

**Minutes of the Retford Oaks Academy Committee meeting
held on Monday 20th May 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	
Mr W Spooner	WS	Staff	
Miss N Ward	NW	Appointed	A
Mrs J Bennett	JB	Appointed	
Mr J Purle	JP	Appointed Parent	
Mr K Morgan	KM	Appointed	
Miss W Luke	WL	Appointed	A
Miss N Bridgeman	NBR	Appointed	

In attendance	Initials	Position	
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	
Mrs N Benson	NBE	Governance Professional	

<i>Quorum numbers</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Governor's present</i>	<i>9</i>
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AC/54/2324	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Miss Luke and these were accepted by the committee. The governance professional will contact Miss Ward following the meeting. [AP-NB]	NB 24/05/24
AC/55/2324	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.	
AC/56/2324	Skills Audit The governance professional thanked governors that have already completed the skills audit and reminded those yet to complete it to take the time to do so as it will feed into the self-evaluation and action plan for next year. Meeting Dates 24/25 The meeting dates for the next academic year were agreed by all attendees.	
AC/57/2324	Actions / Feedback from link governor visits Mrs Bryn-Jones has completed an attendance link visit, and her report was circulated before the meeting, Mrs Bryn-Jones added that she had not yet	

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	<p>met with the attendance team and timescales will depend upon recovery from her planned surgery.</p> <p>Mr Morgan has attended the academy earlier today to meet with Richard Stewardson regarding Pupil Premium (PP).</p> <p>There was no feedback or discussion following recent trust led training sessions.</p>	
AC/58/2324	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 18th March 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the chair.</p>	
AC/59/2324	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>AC/40/2324 NBe to contact Mr Silcock re non-attendance. complete</p> <p>AC/41/2324 NBe to organise induction and next steps for new members NBr and WL. ongoing</p> <p>AC/46/2324 NBe to ensure that arrangements are made for a Health and Safety link visit. Mr Silcock confirmed that he has emailed Claire Rank to arrange a meeting. Mr Dickinson will check that the email has been received. [New AP-LD]</p> <p>AC/47/2324 NBe to discuss planning in link meetings with T Harrop around the school calendar. ongoing</p> <p>AC/47/2324 NBe to update and share the link governor roles and updated action plan. complete</p>	<p>LD 24/05/24</p>
AC/60/2324	<p>Principal's report</p> <p>Mr Dickinson provided an update on the Academy Improvement Plan (AIP) after 2 terms.</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>By Easter the academy attendance as a whole was 1.4% higher than the same time last year which demonstrates that the ongoing focus of the attendance team is having a positive impact.</p> <p>The SEND and PP gaps have reduced with significant improvements in attendance in both areas. Non-SEND attendance has also improved significantly so the gap between SEND and non-SEND, continues to track.</p> <p>Heads of Year are taking more responsibility for attendance with weekly tutor meetings being held to identify any potential issues, tutors are taking responsibility where necessary, making phone calls home etc. From a SEND perspective Claire Gould has been leading this piece of work and Richard Furniss is leading on Pupil Premium. A lot of work has been put into getting to know the students and understand their individual barriers to coming into school. Persistent Absence (PA) is down by over 1% at the moment. Students at risk of falling into PA, which is below 90% attendance are being focussed on to ensure their attendance improves. <u>The governors asked</u> if the number of holidays during term time had reduced as this had been identified as a significant factor earlier in the academic year. Mr Dickinson</p>	


