

# MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL  
ACADEMY

**Academy:** Sparken Hill Academy  
**Meeting title:** Autumn (2) term meeting of the governing body  
**Date and time:** Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 4.00pm  
**Location:** At the academy

## Membership

'A' denotes absence

A Mrs D Carter  
A Mr P Gawthorpe (chair)  
Mr R Lilley (principal)  
Mrs C Middleton (vice-chair)  
Mrs M Norton Allen  
Mrs M Paton  
Mrs K Phoenix  
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/92/23 Apologies for absence Action

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Mrs D Carter (personal);
- Mr P Gawthorpe (personal);
- Cllr N Turner (work commitments).

It was

**resolved**

that governors accepted and consented to these absences.

## FGB/93/23 Declaration of interest

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

- declaration of business interests;
- declaration of eligibility;
- governor code of conduct 2023.

In addition, governors **AGREED** to access their profile on Governor Hub and tick the appropriate boxes to provide further evidence of the above actions.

**All**

The SBM declared an interest in item **FGB/103/23 d**, and it was determined that the SBM left the meeting for this item.

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

**FGB/94/23    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 co-opted governor;
- 1 x partnership governor.

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

- Mrs D Carter (co-opted governor) – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024;
- Mrs C Middleton (community governor) – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2024.

All to note

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

**FGB/95/23    Approval of minutes of autumn (1) term meetings and any additional special meetings**

The minutes of the autumn (1) term meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was **AGREED** that the minutes of 21 September 2023 were to be signed electronically by the vice-chair.

Vice-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/96/23    Receipt of minutes and approval of policies from committees and working parties**

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

- Finance & Personnel Committee (12 October 2023);
- Audit Committee (12 October 2023);
- Finance & Personnel Committee (23 November 2023);

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 (staff);
- flexible working requests;
- the annual accounts and report to trustees/governors 2022-23 which were to be presented to Members at the AGM (8<sup>th</sup> December 2023)

**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;
- lettings policy;

- managing allegations including low level concerns policy;
- no smoking policy;
- risk management policy;
- staff code of conduct policy;
- suspensions & permanent exclusions policy;
- whistle blowing policy.

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

- history policy;
- safeguarding policy.

### **FGB/97/23 Teacher Pay Award**

The SBM provided the following updates for governors:

- the teacher pay award 2023:
  - had passed through parliament and was confirmed as 6.5% on all points except for MPR 1 = 7.1%;
  - was to be backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023;
  - was to be included in the December payroll;
- teacher pension employer contribution was to increase by 5% from April 2024 from 23.6% to 28.6%.

**Q. Governors asked if teachers had been informed that the award was to be included in the December payroll?**

**A.** The SBM verified that all staff were aware.

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **RATIFIED** the application of the teacher pay award approved in principle at the F&P committee (12 October 2023) subject to confirmation of the national pay award.

### **FGB/98/23 Support staff pay award**

The SBM reported that agreement between unions and the government had been reached – the NJC pay award, back dated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, was as follows:

- spinal point 1 was removed from 1 April 2023;
- spinal points 2 - 43 were to be uplifted by £1,925;
- spinal points 44 – 71 were to be uplifted by 3.88%;
- spinal points 72 and upwards were to be uplifted by 3.50%;
- all allowances subject to pay indexation were to be uplifted by 3.88%.

**Q. Governors enquired whether staff who left on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 were entitled to the back pay?**

**A.** The SBM clarified that if requested, then staff were entitled to claim it.

**Q. Governors queried whether any requests had been made?**

**A.** The SBM shared that two former staff members had submitted a request for back pay 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 inclusive.

**Q. Governors questioned whether the back pay had been accounted for in the budget?**

**A.** The SBM advised that salary costs (including on costs) had been included in the payroll accrual and therefore accounted for.

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** application of the support staff pay award backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

## FGB/99/23 **Overseeing Financial Performance – financial reporting**

### a *Budget update 2022-23*

The SBM notified governors that the confirmed carry forward at the end of 2022-23 was £544,701, slightly lower than anticipated.

### b *Budget review 2023-24*

The SBM provided a short summary of the discussions undertaken at the F&P committee meetings and highlighted the following key points from the budget review:

- the projected carry forward - **see confidential item**;
- detailed budget movement of income and expenditure;
- the budget assumptions for 2023-24;
- the revised 3-year forecast.

