

MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Academy: Sparken Hill Academy
Meeting title: Autumn (1) term meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Thursday 18th September 2025 at 4.00pm
Location: At the academy

Membership

'A' denotes absence

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

In attendance

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

FGB/77/25 **Apologies for absence** **Action**

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Mrs C Middleton (personal).

It was

resolved

that governors accepted and consented to this absence.

Governors **WELCOMED** Mr M Bland to his first FGB meeting.

FGB/78/25 **Declaration of interest**

All governors present **REVIEWED, UPDATED** and **SIGNED** the following documentation:

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

Furthermore, governors **COMMITTED** to recording completion under their profile on Governor Hub – the school business manager (SBM) agreed to contact any absent governors if necessary.

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

**All
governors
VD**

FGB/79/25 **Review of membership and terms of office ending in the next 12 months**

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

The clerk drew attention to the following ends of terms of office:

- Mrs S Wichmann (parent governor) – 20 March 2026.

Governors **DISCUSSED** the community vacancy and Mrs Wichmann **INDICATED** her willingness to transfer to this position.

Mrs S Wichmann left the meeting at 4.10pm

Governors **DISCUSSED** and **CONSIDERED** the skills, experience and expertise of Mrs Wichmann and the benefits her continued membership brought to the FGB, and it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED** the appointment of Mrs S Wichmann as a community governor with immediate effect – all relevant documentation having been signed and checks made.

Clerk

Mrs S Wichmann re-joined the meeting at 4.11pm

The principal alerted governors to the resignation of Mrs K Heaton (effective 16 September 2025) from her position as staff governor.

Governors **EXTENDED** thanks and appreciation to Mrs Heaton for her contributions to the FGB and wished her well for the future.

The principal notified governors that the staff governor nomination/election process was underway.

All to note
/Clerk

The clerk highlighted the following vacancies on the governing body:

- 1 x staff governor; and
- 2 x parent governors.

The principal informed governors that the parent governor nomination process had elicited 5 expressions of interest and an election was underway to determine the parent governor places.

All to note
/Clerk

The clerk reminded governors that all new governors needed to provide the required documentation to the school within 21 days of appointment or election so that the school might conduct a DBS check.

All to note

FGB/80/25 Determination of term of office of chair and vice-chair

In line with the articles of association, governors **DETERMINED** the term of office for both positions as one year.

FGB/81/25 Election of chair

Mr Gawthorpe indicated that he would be prepared to stand for the position of chair.

Mr Gawthorpe left the meeting at 4.14pm

In the circumstances, there being no further nominations, it was:

resolved

that Mr Gawthorpe be elected chair for a period of office expiring at the date of the 2026 autumn term meeting.

Clerk

Mr Gawthorpe re-joined the meeting at 4.15pm

FGB/82/24 Election of vice-chair

The chair **CONFIRMED** that Mrs Middleton had indicated that she would be prepared to stand for the position of vice-chair.

In the circumstances, there being no further nominations, it was **resolved**

that Mrs Middleton be elected vice-chair for a period of office expiring at the date of the 2026 autumn term meeting.

Clerk

FGB/83/25 Election of pay committee

Governors **DETERMINED** membership of the pay committee to be:

- Mrs M Pimm (chair);
- Mrs D Carter;
- Mr M Bland.

FGB/84/25 Approval of minutes of summer (2) term meeting and any additional special meetings

The minutes of the summer (2) term meeting held on 17th July 2025 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was **AGREED** that the minutes of 17 July 2025 were to be signed electronically by the chair.

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

Chair/
Clerk**FGB/85/25 Receipt of minutes and approval of policies from committees and working parties**

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

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the child protection policy.

FGB/86/25 Review risk management arrangements

The SBM apprised governors that the academy continued to buy back the RPA at £27 per pupil.

Q. Governors asked about consideration of alternative providers?

A. The SBM confirmed that the academy had been approached by Zurich however, the academy still had a 'live' claim in process which needed to be closed before exiting RPA.

The SBM reassured governors that consideration of alternative providers would be undertaken for next year.

Q. Governors enquired whether the relationship with RPA worked well?

A. The SBM verified that, in general, the relationship worked well.

The SBM alerted governors to a couple of amendments in the risk management policy, consequently the updated version was presented for approval.

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

FGB/87/25 Overseeing financial performance – financial reporting**a *Teachers Pay Award***

The SBM drew governors' attention to the latest teachers' pay award which consisted of a flat rate 4% increase to all pay points and allowances, effective from 1 September 2025 – detail was available in the Corporate Directors report (see item **FGB/93/25 b**).