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	<p>confirmed that those students' attendance has evened out over the course of the year as expected and there had been a couple of holiday requests recently which have been discussed confidentially with the Chair of Governors.</p> <p><u>Governors wanted clarification</u> that attendance is now 3% ahead of where it was this time last year <u>and acknowledged that</u> this is a significant improvement. Mrs Widdup said the national improvement reported is half a percent so the fact that Retford Oaks is up by 3% and that PA is down by over a percent demonstrates that the academy is moving at a better rate than the national average. <u>The governors then asked</u> what the current attendance figure stands at and Mr Dickinson said it was 89.5% and <u>the governors further asked</u> if the target is 92%. Mr Dickinson explained that the AIP target was to improve by 1% on last year, the standard target is 95%. Mrs Widdup added that the year-to-date national figure stands at 91.2% so Retford Oaks is getting closer to that figure. Mr Dickinson went on to state that the gaps in persistent absence (PA) for both pupil premium (PP) and SEND students have reduced. In particular for SEND students where the gap is 60% smaller than at the end of 22/23 and PP 2% smaller. <u>The governors wanted to understand</u> the reason for such an improvement in SEND attendance. Mr Dickinson said that having a consistent SENCO in post and having Claire Gould back in the team focussing on attendance in particular, has made a big difference but also a revision to the structures across the whole school on a wider scale. <u>The governors added</u> that additional resources and space having been put into SEND has shown tangible results.</p> <p>Behaviour</p> <p>There have been no Permanent Exclusions in the last term. There have been 2 so far this year. Suspensions did go up from the first term because of the graduated pathways that are in place. Last year 10% of the school population were suspended at least once, this year up to Easter the figure is below 5% which demonstrates a significant improvement. The truancy pathway has led to a slight increase in suspensions which appears to be a national trend. <u>The governors asked for clarification</u> that this was on site truancy rather than students leaving the school completely and Mr Dickinson confirmed that it refers to students that wander around the school rather than being in their timetabled lessons. Mr Dickinson went on to say that another area currently being considered in terms if the suspension pathway is failure to follow instruction/refusal. The suspension gaps have reduced in the spring term.</p> <p>Most suspensions are for persistent disruption, failure to follow instructions, verbal abuse and physical assault. Suspensions for verbal abuse are down to 16 this year and there are repeat offenders within this figure, physical assault has gone down to 15 but failure to follow instructions and refusal has gone up. The academy is working on a graduated pathway for those students that continue to refuse to engage with the academy life.</p> <p>Other pathways considered for those students that struggle to engage with academy life come under the alternative curriculum. Bally Ward, alongside</p>	

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	<p>the support she gives to the alternative provision over at the Retford Education centre, can negotiate places in external alternative provisions, directed moves and managed moves to other academies. A managed move is for when a child needs a fresh start at another school, agreed with all parties they will negotiate a temporary move to another school with a view to that becoming a permanent move. Those children who do not meet expectation at Retford oaks may be given a directed move, which is a short period of time for maybe 1, 2 or 3 weeks at another academy at the discretion of Retford Oaks. Much of the time this will be at the Outwood schools in Worksop. This is used as an alternative to suspension.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the number of KS4 students at the alternative curriculum at the Retford Education Centre which is used where managed moves and directed moves have not been successful and students might otherwise find themselves permanently excluded. A number of year 10 students are there now, and the academy would benefit from key staff having Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training and Informed Trauma training to further support some of these students.</p> <p>Student voice has been very successful this year. Paddy McGuinness, assistant head of KS3 has a great handle on student voice. He meets with representatives from all year groups and feeds back into the senior leadership team (SLT). This work helps to feed into preparations for Ofsted and gives an authentic view of what is going on within the academy.</p> <p>The behaviour systems are being revised, looking at persistent disruption and trying to prevent a breakdown in relationships between students and teachers by de-personalising detentions/sanctions and changing the language used. This change will be delivered before the summer holidays. <u>The governors asked</u> if all the physical assaults reported had been peer on peer and Mr Dickinson confirmed that they had been. <u>The governors further asked</u> if there had been any specific incidents that governors should be aware of, and Mr Dickinson confirmed that any escalations to governors would come through the formal channels. <u>The governors then asked</u> of the assaults reported had all been separate incidents. Mr Dickinson said there may be a very small number of students involved in several incidents and they have been moved into the alternative curriculum.</p> <p>Staff support for SEND students. Mr Dickinson went on and informed the committee that Provision Map has been launched. All staff have access, and its' use can now be accelerated. <u>The governors wanted to know</u> if the backlog of General Developmental Assessment (GDA) forms had reduced. Mr Dickinson said that the SENCO is working through the backlog and that the number of parental queries has reduced significantly which indicates that progress is being made. Now that the SENCO has 2 full terms of evidence to support the applications things are moving more quickly and when provision map is up and running the GDA forms will be easier to progress.</p>	

