ACADEMY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

YORK HIGH SCHOOL

Date:	Time:	Venue:
Thursday 9th July 2026	5:30 PM	York High School

IN ATTENDANCE

Andy Pope, Chair
Ian Savage
Sally Gordon
Andrew Waller
Clare Besant
Val Roddis
Kate Smithson
Laura Backhouse

Tim Godfrey, SENCO
Sophie Triffitt, Governance Advisor

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes were approved at the committee on the 8th October 2026.

Approved

Action

1. **Welcome, Apologies for Absence, Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

There were no declarations of interest.

Apologies were received and accepted for the Principal who was presenting at Awards Evening.

2. **SEND Update: Inclusion Offer including Link Provision**

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) tabled a comprehensive update regarding the ongoing development of the school's inclusion spaces, outlining the strategic role and operational purpose of each area. Having joined York High in January 2026, the SENCO explained that they had utilised their initial months to evaluate the school's context, build relationships, and get to know both staff and pupils. The SENCO emphasised that the ultimate strategic objective was for students to remain inside the mainstream classroom; when a pupil does need to leave the room, it must be to receive targeted interventions delivered by a qualified professional, in line with the school's Graduated Response framework. To support this, a comprehensive review of the SEND Register had been completed to directly inform the school's intervention provision going forward.

Literacy was highlighted as a top priority for the school, as it underpinned the entire curriculum and a significant number of students at York High were currently identified as struggling readers. To establish a robust intervention framework, the school employed a dedicated reading tutor from outside the immediate area who brought extensive experience in delivering primary school interventions. This tutor was currently delivering the Fresh Start phonics programme.

Challenge: A committee member asked what measures were in place for students when phonics interventions do not deliver results. The SENCO responded that reading interventions must adapt to the individual. The school

utilises Sparks Reader formal assessment data to track progress and identify specific gaps. Where decoding or phonetic knowledge gaps were flagged, a targeted phonics assessment was conducted. If a student failed to make progress under the Fresh Start framework, the school reviews their profile to adapt the offer to their needs, noting that while Fresh Start was highly adaptable, alternative programmes would be considered if required.

Challenge: A committee member asked how many pupils were accessing the reading provision. The SENCO explained that initial screenings identified students who were three to four years or more behind their chronological reading age. Upon assessment through Reading Plus, it was discovered that 50% of those flagged did not actually require phonics-based decoding intervention. For the 50% who did, a staged decoding approach was implemented. The tutor currently runs ten sessions a day through a mix of 1:1 and small group work, with 20 students expected to start in September 2026 and a waiting list of 10 to 15 pupils.

Challenge: A committee member asked if a single staff member was sufficient to meet the school's substantial literacy needs. The SENCO explained that there was a Deeps project focused on reading support and assured committee members that capacity was significantly higher than in previous years and that the leadership team was actively looking at the whole-school reading offer to embed daily reading routines across all classrooms.

The SENCO referred to the English Hub audit report included in the meeting agenda pack and reported that the external feedback strongly validated the school's planned strategy and had successfully secured over £3,000 in funding for Fresh Start books, resources, and class readers to support target groups in Years 7 and 8.

Challenge: A committee member asked whether any data or insights could be shared with primary feeder schools to support early intervention. The SENCO noted from experience that many primary schools do excellent work but some students had been in reading interventions for a long time without success. The offer at secondary school may be when the young people are ready for it to be effective through a bespoke plan delivered regularly and with absolute fidelity. The SENCO noted that the Fresh Start programme was explicitly designed for the Year 6, 7, and 8 cohorts because it utilised age appropriate texts.

Challenge: A committee member asked if there were any next steps regarding links with primary schools, and if the Reading Hub offer would be open to them. The SENCO confirmed that the offer was open to feeder primary schools. **A committee member additionally observed that student attendance issues were frequently linked to an inability to access the curriculum, noting that targeting Year 6 transition students would provide a stronger start and positively impact attendance.**

The SENCO provided an update on the review of the school's inclusion areas undertaken over Easter. The Link provision, originally designed as a turnaround space for students struggling with behaviour or to engage, was re-evaluated alongside the Vice Principal and Mr Rowe. Data revealed that students were not successfully reintegrating into mainstream lessons from this format, and that many of those struggling held EHCPs or complex cognitive and learning needs.

Approved

Consequently, a collective decision was made to repurpose the space to explicitly support EHCP students with cognitive and learning needs, focused on re-engaging them through a bespoke curriculum.

