

# MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL  
ACADEMY

**Academy:** Sparken Hill Academy  
**Meeting title:** Spring (1) term meeting of the governing body  
**Date and time:** Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 at 9.30am  
**Location:** At the academy

## Membership

'A' denotes absence

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

## In attendance

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

- FGB/01/25 Apologies for absence** **Action**
- Apologies for absence were received from:
- Mrs M Norton Allen (work commitments).
- It was  
**resolved**  
that governors accepted and consented to these absences.
- There were no other apologies for absence received – the chair **AGREED** to follow up. **Chair**
- FGB/02/25 Declaration of interest**
- There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for items of business on the agenda.
- FGB/03/25 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 S Sparks (co-opted governor) – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2025.
- Governors **AGREED** to continue to explore options for recruitment to the vacant position.

**FGB/04/25 Approval of minutes of autumn (2) term meetings and any additional special meetings**

The minutes of the autumn (2) term meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was **AGREED** that the minutes of 5 December 2024 were to be signed electronically by the chair.

**Chair/  
Clerk**

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

**FGB/05/25 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.

*Determination of Admission Arrangements*

**Q. Governors asked whether there were any planned changes to the admission arrangements?**

**A.** The principal assured governors there were no changes and no requirement to consult as the academy remained within the seven-year timeline for statutory consultation.

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the admissions policy 2026-27 and the admission arrangements for 2026-27 were determined in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.

**FGB/06/25 Data Presentation**

The principal drew governors' attention to the presentation uploaded to Governor Hub and highlighted the following key points:

- an introduction around the ideal conditions for learning;
- the various stages of assessment:
  - reception baseline;
  - EYFS – good level of development (GLD);
  - Y1 phonics – age related expectation (ARE);
  - Y2 to Y5 = teacher assessments; and
  - Y6 SATs (nationally, all schools measured by this);
- an explanation of a coasting school in terms of data;
- the impact of the COVID effect on data, progress and attainment; and
- greater detail around the meaning of progress measures (positive, negative and zero) and how APS (average point score) was calculated;
- factors affecting progress and attainment:
  - FSM (free school meals);
  - EAL (English as an additional language);
  - SEND;
- at Sparken Hill, the percentage of:
  - FSM = 46% (national = 25.9%);
  - EAL = 19.2% (national = 22.8%);
  - SEND school support = 14.3% (national = 14.1%)
  - EHCP = 1.6% (national = 3%);

- clarification of the data dashboard including examples of the most recent dashboards for foundation stage, KS1 and KS2;
- 2023/24 attainment data;
- an introduction to the IDSR (inspection data summary report) and what the data showed;
- the main actions to be taken:
  - developing a more structured approach to formative assessment – aligned with KS2 SATs presentation – including QLA (question level analysis);
  - combined attainment to reach 60%+;
  - termly tracking of ARE for mathematics, reading, writing and combined to ensure that cohorts remain on track;
  - attainment targets for all groups to be achieved every year up to Y6 – this should alleviate ‘outliers’ in terms of progress.

**Q. Governors enquired if pupils arriving from overseas counted in the SATs outcomes?**

**A.** The principal clarified that it was possible to apply for pupils arriving from overseas with little/no English within 3 years of the SATs to be removed from the figures where necessary – this would only be actioned when there was a detrimental impact on the overall attainment figures. Last year, 3 x pupils were removed which had a nett impact of +2% over the combined figures.

**Q. Governors queried the EHCP figure given the level of need in the school?**

**A.** The principal detailed the background and context to the position of the local authority in terms of the awarding of EHCPs and the use of the funding.

The principal added that the measure applied by the LA re. the awarding of EHCPs was now being challenged – this had contributed to an increase in EHCPs.

**Q. Governors questioned the red on the dashboards?**

**A.** The principal advised that this indicated lower than national outcomes and by how much (percentage).

**Q. Governors asked what it was about the Y6 cohort that saw a big gap between writing and SPaG paper?**

**A.** The principal cautioned that this particular cohort (Y6 2023-24) had struggled academically resulting in lower overall attainment when comparing with previous cohorts and national averages. However, he believed that the gap may be because one was teacher assessed (with a plan for writing being implemented over the year) and the other a test paper – there had been an element of test technique and test anxiety for this cohort.