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **ADOPTED** the newly published teacher pay scales (effective 1st September 2025).

b *Support Staff Pay Award*

In addition, the SBM advised governors of the support staff pay award which comprised a flat rate 3.2% increase to spinal column points and allowances, effective from and backdated to 1 April 2025.

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **ADOPTED** the newly published NJC pay tables (effective 1st April 2025).

c *Management Accounts*

The chair **CONFIRMED** that he had received the management accounts for periods 9, 10, 11 and 12 and they had also been uploaded to Governor Hub.

d *Cash Flow (P9, P10, P11, P12)*

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the cash flow spreadsheet (P9, P10, P11 and P12) in line with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook – **see confidential item**.

FGB/88/25 Estates Management**a *Private Day Care Setting* – see confidential item****b *LXD09* – see confidential item****c *Lighting Project***

The principal reported that **Phase 1** of the project to install an LED lighting system (see **FGB/64/25 a**) had been completed successfully over the summer holidays.

The principal added that **Phase 2** (the rest of the school) was scheduled for completion over the October half-term holidays – the updated quotation for the remaining works = £84,529.27 (a variance of £13,748.25 from the original).

Q. Governors queried the reason for the variance?

A. The principal explained this was due to two lots of hire charges, two x waste charges, and a slight variance to ground floor lighting i.e., all flat panels no suspended egg box fittings.

Q. Governors questioned cost savings?

A. The SBM shared that the anticipated electrical cost savings were expected to be significant.

Governors **APPROVED** the variance in cost.

d *Security*

The principal notified governors that the work to replace part of the fence line which was too low (see **FGB/64/25 c**) to comply with Martyn's Law had also been completed over the summer however, it was now apparent that other areas required consideration:

- **Area 1** - pond fence line £4,032.50 – to be undertaken October half term;
- **Area 2** - service yard £5,710.80 (plus electrics TBC);
- **Area 3** - main entrance £11,796.00 (plus electrics TBC);
- **Area 4** - farm fence line £36,310.80.

Governors **ACKNOWLEDGED** that Area 1 was within the principal's delegated authority and was a priority.

Governors **REQUESTED** that the full costings for Areas 2, 3 and 4 be presented to the next F&P committee meeting (9 October 2025).

VD/Clerk

e *Silent message platform*

The principal reminded governors of the lockdown policy and mentioned the advice that a silent alert system (Vivi) was also beneficial – he was raising the matter for consideration prior to the F&P committee meeting (9 October 2025).

VD/Clerk

Q. Governors asked about the Vivi system?

A. The principal clarified that the system (a box fitted behind the screens) combined wireless screen sharing, digital signage and emergency alerts into one platform – he outlined the benefits for the academy.

Q. Governors enquired about costings?

A. The principal advised that a 3-year subscription for the boxes and software totalled £9,615 plus VAT with annual invoicing.

Q. Governors queried whether technology changes/updates were included in the price?

A. The principal confirmed that this was the case.

Q. Governors questioned whether other people were able to operate the system in the absence of the principal?

A. The principal verified that this was possible, and alternative arrangements were included in the lockdown policy.

Q. Governors asked about its introduction to staff and children?

A. The principal reassured governors that once installed the system would be trialled with the staff first (no children).

Q. Governors enquired about staff training?

A. The SBM informed governors that all staff had now completed ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) training which was bespoke training aimed at all staff working in education settings (EYFS through to further and higher education settings).

Q. Governors queried communication with external users of the building?

A. The principal assured governors this was underway – all were being asked to review the proposals.

Governors **DISCUSSED** the challenges, complexities, anxieties and necessities of lockdown practices.

FGB/89/25

Health & Safety

The principal updated governors re. two incidents which occurred over at the end of the summer term and over the summer holidays – **see confidential item.**

FGB/90/25 To review

a Examination results

The principal reminded governors that the summer term outcomes (see **FGB/65/25**) had seen record breaking results for the academy particularly in phonics and early years GLD (good level of development).

In addition, the principal mentioned how there had been a recovery at KS2 SATs with a return to broadly in line with national following a disappointing 2024.

b Draft SIP (school improvement plan) 2025/26

The principal drew governors' attention to the draft SIP 2025/26 which had been uploaded to Governor Hub and included the following priority areas:

- leadership and management;
- curriculum and teaching
- achievement
- attendance and behaviour
- personal development and wellbeing
- inclusion
- safeguarding
- EYFS.

