

**Minutes of the Retford Oaks Academy Committee meeting
held on Monday 23rd September 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	A
Mr K Morgan	KM	Appointed	
Miss W Luke	WL	Appointed	
Miss N Bridgeman	NBR	Appointed	

In attendance	Initials	Position	
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	
Mr J Rolph	JR	Diverse Academies Trustee	
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/01/2425	Apologies for absence There were no apologies for absence. It was noted that Mr Purle and Miss Ward were absent. NBE will contact Mr Purle and will write to Miss Ward regarding lack of attendance as it has now been over 6 months since she last attended a committee meeting. [AP – NBE]	NBE 07/10/2024
AC/02/2425	Trustee Item. John Rolph The Chair welcomed Mr Rolph to the meeting and invited him to introduce himself to the committee. Mr Rolph gave the committee a brief history as to his involvement with Diverse Academies Trust over the years, starting as a parent governor and then chair of governors at Tuxford Academy around 2004/2005. When the trust was set up in 2011, Mr Rolph became the Chair Of Trustees for Diverse Academies. Mr Rolph described his role as a member and trustee and explained that his background is in chartered accountancy hence his membership of the Finance & Resources committee (F&R). Mr Rolph explained the history of the finance within the trust and explained why it works better to be managed centrally with the trustees rather than at individual academy level.	

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	<p>So far this year, his activity has been around settling in with the new budgets and looking at pay increases for staff, the recommendation for teachers hasn't yet formally been accepted and support staff is also not yet settled. Mr Rolph also considers capital investment and explained how the trust receives a grant from the DfE based on the number of academies and the number of pupils for the upkeep of premises which equates to about £2.2m across the trust and this is not nearly enough. Mr Rolph explained that he is also a member of the Governance & Partnerships committee and works with the development of new academies and the relationships between the Trust and the LACs. David Schwarz has now taken over as Chair Of Trustees and is keen on improving relationships between the trust and Local Academy Committees. Mr Rolph acknowledged that as a group of volunteers it is difficult to arrange useful times and sessions and the idea behind his attendance this evening is to give trustees an opportunity to see what is going on at the coal face.</p> <p>The chair of governors told Mr Rolph that finance has been an issue that has been raised before by the LAC, the committee have no sight over any of the budgets and therefore feel ill-informed and uneasy about their role. Mr Rolph explained that it is responsibility of the finance manager to attend at least one LAC meeting per year. The chair of governors responded that the committee don't see any financial information and haven't been spoken to about the finances in the LAC meetings. Mr Rolph reassured the LAC that the Trustees are ultimately responsible for the finances and agreed to feed back the comments raised.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> how long before the PFI finishes at Retford Oaks. Mr Rolph said he understands that it will run until 2032. <u>The governors then asked</u> who will own the building after that and Mr Rolph explained it will be an asset of the trust when it hands back into ownership. <u>The governors then wanted to know</u> if the leaking roof was still an issue. Mr Dickinson explained that the sports hall roof has now been fixed but the leaking corridor roof is still an issue. Mr Rolph explained that the building should be handed back in good condition and Mrs Widdup went on that there is a cycle of repairs as part of the agreement.</p> <p>Mr Rolph encouraged the committee to use the report to Trustees which is a part of the LAC agenda to share information and raise questions with trustees.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> when the pay offer will be resolved for support staff. The chair of governors explained that there are 3 unions, 1 has accepted the offer and 2 have declined. It is going through the due process. Mr Rolph added that once resolved pay will be backdated and that the DfE have said that they will fund the pay increase on a formula which assumes a mixture of bands of staff.</p>	

