

MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Academy: Sparken Hill Academy
Meeting title: Autumn (2) term meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Thursday 5th December 2024 at 9.30am
Location: At the academy

Membership

'A' denotes absence

Mrs D Carter
Mr P Gawthorpe (chair)
A 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)
Mrs S Cutts (Member)
Reverend D Gough (Member)
Cllr J Shepherd (Member)
Mrs F Walker (Member)

FGB/101/24 Apologies for absence

Action

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Mrs K Heaton (work commitments);
- 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.

FGB/102/24 Declaration of interest

The SBM confirmed that all governors present, had completed and signed the following documentation:

- declaration of business interests;
- declaration of eligibility;
- governor code of conduct 2024.

In addition, the majority of governors had accessed their profile on Governor Hub and ticked the appropriate boxes to provide further evidence of the above actions.

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

FGB/103/24 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) – 5th July 2025.

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

FGB/104/24 Approval of minutes of autumn (1) term meetings and any additional special meetings

The minutes of the autumn (1) term meeting held on 19th September 2024 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was **AGREED** that the minutes of 19 September 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 update or were to be discussed in the meeting.

FGB/105/24 Receipt of minutes and approval of policies from committees and working parties

Minutes of the following committees were **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**:

- Finance & Personnel Committee (10 October 2024);
- Audit Committee (10 October 2024);
- Finance & Personnel Committee (21 November 2024).

Actions in the minutes had been completed or continued to be in hand within the timescales indicated.

a Finance and Personnel Committee

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **RATIFIED** the following approvals from the F&P committee meetings:

- pay progression recommendations;
- application of teacher and support staff pay awards;
- pupil premium report;
- all staffing decisions;
- 2024/25 budget;
- the annual accounts and report to trustees/governors 2023-24 which were to be presented to Members at the AGM (5th December 2024).

b Audit Committee

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **RATIFIED** the annual internal audit report and annual internal audit summary report approved at committee.

c Policies

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **RATIFIED** the following policies approved at committees:

- alcohol & drug abuse policy;

- finance policy;
- investment policy;
- managing allegations (including low level concerns) policy;
- no smoking policy;
- safeguarding policy;
- staff code of conduct policy;
- supervision policy (updated);
- suspensions & permanent exclusions policy;
- whistle blowing policy.

In addition, governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the following policies:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • anti-bullying policy; | • freedom of information policy; |
| • attendance policy; | • history policy; |
| • breakfast club policy; | • medicines policy; |
| • single equality policy; | • music policy; |
| • EVC policy; | • reserves policy. |

FGB/106/24 Overseeing financial performance – financial reporting

The SBM presented a brief summary of the financial picture which included reference to:

- a) budget update 2023/24;
- b) budget update 2024/25;
- c) staffing;
- d) management accounts;
- e) investment account update.

a Budget update 2023/24

The SBM informed governors that the confirmed carry forward 2023/24 following the Streets audit = £664,038 (close to the previous estimate).

b Budget update 2024/24 – see confidential item

c Staffing – see confidential item

d Management accounts

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

e Investment account update – see confidential item

FGB/107/24 Holding executive leaders to account: summary of principal's report and governors' question and challenge

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

- pupil numbers continued to be buoyant (spaces were only available in KS1);
- CEFM were to be commissioned to manage appeals for the academy;
- EAL numbers remained broadly average at 20% - there were 21 distinct first languages in school;
- FSM/pupil premium stood at 43.09%

- the provision of parental mental health support continued through the community team;
- support for CLA children continued to ensure their journey through primary education met individual needs and encouraged significant progress both academically, socially and emotionally;
- the academy had completed 'The Rainbow Flag Award';
- whole school attendance (YTD) = 95.4%, persistent absence = 20.9%;
- behaviour – **see confidential item**;
- health & safety – the school had invested in 2-way radios for all classrooms and had doubled the number of MDSA devices;
- a synopsis of 2023/24.

Q. Governors asked about the persistent absence (PA)?

A. The principal clarified this related to a small number of pupils but assured governors that PA was reducing significantly (national = 18%).

Q. Governors enquired about penalty notices?

A. The principal advised governors that holidays during term time continued to be the main reason for penalty notice referrals – 52 penalty notice referrals had been made during 2023/24 for holidays during term-time.

Q. Governors queried the SEN profile across the school?

A. The principal shared that the SEMH need was still decreasing and there was more of a cognition and learning (C&L) and communication and interaction (C&I) need.

Governors **DISCUSSED** the complexities and challenges associated with the EHCP process.

Q. Governors questioned the reasons for the two-way radio investment?

A. The principal explained that the investment formed one of the features of the school emergency procedures which also reflected the changes brought about by 'Martyn's Law' in that schools were required to take reasonable steps to improve their preparedness for potential threats.

The principal provided further details of the steps taken to ensure preparedness.

Q. Governors asked whether there was to be a whole school lockdown practice?

A. The principal verified that one was planned and outlined the communication strand to be followed in order for the practice to be held without causing undue anxiety to the children.

Governors **THANKED** the principal for the excellent report full of technical and reflective comments.

FGB/108/24 Update on appraisal process for principal and staff including an update on the wellbeing of staff

The chair **UPDATED** governors that Mr Phil Abbott had been appointed as the external advisor.

The chair **CONFIRMED** that the principal's appraisal meeting had been held and new, comprehensive targets set and staff appraisal targets were not being set this year.

FGB/109/24 Information from the Corporate Director for consideration and action

Governors **AGREED** that these had been discussed in detail at the previous FGB meeting (see **FGB/91/24**).