**Q. Governors enquired about the discrepancy in the data dashboard and the validated data?**

**A.** The principal explained that this had been because the local authority had required the data to produce the dashboards before the validated data had been released and there had subsequently been an upward shift for the school due to successful applications for removal of papers from the final calculations.

**Q. Governors queried whether the 30-hour provision had impacted on results?**

**A.** The principal concurred that although the 30-hour provision had enabled a better start at early years (F2), pupils were still behind upon entry.

**Q. Governors questioned how stability was measured for the IDSR?**

**A.** The principal shared that this was measured using the IDACI (income deprivation affecting children index) and the IMD (index of multiple deprivation) measure (property values, education, income, etc).

**Q. Governors requested confirmation that the actions identified were evident within the SDP?**

**A.** The principal verified that they were.

Governors **RECOGNISED** that class sizes within Y5/Y6 of 30+ put a lot of pressure on adults to identify the specific support mechanisms for pupils within each class.

Furthermore, governors **NOTED** that the methodology being employed (highly focused interaction with children) to support pupils was time consuming but a necessary and professional approach.

The principal reminded governors of the importance of the PRM process (pupil progress meetings) which targeted support for pupils and worked extremely well for the school.

Governors **THANKED** the principal for the very informative presentation about data and answers to the questions posed.

**FGB/07/25     Staffing – see confidential item**

**FGB/08/25     Monitoring and overseeing financial performance**

**a**     *Management Accounts*

The chair **CONFIRMED** that he had received the management accounts for November and December 2024, and they had also been uploaded to Governor Hub.

VD

**b**     *Investment Account – see confidential item*

**FGB/09/25     Update on appraisal process for principal and staff including an update on the wellbeing of staff**

The principal informed governors that everything was on track and proposed that he provided governors with a summary of what the staff were doing in relation to the whole school target of vocabulary development – governors **AGREED**.

The principal drew governors' attention to the presentation shared with staff to introduce the 3 tiers of vocabulary:

- **tier 1** – basic, familiar words commonly used by most pupils in everyday conversation;
- **tier 2** – robust, high-frequency words that pupils encountered across content areas and topics, often with multiple meanings and referred to as academic vocabulary words;
- **tier 3** – low-frequency words that were content specific.

The principal outlined the challenges and resolutions (with examples) to the implementation of vocabulary development across the academy.

**Q. Governors asked if knowledge organisers were completed for all subjects?**

**A.** The principal clarified that the production of knowledge organisers was currently for the main topic areas only.

Furthermore, the principal highlighted the reflection and review to be undertaken to consider and create a new planning format – he shared an example of a potential planning document that teams had trialled recently and amended to suit the needs of the academy.

**Q. Governors enquired about how to overcome the resistance of some staff to the new approach?**

**A.** The principal explained that the staff had been put into teams, given a day together to complete the next half-terms' planning – this was upskilling teachers' subject knowledge, providing opportunity for challenge and inclusion of smart targets.

**Q. Governors queried whether mid-year reviews had been scheduled?**

**A.** The principal confirmed that all mid-year reviews were planned.

Governors **THANKED** the principal for the presentation.

**FGB/10/25 Confirm arrangements to review Child Protection and Safeguarding recording and reporting systems (CP safeguarding file audit)**

The principal notified governors that:

- the NCC NSCP SiE safeguarding audit had been completed, signed and submitted to NCC by the deadline (20 December 2024);
- an SCR check was scheduled for today;
- additional safeguarding training was still outstanding for some governors;
- the link for safer recruitment training was to be sent to governors;
- a meeting was to be arranged for the safeguarding governor to conduct the confidential file audit with the DSL.

**CM**  
**All to note**  
**VD/RL**

**CM**

**FGB/11/25 Information from the Corporate Director for consideration and action**

**a** *Headteacher Wellbeing Support Package*

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

- the package had been developed by NCC Support to Schools Service to provide practical support and advice to all Nottinghamshire headteachers support their positive mental health and wellbeing;
- the aim was to help head teachers to know what support and services were available to them and to be able too easily access this information when they needed it;
- alongside general support and advice there were details of two specific offers:
  - critical incident (loss and bereavement) support for schools;
  - support for headteachers during an Ofsted inspection;
- actions for governors.

**b** *Small Schools Sustainability Strategy*

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

- the strategy had been developed with direct input from small school headteachers;
- the strategy sought to ensure that small schools were aware of the options available to them to:
  - help improve their long-term sustainability;
  - secure stable leadership and governance;
  - maintain a good financial position with access to required resources;
  - continue to provide high quality education provision to children across Nottinghamshire;
- actions for governors.

