

**Minutes of the Retford Oaks Academy Committee meeting  
held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 5:30pm at the Academy.**

<b>Governor name</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Governor category</b>	<b>A = absence</b>
Mr A Knight <b>Chair of Governors</b>	AK	Appointed	
Mr D Cartwright <b>Vice Chair of Governors</b>	DC	Appointed	A
Mrs P Bryn-Jones	PBJ	Appointed Parent	
Mr A Silcock	AS	Appointed	A
Mr W Spooner	WS	Staff	
Miss N Ward	NW	Appointed	A
Mrs J Bennett	JB	Appointed	A
Mr J Purle	JP	Appointed Parent	A
Mr K Morgan	KM	Appointed	
Miss W Luke	WL	Appointed	

<b>In attendance</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Position</b>	
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	
Mrs N Benson	NBE	Governance Professional	
Miss N Bridgeman	NBR	<i>Appointed Governor candidate</i>	

<i>Quorum numbers</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Governor's present</i>	<i>5</i>
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<b>Item No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action/ by who/when</b>
<b>AC/40/2324</b>	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies were received from Mr Cartwright, Mr Purle and Mrs Bennett and these were accepted by the committee. Retrospective apologies were received from Miss Ward. The governance professional agreed to contact Mr Silcock. <b>[AP-NBe]</b></p> <p>Mr Dickinson confirmed that Mr Cartwright had completed a Safeguarding Link visit last week.</p> <p>The chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves for the benefit of Miss Bridgeman, Appointed Governor Candidate who was in attendance to observe the meeting.</p>	<b>NBe 28/03/24</b>
<b>AC/41/2324</b>	<p><b>Governor Admin</b> At the previous meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 governors voted unanimously for Miss Luke to join the Academy Committee for a four-year term subject to application and references. Miss Luke was welcomed onto the committee, and it was agreed that her term will run from 18/03/2024 to 17/03/2028.</p> <p>Miss Bridgeman was asked to leave the room so that governors could discuss her appointment. Mr Knight informed governors that he and Mr Dickinson had met with Miss Bridgeman and that her knowledge skills and experience will be of significant value to the committee should she be</p>	

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	<p>appointed. Governors voted unanimously for Miss Bridgeman to join the Academy Committee. Miss Bridgeman returned to the room and was welcomed onto the committee for a four-year term from 18/03/2024 to 17/03/2028.</p> <p>The governance professional will organise induction and next steps for new members. [AP-NBe]</p>	<p>NBe 20/05/24</p>
<p>AC/42/2324</p>	<p><b>Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made.</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for any items of business on the agenda. The chair asked if anyone had any declarations to update. Governors confirmed that the declarations given at the beginning of the academic year were correct.</p>	
<p>AC/43/2324</p>	<p><b>Training</b></p> <p>All attendees were sent a link to the Trust led training – <b>Evaluating the quality of education</b> prior to the meeting and were given the opportunity to raise questions:</p> <p>Most governors in attendance confirmed that they had viewed the training and found it interesting, the remaining governors will watch the training following the meeting when access and technical issues have been resolved. Mr Knight addressed the committee and asked if governors prefer to receive the training to view in their own time and governors agreed that it was a better use of time to view training prior to the meeting.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> about the building blocks covered by the training <i>and questioned</i> how strong the links are with the KeyStage2 feeder schools. Mr Dickinson explained that Retford Oaks students come from around 40 different primary schools, the academy has good relationships with the core local group of schools, two of which are part of Diverse Academies Trust but went on to describe the work that goes on with the year 7 students to understand the level that students are at when they arrive at the academy.</p> <p><i>The governors requested further clarity</i> around the Ofsted Deep Dives that are done <i>and asked</i> how may subjects Ofsted will perform deep dives in. Mrs Widdup said that it will depend upon the nature of the visit but usually they will focus on 4 or 5 subjects. She added that the academies do their own deep dives regularly using the Ofsted format. The governors asked if the academy is able to influence the subjects that Ofsted will focus on and Mrs Widdup explained that they cannot.</p> <p><i>Governors wondered</i> if there had been any further community engagement recently at the academy and Mr Dickinson explained that a significant sum, around £1200, had been raised as part of fundraising activities last week in support of Comic Relief and <a href="#">Young Lives vs Cancer</a> and added that students had conducted themselves excellently.</p>	

