

**Minutes of the Retford Oaks Academy Committee meeting
held on Monday 22nd January 2024 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	
Mrs P Bryn-Jones	PBJ	Appointed Parent	
Mr A Silcock	AS	Appointed	A
Mr W Spooner	WS	Staff	
Miss N Ward	NW	Appointed	
Mrs J Bennett	JB	Appointed	
Mr J Purle	JP	Appointed Parent	
Mr K Morgan	KM	Appointed	

In attendance	Initials	Position	
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	
Mrs A Brammall	AB	Assistant Principal	A
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional	
Miss W Luke	WL	<i>observing</i>	

<i>Quorum numbers</i>	5	<i>Governor's present</i>	8
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Item No	Item	Action/ by who/when
AC/27/2324	<p>Apologies for absence The chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves for the benefit of Miss Luke, potential new governor who was in attendance to observe the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Mr Silcock due to work commitments and these were accepted by the committee.</p>	
AC/28/2324	<p>Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made. 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>	
AC/29/2324	<p>Training The governance professional shared her screen and gave governors a brief recap on how to access SharePoint, where to find useful resources, additional training and reading materials and how to locate all Retford Oaks relevant documents and information for review prior to committee meetings.</p> <p>Mr Knight reminded governors to download and save any word documents that they might want to use and edit to their device before making changes.</p>	
AC/30/2324	<p>Actions / Feedback from link governor visits Mrs Bryn-Jones gave feedback from her link visit regarding attendance. The new system is significantly improved for managing attendance, this has made communication with parents a lot easier and is in response to the findings from the attendance crisis report in September. There had been confusion and stress for some parents being informed their child was absent when they had been dropped off at school due to information from registers sometimes</p>	

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	<p>being inaccurate or late. The new system is much improved. Reporting of attendance from the alternative curriculum at Retford Education Centre is now managed more efficiently, a spreadsheet being sent from Mrs Ward to the academy. Communication to parents is now in 'missed days' rather than a percentage, which is good, but messages sent via WeDuc still shows a circle with 0%. <u>Mrs Bryn-Jones asked</u> if this could be changed. Mr Dickinson explained that because WeDuc provides the software platform, these changes can't be made currently. Mrs Widdup added that WeDuc are meeting with the Trust this week and she has requested that this to be discussed. Mrs Bryn-Jones continued that she had received a call from Mrs Taylor (admin for attendance) to introduce herself and Mrs Bryn-Jones has suggested that she come into the academy to see the process in action and understand how it works. Mrs Bryn-Jones will book in another meeting to progress this further.</p> <p>Mr Knight has completed a visit with Mrs Whitaker (SENCO) and team which included a corridor walk. Mr Knight said that things seemed a lot calmer and the increase in facilities (now 2 rooms) seems to have had a significant impact with an air of positivity around the area. Work with Teaching Assistants has improved and there appears to be greater teamworking. Mrs Whitaker added a piece to the governors' newsletter in December to help raise the team profile. Mr Knight noted that demand on the service is becoming greater and there is work to be done going forwards to ensure that the academy is not single person dependant. There seems to be an issue around admin support in this area and how support is being utilised from elsewhere within the academy that needs to be resolved. Mrs Whitaker is working through the backlog of cases, and everything seems to be moving in the right direction now.</p>	
AC/31/2324	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 20th November 2023 The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the chair.</p>	
AC/32/2324	<p>Matters arising AC/13/2324 Mr Kemp has now been removed from committee. AC/17/2324 SEND Link visit report has been shared with all governors via SharePoint. complete AC/18/2324 All governors to review the governance action plan ahead of the next meeting Govs – reviewed in this meeting. complete AC/18/2324 Link Governors meet and greet could not be arranged prior to the meeting due to staff commitments and the inability to bring the meeting start time forward NB. closed AC/18/2324 Arrange H&S Link visit AS carried forward AC/22/2324 Cat C Spain trip, discuss deposit options with the team planning to trip and look into gifting options and feedback HW. LD provided a response but having been absent from the previous meeting was not clear on the request. HW clarified the issue and LD agree to provide an update next time. 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. Carried forward AC/22/2324 talk to staff at reception regarding initial contact with parents attending discipline / complaints / reintegration meetings. AK noted that there is no additional space or area to place people but that start times for meetings can be considered to try to avoid busy periods in reception. LD added that he has spoken to staff about being more aware of people in reception and a Head of Year is now placed at the front of school every day to provide additional support in this area. Action complete</p>	<p>AS</p> <p>LD</p>

