

**Minutes of the Retford Oaks Academy Committee meeting
held on Monday 25th September 2023 at 5:30pm at the Academy.**


Governor name	Initials	Governor category	A = absence
Mr A Knight Chair of Governors	AK	Appointed	
Mr D Cartwright Vice Chair of Governors	DC	Appointed	A
Mrs P Bryn-Jones	PBJ	Appointed Parent	
Mr A Silcock	AS	Appointed	
Mr W Spooner	WS	Staff	
Miss N Ward	NW	Appointed	
Mrs J Bennett	JB	Appointed	
Mr C Kemp	CK	Appointed	A
Mr J Purle	JP	Appointed Parent	A

In attendance	Initials	Position	
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	
Mr R Stewardson	RS	Assistant Principal	
Mr G Olley	GO	Assistant Principal	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional	
Mr Keith Morgan	KM	<i>Observing potential governor</i>	

<i>Quorum numbers</i>	5	<i>Governor's present</i>	6

Item No	Item	Action/ by who/when
AC/01/2324	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Mr Cartwright and Mr Purle sent their apologies which were accepted. Mr Kemp had not sent apologies and the governance professional will chase this up.</p>	NB
AC/02/2324	<p>Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made.</p> <p>Governors were reminded to re-submit the declarations of interests for 2023-2024.</p>	
AC/03/2324	<p>Governance Housekeeping for 2023/24</p> <p>Discuss and assign Link Roles</p> <p>The committee discussed Link Governor Roles and a new link governor role for attendance was assigned to Mrs Bryn-Jones, the link role for careers and Post 16 was assigned to Mrs Bennett and the governance professional will contact Mr Purle to ask if he will be prepared to pick up the GDPR link role.</p> <p>The chair of governors reminded governors of the importance for the academy committee to be more involved and engaged in relation to attending school for visits and meetings to enable the committee to be as effective as possible in supporting and challenging the academy.</p> <p>Review of self-evaluation and governance action plan</p> <p>The content of the self-evaluation and governance action plan was agreed by all.</p>	NB

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	<p>Agree Annual Committee Report on the effectiveness of governance 2022/23 The content of the Annual Committee Report on the effectiveness of governance 2022/23 was agreed by all.</p> <p>Code of Conduct – all governors were reminded to sign and return the code of conduct to the governance professional.</p> <p>Declaration of Interest – all governors were reminded to complete the declaration of interest for 23/24.</p>	<p>Governors</p> <p>Governors</p>
AC/04/2324	<p>Training Safeguarding update (DSL) Mr Stewardson provided a brief update to the main changes in safeguarding in terms of the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education keeping children safe in education 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Filtering and monitoring in relation to computer systems. The trust uses 2 systems - Senso and Watchguard which monitor and filter internet searches on devices connected to the academy network. - Focus on children 'absent from education' - Change to the legal age to marry from 16 to 18 - The schools liability when school premises are used outside the school day by external agencies - Online searches to be added to Safer recruitment checks. <p>In terms of compliance, all staff have been alerted to their training requirements to ensure that they are up to date with all relevant safeguarding modules. There is a handful of staff beyond deadlines and they are being chased by Mrs Stewardson and HR to get these complete.</p> <p>My Concern is still in use for reporting safeguarding issues. Staff recently had first aid training and this was an opportunity to remind all staff that my concern should be used to report safeguarding concerns and not other issues such as behaviour concerns etc.</p> <p>After 2 full weeks back in school, there have been 89 reports so far. Some have still been behaviour related but these are lower in proportion to last year. <u>The governors asked</u> how many of the 89 are new, were any carried over from 22/23. Mrs Stewardson confirmed that all 89 have been new reports and that there are a very small number in addition that rolled over. Mr Dickinson added that there is some education to be done with staff as they tend to err on the side of caution and report issues when they are unsure if they should or not. <u>The chair of governors acknowledged</u> that Mr Stewardson has a heavy workload at present <u>and asked</u> how he is managing this. Mr Stewardson said that the number of cases has reduced this year to 7 child in need and 1 on full child protection at the moment.</p> <p>Mr Stewardson went on to state that mental health is still in the top 5 safeguarding incidents reported on my concern. Jess Devonshire is back now working 3 days a week as a counsellor to help with this workload. <u>The governors asked</u> what happens when Mr Stewardson is away from teaching to meet with social services or social workers. Mr Stewardson explained that staff cover is sought from elsewhere under these circumstances which can sometimes take him out of school for face to face meetings.</p> <p>Exam Results Review of data Mr Olley gave an overview of the exam results data – see attached slides.</p>	