FGB/110/24 Safeguarding information for consideration and action

The principal notified governors that:

- the NCC NSCP SiE safeguarding audit had been completed for approval, signing and submission by the deadline (20 December 2024);
- all staff had completed the online termly safeguarding courses.

PG/CM

All governors present **CONFIRMED** that they had:

- read KCSiE 2024 and ticked the appropriate box under their profile on Governor Hub;
- completed annual safeguarding training module on Governor Hub called 'The Key – Safeguarding for Governance.'

All to note

FGB/111/24 Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the academy aligns with the agreed vision

The principal presented a brief update around the SIP and highlighted that:

- the SIP document had been uploaded to Governor Hub.
- a focus aimed at improving the delivery of geography in school had been continued;
- the SIP priorities were set in relation to the following Ofsted judgements:
 - **Quality of Education:**
 - to provide a challenging curriculum, with high quality teaching, expectations and appropriate feedback;
 - **Behaviour and Attitudes:**
 - to develop consistency of approaches to promoting behaviour for learning from all staff and increase pupil voice;
 - to reduce the incidents of cyber incidents by equipping pupils with the confidence and knowledge to self-protect;
 - **Personal Development:**
 - to introduce and consolidate a 'wider curriculum model;'
 - **Leadership and Management:**
 - to further improve the effectiveness of subject leaders, ensuring that tracking and assessment in all subjects was enabling leaders to make accurate judgements about how to improve teaching and learning in their subjects;
 - to continue to develop the role of link governors and improve the monitoring role of the governors/trustees;
 - **Early Years Foundation Stage.**

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the 2024-25 SIP.

FGB/112/24 General Data Protection Regulations - Receive report from Data Protection Officer and Information Governance Governor

The SBM reported that there had been no data breaches, SARs or FoI requests since the last meeting – the company commissioned to provide DPO services remained the same.

Mrs Phoenix left the meeting at 10.36am

FGB/113/24 Communication

a *From the principal* – see confidential item

Mrs Phoenix re-joined the meeting at 10.44am

b *From clerk – Governor Newsletter*

The clerk drew attention to the content of the second 2024 autumn term edition of the Nottinghamshire Governor e-newsletter and highlighted the following items:

- a welcome back from the Governor Services Team Manager – Sinead Allan;
- information related to the **Nottinghamshire Governors' Conference** scheduled to take place on Friday 21st March 2025 at the Holiday Inn in South Normanton;
- HR updates including available training and policy changes;
- school admission updates;
- safeguarding in education news and updates;
- an article about:
 - changes to Ofsted inspections;
 - the NCC school leadership induction programme;
 - Ofsted – Early Years: new research and reports;
 - Oracy in Education;
- national updates/articles with news (and links) from Ofsted and the DfE including:
 - the updated EYFS curriculum framework;
 - the new Ofsted inspection handbook;
 - PE and Sports premium funding;
 - the delay to the implementation date of the Procurement Act 2023;
 - children's commissioner – school survey 2024;
- governance articles relating to:
 - school attendance – what are governors responsible for?
 - committees – annual reviews of terms of reference;
- governor termly briefings;
- a message from the chair of NAGS, Susan Beasley including the NAGS governor awards nomination forms, vacancies on the board and networking sessions for chairs and new governors;
- governor recruitment: support for boards from Governors for Schools;
- Em-Ed governor training update.

FGB/114/24 Review of governor monitoring visit reports – key actions for governing body

The chair **REMINDED** governors to:

- consult with the principal prior to each visit;
- ensure at least one governor link visit per term for each governor link;
- complete visit forms once a visit had been undertaken.

All to note

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

- health & safety – Mrs D Carter;
- KS2 curriculum – Mrs S Wichmann, Mrs M Norton Allen;
- principal's appraisal – Mr P Gawthorpe, Mrs M Norton Allen;
- safeguarding – Mrs C Middleton.

The SBM advised that six recommendations had been identified on the health & safety visit, four had been actioned, one was pending (door), and one was linked to the LED lighting matter.

The curriculum link governor provided feedback from the visit, information shared, support in place and impact of changes made last year.

FGB/115/24 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, compliance;
 - governor monitoring visits;
- scrutiny and challenge relating to financial matters, specifically:
 - budget reforecast and impact of variances;
 - plans for use of any carry forward;
 - developments related to NI increases;
 - contact with HMRC;
- increased awareness and understanding of staffing matters through questions and discussion related to:
 - staffing changes and cover arrangements;
 - internal capacity and workload related to the increase in SEN;
- consideration and review of policies and the autumn (2) term governor newsletter;
- questions, challenge and discussion related to:
 - pupil numbers, applications and appeals;
 - attendance, persistent absence and penalty notices;
 - behaviour and support, SEN profile, the EHCP process and plans moving forward;
 - impact of 'Martyn's Law' and the responsibilities of the academy;
- consideration and discussion in relation to safeguarding, the SIP and GDPR.

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

Members wished to record their thanks and appreciation for the invitation to join the FGB meeting and the opportunity it afforded them to see trustees 'in action' as well at the progress the academy and its pupils had made throughout the year.

FGB/116/24 Confirmation of dates for spring term 2024/25

The governing body

agreed

- Thursday 23rd January 2025 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting;
- Thursday 27th February 2025 (4.00pm) – F&P and Audit Committees;
- Thursday 27th March 2025 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting.

All to note

FGB/117/24 Determination of confidentiality of business

It was

resolved

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

- autumn (1) term FGB minutes;
- autumn term committee minutes;
- financial report and associated documentation;
- principal's report and linked documentation;
- staffing update;

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

The meeting closed at 11.05am



Signed:

(chair)

Date: **23rd January 2025**