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AC/03/2425	<p>Governance report</p> <p>The Governance Professional (GP) reminded all governors to complete the Declarations of Interest for 2024-2025 if they have not already done so [AP-Govs].</p> <p>The GP reminded all governors to read and sign the Code of Conduct for 2024-2025 if they have not already done so [AP-Govs].</p> <p>The GP explained the remaining sections of the governance report contained actions for governors to complete and asked all governors to review the document and complete necessary actions around training and housekeeping. [AP-Govs]</p> <p>The GP also explained that the Action Log not only contains specific actions for governors to complete but also a tab with a selection of optional training modules and webinars that governors might find interesting or useful for them to fulfil their role.</p> <p>The dates for the upcoming Link governor meetings are also included within the report which will always include the most up to date and upcoming meetings and events.</p>	<p>All Govs 07/10/24</p> <p>All Govs 07/10/24</p> <p>All Govs 07/10/24</p>
AC/04/2425	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 8th July 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the chair.</p>	
AC/05/2425	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>AC/66/2324. Complete</p> <p>AC/68/2324 It was agreed that a training session on Prevent be built into the meeting timetable for 2024/2025. [AP-NBE] carried forward</p> <p>AC/73/2324 Complete</p> <p>AC/73/2324 Complete</p> <p>AC/73/2324 Complete</p> <p>AC/73/2324 Closed</p> <p>[New AP] AK to produce a newsletter to parents for November, DC will do one after Christmas and will concentrate n the role of governors</p>	<p>AK Nov 24</p>
AC/06/2425	<p>Principals Report</p> <p>Mr Dickinson provided the committee with a summary of the documents contained within the Principal's report starting with the exam results.</p> <p>Results</p> <p><u>A Levels</u> – Increase in value added and overall average grade was up from the previous year. Challenges were found in securing the top grades (A*'s, A's and B's) and this is an area to be developed. Work to be done on stretch and challenge to ensure teachers are knowledgeable and skilled to teach at the top end. This will be reflected at GCSE level as well. This will help with quality assurance of teaching to ensure the right level of challenge for students and identify any gaps in knowledge.</p>	

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	<p><u>GCSE's</u> – Attainment 8 (A8) was down; however it is important to note that this was a weaker cohort. Progress 8 (P8) is in line and still waiting on reviews of marking. Grade 4's and upwards are down in English and Maths, again this is a weaker cohort. English results, in particular, were disappointing in the overall outcomes and trust support has been enlisted for English department.</p> <p>Position statement meetings are all now complete with the exception of Pupil Premium (PP) and SEND where specific cohort meetings will be held and actions from these will be taken forward. The teaching and learning strategy is being re-visited to ensure all students can access the exam paper by the end.</p> <p>Cohort gaps for disadvantaged and SEND students are in line with one another and there is work to do around the middle and the top end. Students performing at the top performed very well. The grade 5-7 boundary needs further development to ensure an appropriate level of challenge has been set. Y10 mock exams before the summer have enabled early planning for the current cohort.</p> <p>ERM Report Art, Drama, French, Spanish and BTech PE were high performing subjects. A recovery plan is in place for English which is already running with specialist English Support. Business Studies is a cause for concern and the current Y11 cohort will be following a different course. Other areas of concern are in combined science, English literature and photography, these are all being addressed through line management and a change in personnel.</p> <p>At Post 16, Art, Drama, History, Maths and Media performed well. Poor performing subjects were in Business Studies, Biology and Chemistry, English Language and English Literature.</p> <p>The current position is that A8 is below target but this is expected to improve. Triple science is a strength, and music is showing strength having changed to a vocational course. Areas for development are in combined science where an additional teacher has been added. GCSE RE will not be compulsory from the incoming year 10 cohort.</p> <p>Looking at the current Y13 AS level results are in and the modal grade in sciences for AS level is an A and therefore there is hope that there will be an improvement of the average grade this year. Strengths were in Media, Biology and Drama.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson asked if there were any more questions relating to the ERM summary, <u>the governors asked</u> which exam board is used for English GCSE. Mr Dickinson replied the exam board is AQA.</p>	

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	<p>AIP overview 23-24</p> <p>Mr Dickinson referred to the AIP 23-24 document and explained the reasons for the RAG ratings identified. The cohort gaps for SEND and PP didn't reduce sufficiently to move the rating to green and a delay on the provision map is also reflected in the document, he added that more context will be given when reviewing the AIP for 24-25. There were no questions on this from governors.</p> <p>AIP 24-25</p> <p>Objective 1 - SEND focus broken down into Outcomes, Attendance and Persistent Absence (PA) gaps and Suspensions and the use of Alternative Curriculum. the gap is a baseline. <u>Suspensions</u> were at 10.6% last year (19 students in total) this is a reduction on previous years, however despite utilising different strategies, the cohort gap for attendance remains at 7.3%. 39 students were at AP or AC at the end of last year which will be the baseline for this year and will be looking to keep the number proportional to the rest of the academy cohort. <u>Outcomes</u> - improving attainment will be the focus this year as Y11 children did not sit SATs so there is no progress 8 data, making sure appropriate outcomes and next steps are achieved for those students attending AP and AC. Baselines will be taken from Y11 outcomes and Y10 mock exams. In terms of <u>Social Outcomes</u>, attendance increased by 3% versus a target of 1% and PA came down from 37% to 30%. There were two permanent last year and currently options are being reviewed to avoid further exclusions for some students. Suspensions have reduced from 10% of the academy to 4.7% of the academy.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson asked if there were any questions in relation to the new Academy Improvement Plan, there were no questions.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson asked if there were any questions in relation to the Safeguarding template shared as part of the Principal's report. There were no questions.</p> <p>SEND</p> <p>Mr Dickinson apologised to governors for the late delivery of the SEND report to governors and the SEND information to parents paperwork and asked if there were any questions, there were no questions. Mr Dickinson gave a summary of the current situation with regards students with SEND. There are currently 19 students with an EHCP and 5 with applications in progress. Funding is being received was £56,531 for 14 students at present. The Local SEND offer can be found on the academy website. Governors acknowledged that the council is improving the local offer for accessibility.</p> <p>Pupil Premium (PP)</p> <p>The Pupil Premium strategy will be shared following the meeting. [AP – LD] Anna Brammall has taken over the lead for the academy. Challenge number 4 has been changed to lack of engagement in independent study beyond the academy. The academy is working towards rewarding PP</p>	<p>LD 11/11/2024</p>