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	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>2022-2023 Results analysis - Copy.pdf</p> <p>A Levels results data is disappointing but the figures were low as a result of a number of students leaving before taking census and some students dropping from three to two A levels. 9% dropped from 3 to 2, 9% left before census. Dance and Applied Science, in particular, performed well. <u>The governors wanted clarification</u> if this was the first year sitting exams. Mr Olley confirmed that these students did not sit exams at GCSE and were the first students that did not receive additional leniencies towards there A level exams.</p> <p>Moving forwards into 23/24 and beyond, recruitment has been strong. This year has seen a higher retention of ROA students and also new students gained. There are some students in this Y12 with high targets and expectations. <u>The governors questioned</u> whether there is likely to be a similar drop from 3 to 2 A levels this year <u>and wondered</u> if targets and expectations are being set too high, resulting in the drop-outs. Mr Dickinson made it clear that the ethos at Retford Oaks is to give all students the opportunity to learn and study their chosen subjects irrespective of whether they are high achieving students or not. He added that the current year 13 and year 12 have been impacted by the pandemic and a high proportion struggle with anxiety which has to be taken into account.</p> <p>GCSE results have demonstrated significant gains in maths. Mrs Widdup wanted it noted that the KS2 data has not been as reliable as it could have been which has resulted in the P8 figures being skewed. The data is currently being reviewed by the FFT Fisher Family Trust, https://fft.org.uk/ and it is anticipated that following the review the data will appear more positive.</p> <p>Given that the committee consists of some newer members who may not fully understand the way that the data is presented, the <u>chair of governors asked</u> Mr Dickinson to explain the measures. Mr Dickinson explained that students achieving their expected grades have a 0 rate, so an average of plus 1 would be a school performing at on average 1 grade above target for all students, minus 1 would be on average 1 grade below target for all students.</p> <p>Mr Olley shared a more detailed slide showing performance across all subjects. EBACC continues to be pushed and more students are starting to take up languages. <u>The governors commented</u> that there appeared to be good grades in German and this is encouraging to see and Mr Dickinson confirmed that there are a strong group of teachers in this area. Mr Olley went on to explain that there will be some work to focus on high ability students to challenge them further to improve their progress. On reviewing the performance data split by gender, <u>the governors asked</u> if there was a reason for the male students outperforming the females as it is an unusual statistic. Mr Olley said there was a large cohort of females that were underperforming in this particular year group and Mr Dickinson added that some female students had not attended the academy having been placed through fair access and this also skewed the figures. <u>The governors commented</u> that English outcomes appear to be a concern and Mrs Widdup confirmed that additional support is now being provided by the trust for English.</p> <p><u>The governors then asked</u> about sociology and psychology and Mr Dickinson confirmed that staffing was being looked at to improve the delivery of these subjects.</p>	

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	<p><u>The governors were interested to know</u> what happened to those students moving on from the academy. Mr Olley said that more students have achieved first choice places at university or have succeeded in moving onto what they wanted to do next and Mr Dickinson added that there are 2 students who have returned to improve on their results in order get into their first choice universities. The governors noted that they are aware that figures have dropped nationally and asked if the academy is in line with the national picture. Mrs Widdup explained that as mentioned previously, the P8 is unstable so the attainment score has been looked at closely. Across the trust all schools have fallen in terms of attainment but that ROA was closer to the smallest fall in attainment than the largest and in terms of the academies position within the trust, that indicates that there has been progress.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if there were still concerns about behaviour in Y10 and Y11 as there were issues last year for Y9 and Y10. Mr Spooner said that so far Y11 has been quiet. Mr Dickinson said that there's a small number of issues in Y10 but the students that have been struggling to behave have been working over at The Post 16 centre with Mr Spooner to take them out of an environment that does not work for them. There was an intervention last year from Lucy Gascoigne with the girls talking about self-esteem and this brought about a positive change for some of the students in Y10, some others have been found alternative placements elsewhere.</p> <p><u>The chair of governors asked</u> Mr Dickinson to explain to the committee the changes that have been implemented in relation to utilising Alternative Provision for those students struggling in the mainstream school environment. Mr Dickinson explained that ideally all students should be reintegrated into the academy wherever possible however for those students that need a different environment in which to learn, there is the hub within the academy and further provision at the Post 16 centre which is the headquarters for Diverse Academies Trust. Here a small number of KS4 are being taught and supported by staff from the academy. It is anticipated that by October half term all students currently at external Alternative Provision will be studying in the post 16 centre. The set up consists of 2 members of staff teaching KS3 and KS4 and the use of the gym in the leisure centre in the next door building to support mandatory PE requirements. Having this facility will mean that the number of suspensions will be reduced, this has already shown dividends with 5 suspensions so far this year compared with 33 last year by the end of September.</p> <p>This solution will be cost effective, reducing the AP bill and giving the academy more control over the education of our students ensuring a better grade profile and academic foundation. <u>The governors asked</u> if Mr Dickinson could provide a ballpark figure to demonstrate the financial saving, and Mr Dickinson said it would save around £125k. He added that students working in this environment will attend a shorter day, 8:40 – 2pm as the small groups provide a more intense learning environment.</p> <p>Confirmation of training for governors to complete The governance professional will contact governors individually to confirm which specific training requirements are due for completion and the 2023/24 training programme will be communicated when it is available.</p>	<p>NB</p>
AC/05/2324	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 3rd July 2023 The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the chair.</p>	