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	<p>Results from the first set of mocks indicate that there will be more grade 4's and above from SEND students in English and maths. Appropriate support in exam strategies and resources have been acquired for those students that need them. The Progress 8 (P8) gap has decreased in English but the data indicates a slight widening in maths. Mr Dickinson said however that the maths team have been very conservative in their predictions. All identified areas for improvement are being worked on. Work has been ongoing to increase coursework grades and encourage greater attendance to identifying and support students that can be moved forwards.</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>The Fresh Start programme has started working with a small group of students. One English teacher and a TA are working on this daily and a retest is scheduled for mid-May. Star reader assessments have shown that all students have made progress in their reading ages since January.</p> <p>Quality of education</p> <p>Quality Assurance (QA) in the form of deep dives and pop ins on staff are ongoing and all staff should have one of these at least every 3 weeks. <u>The governors asked</u> how it works. Mr Dickinson said the SLT are going into a classroom and spending 10 minutes observing. Every department has a deep dive where they talk about curriculum intent, observations are carried out on all staff and a report produced at the end to identify strengths and improvement opportunities.</p> <p>QA in marking demonstrates that many staff are adhering to the marking policy. Where there are new staff members additional support is given by line managers or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training. Currently Y11 are receiving boosters prior to the exam in specific subjects, and these have been well received.</p> <p>Improvements have been seen in Dedication to Learning (DTL) in years 11, 12 and 13. There have been slight regressions in some of the other year groups, in year 9, students know that they will soon be dropping some of the subjects and therefore effort sometimes drops off. The use of DTL language in classrooms is an area for improvement to use positive language to encourage and motivate students.</p> <p>Homework</p> <p>Currently a review is underway around the relevance and quality of homework. Mrs Widdup explained that there appears to have been a shift in attitudes to homework with some children completing it and others not doing so and therefore the role that homework plays in terms of the progression of the curriculum becomes difficult to control. The review will be looking at ways of homework becoming an added extra rather than a necessity.</p> <p><u>One of the governors commented</u> that they had attended the presentation evening about exams for year 10s <u>and asked Mr Spooner</u> if he could explain this further to the committee.</p>	

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	<p>Mr Spooner explained that the session was an introduction for parents to GCSEs to help them better understand the language around the exams, in particular the conversion from letters into numbers for GCSE grades. They also talked about revision and why it is important in preparing year 10 for this time next year. The year 10 GCSE mock exams which will be held in formal conditions and will follow this years' GCSE's and the results will factor into class setting for year 11. The governors felt that the majority of parents attending the event appeared to be supportive of the approach. Mrs Widdup added that a 2-year programme of preparation for GCSE is now being developed.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if the issues around homework are unique to Retford Oaks Academy and Mrs Widdup responded that it appears to be a national issue and added that she is meeting with the principals and vice principals for both academies that she works with to look at the approach to homework. One of the things being considered will be rewarding homework completed rather than punishing homework not done. <u>The governors then wondered</u> how homework was currently being monitored. Mrs Widdup said it is difficult to monitor and manage when some students do the homework and others do not, and this has an impact on the next lesson and therefore a realistic approach needs to be developed.</p> <p>Update on pupil numbers Synergy (Notts County Council) has put Retford Oaks down for 233 students for next year into year 7 which is close to the advertised PAN of 240. The academy is now waiting to hear if Retford Oaks will be asked to go over the 240 PAN to 270 for which contingency has been built into staffing. <u>The governors asked</u> if the Notts County Council had given more detail to enable the academy to plan <u>and then questioned</u> whether the number of anticipated students is likely to change further. Mrs Widdup said that despite a meeting with the local authority last week, numbers for the four schools within the trust asked to take more students this year were still unclear. <u>Governors asked</u> if the number is likely to go down and Mrs Widdup said that the number won't go down but may still increase.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson went on to inform the committee that himself and pastoral staff from the academy are currently visiting year 6 students in the feeder schools and delivering their welcome packs. They are also visiting the year 5s to talk to them about the opening evenings and are looking to develop a series of year 5 experience days in the summer term. <u>The governors wondered</u> if this approach is going above and beyond what would normally be expected. Mrs Widdup said that rather than Retford Oaks staff going out to the primaries, students need to see what it's like here at Retford Oaks, see the facilities and become more comfortable about the environment. Mr Dickinson added that the Elizabethan PAN has also increased and therefore the strategy is to take a more proactive approach to encouraging children to apply to Retford Oaks. <u>The governors then asked</u> if any feeder schools were looking particularly lower than expected in terms of numbers. Mr Dickinson explained that the number coming from St Swithun's is very low</p>	