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AC/44/2324	<p><b>Actions / Feedback from link governor visits</b></p> <p>The governance professional informed the committee that Mrs Bennett had shared a progress report with regards her careers link role earlier and that it had been uploaded to SharePoint for governors to review.</p> <p><i>Mr Knight told the committee</i> that he had recently had a walk around the site with Mr Dickinson and had noticed a lot of litter. He <i>asked</i> if Mr Dickinson was aware of any issues and if any action was being undertaken to address this. Mr Dickinson agreed that students need to be responsible for their own litter and added that there are also external factors which contribute to the state of the site because it is a PFI and therefore local clubs using the facilities often leave rubbish behind. <i>Mr Knight went on to ask</i> if the leaking roof along the corridor had been repaired yet and Mr Dickinson confirmed that the issue is ongoing.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> if there is an update in terms of the planned dining hall extension. Mr Dickinson explained that the proposal is currently with the trust who are speaking to the county council. <i>Governors noted</i> that they had not heard as many grumbles recently about the dining space <i>and asked</i> if things had settled somewhat. Mr Dickinson explained that issues are often more challenging in the Autumn term when new year 7 students are learning the system but once they are more settled, issues generally reduce.</p>	
AC/45/2324	<p><b>Taken Out of Order</b></p> <p><b>Minutes of the meeting dated 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the chair.</p>	
AC/46/2324	<p><b>Taken Out of Order</b></p> <p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p><b>AC/32/2324</b> carried forward AC/18/2324 Arrange H&amp;S Link visit. The governance professional will contact Mr Silcock to ensure arrangements are made. Mr Knight confirmed that he will pick this up if Mr Silcock is unable to. <b>[New AP-NBe]</b></p> <p><b>AC/32/2324</b> The academy used to sell gift vouchers so that family members can buy gift vouchers from the academy to put towards the cost of trips for example. Investigate whether this should be re-considered and feedback. Mr Dickinson explained that this is not something that the academy can facilitate. <b>Action complete</b></p>	<p><b>NBe</b> <b>28/03/24</b></p>
AC/47/2324	<p><b>Governors' Action Plan – Priority 1 review</b></p> <p>Governors were asked to review priority 1 of the action plan. It was agreed that governors would continue to develop individual training in governance and inform the governance professional when they have completed it to keep records up to date. Mrs Knight explained that as chair of governors he sees the biggest area of concern for the committee is in developing the link governor roles and relationships with counterparts further. Mrs Widdup suggested that the governance professional should liaise with Tracey</p>	



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	<p>them to be the best that they can be. Recent mocks in English maths and science showed gains, particularly in English but also some gains in maths and science.</p> <p>The recent staff training day on 19th February was focussed around how to move year 11 forward by working on helping students to acquire the knowledge but then more importantly how to apply it. Mrs Widdup thanked Mrs Bryn-Jones for feedback that she had previously given around this and explained that it really resonated with her and was quoted on the training day.</p> <p><u>Governors asked for clarification</u> around the reduction in the number of subjects and when that would be applied to avoid students having additional time. Mrs Widdup explained that this will begin from September for the current year 9 (year 10 in September) students and that the time previously applied to the 4<sup>th</sup> option would be shared amongst the 3 options enabling an additional lesson per subject each week. <u>Governors asked</u> how the timetable was managed in terms of study leave and Mrs Widdup explained that booster sessions are timetabled around the exams and that as exams are completed the timetable gradually reduces. Support will remain in place to the last exam.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson discussed the principals report informing governors that an external safeguarding review was completed in January and no issues were identified.</p> <p>Behaviours – there have been no further Permanent exclusions following the 2 in the autumn term.</p> <p>Suspensions – the number of suspensions has dramatically reduced this year and are currently at 2.8% as opposed to just below 10% last year. Some of this is because of the ability to utilise the ‘in house’ alternative provision at the Retford Education Centre rather than suspension. There was a significant change in attitudes following the lockdowns and a reset was required, which has taken some time to settle down but appears to be turning the corner now. Mr Dickinson added that of significant note is the shift in the number of SEND students being suspended. Last half term fewer SEND students were suspended than non-SEND. <u>The governors asked</u> if Mr Dickinson could put that down to activities and changes in provisions that have been made rather than it being coincidental. Mr Dickinson explained that the capacity to “manage” behaviours rather than opt for suspension has had a significant impact. Students can work at the alternative provision for a short time. Other changes, such as repositioning of the HUB and access to support for students with SEND have also seen results. <u>The governors asked</u> if there are lessons learned or good practice that can be shared from the change to suspensions for SEND students that might help tackle suspensions amongst the PP cohort. Mr Dickinson explained that much of this is to do with knowing the individuals and their circumstances and added that the pastoral team, who are excellent, have been given more capacity.</p> <p>The SAR request has now been closed.</p>	