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AC/33/2324	<p>Principal's report Mr Dickinson explained that the ERM report was produced in November and asked if everyone had reviewed it. All governors confirmed that they had, and Mr Dickinson summarised the highlights from the report.</p> <p>Alternative Provision is much lower this year than at the end of last year, this results in a saving financially but also demonstrates that the academy is meeting the needs of young people and reintegrating them back into the academy or moving them over to the alternative curriculum at the Retford Education Centre.</p> <p>Supporting disadvantaged students with their attendance: C Gould, last years temp SENCO, is now targeting SEND attendance, meeting with parents and trying to break down barriers; and R Furniss, previously numeracy coordinator is now working on pupil premium attendance, prioritising those students that he can impact very quickly. Student meetings are being held to identify the barriers.</p> <p>Current attendance is significantly better at 90.17% than the end of last year which was 86.15% Suspensions are significantly down below 2% after over a term. There have been 2 exclusions so far this year compared with 4 overall last year.</p> <p>Academy Improvement Plan objectives for this year focus on attendance, behaviour, SEND students and quality of education provided. The changes made to use of external Alternative Provision in favour of the Alternative Curriculum have already been noted.</p> <p>Attendance, there are differences between PP, non-PP, SEND and non-SEND and these gaps are starting to narrow as a result of the current work being undertaken as mentioned previously.</p> <p>In terms of outcomes, there are a small number of students being supported to find the right career choices through Alternative Provision, in particular Prime8. All students working over at the Retford Education Centre on the alternative curriculum were taken to Worksop College recently to attend a careers event to look at pathways that will be available to them. The current in school cohort will be taken out to careers events as well as events being held for the 6th form in school.</p> <p>Outcomes in general English – line management has been changed to J West (senior leader, former head of English and specialist teacher) to strengthen teaching in this area. Maths – improvements are being seen this year and predictions are that improvements will continue. Maths used to be taught at the same time for all year 11 students. This has now been reduced so that there are 2 populations which reduces the variation in teaching and enables planning to be much tighter.</p> <p>SLT data training - Heads of department have had additional training tonight and follow ups are planned to get the right level of training. More emphasis this year is being put through position statements which took place in the first term and now post mock position statements to ensure teachers are more responsible for their outcomes. Coursework - a calendar has been developed to give time for improvements and moderation which should be in place in February. Student by student outcomes analysis is ongoing, a weekly meeting is being held to look at year 11's specifically to consider how their outcomes can be improved.</p>	

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	<p>Revision strategies – tutor time (PDE) has been changed there are now 2 bespoke intervention sessions around subjects that students are targeted to and an assembly one day to get the year group together, one day of personal development which gives revision strategies to the students and on the 5th day they get the opportunity to practice the revision strategy within school. Exam familiarisation is going on in lessons, past exam papers, marking schemes, mocks are about skills gaps and identifying what the students need.</p> <p>Celebrating success – the Prom and a trip to Alton Towers linked to success and rewards.</p> <p>Science – some consideration is being given to all students taking the science triple award. Offering students the opportunity to study all three sciences is showing better progress. Currently students can choose whether to study combined science (2 GCSEs) or the triple award which is individual sciences.</p> <p>There is a year 11 month by month plan which is being worked through with lots of different levels of support in place for year 11.</p> <p>Split breaks to improve behaviour is being considered for the next academic year.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> how attendance currently sits against national standards. Mr Dickinson responded that ROA is very slightly below the national average and Mrs Widdup confirmed that the national average is about 90% at the end of term 2 so we are thereabouts. <u>The governors wanted to commend</u> the academy on the work they have put in around attendance to get figures moving in the right direction. <u>The governors then asked</u> if the reduction in the number of exclusions and suspensions means that the reset following covid is starting to see dividends. Mr Dickinson confirmed the reset in behaviour management meant that there were a lot of suspensions last year but this is now coming down, there has been a significant reduction in verbal abuse towards staff and there are also more ways of managing behaviour and reducing suspensions with respite over at Retford Education Centre, respite at other academies in the form of directed moves and there is now a bigger pre-exclusion room.</p> <p><u>Mrs Widdup wanted to commend</u> the academy for the attendance performance expressing that the academy staff have pulled together to improve attendance despite the senior leader responsible for this area being long term sick. Mr Knight agreed and added that his shows how well the senior leadership team are being managed. <u>Governors added</u> that the same message should be relayed with regards suspensions as it appears that the zero-tolerance approach to verbal abuse in particular appears to have set the bar. Mr Dickinson went on to inform governors of a piece of work undertaken last year to consider one-time offenders for suspensions, and this year first offences are being managed differently to gain support from parents at this early stage which helps to reduce repeat offences.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if there had been any change to the situation with accessing the toilets. Mr Dickson responded to say that the situation remains the same, 1 large toilet is opened for each gender at break and lunch. And the rest of the time it's the accessible single use toilets that are available. Even last week, with staff stationed outside of the toilet door, there was an incident whereby the taps had been tampered with to disconnect them from the pipe and cause water to cover the floor.</p>	