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	<p>students who do engage with independent learning and homework rather than punishing those who do not. The PP voucher booklet has been removed due to cost and also to take away the physical evidence of students carrying the booklets which may carry a stigma for those students. Attainment was down on last year as with English and Maths. Gap remains. Attendance for PP is an improvement on last year. The PP and young carers lead is working with PP students to identify barriers to attendance and engagement when in school.</p> <p>There were no questions from governors on PP.</p> <p>Risk report Mr Dickinson explained that viability of P16 has been added as a risk, the current intake of 28 is lower than expected. Some students have moved over to the Elizabethan. This possibility was identified as an issue in the offer and the offer had been adapted and changed to try to prevent this from happening, but the students did not stay. As a consequence, the offer will be marketed earlier this year. <u>The governors asked</u> if there had been any follow up activity with those students to identify the reasons for them going elsewhere. Mr Dickinson explained that some felt they wanted a fresh start somewhere new and added that this cohort had faced challenges in the early years at Retford Oaks due to the pandemic and haven't developed a strong sense of belonging as you would normally expect to see, also some of the students would struggle to achieve and it would be setting them up to fail if they were to accept all students into sixth form irrespective of GCSE grades. This risk will continue to be reviewed.</p> <p>Staff survey Mr Dickinson listed the positive feedback received from staff voice 2024 which revealed that staff feel respected by students. They feel that have approachable line managers, they like the changes to the structure of the lessons and are happy with colleagues and colleague support. Some constructive feedback has been received in relation to the changes been made to the time of the school day, CPD, rewards, communication with Mr Dickinson and Mr Cooper being more involved with middle leaders. Changes to policy around marking and homework to better support staff. A greater presence on the corridor means improved behaviour. Some elements of feedback that will be addressed are around, Safeguarding information, entitlement of leave of absences is zero and staff understand that they are required to be in the building, staff appointed to leadership roles. Mr Dickinson made it clear that the best people are appointed to leadership roles irrespective of gender.</p> <p><u>The governors wanted some clarity</u> on the impact on year 11 teaching staff of placing senior level teachers into the Y11 roles. Mr Dickinson explained that staff were placed to work alongside teaching staff and work together to achieve better outcomes for students. <u>The governors then asked</u> if they can be satisfied that there are equal opportunities for all staff to develop and progress. Mr Dickinson said that CPD is made available, discussions</p>	