The principal also advised that the SIP would continue to evolve as the academy was part of the PINS (partnership for the inclusion of neurodiversity in schools) project.

Q. Governors questioned the increase in the level of SEND?

A. The principal communicated that there had been a 900% increase in EHCPs in school over the last two years – there were plans to access a lot of CPD and undertake system level changes within school.

c Pupil Targets

The principal shared that the targets were to achieve national by the end of the year although setting of EYFS targets remained challenging until baseline measures had been taken – the targets could also be found in the centre of the SIP due to the changes in the Ofsted framework.

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the provisional school targets as presented.

RL/Clerk

d Policies

Governors **RECEIVED**, **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the following policies and documents as presented:

- child on child policy;
- complaints policy;
- managing allegations (inc low level concerns) policy – update;
- prevent duty policy;
- risk management policy (updated);
- safeguarding/child protection policy;
- whistle blowing policy.

FGB/91/25 **Net capacity (NC)**

The principal recapped the discrepancies regarding the NC for the academy (575) and the challenges this had created related to NCC place planning.

The principal explained that in order to change the NC figure with NCC, the academy was required to consult as the original funding agreement had 630 (which had never been the case) and to appear to reduce to 575 equated to a reduction in PAN which required formal consultation.

Q. Governors asked what the process was to action this?

A. The SBM clarified that permission to consult needed to be given by the FGB and then the process involved an application to the DfE after consultation.

Following discussion, it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED** the proposal to undertake a consultation process to bring the Net Capacity figure in line with the actual capacity.

VD/Clerk

FGB/92/25 Update on appraisal process and well-being for principal and staff

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

Following discussion, it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED** the appointment of:

- Mr P Gawthorpe and Mrs S Sparks as the principal's appraisal governors;
- Mrs C Middleton as the QA governor.

In addition, the principal assured governors that a date for his appraisal meeting was to be finalised but would take place before November 2025.

RL/Clerk

FGB/93/25 Information from the Corporate Director for consideration and action

a Reduced timetable

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

- all children of statutory school age, regardless of their circumstances, were entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have;
- reduced timetables should only be used in exceptional circumstances, such as reintegration after absence, medical recovery, or to support SEND needs—not as a behaviour management tool.;
- reduced timetables must be agreed with parents/carers and include a clear reintegration plan with review dates;
- schools must ensure safeguarding and legal responsibilities were met, avoiding any form of illegal exclusion;
- accurate records, including a signed parental agreement, must be kept;
- vulnerable pupils (e.g. those with EHCPs, LAC, CIN, or CP plans) required close monitoring;
- attendance must be recorded correctly;
- schools must notify the Local Authority via the Schools Portal when implementing a reduced timetable;
- governors should ensure registers were accurate and that reduced timetables were used appropriately and safely;
- questions for governors to ask.

Governors **DISCUSSED** the pros and cons of reduced timetables and the frustrations in the Bassetlaw area of a failure to commission sufficient special or specialist places for children unable to access mainstream.

The principal reassured governors there were no children on reduced timetables although there were two non-statutory aged children on a flexi-schooling arrangement.

b *Safer Working (recruitment and selection), Teachers Pay and HR updates - September 2025*

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

- changes to the recruitment and selection safer working documents 2025;
- teachers pay award (Sept 2025) and related policy updates;
- School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD);
- School Teacher's Review Body 2026 (STRB);
- the STRB remit 2026-2028 and the consultation underway through the national employers on the next teachers' pay round – the evidence being sought around matters for recommendation;
- employment tribunal statistics;
- an update re. School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB);
- available HR training through Em-Ed;
- actions for governors.

FGB/94/25 Safeguarding information for consideration and action

The principal informed governors that:

- the NCC NSCP SiE safeguarding audit was moving to an online format and was to be submitted to the autumn (2) FGB meeting;
- all staff had read KCSiE 2025 and signed to confirm the fact;
- governors needed to read KCSiE 2025 and tick the appropriate box under their profile on Governor Hub;
- all governors needed to complete updated annual safeguarding training module on Governor Hub called 'The Key – Safeguarding for Governance.'

**Principal
/Clerk**

**All
governors**

**All
governors**

[Safeguarding for governance | GovernorHub](#)

FGB/95/25 Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school aligns with the agreed vision of the Trust

Governors **AGREED** this had been discussed and considered under item **FGB/90/25 b).**

FGB/96/25 General Data Protection Regulations - Receive report from Data Protection Officer and Information Governance Governor

The SBM reported that there had been no data breaches, Fol requests or SARs so far this term.