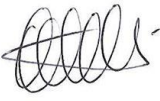
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	<p>AIR report The number of learning walks has been increased with every member of SLT completing a minimum of 5 'pop-ins' every week which equates to 30 teachers being visited in their classrooms each week. Every teacher should be seen no less than once every 3 weeks but those staff that need additional support or for whom more quality assurance is required are being targeted.</p> <p>Review of Post 16. The curriculum offer has been refined for students. The curriculum offer wasn't quite right for our students and so looking at better use of vocational courses. As an example, the academy can run a double award in PE and outcomes are very good in PE. This should improve outcomes and utilise what we have more efficiently. Consideration is being given to replacing those courses that do not perform well historically with other courses. Performing arts is an area under consideration to make the offer more suitable for learners.</p> <p>Behaviours – additional support from a behaviour consultant has been brought in to help manage work in this area during Mrs Brammall's absence. This adds an extra layer of support to heads of year.</p> <p>Lesson Delivery – the academy has moved to a 3-part lesson to better manage the information delivered to students and ensure it can be better retained. This works on a ratio with 1 third based on knowledge acquisition, 2 thirds on application, 1 to develop understanding and 1 to develop a skill to do something different.</p> <p>The senior leadership team has been expanded in terms of teaching and learning. M James (quality assurance) and K Simpson (lead practitioner working with individuals around teaching and learning strategies to give extra support).</p> <p>MFL – Inconsistencies relate to one member of staff who has a significant commitment in another area of the academy and had missed a number of weeks in the lead up to the lesson that was observed.</p> <p>English – P Evans from the Trust did some work and consistency in delivery and assessment was picked up and the work that has been done has bolstered support in this area.</p> <p>Maths – curriculum has moved forward in this area and good relationships, are being developed to make Maths a more positive environment reducing sanctions and issues. Mr Dickinson and Mr Spooner are currently delivering additional teaching in this area to assist in covering absence. <u>The governors acknowledged</u> that they were aware that the new Head of Maths appears to have made a positive impact and these is less disruption to lessons.</p> <p>Reading is a priority with reading ambassadors in DEAR (some students in years 9 and 10 come and read with students who need additional support with reading).</p> <p>Work ongoing with SEND students to better know learners and ensure their needs are met..</p> <p>Behaviours – consistently positive behaviour in lessons, staff are dealing with low level behaviour and most pupils exhibit good behaviour in unstructured time. Developing students' ability to self-regulate behaviours and attitudes.</p>	

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	<p>The AIR report picked up on hesitancy from KS3 students to report incidents. A relaunch of 'See It Say It' will happen by February half term to ensure this system is better understood.</p> <p>Enrichment programme for trips contains lots of opportunities, the next trip is Sheffield Steelers.</p> <p>Behaviour hotspots are noted, and behaviour procedures are being reviewed with the Heads of Year and support being put in place.</p> <p>KS4 student voice came out positive on the whole.</p> <p>Suspensions have reduced year on year. Although disadvantaged students are more likely to get suspended than others, the gap has closed and the use of the alternative curriculum, respite and directed moves have had a positive impact in reducing suspensions and supporting young people. The hub is also being used to get students who are facing difficulties working more positively. Verbal abuse has reduced, and restorative justice is working well.</p> <p>Personal development, previously there were 6 drop down days per year but those who missed the personal development day will have missed the PD content. Now an introductory assembly the week before the PD Day will be held by a senior member of staff to talk about what will be covered, followed by the PD Day and then once a week in tutor time the PD work is being reinforced by recap activities to catch those students missing the PD days. Following the Christmas break there was an assembly and a briefing for staff around misogyny and making sure that it is recognised and challenged.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson was very pleased to share that staff consistently maintain a cheerful demeanour, fostering positive relationships with pupils and cultivating a culture of kindness from the AIR report.</p> <p>Safeguarding is compliant, secure, and record keeping is robust. Staff training is ongoing. See it Say it is being relaunched.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if 'See It Say It' is it anonymised and if there is any way the academy can identify the reporter from the barcode in order to perhaps direct help their way. Mr Dickinson confirmed that it is completely anonymous and explained that the staff need to be transparent with students and there needs to be that level of trust.</p> <p>Post 16 –Big push on the new curriculum offer being made. Recruitment in social media and website approach with two links, internal applicant and external applicant so it can be tailored to attract new young people and retain existing young people. <u>The governors asked</u> if a feasibility study been done on why uptake was low and to better understand the reasons for not coming to the sixth form. Mr Dickinson explained that some students do not fit the criteria but that the curriculum offer is an area that the academy can control in terms of retaining and attracting new students. <u>The governors then wanted to know</u> if post 16 is commercially viable, Mrs Widdup explained that post 16 is subsidised by KS3 and KS4, however this is the situation for all 6th forms across the trust, even Tuxford Academy which has the biggest 6th form in the trust is subsidised. Mrs Widdup added that a model used by universities whereby a lecture is held on Teams followed up by tutorial time is something that the trust might consider. There are considerations around logistics and timetabling to overcome but this would mean that the initial lecture, (for some subjects), could be delivered to the whole trust and therefore reduce costs and time commitments of teaching staff.</p>	