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	<p>but numbers are strong from Ordsall Primary and Bracken Lane. Numbers from Thrumpton are a little disappointing and this is being looked at. The other thing to note with many of the outlying village schools is that class sizes are very small and Retford Oaks take from over 40 primary schools. <u>The governors asked</u> what the year 5 experience days might entail. Mr Dickinson confirmed that they are gathering feedback from their visits with the feeder schools that will then be developed into a plan. <u>The governors then wanted to understand</u> if the academy have much influence over the feeder schools to enable better preparation into year 7. Mr Dickinson explained that because the number of feeders schools is so high, it is not possible to ensure that all students arrive with a similar baseline.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson said that parental engagement has improved more recently to provide the opportunity for parents to talk to staff and <u>governors wondered</u> if transportation costs might be a barrier to some families living in villages that are served by a bus to Elizabethan. Anecdotal evidence suggests that due to the location of St Giles, Retford Oaks is considered the 3rd school, furthest away from those living north of Retford and therefore transport costs are not covered. St Giles is not a school that they could attend and therefore should not be taken into account. ACTION: Mr Dickinson agreed to investigate this issue further and added that transportation is either provided by the local authority, otherwise public transport is the only other option to parents. [AP-LD]. <u>The governors then questioned</u> whether traffic might be an issue, given the local road network and the time it takes to reach the academy in the morning adding that many students from Misterton are lost to Epworth as it is closer and easier to get to. Mr Dickinson said that there is little that can be done to alleviate the pressure on the roads in the mornings.</p> <p>Risk report</p> <p>Mr Dickinson referred governors to the risk report and noted that as just mentioned, the Year 7 PAN is still a little up in the air and the viability of Post 16 remains a risk. Option choices have been revised following a survey in January; Psychology has been reintroduced now which has brought some students back who would otherwise have gone to The Elizabethan. The Drama A level is now being offered as opposed to the performing arts qualification. There appeared initially to be a reluctance from year 11 to stay at the academy into Post 16 but indications are that students now feel more bought in and Mr Dickinson is expecting an increase in students wanting to stay at the Retford Oaks on results day. <u>The governors acknowledged</u> that Post 16 continues to be a work in progress.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if there were any Cat C trips in the pipeline the governors needed to be aware of. Mr Dickinson said that there is nothing currently planned that hasn't already been discussed The Duke of Edinburgh trip was out at the weekend. <u>The governors then asked</u> whose responsibility the school minibuses are, and Mr Dickinson said the academy are looking at reducing from 2 to 1 minibus which will be more cost effective and unlikely to cause an issue.</p>	<p>LD 08/07/24</p>

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AC/61/2324	Policy Updates The following policies have been approved by the Board Committees and were shared for information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Suspension and Exclusion Policy (summary of changes) ➤ Financial Procedures Manual (summary of changes) 	
AC/62/2324	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attendance ➤ Behaviour ➤ Homework ➤ Exam preparation ➤ Admissions numbers 	
AC/63/2324	How have the VMV of Trust / Equality been upheld? It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust & Equality has been upheld.	
AC/64/2324	Complete report to trustees The report to trustees was discussed and completed and covered the following positive points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Paddy McGuinness work with student voice ➤ Attendance improvements, in particular to SEND, thanks to all staff putting time into this. ➤ Engaging year 10 students and parents with the plans for preparation for GCSEs in a professional way. 	
AC/65/2324	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were no confidential items discussed. - There had been no Equality Act implications. 	
	Date and time of next meeting: Date 8 th July <u>at 5.30pm</u> at Retford Oaks Academy The meeting closed at 18:33pm	
	Signed...  (chair) Date.. 03/06/2024 Print... Andrew Knight.....	