### c *Staffing update* – **see confidential item**

### d *Management accounts*

The SBM informed governors that:

- in line with the academy trust handbook (ATH) the management accounts had been provided by period to the chair of governors;
- the period for review was September and October 2023 and included the cash balance on 31 October 2023.

### e *Disposals*

The SBM presented the following items for disposal:

- catering trolley
- 2 x iPhones (asset tag no. 0206 and 0211).

#### **Q. Governors asked if donation of the catering trolley had been considered?**

**A.** The principal confirmed that the trolley had been offered to individual schools – there had been no response and the item sat on the asset register.

#### **Q. Governors enquired about trade-in options for the i-phones?**

**A.** The SBM assured governors that the trade-in option had been pursued – one phone had been ineligible for trade-in, school had received £170 for the other to offset against the purchase of new phones for the school.

Following discussion, it was

#### **resolved**

that governors **APPROVED** of the disposal of both the catering trolley and 2 x i-phones.

## FGB/100/23 **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:

- total pupil numbers across the school on Census Day = 543;
- Y6 was full, with a waiting list;
- all KS2 year groups were either at PAN or oversubscribed;

- in KS1 the cohort numbers were under or over PAN (75):
  - YR (F2) = 58;
  - Y1 = 59;
  - Y2 = 77;
- numbers in nursery (N2) = 45.

The chair **REMINDED** governors of the reasons why the PAN had been exceeded in KS2 – governors **SUPPORTED** the reasoning of the school.

**Q. Governors asked how the school balanced the extra numbers in Y2 with infant class size legislation (ICS)?**

**A.** The principal detailed the class organisation, the reduction of the Y1 threshold to avoid contravening the ICS ruling and the need to remain aware of the distribution of Y1/Y2 in those classes.

**Q. Governors enquired whether permission had to be sought for accepting pupils above PAN at KS1?**

**A.** The principal outlined the ICS exceptions and that the academy was its own admitting authority therefore, as long as the decisions were in line with the 2021 school admissions code and ICS legislation then the action taken was permissible.

Governors briefly **DISCUSSED** the challenges and frustrations experienced by schools and academies in relation to the new Synergy admissions software adopted by the local authority.

**Q. Governors queried why there was one smaller class in each year group?**

**A.** The principal explained that this was to provide greater support for children with additional needs.

**Q. Governors questioned whether there had been an opportunity to look at applications for FAD 2024?**

**A.** The vice principal stated that the academy had only checked that the parents of children in F1/N2 had applied for a school place.

The principal continued with the presentation of his report which included:

- gender, ethnicity and pupil premium (PP)/FSM (free school meal) distribution across the school;
- attendance data:
  - whole school figure = 94.2% (as of 17 Nov 2023);
  - persistent absence (PA) = 20% (as of 17 Nov 2023);
- community engagement;
- behaviour – suspensions/exclusions/incidents – **see confidential item**;
- SEND – **see confidential item**;
- a safeguarding update.

**Q. Governors asked about the percentage EAL/PP/FSM figure for the school?**

**A.** The principal shared that the:

- PP figure was 43.69% - a 4.85% increase from the same time last year;
- EAL figure stood at 19% (below national) and covered 20 discrete first languages.

Governors **NOTED** the increased activity in relation to community engagement and parental involvement.

**b** *School Improvement Plan (SIP)*

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the 2023-24 school improvement plan as presented.

Governors **DISCUSSED** the inclusion of governors within the SIP and/or production of a governor action plan – it was proposed that the matter of a governor action plan be formally addressed by governors in the New Year.

All to note

Governors **THANKED** the principal for his clear, comprehensive report.

**FGB/101/23** **Update on appraisal process for principal and staff including an update on the wellbeing of all staff.**

The principal updated governors that:

- his appraisal review had taken place and new targets set for 2023-24;
- the appointment of a new external advisor was to be considered and discussed by the appraisal governors;
- staff reviews and target-setting had been completed by end of October 2023 in line with policy.

PG/MNA/  
Clerk

**FGB/102/23** **Safeguarding Information for consideration and action**

The principal informed governors that further to item **FGB/84/23** and **FGB/100/23**:

- the NCC NSCP SiE safeguarding audit had been completed;
- a safeguarding governor visit was to be arranged;
- all governors were required to tick the appropriate box under their profile on Governor Hub to confirm they had read KCSiE 2023.

CM

All

**FGB/103/23** **Estates management**

**a** *Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS)*

The SBM outlined the expectation of the DfE for schools/academies to take a strategic approach in managing its estate to ensure positive impact across the organisation in a number of areas to bring cost efficiencies, safer schools and a commitment to sustainability.

