

MINUTES OF MEETING



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Academy: Sparken Hill Academy
Meeting title: Spring (1) term meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Thursday 22nd January 2026 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)

FGB/01/26	Apologies for absence	Action
	There were no apologies for absence.	
FGB/02/26	Declaration of interest	
	Mr G Eden declared an indirect interest in FGB/08/26 and agreed to leave the meeting for this item.	
	There were no other declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for items of business on the agenda.	
FGB/03/26	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.	
FGB/04/26	Approval of minutes of autumn (2) term meeting and any additional special meetings	
	The minutes of the autumn (2) term meeting held on 4 th December 2025 having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true and correct record, therefore it was AGREED that the minutes of 4 December 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:

FGB/108/25 Overseeing financial performance – financial reporting

The school business manager advised that the purchase of the minibus was still 'on hold' until the picture re. LDX09 was clearer – **see confidential item.**

FGB/05/26 Receipt of minutes and approval of policies from committees and working parties

Governors **AGREED** there had been no committee meetings since the last FGB meeting (4 December 2025) however, an admissions committee meeting was to be organised to rank FAD applications for September 2026.

PG/MP/
SW

Q. Governors requested an update re. applications?

A. The principal reported that there were currently 118 applications and 58 first preferences.

Policies

The school business manager (SBM) advised governors that until the matters related to the private day care setting and LDX09 were resolved, the reserves policy remained as 'pending.'

VD/Clerk

FGB/06/26 Determination of Admission Arrangements

Governors **RECEIVED, NOTED** and **APPROVED** the admissions policy 2027-28 and the admission arrangements for 2027-28 were determined in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.

FGB/07/26 Data Presentation

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

- an introduction around the ideal conditions for learning;
- the various stages of assessment:
 - reception baseline;
 - EYFS – good level of development (GLD);
 - Y1 phonics – age related expectation (ARE);
 - Y2 to Y5 = teacher assessments; and
 - Y6 SATs (nationally, all schools measured by this);
- greater detail around the meaning of progress measures (positive, negative and zero) and how APS (average point score) was calculated;
- factors affecting progress and attainment:
 - FSM (free school meals);
 - EAL (English as an additional language);
 - SEND;
- at Sparken Hill, the percentage of:
 - FSM = 45% (national = 25.7%);
 - EAL = 19.2% (national = 20.8%);
 - SEND school support = 14.3% (national = 14.1%);
 - EHCP = 1.6% (national = 3%);
- an explanation of a coasting school in terms of data;
- clarification of the data dashboard including examples of the most recent dashboards for foundation stage, KS1 (phonics) and KS2;

- an introduction to the IDSR (inspection data summary report):
 - what the school did well;
 - priority development areas;
 - key strengths and priorities.

Q. Governors asked about the EHCP figure given the level of need in the school?

A. The principal detailed the background and context to the position of the local authority in terms of the awarding of EHCPs and the use of the funding.

The principal added that the measure applied by the LA re. the awarding of EHCPs was now being challenged with increased awareness nationally – this had contributed to an increase in EHCPs.

Q. Governors enquired about the red on the dashboards?

A. The principal advised that this indicated lower than national outcomes and by how much (percentage).

Q. Governors queried the 10% increase in GLD from 2023 to 2024?

A. The principal explained that the 30-hour provision had enabled a better start at early years (F2), although pupils were still behind upon entry.

Governors **NOTED** the improving trend for GLD and Y1 phonics over the last three years.

Q. Governors questioned if the Y1 phonics outcomes could be maintained?

A. The principal cautioned that outcomes tended to be cohort specific and given the percentage EAL it may take pupils a little longer to achieve the required level.

Q. Governors asked what happened to the KS2 writing outcomes 2025?

A. The principal clarified that LA moderation had taken place which was extremely formulaic and sometimes down to the perception of the moderator.

Q. Governors enquired about how Ofsted viewed the SAT results?

A. The principal conveyed that Ofsted tended to be particularly interested in the combined figure (RWM – reading, writing and mathematics) – the outcome in 2025 was broadly average compared to national.

Q. Governors queried GDS writing outcome 2025?

A. The principal agreed that this was the limiting factor that held the GDS combined figure down and the academy had formulated a response to ensure improvements moving forward.

