

MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Academy: Sparken Hill Academy
Meeting title: Spring (2) term meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Tuesday 26th March 2024 at 9.30am
Location: At the academy

Membership

'A' denotes absence

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

In attendance

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

FGB/20/24 Apologies for absence Action

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Mrs M Norton Allen (work commitments);
- Mrs M Pimm (personal);
- Cllr N Turner (work commitments);
- Mrs S Wichmann (work commitments)

It was

resolved

that governors accepted and consented to these absences.

FGB/21/24 Declaration of interest

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

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

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

FGB/23/24 Approval of minutes of spring (1) term meetings and any additional special meetings

The minutes of the spring (1) term meeting held on 25th January 2024 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was **AGREED** that the minutes of 25 January 2024 were to be signed electronically by the chair.

**Vice-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/06/24 Overseeing Financial Performance – financial reporting

a) Premises update

The SBM provided a verbal update regarding advice and guidance from VIA (Notts) related to school crossing training (see item **FGB/31/24**).

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

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

- Pay Committee (25 January 2024);
- Finance & Personnel Committee (22 February 2024);
- Audit Committee (22 February 2024).

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

a Pay Committee

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **RATIFIED** the pay progression recommendations approved by the pay committee.

b Finance & Personnel Committee

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

- services for schools (NCC buy back);
- new lease proposal for the printing machine;
- the purchase of ARBOR as the new MIS;
- write offs and disposals;
- the actions from the Harpur Trust vs Brazel ruling;
- staffing decisions.

Governors also **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the school resource management self-assessment checklist (SRMT).

c Policies

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

- GDPR related policies;
- gifts & hospitality policy;
- lettings policy;
- staff ICT user agreement/policy;
- volunteer policy.

FGB/25/24

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:

- pupil numbers:
 - total on roll = 561 (including foundation stage);
 - FAD numbers indicated 68 first preferences;
- class organisation:
 - the intention was to operate:
 - 2 x FS2 classes and a small nurture provision;
 - 4 x KS1 classes;
- pupil mobility was approximately 25% over the year;
- ethnicity of pupils and EAL numbers;
- pupil premium eligibility stood at 42% across the school.

Q. Governors asked about any financial benefit afforded by the reduced number of classes?

A. The principal confirmed that the savings were the equivalent of one teaching assistant.

Q. Governors enquired about the nurture provision?

A. The principal advised that this was to be trialled for children with complex needs as a nurture environment for certain times of the day/activities – **see confidential item.**

Q. Governors queried whether the nurture provision in the KS1 area was only for Y1/Y2?

A. The principal clarified that it was likely that the nurture provision would be used as a group room and timetabled.

Q. Governors questioned liaison with parents about the nurture provision?

A. The vice principal assured governors that parents were approach individually with reasons as to why the child had been chosen or the matter was raised during regular meetings

Q. Governors asked about the number of 30-hour places?

A. The vice-principal shared that there would be 17 x 30-hour places after Easter.

Q. Governors enquired about communication with parents re., FSM eligibility?

A. The principal explained that it was now the intention to get all parents to apply for FSM immediately upon entry to the school and if refused, there was no need for parents to reapply if circumstances changed in the future.

In addition, the principal notified governors that:

- the academy was no longer participating in the KS1 SATs;
- attainment on entry to FS was still below that expected by other schools nationally;
- KS1 data was beginning to show 'green shoots' of improvement;
- progress across KS2 was broadly 'good' and by the time pupils left, cohorts were broadly in line with national.

The principal cautioned governors that Y6 may not reach 59% combined as last year but this had been predicted for a number of years.

Q. Governors queried the areas of focus for Y6?

A. The principal reported that writing was the 'Achilles heel' for the year group and stood at 48% currently however, the position was cohort specific, and he was confident that following year groups would perform better.

The principal reassured governors that the staff continued to work hard to strive for the best possible outcomes for the current Y6 pupils.

Q. Governors asked about steps to be taken to mitigate against the predicted outcomes?

A. The principal summarised the steps being undertaken which included the provision of precise, targeted, intervention classes with a qualified teacher who will then transfer to Y5 booster classes after SATs.

Q. Governors questioned SEND numbers?

A. The principal informed governors that there is predicted to be in excess of 20 EHCP's by the end of the Academic Year.

Governors **ENCOURAGED** the principal to be mindful of the range of EHCPs being admitted – the principal clarified that these were EHCPs which had been applied for through the academy. However, it was noted that the academy was inclusive and would consider all EHCPs on an individual basis - these would only be agreed if need could be met by the academy.