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AC/06/2324	<p>Matters arising AC/62/2223 To note, the ongoing action regarding the SEND page on the website has been escalated to the Trust for action. AC/64/2223 To note, an agenda item to discuss and assign link roles has been included.</p>	
AC/07/2324	<p>Principal's report</p> <p>Mr Dickinson gave a brief overview of the AIP report: 9.7% suspensions last year, mostly poor social behaviours. 2 PEX for persistent disruption 2 PEX for assault on staff and assault on a peer</p> <p>Work is being done to promote better behaviours to respect each other for example, teaching students how to queue, staff addressing everything at the door. On the 2nd day back students were engaged in group work to encourage them to better interact with each other. Hopefully this will help reduce the number of suspensions this year. The bar had to be reset last year following covid.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> why the number of SEND students suspended was higher than the average. Mr Dickinson acknowledged that there have been issues with SEND due to lack of staff in this area but added that Suzy Whittaker has been appointed as the new SENDCO and will be working to improve things in this area, particularly looking at priorities of attendance and behaviour.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson summarised the key points from the ERM report: <u>The governors asked</u> if the provision map is being utilised and Mr Dickinson confirmed that Miss Whittaker will be briefing staff regarding individual students and their needs. Staff use of language with students has been picked up on by Miss Whittaker as an area that needs improvement and she is working with staff to address this. <u>The governors wanted to know</u> if the 'one-page profiles' are being used for students with SEND. Mr Dickinson confirmed that they do use one-page profiles but they require updating and this is something that Miss Whittaker will be developing further. The governors questioned how the profiles are communicated with staff in the academy. Mr Dickinson explained that all one-page profiles are stored on SharePoint and all staff have access to this. <u>The governors questioned</u> whether all staff should be emailed the profiles and Mrs Widdup clarified that with the large number of students and staff within the academy an email per student would be a significant number for staff to receive and reiterated that all staff have access to relevant information. Mr Dickinson added that staff will have printed class sheets and students with a one-page profile would be highlighted on the sheet so staff will know which students to research.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson summarised the key points from the Self Evaluation and AIP for 23/24 Trip day was a huge success in the summer term. Greater control over use of toilets continues to prevent damage and reduce poor behaviour. At the moment there isn't a justification to soften this control. Greater progress is anticipated with SEND students now that Miss Whittaker is on board, she is bringing in new ideas and knowledge that has taken some members of staff by surprise. Miss Whittaker is meeting with parents, and engaging with students to learn and understand the needs of all SEND students as quickly as she can. Attendance is an area that requires improvement and again Miss Whittaker is working towards this.</p>	

