link governor visits	Governors were reminded to record any visits on Governor Hub. All were encouraged to contact the schools to arrange visits.
15	Questions for the Trust Board	LACs to submit any questions to the Trust Board through Vicky.langford@bcwcat.co.uk None to submit.
16	Governor training	No governor training undertaken since the last meeting was reported.
17	Policies	• Uniform Policy • Marking & Feedback Policy • Invacuation & Evacuation Policy and procedures





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Joint Academy Council Meeting Minutes

		Governors to review and submit any queries within one week. policies to be approved outside the meeting if no objections are raised.
18	Any other Business	- Staff leave – A request for unpaid religious observance (15 – 26 June 2026) was noted. Governors supported the request, subject to minimal impact on pupils and appropriate cover arrangements. APPROVED. - Nursery provision – Governors agreed nursery provision at St Anthony's should be a substantive agenda item at the next meeting. ACTION. - Trust Conference – Governors were reminded of the Trust conference on 12th June 2026 at Hollins Hall. The main speaker is David Wells.
19	Agenda, papers, and minutes - confidentiality	Governors agreed that there were no confidential items discussed during the meeting.
20	Dates for the diary	LAC meetings - Wednesday 8th July 2026 at 6pm – St Anthony's Finance meetings - Tuesday 16th June 2026 – hybrid Dates of LAC meetings for 2026 – 2027 all at 6pm - Tuesday 6 October 2026 at St Walburga's - Wednesday 9 December 2026 at St Anthony's - Tuesday 9 February 2027 at St Walburga's - Wednesday 28 April 2027 at St Anthony's - Tuesday 6 July 2027 at St Walburga's Dates of Finance committee meetings for 2026 – 2027 all hybrid at 1.30pm. - Wednesday 9 December 2026 - Tuesday 9 February 2027 - Wednesday 21 April 2027 - Tuesday 15 June 2027
21	Meeting closure	The meeting ended at 8.20pm.

The Meeting closed at 8.20pm



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