The principal continued his presentation which included:

- the work of the community team – the link with the Westwood Care Home;
- the delivery of therapeutic play therapy (following the return from maternity of the therapist) from May 2024;
- behaviour:
 - there had been no suspensions/exclusions since the last meeting;
 - **see confidential item;**
 - there had been no recorded racial incidents this term;
- attendance:
 - whole school attendance stood at 93.5% (national = 94.3%);
 - persistent absentees stood at 21.7% (national = 17%);
 - attendance was returning to pre-COVID levels;
- staffing – **see confidential item;**
- school activities and events, fundraising achievements and visits.

Q. Governors enquired about the year groups involved in the care home visits?

A. The vice principal advised that a variety of age groups were chosen to attend throughout KS2 – enough to fit on the mini-bus – the children stayed for about an hour, talking to the residents.

Governors **RECOGNISED** that attendance was moving in the right direction.

Governors **THANKED** the principal for his report and responses to the questioned therein.

FGB/26/24 Overseeing Financial Performance – financial reporting

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the following items discussed at length at the F&GP committee meeting:

- monitor expenditure against budget plan and agree adjustments as necessary;
- three-year forecast;
- investment account period five;
- management accounts period five.

The chair of governors **CONFIRMED** that he had received the management accounts (period six) and they had also been uploaded to Governor Hub.

FGB/27/24 Investment account – see confidential item

FGB/28/24 Write Offs/Disposals

The SBM presented the list of items for disposal/write off:

- 1 x 'stage line' CD player;
- 1 x HP pro desktop;
- 4 x 'Asus' curriculum laptops;
- 2 x interactive clever touch screens;
- 2 x mid-year leaver's dinner arrears (total £4.45).

Q. Governors queried whether the items had been checked?

A. The SBM assured governors that the IT engineer had checked them and established the items were no longer fit for purpose.

The principal added that the interactive screens were part of a replacement programme and were to be donated to nearby schools.

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the items listed for write off/disposal.

FGB/29/24 Update on appraisal process for principal and staff including an update on the wellbeing of all staff.

The principal reported that:

- appraisal was on track for all staff and new targets set for 2023-24;
- staff wellbeing and workload remained a priority;

The chair **CONFIRMED** that Mr P Abbott had been appointed as the external advisor.

Following discussion, it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED** the appointment of:

- Mr Gawthorpe and Mrs Norton Allen as the principal's appraisal governors; and
- Mrs Middleton as the QA governor.

FGB/30/24 Confirm arrangements to review Child Protection and Safeguarding recording and reporting systems (CP safeguarding file audit)

Governors **DETERMINED** that this item had been covered in detail under **FGB/08/24**.

FGB/31/24 Health & Safety

The SBM provided an update about a no-notice risk assessment regarding the proposed crossing patrol – the recommendation was that the academy did not use crossing patrol personnel.

Governors **ACKNOWLEDGED** that it remained the academy's job to introduce systematic controls to mitigate the risk to children.

Q. Governors questioned the reasoning behind the VIA recommendation?

A. The principal understood the reasons to be related to the reputational liabilities involved to VIA because the academy, (not VIA) would be the employer of the crossing patrol personnel.

Q. Governors asked about next steps given the VIA recommendation?

A. The principal shared with governors the current situation regarding the temporary appointments made for the crossing patrol positions (morning and afternoon cover) and proposed that the recommendation be accepted.

Governors **DISCUSSED** liabilities both reputational and financial and academy safety and safeguarding responsibilities.

The principal proposed that the appointees became parking wardens instead – he outlined the responsibilities of the parking wardens.

Q. Governors enquired whether the parking warden positions had been budgeted for?

A. The SBM verified that both positions had been budgeted for.

Governors **APPROVED** the implementation of parking wardens (temporarily for one year), subject to agreement by the appointees.

FGB/32/24 Premises**a Hall Floor and Music Room**

The SBM presented the four quotes for the refurbishment of the hall floor and music room – the principal explained the:

- circumstances surrounding the need for the floor to be restored to its original condition;
- caveat on all quotes was the requirement for the companies:
 - to be able to replace all the floor markings;
 - to complete the work during school holidays.

Q. Governors queried what the quotes were based on?

A. The SBM advised governors that all the companies had recognised the flooring and were familiar with the requirements. In addition, all 4 quotes were based on what the school already had in terms of markings (badminton and basketball) – anything more may incur additional costs.

Q. Governors questioned whether recommendations had been secured?

A. The principal confirmed that the Sheffield company had been recommended, the academy was to gather recommendations/references from the others.