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	<p>DTL (dedication to learning) scores have been roughly in line with the September baseline. There has been a relaunch in terms of tutor support. Initial signs have been positive and a full Quality Assurance exercise will be done next week.</p> <p><i>Mrs Bryn-Jones raised a concern</i> picked up from the minutes of the previous meeting, suggesting that advice had been given to implement and communicate the use of a shared mailbox for parents of SEND students to use. It was noted that this has not yet been communicated to parents and Mr Dickinson agreed that the mailbox had been set up but had not yet been communicated and confirmed that it would be communicated to parents.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> if staffing is sufficient within the SEND team. Mr Dickinson said that in support of Miss Whittaker, there is Mrs Austerberry who is currently undertaking trust SEND training, Mrs Gould whose focus will be on teaching and learning and a new TA starts at the academy next week to support a year 7 child requiring 1 to 1 support and that currently there is approximately 10 members of staff. <i>The governors asked further</i> if the severe training needs identified by the local authority had been addressed and Mr Dickinson confirmed that is part of the plan that Miss Whittaker is working on with training being provided by both the trust and the local authority.</p> <p>There were no questions from governors regarding the Health and Safety Report</p> <p>Mr Dickinson summarised the Risk report Viability of A Level remains a risk, PAN set at 100 but numbers are improving. Year 7 PAN – anticipating being asked to go over the 240 again next year. <i>The governors asked</i> if there was reason for the increase in numbers and how long it was likely to be a risk. Mrs Widdup confirmed that there is an increased number of students moving into the area due to housebuilding. <i>The governors further asked</i> if funding will be provided up front. Mr Dickinson confirmed that funding for an additional 30 students was provided up front for this year but there has been no such guarantee going forwards. Mrs Widdup added that she will be meeting with the relevant bodies this week and will ensure this is discussed. Mrs Widdup’s other academy have also been asked to take additional students, the Local Authority are looking at a three year peak, this year being the first. After that the numbers are expected to drop significantly. Mr Dickinson said that currently there are a group of students who have been allocated places at the academy but have not yet started attending and this is being challenged with the local authority to remove them so that they are not effectively blocking places.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson summarised the upcoming trips to which there were no questions from governors.</p> <p>The Academy has achieved a Young Carers accreditation and a Year 11 student who is a Young Carer attended the Department for Education in London alongside staff to highlight the challenges that these students face throughout their education.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> what the attendance target is for this year and Mr Dickison confirmed that the target is to achieve 1% higher than last year, however the academy are aiming for 90%. <i>The governors then asked</i> what the attendance had been so far this year and Mr Dickinson confirmed it was currently 91%, the team are taking a more robust approach to attendance, ensuring that 6th form is better focussed. Attendance is weak for pupil premium students and an additional layer has</p>	<p>LD</p>

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	<p>been added for the class tutor to try and understand what the barriers to attendance are. <u>The governors wanted to understand</u> which year groups have the poorest attendance and Mr Dickinson replied that Y9 and Y10, PP and SEND are of concern.</p> <p><u>The chair of governors asked the committee</u> who they would like to hear from at the next meeting and it was agreed that reports would be presented for attendance, SEND and Pupil premium</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if the cancellation of the contract with Unity buses had resulted in a change to attendance with the concern that bus fare may be a barrier. Mr Dickinson said that it doesn't appear to be an issue. A couple of the students have moved to the schools in Worksop due to proximity to their home.</p>	
AC/08/2324	<p>How have governors held the school leaders to account? It was agreed that the governors held the school leaders to account with discussion and robust challenges on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exam results data, student performance and targets - Attendance - Behaviour - Safeguarding - workloads - SEND – workloads, staff, support and communication with staff and parents. 	
AC/09/2324	<p>How have the VMV of Trust / Equality been upheld? It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust & Equality has been upheld.</p>	
AC/10/2324	<p>Complete report to trustees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trip day at the end of the summer was a great success - Reduction in external AP by delivering in-house alternative pathways has been a huge success, both financially and educationally. Gratitude has been expressed to the trust for their support with this. - New Link governor roles have been assigned and all governors have been reminded of their responsibility to endeavour to visit the academy at least termly. - Keith Morgan (potential new governor) was in attendance having met with the principal and visited the academy in the previous week. The committee will vote on his appointment prior to the next meeting. - Trustees response is acknowledged regarding SEND web page concerns however the committee's concern that suggested improvements have yet to be implemented remains 	
AC/11/2324	<p>Determination of Confidentiality Equality Act consideration Nolan Principles Trust mission, vision, and values Governors considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were no confidential items discussed. - There had been no Equality Act implications. 	
	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Date <u>20th November at 5.30pm</u> at Retford Oaks Academy</p> <p>The meeting closed at 19:06pm</p>	

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	<p>Signed...  (chair) Date..05/10/2023</p> <p>Print.....Andy Knight.....</p>	