FGB/97/25 Communication received and updates

a *From the principal*

The principal proposed the setting up of a WhatsApp group for governors for emergency or urgent communication only – he explained the challenges of the reliance on email and the advantages of a more immediate communication tool.

Following discussion, it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED** the setting up of a WhatsApp group for governors.

b *From the clerk – governor newsletter*

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

- launch of the 2025 model complaints policy;
- safeguarding updates including:
 - a welcome to the new SCIEO, Zain Iqbal;
 - minimal updates to KCSiE 2025;
 - a new model NSCP child protection policy had been circulated; and
 - the safeguarding audit was to be made available later in the term with the intention to move this to an online system;
 - information about free Prevent Duty training for governors/trustees and best practices for managing images and videos on school websites;
- HR updates – as per the directors' report;
- finance updates which comprised of:
 - budget reforecasts - the formal reforecast should be submitted to school finance by 30th November 2025;
 - School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) to be completed by governors by 31st March 2026;
- changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework 2025 (effective 1st September 2025)
- the new DfE Writing Framework (2025) – key messages and questions to support governor monitoring;
- improving school attendance – View Your Education Data (VYED) – action for governors;
- 2025 DfE changes to the Maintained Schools and Academies Governance guides;
- effective governance – a new and free governing board self-evaluation tool on the Governor Services Governor Hub page;
- an article about using AI in Education - responsibilities of the governing board and DfE resources;
- national updates such as:
 - extension of free school meals (FSM) eligibility;
 - new procurement advice for governing boards;
 - new DfE fraud reduction guidance published;
 - extended DfE support for neurodivergent children in mainstream schools;
 - Ofsted restructure for Inspection Teams - from November 2025;
- training for governors and trustees – a reminder of the required governor training with free webinar training as part of the GovernorHub package;
- messages from the Nottinghamshire Association of Governors (NAGs);
- 2026 Governor Conference;
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

FGB/98/25	Report from training co-ordinator including a skills audit and review of governor training requirements (including safeguarding) for 2025/2026 Governors CONSIDERED the need for a training coordinator given the resignation of the current incumbent and it was AGREED that Mrs S Wichmann be appointed training coordinator (supported by the SBM) Governors AGREED to update the 'effectiveness' tool on Governor Hub to assist with a review of governor training requirements. The SBM alerted governors to the following available training: - managing appraisal and performance management – 30 Sept (3-5pm); - introduction to pay, appraisal and capability for governors – 16 Oct (4.00pm-6.30pm); - governor role in HR process – preparing governors to sit on a HR hearing or appeal panel – 13 Nov (4-5.30pm); - dealing with complaints – 19 Nov (6-7.30pm). The SBM requested that anyone interested in the above training needed to contact her as soon as possible.	Action Clerk All governors All to note
FGB/99/25	Review of governor monitoring visit reports – key actions for governors Governors DETERMINED that visits were to start this term.	All to note
FGB/100/25	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 compliance; - roles, responsibilities and governor training; - scrutiny and challenge relating to staffing matters such as: - teacher and support staff pay awards; - staff and principal appraisal processes; - consideration and discussion related to safeguarding, risk management and GDPR; - questions and challenge regarding: - health & safety; - SIP, pupil targets and summer term outcomes; - Net Capacity and consultation; - increased awareness and understanding of finance and estates management through questions and discussion related to: - cost saving and variances to contractual costs; - enhancement of lockdown processes and procedures; - boundary security arrangements in line with Martyn's Law; - developments related to the private day care setting; - consideration and review of policies, Corporate Directors 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/101/25 Confirmation of dates for 2025-26

The governing body

agreed

Autumn Term 2025

- Thursday 9th October 2025 (9.30am) – F&P and Audit Committees;
- Thursday 20th November 2025 (9.30am) – F&P Committee (Streets);
- Thursday 4th December 2025 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting;
- Thursday 4th December 2025 (after the FGB) – AGM/Members meeting;

All to note

Spring Term 2026

- Thursday 22nd January 2026 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting;
- Thursday 26th February 2026 (4.00pm) – F&P and Audit Committees;
- Tuesday 26th March 2026 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting;

Summer Term 2026

- Thursday 7th May 2026 (4.00pm) – FGB Meeting;
- Thursday 4th June 2026 (4.00pm) – F&P and Audit Committees;
- Thursday 16th July 2026 (9.30am) – FGB Meeting.

FGB/102/25 Determination of confidentiality of business

It was

resolved

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

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

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

The meeting closed at 5.48pm



Signed:

(chair)

Date: **4th December 2025**