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	<p>Mrs Widdup went on to explain that uncertainty around the political situation will also be a factor in any plans considered. The aim of the current government was to take all vocational subjects out of school, leaving only academic courses in school but with an incoming government there is potential for all these plans to change. If the offer is purely A level academic, it automatically reduces the number of students that can apply. <u>The governors then wanted to understand</u> how long it might take for such changes to take effect and Mrs Widdup explained that initially there would be legislation followed by an implementation time and this would include a legacy time, the government would stipulate the last year that a course can run. However, if government opened it up to allow vocational courses back, it would be easier to put those courses back on than to withdraw them.</p> <p><u>The governors acknowledged</u> that attempts to reduce costs by removing post 16 there would be an impact on KS3 and KS4 in terms of aspiration and recruitment and asked if P16 students would be spending time travelling to lectures, Mrs Widdup reiterated that the lectures would be held on the Teams platform which can be accessed remotely and mentoring and tutorial work would be done in the academy.</p> <p>Risk reports P16 viability - discussed PAN for next year – advertised at 240 and have been asked if it is likely to be higher. There is a plan to go bigger to 270 if needs be based on the information provided last year. This year 248 have been taken but funding for 270 was received. In many cases students were placed elsewhere based on appeal and those students travelling from Worksop have moved when places closer to home have become available.</p> <p>H&S Nothing to report.</p> <p>Data protection SARs have been dealt with Complaints are being managed.</p> <p>In year admissions Currently at around 1170 students. At times with managed moves in and out, the number remains relatively stable for in year admissions, there is some movement out to Worksop schools when places become available. Projected PANS for next year would result in around 30 spaces in school.</p> <p>Cat C trips have been shared and have all been reviewed.</p> <p>Daisy who had been ill, sadly died on the day that school broke up for Christmas. It was covered in the local and BBC news, all students went out to applaud the funeral procession on 12th January celebrating Daisy's life. Year 7 were in the visitors carpark, year 8 and 9 were on the drive and years 10, 11 and the 6th form lined the road. Mr Dickinson and Mr Spooner said the students were 'immaculate on that day'. Mr Spooner added that two members of staff in particular had been closely involved with Daisy's family, having received the news of her passing and then in organising the events of that day and he wanted to ensure that it was noted that heads of year 8 and 9 and the head of year 11 should be acknowledged along with Mr Dickinson who supported all staff and students. Mrs Spooner expressed thanks to Mr Dickinson and everyone else involved, which were recognised by the committee.</p>	