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	<p>2 police requests have been responded to and dealt with and were not related to incidents within the academy.</p> <p>The Fire safety report has identified some white goods/machinery in an area that needs to be rectified. <u>The governors asked</u> if there are any students with Personal Evacuation Plans. Mrs Widdup explained that all students in need of assistance have individual risk assessments. Mr Dickinson went on to inform governors that compliance training is up to date and a fire evacuation is planned before Easter.</p> <p>Complaints – The 1 complaint reported on within the principals report was rectified in a meeting with the parent last Friday. There is a backlog of GDA paperwork that needs to be completed and this has had an impact on recent issues and early-stage complaints received.</p> <p>Curriculum – Mr Dickinson expanded on the earlier discussion around the change planned to the curriculum in terms of option choices from September 24 and added that compulsory GCSE RE will be removed from the curriculum, the statutory elements to be delivered during PSHE. The time created in timetables from removing RE will enable all students to study individual sciences rather than the combined award. <u>The governors questioned</u> the move from combined to triple sciences and shared concerns that individual sciences were considered more difficult. Mr Dickinson explained that the progress scores seen at Retford Oaks indicate that students perform better in individual sciences but reassured governors that there is flexibility within the timetable to bring students back to the combined science if they are struggling. Mr Dickinson explained that the curriculum changes have been communicated with parents and will be reiterated at the upcoming options evening. <u>Governors wanted to know</u> if parents had been receptive to the changes and Mr Dickinson confirmed that he had received no backlash from parents, Options Evening is next week and this will be an opportunity to address any concerns directly. Further discussion followed around the sciences and clarity was given around the grading of combined science compared with individual sciences. The 3 individual sciences are graded separately, whereas the combined science takes an average grade from all 3 sciences so a poor performance in one of the sciences will bring the entire grade down for the combined GCSE.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson referred to the details shared prior to the meeting in relation to the trips being offered and governors were happy to see students being rewarded for good work, learning being enriched and that trips have been successful. Mr Dickinson added that a trip to Wembley to watch the women’s football was arranged after the trips calendar had been shared.</p> <p><u>Governors referred back</u> to the discussion around the curriculum <u>and asked</u> if it was cost effective for the academy to offer 3 modern languages at GCSE when the uptake is very low. Mrs Widdup explained that this was a legacy from primary schools where children had been learning different languages at different schools but confirmed that German has now stopped with French and Spanish still being taught. Mr Dickinson added that everything is</p>	