Q. Governors questioned the development areas?

A. The principal highlighted that priority one was the critical area for development i.e., GDS/higher standards – the targets this year were driven by the higher ability/GDS quintile.

Q. Governors asked if the development areas were built into the SIP/SDP?

A. The principal reassured governors that this was the case

Governors **OBSERVED** how useful and refreshing it was to be focusing on the children and their performance and **THANKED** the principal for the interesting and informative presentation and the staff for all their hard work.

Mr Eden left the meeting at 10.31am

FGB/08/26 Staffing Update – see confidential item

Mr Eden re-joined the meeting at 10.40am

FGB/09/26 Overseeing financial performance – financial reporting

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

- a) management accounts and cash flow;
- b) disposals/write-offs;
- c) managed Internet connection.

a *Management accounts and cash flow*

The chair **CONFIRMED** that he had received the management accounts for periods 2 and 3, and they had also been uploaded to Governor Hub.

Governors **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the cash flow spreadsheet (P4) in line with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook – **see confidential item**.

b *Disposals/write-offs*

The SBM presented the following fixture and fitting items for disposal/write off which were on the asset register but either held in storage, out of use or no longer fit for purpose:

- 1 x hobart dishwasher;
- 1 x goat house;
- 2 x portable air conditioning units;
- 5 x wooden summer houses;
- 1 x community hub wall art;
- 1 x staff photo board.
- all yellow Motorola walkies talkies;

The SBM also included 1 x HP desktop computer (no longer fit for purpose) for disposal/write-off.

Governors **RECEIVED**, **NOTED** and **APPROVED** all the items for disposal/write-off as presented.

c *Managed internet connection*

The SBM alerted governors that the managed internet connection was due for renewal (36-month contract) currently with a third-party company called Daisy.

The SBM provided governors with three quotes:

- **Option 1** – Daisy (TalkTalk) renewal cost = £544pm (increases every April in line with rate of inflation)
- **Option 2** – new third-party provider (tbc) through Daisy = £377pm (increases every April in line with rate of inflation);
- **Option 3** – alternative provider (Eclipse) = £349pm (increases annually in April by February's consumer price index plus 3.9%).

The SBM added that **Option 3** had also been recommended by Jasmine IT who worked with Eclipse re. new installations for other local schools.

Q. Governors enquired about the current price with Daisy?

A. The SBM informed governors that the current contract was £514pm – three years ago, when the contract had started, the cost had been £364.

Q. Governors queried the preferred option?

A. The SBM conveyed that the preferred option was Option 3 and the reason for bringing the quotes to the FGB early was the 90-day notice period required by Daisy.

Q. Governors questioned whether there would be any loss of speed or facility?

A. The SBM reassured governors that there would be no reduction in performance.

Following discussion, it was

resolved

that governors **APPROVED** the purchase of Eclipse as the new provider for the managed internet connection.

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

FGB/10/26 Update on appraisal process and well-being for principal and staff

The chair **CONFIRMED** that the principal's mid-year review date had been arranged for 26th February 2026 (3.15pm)

PG/SS

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

FGB/11/26 Confirm arrangements to review Child Protection and Safeguarding recording and reporting systems (CP safeguarding file audit)

The principal and safeguarding governor reported that:

- the NCC NCSP SiE safeguarding audit had been completed and returned to the local authority by the deadline (5th January 2026);
- the audit had not been an improvement on the previous iteration; in fact,
- the experience had been onerous and time-consuming – this had been fed back to the local authority;
- a link visit was to be arranged to undertake the confidential file audit.

CM/KP/RL

FGB/12/26 Information from the Corporate Director for consideration and action***Working Together to Improve School Attendance***

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

- post-pandemic, both overall and persistent absence rates rose sharply nationally and locally;
- Nottinghamshire's rates were slowly improving but remained above pre-pandemic levels;
- the government was introducing Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectations (ABIE) which were minimum improvement targets tailored to each school – these were to be piloted in 2025/26 and rolled out in 2026/27;
- local authorities must hold Targeting Support meetings to agree plans for severely/persistently absent pupils – these began in Nottinghamshire in 2024/25, but uptake needs improvement;

- additional support included the RISE Attendance and Behaviour Hubs, and a new DfE attendance campaign promoting school's social and emotional benefits through local stories and health advice;
- questions for governors to ask.