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	<p>Mr Dickinson went on to share the academy will be looking at ways in which they can remember Daisy going forwards in the form of fundraising events. Some students are fundraising individually, one student is cycling all the way to Amsterdam to raise money for Sheffield Childrens hospital, Daisy’s parents chosen charity. <u>The governors suggested</u> that some sort of prize giving or pledge at the end of year that could be sponsored might be a nice way to remember Daisy. Mr Dickinson said that the academy do have awards at the end of the year and this will be something they will consider.</p> <p>Moving on <u>the governors wondered</u> if there had been any progress with regards the ongoing issue involving an ex-teacher. Mrs Widdup confirmed that the matter is being dealt with by the trust, litigation is involved so it cannot be discussed in this meeting.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if there was anything they need to be aware of with regards the ski trip. Mr Spooner replied that he will be doing an inspection visit in February as part of the risk assessment and this will be fed back to Mr Dickinson, parents and students.</p> <p><u>The governors wondered</u> if there was an update with regards plans to expand the dining space. Mr Dickinson confirmed that there is a project ongoing about how to better utilise the space, moving the staff room area and rooms around it (moving the section upstairs). If all goes to plan the work will be completed at the start of the academic year 2024.</p>	
AC/34/2324	<p>Review of Governance Action Plan Priority 2 of the plan was displayed on screen and all governors asked to review. The plan was updated and can be viewed here <u>insert link</u></p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if anxiety around exams and attendance for exams was still a concern. Mrs Widdup confirmed that this continues to be an issue, not just at Retford Oaks but across the trust. <u>The governors further asked</u> if the academy had a specific EBSA policy and Mrs Widdup said there wasn’t one that she was aware of. There was discussion around the reasons for low attendance and <u>governors wondered</u> if there were more illnesses affecting students. Mrs Widdup acknowledged that there might be an element of immunity lost in young people but more importantly research has shown that parents no longer prioritise school attendance. <u>Governors were concerned</u> that the message that parents of persistently absent students aren’t prioritising school may detract from those students that have significant mental health issues and anxiety about attending school. Mrs Widdup explained that the trust worked with an attendance advisor from the Department for Education to look at how to categorise persistent absence. The trust now manage persistent absences according to the individual and the reason behind the absence, interventions are better suited to students.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> what the current PA figures are, and Mr Dickinson confirmed that the current figure is around 30% compared to last year at 37.5%. The figure is expected to drop as attendance of those students that were ill pre-Christmas or took early term holidays improves. It was acknowledged that holidays during term time will continue to be an issue, whilst despite fines being imposed by local authority, it is still significantly cheaper for many families.</p> <p>Mrs Bennett has taken on the role of careers link governor and she confirmed that she now has contacts with the staff members in this area and will make an appointment to move this forwards.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if there were any issues or areas of concern with regards the budget. Mrs Widdup explained that there is currently a small</p>	

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	<p>surplus in the budget and there is nothing to be concerned about. Mr Dickinson explained that the reduction in use of Alternative Provision has had a positive impact on finances. He added that supply costs were high last year and so the academy has now employed 4 cover teachers which has had a positive effect on finances as well as providing more reliable teaching.</p> <p>Mrs Widdup explained that any issues of significant concern for the budget would be added to the risk register and this would flag up concerns to governors.</p>	
AC/35/2324	<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"> ➤ Attendance ➤ Behaviour ➤ Post 16 ➤ Finances 	
AC/36/2324	<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/37/2324	<p>Complete report to trustees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attendance ➤ Strong performance and commitment from all staff bearing in mind absence of senior leader ➤ Comments about the sad events and the level of support and engagement around Daisy's funeral. ➤ ECT / Emersion days are having a significant impact, last Tuesday the academy were around 10 staff short which has a knock-on effect. The academy need to arrange cover for these members of staff without additional funding. Currently year 11 are prioritised to ensure that learning for these students is not disrupted but unfortunately, last week, the academy was not able to do that. Can the trust consider limiting these days whilst year 11's are still in school? Or potentially hold more sessions with fewer ECT's so that the impact on academies is not as significant? <u>Governors agreed</u> that the concern should be raised. Mr Dickinson explained that due to recent growth in the academy, 14 staff members at Retford Oaks are ECTs. All first-year teachers will be required to attend Trust events on the same day so more events that are spread out would help academies that employ a lot of new teachers. As the requirement for staff to attend is a Trust directive, can they consider picking up the cost to academies of supply cover. 	
AC/38/2324	<p>Determination of Confidentiality Equality Act consideration Nolan Principles Trust mission, vision, and values</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"> - There were no confidential items discussed. - There had been no Equality Act implications. 	
AC/39/2324	<p>Mrs Ward wanted to raise a concern about a first aid incident that had occurred at the Alternative Curriculum at Retford Education Centre. Mrs Widdup asked Mrs Ward to refrain from entering into the details of the incident to ensure confidentiality for those involved but confirmed that lessons</p>	

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	<p>were learned around contact back to the academy and how that can be improved. She confirmed that the staff member at the building involved had been dealt with by their employer. Governors clarified that procedures have been reviewed and improvements made to avoid this happening again.</p> <p>Witney was asked to leave so that governors could have a confidential discussion. Governors agreed to invite Witney to join the committee.</p>	
	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Date <u>18th March at 5.30pm</u> at Retford Oaks Academy</p> <p>The meeting closed at 19:02pm</p>	
	<p>Signed...  (chair) Date..05/02/2024</p> <p>Print.....Andy Knight.....</p>	