

MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Academy: Sparken Hill Academy
Meeting title: Autumn (2) term meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Thursday 4th December 2025 at 9.30am
Location: At the academy

Membership

'A' denotes absence

Mr M Bland
Mrs L Bunn
Mrs D Carter
Mr R Collins
Mr G Eden
Mr P Gawthorpe (chair)
Mr R Lilley (principal)
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)
Cllr J Shephard (Member – observer)
Mrs F Walker (Member – observer)

FGB/103/25 Apologies for absence

Action

There were no apologies for absence and the chair **WELCOMED** the following new governors to the meeting:

- Mrs L Bunn (parent governor);
- Mr G Eden (parent governor); and
- Mr R Collins (staff governor).

The chair **INVITED** everyone to introduce themselves.

FGB/104/25 Declaration of interest

Governors **CONFIRMED** all compliance documentation had been completed both in hard copy and on Governor Hub.

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

FGB/105/25 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:

- Mr P Gawthorpe (partnership governor) – 31 October 2026;
- Mrs K Phoenix (staff governor) – 18 April 2026.

		Action
FGB/106/25	Approval of minutes of autumn (1) term meeting and any additional special meetings	
	The minutes of the autumn (1) term meeting held on 18th September 2025 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was AGREED that the minutes of 18 September 2025 were to be signed electronically by the chair.	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:	
	<i>FGB/83/25 Election of Pay Committee</i>	
	The school business manager (SBM) reminded governors of the conversation under item F&P/44/25 that following advice from the internal and external auditors, a pay committee was not required, and the usual processes and procedures could be retained.	
FGB/107/25	Receipt of minutes and approval of policies from committees and working parties	
	Minutes of the following committees were RECEIVED and NOTED: • Finance & Personnel Committee (9 October 2025); • Audit Committee (9 October 2025); • Finance & Personnel Committee (20 November 2025). Actions in the minutes had been completed or continued to be in hand within the timescales indicated.	
	<i>a Finance and Personnel Committee</i>	
	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, revised three-year forecast; • approval of the annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31 August 2025 (draft accounts) and Trustees Report 2025 which were to be presented to Members at the AGM (4th December 2025); • approval of security gates/electrical work.	All to note
	<i>b Audit Committee</i>	
	Governors RECEIVED, NOTED and RATIFIED the 2024/25 summer term internal audit report and 2024/25 internal audit annual summary report approved at committee.	
	<i>c Policies</i>	
	Governors RECEIVED, NOTED and RATIFIED the following policies approved at committees: • capability for support staff policy; • capability for teachers' policy; • finance policy; • investment policy; • menopause policy;	

- parental leave policy
- staff code of conduct policy;
- stress management & avoidance policy
- supervision policy;
- suspensions & permanent exclusion policy;
- time off to accompany pregnant women to antenatal appointments policy.

In addition, the school business manager (SBM) alerted governors that a number of policies listed were bi-annual and no longer required approval although the breakfast club policy may need tweaking before September to account for the government requirement to offer a free element (30 minutes) to the provision.

All to note

Q. Governors asked where the policies were found/stored?

A. The SBM clarified that once approved most policies were uploaded to the school website with the exception of the school's emergency procedures and the health & safety policy.

The principal notified governors that the school was using an AI tool to review and check policies and school website compliance – the SBM reassured governors that as the AI tool was paid for, it was compliant and would only be used to store school data (SHA).

Q. Governors enquired about where AI was pulling data from?

A. The SBM advised that the data it was pulling from was publicly available on the academy website and DfE accessible platforms.

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

- anti bullying policy;
- equality policy;
- EVC policy;
- freedom of information policy;
- history policy;
- medicines policy;
- music policy.

The school business manager also alerted governors that the reserves policy was to be submitted to the next FGB meeting (22 January 2026) due to the pending outcome of the LXD09 project.

All to note
/Clerk

FGB/108/25 Overseeing financial performance – financial reporting

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

- a) staffing update – **see confidential item**;
- b) budget review 2025/26 & revised 3-year forecast – **see confidential item**;
- c) LDX09 update – **see confidential item**;
- d) minibus proposal;
- e) management accounts and cash flow;
- f) Lloyd's bank complaint.

d Minibus proposal

The SBM notified governors that, further to the conversation under item **F&P/59/25**, the proposal was to replace one minibus for a minibus Lite, Peugeot Boxer, 17-seater, metallic paint, disabled access.

The SBM confirmed that two quotes had been circulated to governors for consideration: Rivervale; and GM Coachwork.

The principal outlined the pros and cons of both quotes and the reason for exploring a lease arrangement rather than buying outright.

Q. Governors queried the cost of buying the minibus outright?

A. The SBM conveyed that the cost through either company was c. £43,526 – the price was not inclusive of Apple car play or the statutory 10-week checks.

Governors **DISCUSSED** the option of hiring: hire costs, benefits and drawbacks and **RECOGNISED** that it was more cost effective for the school to lease or buy a minibus.