The SENCO shared early success stories from this newly repurposed space, which had been operational for seven to eight weeks. Notably, one student's attendance had risen from 0% to between 60% and 70% and another student had avoided any suspensions since accessing the provision. The space utilised White Rose Maths and mainstream science resources to maintain an explicit link to the standard classroom curriculum. To protect capacity for the incoming Year 7 cohort, the school started with a small group of students. These pupils do not spend their entire day in the provision; instead, they access it according to their needs, with a minimum requirement to attend at least one mainstream lesson per day to maintain peer contact before gradually scaling up their classroom time.

The SENCO outlined the purpose of the Autism Zone, which served as a sensory room and calm environment for autistic pupils who mask during the day, helping them to avoid autism burnout.

Challenge: A committee member asked how students accessed this room and whether teaching staff were kept informed. The SENCO clarified that students who need the space regularly were issued a formal pass, and the SEND office managed a strict check-in process. As staff know the pupils better, they could often preempt their needs, and students were becoming increasingly comfortable asking to use the space. Systematic check-ins were being built across the entire SEND offer wherever possible.

The SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) space was now staffed by an ELSA-trained coordinator. This area provided a safe transition environment to rebuild relationships and maintain contact with students who have low or zero attendance. The space utilised a flexible timetable to allow for a soft start at the beginning of the school day and a structured check-out at the end. It currently accommodated approximately 18 students who used the space to regulate and re-engage, with the long-term goal being for staff to conduct proactive, preventative work with these individuals.

Kate Smithson left the meeting at 6:00 pm.

The SENCO highlighted the EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) space, presenting an anonymised data tracker that demonstrated measurable improvements in school attendance for the students accessing it. The ultimate goal remained getting these pupils back into the mainstream school offer.

Challenge: A committee member suggested that the EBSA room's success could be enhanced by relocating it to a more appropriate downstairs space, which would allow school avoidant pupils to enter the provision directly without facing the physical barrier of the main building. The committee member offered committee support to ensure any necessary capital funding could be secured.

Approved

Challenge: A committee member asked for the 'so what' of the EBSA provision data. The SENCO responded that when targeting children with low or zero attendance, the school could provide powerful, anonymised individual case studies to demonstrate progress.

Challenge: A committee member asked how many young people currently accessed the EBSA offer. The SENCO explained that they were on a developmental journey; interventions were structured as 1:1 or small group sessions, and staff deployment was continuously monitored and adjusted based on student need.

A committee member recommended that committee members arrange visits during the school day to see these inclusion spaces in practice. The SENCO welcomed visits to school.

The SENCO provided an update on Quality of Teaching and Learning, reporting that a full review and rewrite of all Pupil Passports was completed by the May half-term. The new, streamlined format focused on individual areas of need, reasonable adjustments, formal access arrangements, and contained between three to five specific teaching and learning strategies. Significant work had been undertaken with staff to embed these passports into daily practice, and all teachers were now required to maintain annotated seating plans to include these strategies for every class. The SENCO acknowledged that this represented a substantial workload for teaching staff, but reported that teachers had been incredibly positive, engaged, and were already seeing the impact in their classrooms.

The SENCO reported that the internal progress had been validated by external reviews. Feedback from the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) assessment was exceptionally positive, resulting in a highly commendable report. Furthermore, the Assistant Director of School Improvement for Inclusive Education praised the school, noting that lessons were calm and engaging, and that staff had clear, actionable knowledge of student vulnerabilities and strategies.

The SENCO concluded by stating that the school was significantly further along in this development process than originally anticipated and was in an excellent position for the upcoming September term. Pupil Passports would undergo termly reviews and would be shared with parents and carers before the end of the current term to allow for home input.

A committee member recorded thanks to the SENCO, praising them for taking deliberate time to observe and evaluate the school's needs since starting in January, and commending the high-quality work achieved in a short timeframe.

The SENCO left the meeting at 6.12pm.

Challenge: A committee noted that the SENCO presentation had not been recorded as a future agenda item in the May 2026 meeting minutes and explained that information would have informed their visit to school and subsequent report.

Approved

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 14th May 2026** (previously circulated)

Resolution: The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were approved.

Matters Arising and Action Plan
Action 1: Ongoing
Action 2 Ongoing
Action 3: Action completed through the SENCO update.
Action 4: Completed and reported in the visit report.
Action 5: The Committee Chair informed the committee that York High Families would form part of an Assistant Vice Principal Deep role starting in September 2026 for Year 7.
Action 6: The record of contact form was shared with committee members.
Action 7: Committee Chair to chase lanyards and badges.

4. **Committee Member Visits**

SEND (previously circulated)
The Committee Link noted the significant level of challenge to the SENCO from the link committee member, Assistant Director of School Improvement (Inclusive Education and attending the meeting and noted the impact of that on his workload and wellbeing.

Deep Learning (previously circulated)
The Committee Link met with Mr Hardy and highlighted that the level of work from SLT was evident and Mr Hardy knows his role and the pupils. Clear progress through the year was supported by evidence.

