

MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Academy: Sparken Hill Academy
Meeting title: Summer (1) term meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Thursday 1st May 2025 at 4.00pm
Location: Hybrid – onsite and via Microsoft Teams

Membership

'A' denotes absence

A Mrs D Carter
Mr P Gawthorpe (chair)
Mrs K Heaton *
Mr R Lilley (principal)
Mrs C Middleton (vice-chair)
Mrs M Norton Allen
Mrs K Phoenix (vice principal)
A Mrs M Pimm
Mrs S Sparks
A Cllr N Turner
Mrs S Wichmann

* denotes virtual attendance

In attendance

Miss J Littlewood (clerk to the governors)
Mrs V Dashper (school business manager – SBM)

FGB/41/25 Apologies for absence

Action

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Mrs D Carter (work commitments);
- Mrs M Pimm (personal);
- Cllr N Turner (work commitments).

It was

resolved

that governors accepted and consented to these absences.

FGB/42/25 Declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for items of business on the agenda.

FGB/43/25 Review of membership and terms of office ending in the next 12 months

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the governing body membership list.

The clerk highlighted the following vacancies on the governing body:

- 1 x partnership governor.

In addition, the clerk drew attention to the following ends of terms of office:

- Mrs M Norton Allen (parent governor) – 20 March 2026;
- Mrs S Wichmann (parent governor) – 20 March 2026.

Governors **AGREED** to continue to explore options for recruitment to the vacant position.

FGB/44/25 Approval of minutes of spring (2) term meetings and any additional special meetings

The minutes of the spring (2) term meeting held on 27th March 2025 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was **AGREED** that the minutes of 27 March 2025 were to be signed electronically by the chair.

Chair/
Clerk

Actions in the minutes were reviewed. It was noted that they had been undertaken, were subject to the following update or were to be discussed in the meeting:

FGB/24/25 Receipt of minutes and approval of policies from committees and working parties

Y6 Residential – update

The school business manager (SBM) informed governors that there had been a slight amendment to the PGL booking which had impacted on the trip costs:

- the final cost = £16,835 (formerly £12,935);
- the charge per pupil remained at £140;
- the academy was to subsidise £119 per pupil;
- total costs per pupil = £259.

The principal added that there had been spare places and subsequently those places had been offered to Y5 pupils.

Furthermore, there had been exploration around the residential for next year and a provisional booking made with the Castleton Youth Hostel which allowed for earlier communication with parents and an extended period for payment.

Q. Governors asked about a package of activities?

A. The principal assured governors that the Youth Hostel offered optional packages – a package had been provisionally booked for 75 children with a potential discount for pupil premium children.

Q. Governors enquired about when the facility to pay for the current trip would be opened?

A. The principal confirmed that the payment method had already re-opened – he agreed to circulate an alert to parents informing them that the payment method was now open.

RL

Mrs Middleton joined the meeting at 4.16pm

FGB/45/25 Receipt of minutes and approval of policies from committees and working parties

Governors **AGREED** there had been no committees held since the last FGB meeting.

Policies

Q. Governors queried where the lockdown procedures appeared?

A. The principal clarified that the lockdown procedures were to feed into the emergency plan – a dry-run was scheduled for the admin day in September 2025 with a practice for children to be arranged for next academic year.

Q. Governors questioned whether the alarms could be heard externally?

A. The principal assured governors that arrangements had been made to instal nine external sound units.

Q. Governors asked whether updates had been incorporated into the medical needs policy?

A. The principal verified that the policy remained unchanged from previous one with the exception that medical tracker had been woven in throughout.

Q. Governors enquired about medical tracker?

A. The principal explained this was an online portal which recorded the administration of any medication or first aid – the SBM added that further training on the use of the portal was scheduled.

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the following policies:

- carer's leave policy;
- emergency plan;
- English policy;
- flexible working policy;
- handwriting policy;
- health and safety policy;
- medical needs policy;
- quality assurance policy and procedure;
- reading policy;
- redundancy and restructuring policy;
- science policy;
- shared parental leave policy.