## FGB/12/25 Communication received and updates

### *From clerk – Governor Newsletter*

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

- a welcome back and overview of the content from the Governor Services Team Manager – Sinead Allan;
- HR and finance updates including urgent action for pay committees;
- school admission updates;
- safeguarding in education news and updates;
- articles related to:
  - a reminder re. improving school attendance strategy;
  - restrictive practice – changes to the NCC training model and service offer;
  - suspensions and exclusions;
- national updates/articles with news (and links) from Ofsted and the DfE including:
  - the 'Plan for Change';
  - 2023/24 annual Ofsted report;
  - DfE regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE);
  - financial support to create SEND places in mainstream schools;
- effective governance – annual reviews;
- governor termly briefings;
- a message from the chair of NAGS, Susan Beasley;
- governor recruitment: support for boards from Governors for Schools;
- Em-Ed governor training update including information about the Governor Conference, Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025, The Holiday Inn, South Normanton.

## FGB/13/25 Report from training co-ordinator including review of governor training audit and requirements for 2025-2026

Governors **AGREED** that the following training had been completed or was planned:

- safer recruitment training – all governors;
- additional safeguarding training – all governors.

## FGB/14/25 Estate Management

### *a DfE Condition Summary*

The SBM presented the following documents (uploaded to Governor Hub) which informed the DfE Condition Summary:



- CDC2 condition report;
- school condition summary.

The SBM clarified that the school condition summary detailed all areas inspected and the condition of those areas identified as requiring attention – nine areas had been identified as poor, bad or requiring full replacement.

The SBM reported that work to rectify the identified areas was underway, completed or planned – none of the identified areas had been a surprise and some were still ongoing due to the lighting/electrical work happening.

Furthermore, the SBM informed governors that a maintenance walk for the internal of the building had been completed by the principal, site manager and herself prior to Christmas – a plan for internal maintenance was being formulated with costs and incorporated into the budget.

All to note

#### b *BMS/Lighting update*

The SBM advised that:

- the BMS remained outstanding but almost complete except for the window actuators and radiator parts – the estimated completion date was now February 2025;
- the lighting had been identified in the DfE conditions report as a 100% failure – this needed to be resolved and was for discussion at the F&P committee (27 February 2025).

VD/Clerk

#### c *CIF*

The SBM alerted governors that following the successful application for CIF funding to undertake the work re the replacement BMS, the academy had been selected by the DfE for a site assurance visit - supporting documents with regards to the project including finances, contract instructions, CDM and H&S etc had been requested for review as part of the visit.

#### Q. Governors questioned the date of the visit?

A. The SBM informed governors that the date was still to be confirmed.

VD/Clerk

*Mrs Heaton left the meeting at 11.19am*

#### FGB/15/25 Health & Safety

The SBM communicated that there was nothing further to add to the information as part of FGB/14/25.

#### FGB/16/25 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;
- phonics – Mrs S Sparks;
- safeguarding (confidential file audit) – Mrs C Middleton;
- SCR check – Mrs C Middleton.

#### FGB/17/25 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, recruitment;

- governor monitoring visits and governor training;
- scrutiny and challenge relating to staffing matters, specifically:
  - vacancies, recruitment and capacity;
  - affordability;
- increased awareness and understanding of data and analysis through questions and discussion related to:
  - meaning and use of acronyms;
  - use of comparative local and national data;
  - actions to improve progress and attainment;
  - impact of 30-hour provision;
- consideration and review of policies, Corporate Directors reports and the spring (1) term governor newsletter;
- questions, challenge and discussion related to estates and health & safety;
- consideration and discussion in relation to safeguarding, finance and admissions.

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

**FGB/18/25 Confirmation of dates for spring term 2024/25**

The governing body

**agreed**

- Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025 (4.00pm) – F&P and Audit Committees;
- Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting.

**All to note**

**FGB/19/25 Determination of confidentiality of business**

It was

**resolved**

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

- autumn (2) term FGB minutes;
- data analysis presentation;
- DfE school condition summary documents;
- financial report and associated documentation;
- vocabulary development presentation;

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

**The meeting closed at 11.23am**

Signed.

  
(chair)

Date: **27<sup>th</sup> March 2025**