The committee recorded their thanks to Mr Hardy.

Finance (previously circulated)
The Committee Link had no further update to add.

Committee Network Evening (previously circulated)
Val Roddis and Kate Smithson attended the Committee Network Evening and a copy of the presentation was provided. Ms Roddis reported lots of positive feedback on York High work on attendance and that the event was useful for networking. Links to the IQM Reports for Trust schools were provided for information.

5. **Deep Leadership**

Pulse Report WC 29th June 2026 (previously circulated)
There were no questions on the report.

6. **Chair Key Items**

Attendance and Behaviour (previously circulated)
The Committee Chair explained that the report demonstrated the impact of the work of the Vice Principal to suspensions.

Approved

Attendance was reporting a three year improving trend and bucked the national trend of declining through the year with a reported increase since the Vice Principal started. A strong start to attendance in September 2026 was anticipated.

In reference to BRAG outcomes the Chair had challenged the Principal on the confidence of achieving the targets of 45% and 65% given the tracking data. The Principal explained that last year there was an uplift from predictions to outcomes and if that same uplift happens the targets will be met.

Year 10 BRAG data was already tracking higher than the current Year 11 cohort at the same point.

In summary, suspensions were down, attendance was up and positive GCSE outcomes were predicted.

Action: Committee Chair to recirculate the Chair's document updated with year end data. — Chair

Ofsted Leadership and Governance (previously circulated)
The Chair noted confidence that committee members were fully aware of what happened in school and the impact of that work. The document provides a summary narrative around this.

7. **Community Distinctiveness and Stakeholder Engagement**

Making School Unmissable Framework (previously circulated)
There were no questions on the framework.

8. **Deeps**

Learning
Reading Audit (previously circulated)
Updated as part of the SENCO agenda item.

Experience
There was no update to report.

Support
Promise to Vulnerable Pupils (previously circulated)
There were no questions on the report.

Inclusion Quality Mark Reports (previously circulated)
Updated as part of the SENCO agenda item.

9. **Committee Business**

Training (previously circulated)
Committee members noted the training record.

The Chair informed committee members that an Ofsted session would be held online on Tuesday 8th September at 6pm.

Panels (previously circulated)
Committee members noted the panel data.

Link Roles

Approved

Resolution: With the resignation of Mr Law it was agreed for the Chair to be the link committee member for safeguarding and behaviour on an interim basis until new link allocations are agreed at the first meeting of 2026-27.

10. **For Information**

Period 9 Finance Monitoring and Consolidated Accounts (previously circulated)
iAMCompliant Report (previously circulated)
Risk Record (previously circulated)
The reports were noted for information.

11. **Any Other Business**

The Committee Chair noted that at this same time last year, the committee had pressed the Principal hard regarding his assertion that school performance and culture would shift positively with changes to the Senior Leadership Team. The Chair acknowledged that while there had been initial nervousness among committee members, the Principal's position had been completely vindicated. The new leadership team members had made a significant, measurable impact across the school's core priority areas. The Chair added that this success was mirrored in the school's staff retention data, with staff turnover for the current year falling below the national average. The Chair reflected on the very positive atmosphere currently felt throughout the school environment.

Challenge: A committee member asked for the committee to be conscious of the wellbeing and potential burnout of the Principal and the wider Senior Leadership Team noting concerns regarding the sustainability of the team's workload given the late hours and days on which work emails were being sent.

Challenge: A committee member highlighted feedback received from parents regarding the timing of school communications, contact or automated notifications from the school over weekends could feel intrusive to some families. The committee member asked for the timing of when automated attendance emails were dispatched to be reviewed to ensure a better balance for the school community.

Action: Principal to review times and days of communications to families. Principal

12. **Future Meeting Dates**

Thursday 8th October 2026 6pm

Thursday 3rd December 2026 6pm

Thursday 4th February 2027 6pm

Thursday 18th March 2027 6pm

Thursday 13th May 2027 6pm

Thursday 8th July 2027 6pm

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

Approved

York High School Committee Actions

	Item	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
1.	3 (5.2.26)	Trends / themes from the staff surveys to be shared with committee members.	Principal	March 26
2.	5 (5.2.26)	Committee members to be given access to ongoing Pulse documents to see trends outside of a committee member meeting.	Principal	February 26
3.	7 (14.5.26)	Committee members to inform the Chair if they require updated identification badges and lanyards.	Committee members / Chair	June 2026
4.	6	Recirculate the Chair's document updated with year end data.	Chair	July 2026
5	11	Review times and days of communications to families.	Principal	September 2026

Autumn 1 Meeting Agenda Items:

- Ofsted Readiness
- Poverty Proofing Audit
- Stakeholder Survey Data and Action Plan

Approved