In addition, governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** subject to pending legislative changes, the following CEFM policies:

- adoption leave policy;
- paternity leave policy;
- pregnancy and maternity leave policy.

FGB/46/25 Monitoring and overseeing financial performance**a** *Management Accounts*

The chair **CONFIRMED** that he had received the management accounts for period 7 (March 2025), and they had also been uploaded to Governor Hub.

b *Cash Flow (P7)*

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the cash flow spreadsheet (P7) in line with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook – **see confidential item**.

FGB/47/25 Review risk management arrangements

The SBM advised that the risk management policy had been updated to reflect the HR changes and any associated changes to practices or policy.

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the risk management policy.

FGB/48/25 Information from the Corporate Director for consideration and action**a** *Education Improvement Service (EIS) Updates and Ofsted*

The clerk provided a summary of the content of the report and drew governors' attention to the following:

- the Education Improvement Service (EIS) focused on partnerships to utilise funding and resources effectively, empowering schools for continuous improvement;
- EIS support levels were:

- universal support: available to all LA maintained schools;
- targeted support: tailored to specific areas of improvement and unique challenges;
- enhanced support: intensive support for schools facing significant challenges, involving deeper intervention and ongoing monitoring;
- Ofsted updates (from September 2024) including:
 - no single overarching grade – evaluations to be made across sub-categories;
 - ungraded inspections (Section 8) to assess maintenance of previous standards;
 - inspectors will be able to suspend inspections for safeguarding issues;
 - schools with 'requires improvement' judgments may undergo monitoring;
 - schools with inadequate key judgments or ineffective safeguarding were to be placed in a formal category of concern;
- actions for governors.

b Building Relational Schools: Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Schools

The clerk provided a summary of the content of the report and highlighted the following information:

- relational practice in schools aimed for children to feel safe, feel they belonged, develop trust in adults, experienced connection and being 'in relationship' as relationships were the antidote to difficult experiences;
- the aim was to provide headteachers and school leaders with knowledge, frameworks, strategies and follow up supervision to develop relational practice in schools to support inclusion in its widest sense;
- this approach was underpinned by NCC's strengths-based approach and sought to build on the strengths of Nottinghamshire schools, build even stronger relationships and provide continued high-quality education for children, young people, families and communities across Nottinghamshire;
- actions for governors.

Governors **DISCUSSED** the article and **RECOGNISED** the value of the approach however they also **APPRECIATED** the challenges faced by small schools to send 3 members of staff (including a leader) to attend 3 full days of training.

FGB/49/25 Estate Management – see confidential item

FGB/50/25 Communication received and updates

From clerk – Governor Newsletter

The clerk drew attention to the content of the first 2025 summer term edition of the Nottinghamshire Governor e-newsletter and highlighted the following items:

- feedback from the Governor Conference;
- HR updates including:
 - an introduction of the Nottinghamshire headteacher wellbeing support package; and
 - the HSE Wellbeing Survey;
- safeguarding updates which highlighted:
 - training; and
 - a reminder on the revised child protection and confidential file audit

toolkit;

- articles related to governor roles such as:
 - responsibilities in supporting vulnerable children and useful questions and challenges;
 - dealing with complaints – support for governors and urgent actions for all boards;
 - end of year checklists for governors;
- national updates including:
 - further resources from the National Governance Association (NGA) linked to RISE teams, Prevent duty and school food standards;
- recruiting great governors! – revised toolkit available on GovernorHub.

Governors **REQUESTED** that the questions from the vulnerable children article be added to the end of the internal safeguarding audit as evidence that the questions had been asked – the principal agreed.

RL/CM

FGB/51/25 Approval of in-service training days 2025 – 2026

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the following Inset days from the principal:

- Monday 1st September 2025;
- Friday 3rd October 2025;
- Monday 6th October 2025;
- Friday 27th March 2026;
- Monday 1st June 2026;
- Monday 27th July 2026.

Q. Governors queried whether there were to be any days disaggregated?

A. The principal explained that currently this was not the plan and had been agreed by the staff.

Q. Governors questioned whether six in-service days were permissible?

A. The principal clarified that legislation regulating the school day and school year applied to schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority, but not to academies (other than special academies) or pupil referral units.