In line with DfE guidance on GEMS, the SBM confirmed that the school had

- completed the GEMS tool kit;
- produced an estate vision;
- produced estate strategy plan.

The SBM explained that:

- all documents were available on Governor Hub;
- a further document, the asset management plan, was currently being finalised ready for submission to the next F&P committee meeting.

**b** *BMS – CIF bid update*

The principal alerted governors to:

- a final planning meeting which had been held that morning (7 December 2023) with Eddisons in relation to the CIF bid to replace the BMS system in school (see **F&P/48/23**);
- the closing date for submission (14 December 2023);
- the scoring process i.e., CIF funding allocation;
- the financial commitment required from SHA – the greater the school contribution the more chance of success – **see confidential item**

**c LED Lighting options**

The principal detailed the exploratory work undertaken around funding sources and repayment to enable replacement of all the lighting in school with LED lights at the same time as the BMS installation – further information was to be submitted if available, to the spring term F&P committee.

VD/Clerk

*Mrs Dashper left the meeting at 5.37pm*

**d Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)**

The principal notified governors of the quotes received from companies in relation to the cleaning and redress of the 'artificial' grass MUGA:

- NOVA sport = £9,500 (an increase of c. £5k from 2019);
- ND Services = £6,676 (annual clean and redress).

In addition, the principal cautioned that an annual clean and redress was only a short-term solution, the MUGA was actually reaching the end of its useful life and may need to be replaced – he shared the cost of the long-term solution of replacement (like-for-like or an upgrade).

Governors **OBSERVED** that a lottery bid may need to be considered for replacement.

**Q. Governors enquired whether the relationship was good enough with the third-party provider that if not satisfied, it would not affect other services?**

**A.** The principal believed that the relationship was strong and would not be soured.

Following discussion, it was

**resolved**

that governors **APPROVED** the quote from ND Services for a clean and redress at a cost of £6,676.

*Mrs Dashper re-joined the meeting at 5.50pm*

**FGB/104/23 Health and Safety (H&S)**

The principal presented a summary of the health and safety developments during the 2023 autumn term. In particular, he highlighted that;

**a Regularity reform**

- he had received H&S training from a legal firm approved by the RPA;
- the information covered within the training related to parking on school site – this was communicated to governors;
- a review of road safety was proposed, particularly to address the risk that cars posed to pupils whilst on site.

**Q. Governors enquired who was allowed to park on school site?**

**A.** The principal outlined the school policy on the matter and how the limited spaces were allocated.

**Q. Governors queried who was responsible if a car hit a child on school site?**

**A.** The principal explained that employer or, in the case of independent schools, the proprietor, was accountable for the health and safety of school staff and pupils – **see appendix 1.**

Governors **RECOGNISED** the increase in the number of parents without permits utilising the site at the end of the school day and the risk this posed to the pupils.

Governors fully **SUPPORTED** a review of road safety.

In addition, governors **PROPOSED** that:

- a parents meeting be held, with governors in attendance;
- the school commissioned an independent traffic survey;
- a working party be convened to examine the matter in more detail and propose a way forward with feedback at the next F&P committee.

**RL/CM/  
Clerk**

Governors **DISCUSSED** working party membership and it was determined that the following governors be appointed subject to their agreement:

- Cllr N Turner, Mr P Gawthorpe, Mrs M Paton;
- Mr R Lilley, Mrs M Norton Allen.

**NT/PG/MP  
RL/MNA**

**b New health & safety reporting**

- a new reporting system based on the previously successful safeguarding recording forms called 'Initial Concern Record' (ICR) had been introduced;
- staff, already familiar with this system, had utilized the new H&S ICRs; and
- as per the safeguarding versions, the matters highlighted were addressed before being filed;
- **see confidential item.**

In addition, the principal highlighted that:

- signage was to be enhanced around the site to improve transition for new parents/pupils and visitors;
- thermoplastic signage indicating (permanently) that no bikes/scooters were allowed on school site was to be installed;
- a quote had been requested:
  - for external fire alarm sounders on the playground;
  - to replace the metal fire doors on the plant room;

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the health and safety update.