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	<p>considered in terms of value for money. <i>The governors then queried</i> whether numbers may drop further in the minority subjects, such as music, performing arts etc due to the reduction in options. Mr Dickinson explained that the music GCSE has been replaced with a B Tech award in music and a recent poll has revealed a higher number of students showing an interest.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> if there was an update on the expected number of admissions for September. Mr Dickinson said that currently the number of places offered is 212. Mrs Widdup added that there is some uncertainty about whether there may be more students yet to be allocated a place currently with the local authority given that the academy was asked to take an additional 30 students and Mr Dickinson confirmed that because of the request, he has been planning for larger numbers.</p> <p><i>The governors then asked</i> what numbers were expected in Year 12 in September. Mr Dickinson said that the initial indication was around 50-60 students. Sixth form continues to develop in strength and there are currently 63 students in year 12 now and the attendance for year 12 is now at 95.2% which is very positive. Mr Knight acknowledged that he felt sixth form to be a positive environment from his recent visits. <i>The governors then questioned</i> if there were any early indications as to what GCSE results will be this year. Mrs Widdup explained that an improvement from last year is expected but it needs to be put into context in relation to the community. Mr Dickinson added that the current year 11 group were the year 7s when the country went into its first lockdown and missed education during those periods of time will be more significant for some than others depending upon how engaged they were with the online learning provided. Mrs Widdup added that the concept of working over and above the normal hours of the working day has changed (for adults as well as students) and it is becoming significantly more apparent that students aren't spending the time revising outside of school time.</p> <p><i>The governors were interested to know</i> if there had been any change in the ethnic makeup of the academy more recently. Mr Dickinson explained that recently the students that had been at Retford Oaks with an Asian background have moved over to the Worksop schools as places became available and that more recently there have been more students from Africa. <i>The governors then asked</i> if this created any additional support requirement where English is a second language and Mr Dickinson explained that was not an issue and all students have settled well and are an asset to the academy.</p>	
AC/49/2324	<p><b>Admission policies for 25/26</b></p> <p>The admission policy local appendix for 25/26 was updated by Retford Oaks in September 2023 and is available on the Academy website. Governors were informed of these updates on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and all were ratified in the governor meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.</p> <p><b>Other policy updates</b></p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relationship and Sex Education Policy</li> <li>○ Provider Access policy</li> <li>○ Supporting students with medical conditions policy</li> <li>○ Early Careers Teachers policy</li> <li>○ Levels of Authority</li> <li>○ Filtering and monitoring appendix 2024</li> <li>○ Risk Policy</li> </ul> <p>The above Diverse Academies policies were updated by the Trust on the 30th of January 2024 and are available on the Trust website. Governors were informed of these updates on the 18th of March 2024.</p>	
<b>AC/50/2324</b>	<p><b>How have governors held the school leaders to account?</b></p> <p>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"> <li>- Curriculum and GCSE Option availability</li> <li>- Quality of education and monitoring</li> <li>- Attendance and Behaviour</li> <li>- Admissions numbers for year 7 and year 12</li> <li>- The appearance and maintenance of the site</li> </ul>	
<b>AC/51/2324</b>	<p><b>How have the VMV of Trust / Equality been upheld?</b></p> <p>It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust &amp; Equality has been upheld.</p>	
<b>AC/52/2324</b>	<p><b>Complete report to trustees</b></p> <p>The report to trustees was completed and it was agreed that the work ongoing to bring down the number of suspensions (particularly SEND) should be recognised.</p> <p>The committee would like to welcome 2 new governors, Miss Witney Luke and Miss Nuikita Bridgeman have joined the committee with effect from Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> how long suspensions are generally issued for. Mr Dickinson explained that the length of a suspension can span from half a day upwards, usually the maximum period for a suspension will be 5 days (longer suspensions have been issued in specific circumstances). Mr Dickinson will discuss each individual with their Head of Year and issue suspensions that are appropriate in line with the behaviour policy.</p>	
<b>AC/53/2324</b>	<p><b>Determination of Confidentiality</b></p> <p><b>Equality Act consideration</b></p> <p><b>Nolan Principles</b></p> <p><b>Trust mission, vision, and values</b></p> <p>Governors considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There were no confidential items discussed.</li> <li>- There had been no Equality Act implications.</li> </ul>	



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	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting:</b> Date 20<sup>th</sup> May at 5.30pm at Retford Oaks Academy</p> <p>Mrs Bryn-Jones told the committee that she may not be available for the next meeting but will let the governance professional know nearer the time.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 18:33pm</p>	
	<p>Signed...  (chair) Date.. 16/04/2024</p> <p>Print... Andrew Knight.....</p>	