Q. Governors asked about regulations surrounding the length of the school year?

A. The principal shared that in academies, the length of the school day and year was the responsibility of the academy trust as per the funding agreement – this was to be formally recorded at the summer (2) term FGB meeting for 2025/26.

RL/Clerk

Following discussion, it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED** the in-service training days as presented with no days currently disaggregated.

FGB/52/25 Review of Trust's Scheme of Delegation for academies and responsibility of the FGB or Governor Services template for academies

a Agree committee structure and membership of committees

Governors **AGREED** to retain the current committee structure and membership:

- finance and personnel – all governors – Mrs C Middleton (chair);

- audit – Mrs D Carter, Mr P Gawthorpe, Mrs C Middleton, Mrs M Norton Allen, Mrs M Pimm, Mrs S Sparks (chair), Cllr N Turner, Mrs S Wichmann;
- admissions – Mr P Gawthorpe (chair), Mrs M Pimm, Mrs S Wichmann.

In addition, governors **DETERMINED** that any matters related to pay progression were to be approved at the finance and personnel committee without the presence of staff governors and identified governors in case of appeal.

b *Scheme of Delegation 2025/26*

Governors **RECEIVED**, **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the scheme of delegation 2025-2026 as presented.

c *Annual Planner 2025/26*

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the annual planner 2025/26.

d *Policy Checklist 2025/26*

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the 2025/26 policy checklist.

e *Review of and appointment to link governor roles*

Governors **AGREED** to retain the link roles as outlined on the academy website.

FGB/53/25 **Report from training co-ordinator of impact of training undertaken and review of governor training requirements (including safeguarding)**

Governors **DETERMINED** that some had still to complete the 'effectiveness' tool on Governor Hub – those who had yet to access the tool **COMMITTED** to doing so as soon as possible.

**All
governors
/Clerk**

The SBM notified the meeting that:

- 55% of governors had completed the effectiveness tool on Governor Hub and this had already identified some training – individuals were to be contacted when training had been sourced;
- through the NGA subscription, the NGA training link below provided a huge resource for governor training:

<https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/register>

Governors **AGREED** that the following training had been scheduled:

- health & safety – Mrs K Heaton, Mrs S Wichmann.

FGB/54/25 **Review of governor monitoring visit reports – key actions for governors**

Governors **DETERMINED** that the following monitoring visits had been undertaken or scheduled:

- health & safety – Mrs D Carter.

The SBM reported that all issues identified for action following the health & safety visit had been addressed and resolved or were being addressed.

FGB/55/25 **Evidence of governing body impact on school improvement and review of how the governing body has held the school's leaders to account**

Governors identified impact through:

- consideration and discussion regarding governance matters including:
 - membership, vacancies and recruitment;
 - governor training and monitoring visits;

- review of delegation and organisation of committees;
- scrutiny and challenge relating to policies, specifically:
 - lockdown policy implementation including practice and procedures;
 - medical needs policy, changes and the use of recording systems;
- increased awareness and understanding of estates management through questions and discussion related to:
 - communication with the local authority and linked parties;
 - advice sought and action considered/taken;
 - lighting and BMS developments including financial implications;
- consideration and discussion related to financial matters and risk management;
- questions, challenge and discussion related to the Y6 residential: costs, discounts and organisation;
- consideration and review of the Corporate Director's reports and the summer (1) term governor newsletter.

Accountability continued to be evidenced in all governing body and committee meetings through regular review of actions, question and investigation.

FGB/56/25 Confirmation of dates for summer term 2024/25

The governing body

agreed

- Thursday 5th June 2025 (4.00pm) – F&P and Audit Committees;
- Thursday 17th July 2025 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting.

All to note

FGB/57/25 Determination of confidentiality of business

It was

resolved

that there were two confidential items and that the confidential sections of the following reports:

- spring (2) term FGB minutes;
- principal's report and linked documentation;
- financial report and associated documents;
- governor monitoring visit reports;

be deemed confidential but that all other papers and reports be made available as required.

The meeting closed at 5.25pm



Signed:

(chair)

Date: **17th July 2025**