**FGB/105/23 Communication received and updates**

*From the headteacher – see confidential item*

*From clerk – Governor Newsletter*

The clerk drew attention to the content of the second 2023 autumn term edition of the Nottinghamshire Governor e-newsletter and highlighted the following items:

- school admissions information;
- safeguarding in education news and updates;
- an article about online safety;
- HR and finance updates and actions;
- an article about:
  - governor declarations and confirmations;
  - what information must be published about your governing body;
  - could you be a Notts support governor;
  - news from NCC Governor Services – FAQs for governors;
- the Governor Conference to be held on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024** at Eastwood Hall;
- Nottinghamshire Governor Awards;
- health and wellbeing survey and the intent programme;
- introduction to the climate change team;

- school infrastructure improvements worth £9.2m;
- NCC education library service and the DfE reading framework;
- national updates/articles with news (and links) from Ofsted and the DfE:
  - the early years curriculum – a focus on communication and language – Ofsted;
  - Ofsted's school inspection update: autumn 2023 - webinar;
- Governor for Schools – conference 2023;
- governor termly briefings;
- governor recruitment – support for boards from Inspiring Governance and Governors for Schools;
- celebrating governance;
- governor learning and development updates.

**FGB/106/23 Review of governor monitoring visit reports – key actions for governing body**

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

- KS1 nativity – Mrs S Sparks;
- PE – Cllr N Turner.
- safeguarding – Mrs C Middleton;
- safeguarding audit – Mrs C Middleton.

**All to note**

The vice-chair **REMINDED** governors to:

- liaise 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**

**FGB/107/23 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;
  - compliance and governor monitoring visits;
- discussion and questions relating to pupil numbers specifically class organisation, the impact of the new LA admissions processing system and the availability of future FAD numbers;
- increased awareness and understanding through questions and discussion in relation to financial matters including the impact of:
  - income and expenditure variances;
  - the teacher/support staff pay awards;
  - availability of funding;
- consideration and review of policies and the autumn (2) term governor newsletter;
- questions, challenge and discussion related to:
  - staffing matters, pay and appraisal;
  - behaviour monitoring and SEND support;
  - attendance;
- consideration and discussion in relation to:
  - the school improvement plan (SIP);
  - safeguarding and vulnerable groups;

- discussion, questions and challenge regarding estates management and health and safety, specifically:
  - contracts and tendering processes;
  - pupil safety and traffic control (on and offsite);
  - mitigation and responsibilities.

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

**FGB/108/23 Confirmation of dates for 2023/24**

The governing body

**agreed**

Spring Term 2024

- Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting;
- Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024 (4.00pm) – F&P/Audit Committee;
- Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting;

Summer Term 2024

- Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 (4.00pm) – FGB Meeting;
- Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (4.00pm) – F&P/Audit Committee;
- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting.

**All to note**

**FGB/109/23 Determination of confidentiality of business**

It was

**resolved**

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

- autumn (1) term FGB minutes;
- committee meeting minutes;
- principal's report and linked documentation;
- governor monitoring visit reports;
- financial report and linked documentation;

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

**The meeting closed at 5.58pm**



Signed:

**(vice-chair)**

Date: **25<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

## Onsite Parking

The day-to-day running of the school was usually delegated to the headteacher and the school management team. In most cases, they were responsible for ensuring that risks are managed effectively. This included health and safety matters. There was therefore an absolute necessity to ensure that all reasonable measures to mitigate incidents occurring on site.

The difficulty was that when the school was built, there was no real facility for managing the increased traffic implications – despite requests to do so. A limited number of ‘visitor’ parking spaces were installed (together with 4 x visitor disabled bays). The issue had been one of managing parents / carers who had recognised mobility issues, as the school was positioned a distance from the main road. The Academy had developed an annual car parking application and controls access only to those who have been issued with a car parking pass. The huge difficulty was that the security was only present (reasonably) at school finish times.

At after school clubs, many parents had taken advantage of the fact that the main gate may be open (e.g., to allow visitors onto site) where they ‘tailgate’ or even resort to entering the grounds through the open exit gate. This makes policing the issue extremely difficult.

Some had called for the gates to be closed to all parents/carers (despite their physical difficulties). However, this would merely push the problem onto the main road. Last year, we had a child run over outside the school gates on the main road. Although the liability for such an incident legally does not rest with the school, the ‘responsibility’ for an accident could be levelled at the school for making the decision to increase parking outside the main gates.

One potential solution would be to seek permissions to open the field up between Holy Family and Sparken Hill. A portion of this land was already used for ‘temporary parking’ for Holy Family parents. Some Sparken Hill parents also park here but it does not have the capacity to accommodate the number of vehicles on a daily basis. Although outline permission was granted, it was leased to Outwood Portland, and they cannot relinquish at this time due to planning restrictions relating to the extension.