Governors **DISCUSSED** and **CONSIDERED** the questions within the report.

Governors **NOTED** that:

- the principal had confirmed that the attendance team were engaging with the targeting support process where applicable/necessary;
- the school attendance data was significantly positive (see the VYED) so currently engagement with a RISE behaviour and attendance hub was not a recommendation.

In addition, governors **COMMITTED** to familiarising themselves with the Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectations (ABIE) for the school and the actions being taken to achieve the target.

**All
governors**

FGB/13/26 Communication received and updates

Governor Newsletter

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

- admissions, safeguarding and HR updates;
- changes to NCC early help services;
- information re. the Nottinghamshire Governor Conference (shaping inclusive education together) – Friday 6th March 2026 at Eastwood Hall;
- articles for governor information:
 - school complaints – is your board prepared;
 - what governors need to know – understanding equality duties;
 - publishing governance data: what maintained schools must or should publish online;
- articles related to governor roles:
 - new governors on governing boards;
 - recording governor monitoring visits on Governor Hub;
 - the role of the chair of governors: leading with purpose: [leading-governors-the-role-of-the-chair-of-governors-in-schools-and-academies.pdf](#)
- national updates including:
 - curriculum assessment and review 2025;
 - DfE attendance targets;
 - DfE updated guidance and regulations relating to school governance [Academy trusts: governance guide - GOV.UK](#)
 - updated DfE guidance re. school uniform policy and cost of school uniform;
 - meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges
- EM-Ed governor training update;
- message from the Nottinghamshire Association of Governors (NAGs).

		Action
FGB/14/26	Report from training co-ordinator including review of governor training audit and requirements for 2026/2027 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. The training coordinator ENCOURAGED all governors to update their training record under their profile on Governor Hub as soon as possible. Governors AGREED the following training had been undertaken or was scheduled: • finance training – all governors (prior to the FGB meeting – 26 Mar 2026); • governor conference – Mrs L Bunn, Mr R Collins, Mr G Eden, Mr P Gawthorpe; • safer recruitment – Mr P Gawthorpe.	All governors All to note All to note
FGB/15/26	Review of governor monitoring visit reports – key actions for governors Governors DETERMINED that the following visits had been undertaken or were planned: • admissions committee – Mr P Gawthorpe, Mrs M Pimm, Mrs S Wichmann; • early years – Mrs M Pimm, Mr P Gawthorpe; • meeting with LA – Mr R Lilley, Mrs K Phoenix, Mr P Gawthorpe; • nurture provision – Mr P Gawthorpe; • safeguarding (audit) – Mrs C Middleton; • safeguarding (confidential file audit) – Mrs C Middleton; • SEN catch-up – Mrs M Pimm; • SEND – Mr P Gawthorpe. Governors RECOGNISED the need to review link governor roles given the recent additions to the governing body – these were to be considered over the spring term and finalised at the next FGB meeting (26 March 2026).	All to note All to note /Clerk
FGB/16/26	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, training, monitoring and link roles; • scrutiny and challenge relating to staffing matters such as: ○ staff and principal appraisal processes; ○ leavers, starters and recruitment; ○ staff wellbeing; • consideration and discussion related to safeguarding and admissions; • increased awareness and understanding of data and analysis through questions and discussion related to: ○ barriers to progress and attainment; ○ use of comparative local and national data; ○ identification and prioritisation of development areas; ○ impact of 30-hour provision; • questions and challenge regarding estates management and finance including: ○ consideration of contracts, cash flow and investments;	

- updates from conversations with the local authority;
- options and possibilities for space usage;
- consideration and review of policies, the Corporate Directors report and the spring (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/17/26 Confirmation of dates for 2025-26

The governing body

agreed

Spring Term 2026

- 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/18/26 Determination of confidentiality of business

It was

resolved

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

- autumn (2) term FGB minutes;
- data presentation and safeguarding documents;
- financial report and associated documents;

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

The meeting closed at 11.12am



Signed:

(chair)

Date: **26th March 2026**