Q. Governors questioned the preferred quote?

A. The principal reassured governors that both Rivervale and GM Coachwork were both well-known, trusted providers to schools for the purpose of leasing minibuses and both quotes were similar however the preferred quote/company was GM Coachwork due to the better support and communication experienced.

Q. Governors asked whether there were any options to buy?

A. The SBM informed governors that there was no option during the period of the lease arrangement (5 years) however there was an option to buy at the end, this would be based on market value at the time.

Q. Governors enquired about insurance and maintenance?

A. The SBM advised that insurance remained the responsibility of the school however maintenance and breakdown cover were included in the lease arrangement.

Q. Governors queried possibilities to hire out a minibus to other schools?

A. The principal outlined the complications around this linked to insurance, permit 19 legislation and maintained/academy status.

Q. Governors questioned whether there was a trade-in option for the old minibus?

A. The SBM clarified that Rivervale had considered a trade-in option, GM Coachwork had not, this was due to the age of the bus for trade in – selling the old minibus would be the responsibility of the school.

Following further discussion and the uncertainty about LDX09, it was

resolved

that governors **DEFERRED** the decision to replace the minibus until the picture re. LDX09 was clearer and communication with the local authority had taken place regarding the private day care setting.

**All to note
VD/Clerk**

e Management accounts and cash flow

The chair **CONFIRMED** that he had received the management accounts for period 1 and they had also been uploaded to Governor Hub.

The SBM communicated that the October management accounts had been delayed due to year end works ongoing to ensure accuracy.

**All to note
VD/Clerk**

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the cash flow spreadsheet (P1, P2 and P3) in line with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook – **see confidential item**.

f *Lloyds bank complaint*

The SBM alerted governors to a complaint raised with Lloyds bank – she reported that the bank had investigated, and the outcome had been that Lloyds had acknowledged they agreed with the school's complaint and the matter was now resolved.

Governors **THANKED** the SBM for presentation of the latest financial information and answering questions posed.

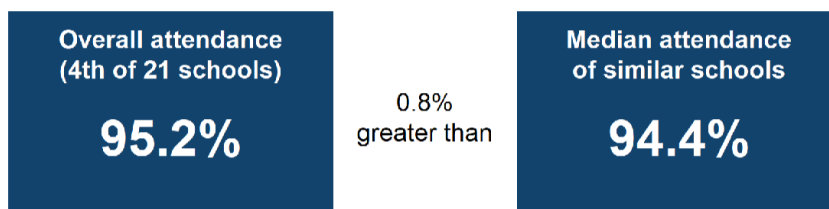
FGB/109/25 Holding executive leaders to account: summary of principal's report and governors' question and challenge

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

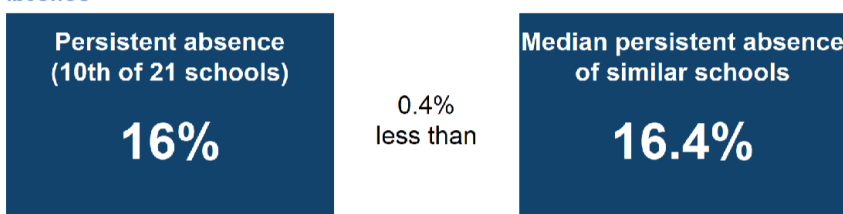
- pupil numbers remained buoyant:
 - above PAN in KS2 to mitigate lower numbers in KS1;
 - whole school numbers stood at 547 (net capacity = 575);
- there had been some pupil mobility mainly due to moving house/country;
- pupil premium numbers = 41.7% of total school population;
- overall attendance (YTD) = 95%;
- persistent absence (YTD) = 15.3%.

The principal also provided governors with the DfE VYED (view your educational data) attendance/persistent absence figures for Y1-Y6 which compared the school with 20 similar schools from across the country:

Overall attendance



Persistent Absence



Q. Governors asked about the information re. vulnerable groups?

A. The principal confirmed that the vulnerable group data was also collated and contained within the report.

Q. Governors enquired if Ofsted used the data?

A. The principal reported that the data was not currently shared with Ofsted, but it may be a possibility moving forward.

Q. Governors queried how the VYED worked?

A. The principal explained that the report generated areas where similar schools had achieved a higher attendance rate and provided a projection of higher attendance if these areas improved.

Q. Governors questioned how the school responded to the target areas?

A. The principal shared that the attendance officers used the information to help focus and shape future work.

The principal provided governors with other key points from the report including:

- behaviour – this continued to be incredibly good:
 - there had been no suspensions/exclusions;
 - there had been no prejudice incidents; and
 - school had participated in anti-bullying week;
- developments in SEND provision such as:
 - implementation of TES provision maps;
 - introduction of a targeted intervention programme (Lexia);
 - reintroduction of Clicker with Widget software in classrooms;
 - continuation of termly vulnerable pupil meetings;
 - **see confidential item**; and
 - participation in the PINS project
- a significant focus on health & safety systems – the LED lighting had now been installed and was working well.