Q. Governors asked about next steps if the preferred company had no capacity to work during the school holidays?

A. The principal suggested that if the preferred company was unable to commit to the required variables, then the academy pursued the next nearest quote – with governor approval.

Q. Governors enquired about the lifespan of the floor?

A. The SBM informed governors that the advice was to maintain the floor every two to three years.

Following discussion, it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED**:

- the quote submitted by Sheffield Floor Sanding (£8,260) subject to availability;
- spend of up to £10k to secure one of the other quotes if the preferred company was unavailable.

b William Saunders Partnership

The principal reminded governors of the background and context to the investigations regarding the smell – the situation was getting no better.

The principal related the company's suggestions as to possible reasons for the smell and resolutions – he outlined the systematic process to be undertaken to find the source and fix the issue.

Q. Governors queried whether the investigation and remediation process had been budgeted for?

A. The SBM clarified that the cost was not yet included in the budget.

Q. Governors questioned cost?

A. The SBM reported that the worst-case scenario was £40k but it was hoped that the process to be undertaken would discover the source of the problem before the costs advanced towards this amount.

Governors **APPROVED** the commencement of works to eliminate the smell.

FGB/33/24 Policies

The principal alerted governors to the reasoning behind the development of a new Fostering and Connected Parties' policy.

Q. Governors asked if advice and guidance had been taken about the new policy?

A. The principal assured governors that he had spoken to the local authority, the LADO, the MASH team education adviser and taken legal advice.

Q. Governors enquired what the policy covered?

A. The principal explained that the policy covered the rights of the foster carer and the academy approach that enabled staff to foster a child both externally and internally.

Governors **COMMENDED** the academy for putting the policy together.

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

- health and safety policy;
- fostering and connected parties' policy.

FGB/34/24 Communication received and updates

a *From the principal – see confidential item*

b *From clerk – Governor Newsletter*

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

- an introduction from the Governor Services Team Manager – Sinead Allan;
- school admissions information 2025-26;
- HR updates;
- safeguarding in education news and updates;
- an article about:
 - improving school attendance;
 - the updated EYFS framework;
 - an open consultation on DfE non-statutory guidance on gender questioning children for schools and colleges;
- national updates/articles with news (and links) from Ofsted and the DfE including:
 - attendance;
 - schools causing concern;
 - RAAC update;
 - a press release re boosting teacher recruitment and retention;
- news from the NGA;
- a series of helpful articles about:
 - GDPR and the governors' role;
 - governor recruitment;
 - support for new chairs/vice-chairs;
- governor termly briefings;
- a message from the chair of NAGS, Susan Beasley;
- governor recruitment – support for boards from Inspiring Governance and Governors for Schools;
- an advert for the governor learning and development package.

FGB/35/24 Report from training co-ordinator including review of governor skills audit and requirements for 2024-2025

Governors **AGREED** that feedback from the skills audit be deferred to the next FGB meeting.

RL/Clerk

All governors **CONFIRMED** they had completed the safeguarding training

FGB/36/24 Review of governor monitoring visit reports – key actions for governing body

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

- governor induction visit – Mrs M Pimm;
- health & safety – Mrs D Carter;
- safeguarding confidential file audit – Mrs C Middleton.

All to note

The 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/37/24 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, vacancies and recruitment;
 - governor training and monitoring visits;
- discussion and questions relating to financial matters, specifically:
 - investment, regulations and policy changes;
 - contracts, competitiveness and value for money;
- scrutiny and challenge related to attainment and progress data specifically the current picture and steps to be taken to support Y6 and SEND pupils;
- increased awareness and understanding through questions and discussion in relation to staffing matters such as:
 - pay, appraisal and wellbeing;
 - benefits of proposed staffing arrangements;
- consideration and review of policies and the Spring (2) term governor newsletter;
- questions, challenge and discussion related to estates management and health and safety including: - pupil safety and progress regarding traffic control (on and offsite); mitigation and responsibilities;
- consideration and discussion in relation to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding;
- questions and challenge around pupil numbers and class organisation particularly fiscal impact, availability of nurture provision and positive parental engagement.

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

FGB/38/24 Confirmation of dates for 2023/24

The governing body

agreed

Summer Term 2024

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

All to note

FGB/39/24 Determination of confidentiality of business

It was

resolved

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

- spring (1) term FGB minutes;
- committee minutes;

- principal's report and associated documents;
- staffing matters 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 11.25am



Signed:

(vice-chair)

Date: 2nd May 2024