Q. Governors asked about progress with the PINS project?

A. The principal advised that this was a DfE project – he outlined some of the challenges faced and that contact with the project lead had been initiated to find a solution.

The principal also presented a 2024-25 annual review of school life which was well-received by governors and particularly highlighted:

- the excellent summer term outcomes;
- curriculum innovation and development including achievement of the Silver Arts Mark award;
- SEND innovation and development;
- professional development opportunities;
- community engagement and enrichment such as:
 - the intergenerational links with Westwood Care Home residents;
 - getting to the national finals of the 'Great Big Dance Off'; and
 - a visit from Sir Ian McKellen.

Governors **THANKED** the principal for the interesting and informative report

FGB/110/25 Update on appraisal process and well-being for principal and staff

The chair **CONFIRMED** that:

- the principal's appraisal meeting had now been held and targets/objectives set for 2025/26;
- quality assurance had been undertaken;
- the mid-year review date was to be arranged.

PG/SS

The principal notified governors that staff appraisal meetings had been held, and 2025/26 targets set – appraisals were on track.

FGB/111/25 Information from the Corporate Director for consideration and action

Governors **AGREED** that these reports had been discussed and considered at the autumn (1) term meeting.

FGB/112/25 Safeguarding information for consideration and action

The principal informed governors that:

- the NCC NSCP SiE safeguarding audit had been received and work was underway to ensure completion by the deadline date;
- a safeguarding governor visit was to be arranged.

CM

FGB/113/25 General Data Protection Regulations - Receive report from Data Protection Officer and Information Governance Governor

The SBM reported that since the last meeting there had been:

- 1 x data breach; and
- no FoI requests or SARs.

The SBM added that the data breach was low level – it had been assessed, an action plan put in place and reported to the DPO.

Q. Governors enquired about the feedback from the DPO?

A. The SBM reassured governors that the DPO had considered the breach had not reached the threshold for reporting to the ICO and no further action was required.

FGB/114/25 Communication received and updates*From clerk – Governor Newsletter*

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

- admissions update and OAA responsibilities;
- safeguarding updates including:
 - the new safeguarding audit;
 - schools safeguarding inbox – ‘Operation Encompass’ and general best practice;
 - schools and GP information sharing
- DfE statutory guidance re. CME (children missing education);
- finance updates which comprised of:
 - the LA Scheme for Financing, links to school finance documentation, and reforecasting;
- governance articles related to:
 - key changes to the new Ofsted inspection framework 2025;
 - Ofsted inspections and school governance;
 - moderation, monitoring and assessment;
- Em-Ed service – governor training update;
- a quick guide to complaints and the Governor Services’ complaints toolkit;
- DfE effective governance resources;
- cyber security update;
- national updates including:
 - data protection: privacy notice model documents;
 - national behaviour report;
 - Martyn’s law for education settings;

- an article re. the school of signs - a brand-new, free BSL programme
- messages from the Nottinghamshire Association of Governors (NAGs);
- 2026 Governor Conference.

FGB/115/25 Report from training co-ordinator including a skills audit and review of governor training requirements (including safeguarding) for 2025/2026

The training coordinator **THANKED** those governors who had completed all the mandatory training however, she **REMINDED** governors that there were still a few gaps in governors' training records: safer recruitment, PREVENT.

All governors

The training coordinator **ENCOURAGED** all governors to update their training record under their profile on Governor Hub as soon as possible and update the 'effectiveness' tool on Governor Hub to assist with a review of governor training requirements.

All governors

Governors **AGREED** the following training had been undertaken or was scheduled:

- governor induction training – Mrs L Bunn, Mr G Eden, Mr R Collins;
- finance training – all governors.

All to note

FGB/116/25 Review of governor monitoring visit reports – key actions for governors

Governors **DETERMINED** that visits were to start this term and reported to the next FGB meeting (22 January 2026).

All to note

FGB/117/25 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 and compliance;
 - governor training and governor monitoring;
- scrutiny and challenge relating to staffing matters such as:
 - teacher and support staff pay awards;
 - staff and principal appraisal processes;
 - leavers, starters and recruitment;
- consideration and discussion related to safeguarding, premises/health & safety and GDPR;
- questions and challenge regarding:
 - attendance – how VYED worked and its impact on tracking and monitoring;
 - behaviour and developments in SEND provision;
 - community engagement and enrichment;
- increased awareness and understanding of finance and estates management through questions and discussion related to:
 - cost saving, variances and consideration of contracts;
 - affordability and priorities;
 - capital project updates and developments;
 - developments related to the private day care setting;
- consideration and review of policies, and the autumn (2) term governor newsletter.

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

FGB/118/25 Confirmation of dates for 2025-26

The governing body

agreed

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.

All to note

FGB/119/25 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;
- 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 11.30am



Signed:

(chair)

Date: **22nd January 2026**