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	<p>are held, and all staff are being encouraged to apply for positions. <u>The governors asked again</u> if all opportunities were equal, and Mr Dickinson confirmed that they were.</p> <p>There was a GDPR breach in 2024 which has been through due process and there is no further action. One SAR currently being actioned and due to be complete in 2 weeks. There are no ongoing FOI requests. There has been one police request which has been actioned. Mr Dickinson told the committee that there are no complaints or claims ongoing at present.</p> <p>Trips Mr Dickinson told the committee that the Science and Geography departments would like to take a residential trip to Iceland in 2025/2026. The price will be £1500 which includes return flights from a local airport, travel around Iceland, accommodation and all meals included. This will run on alternate years to the ski trip and will be targeted towards the older students. Governors were asked if they were happy for plans for the trip to proceed. <u>The governors asked</u> how many students the trip will be aimed at and Mr Dickinson said it is based on up to 40 students, <u>the governors then wanted to know</u> what age groups would be eligible to go on the trip. Mr Dickinson said it would be initially aimed at the older year groups and if not full would be offered out to younger students.</p> <p><u>The chair of governors asked</u> if the tour provider is a reputable company, and it was confirmed that the company is a reputable one who specialise in these types of trips. <u>The governors then wanted to understand</u> the cost of the ski trip in comparison along with the uptake. Mr Dickinson said that the ski trip is around £1200 And there are 52 places and 25 on the reserve list. It was acknowledged that the need and desire is there for both trips and therefore governors were happy to approve the Iceland trip. The Chair of governors asked all committee members if they had any objections, there were none.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson noted that the minutes from the most recent Health & Safety meeting had been shared. Mr Silcock said he attended the last meeting and agreed that he would be in attendance at the next one also.</p> <p>Admissions The PAN remains at 240 with 100 6th form places. The current year 7 intake was 215. Mrs Widdup added that the council are having a conversation with the trust again about raising the PAN for 25/26. <u>The governors wanted to know</u> what the strategy is going forward to increase the numbers into sixth form and wondered if there was a desire to increase sixth form numbers. Mrs Widdup said that she felt the change of offer made last year to meet the need/desire of students was a mistake. The Academy need to be clear about what the offer is. They will be exploring the potential to bring in a T level in Health to build on the link with the NHS. There will also be visits to other schools and colleges within the Local Authority to identify what the draws are from other sites. She added that the commitment to sixth form remains. <u>Governors asked</u> what numbers would be ideal for</p>	

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	<p>Retford Oaks and Mrs Widdup replied that would be 50 students in each year group. Mr Dickinson said that there are over 50 students in the current year 12. The academy are trying to replicate the year 6 into 7 strategy, taking ex-students out to primaries but also having 6th formers drop into lower year groups to mentor and create aspirations.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if there is an open evening planned for the sixth form. Mr Dickinson said it is scheduled for 9th December. <u>The governors then asked</u> if students in the lower year groups are offered the opportunity to experience taster sessions in sixth form and Mr Dickinson confirmed that this is a strategy being explored this year alongside a 'showcase event'.</p> <p><u>The governors wanted to know more</u> about staff development <u>and asked</u> if the trust / academy use external companies to deliver staff training. Mr Dickinson said there are DfE courses, NPQ's via Redhill trust, partnerships with external companies such as IRIS for example. Where there is an identified need, a course will be researched and external providers will be used if appropriate.</p> <p><u>The governors referred to</u> the results analysis for the recent GCSE results <u>and asked</u> if the weaker cohort at Retford Oaks this year was reflected in other schools within the trust or if it was specific to Retford Oaks. Mrs Widdup said there doesn't appear to be a national or trust picture and results are very much dependent upon specific cohorts. <u>The governors wanted to understand</u> how concerned the academy and trust are about the dip in progress. Mr Dickinson said that it is a concern for the school and is something that has already been addressed by the recovery plan and will be the number 1 priority for this year. The chair of governors added that he had been in the academy at the start of term and feels satisfied that everything is being done that can be done by the academy and staff.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> when the number of applications for the next year 7 would be known and Mr Dickinson said that offer day is in March next year and that the academy are working on a more intimate approach to encouraging applications this time by offering opportunities to meet key staff and visits the school which was well attended.</p>	
AC/07/2425	<p>Budget Summary 2024-25</p> <p>Mrs Widdup told the committee that Simon Lowe is looking at doing some benchmarking before information can be shared and reassured the committee that the budget has been set and is well managed.</p> <p>Mr Rolph added that he will ask for the finance manager to attend the committee meeting once a year to provide an overview and answer any questions. [AP -JR]</p> <p>Other business</p> <p>Mr Spooner told the committee that he will be stepping down from the role of staff governor following this meeting. Mr Spooner's term of office</p>	<p>JR 07/10/2024</p>

Item No	Item	Action/ by who/when
	<p>comes to an end this half term and he feels that he has less time to commit to the role. The chair of governors thanked Mr Spooner on behalf of all committee members for all his hard work and accepted his resignation. The governance professional will organise a new nomination and election process for a staff governor. [AP-NBE]</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> what numbers the academy would need in 6th form to break even. Mr Widdup explained that 6th form breaking even is unlikely but needs to be offered. Mr Rolph added that the offer is what counts.</p> <p>The chair of governors told the committee that he will be organising some 1 to 1 sessions with each committee member and that the governance professional will be in touch to schedule the sessions before the spring term. [AP- AK / NBE].</p> <p><i>The chair of governors asked</i> if all attendees would be available to meet earlier in the evening than the planned 5:30pm start. There was some discussion, and it was agreed that the meetings remain at 5:30pm.</p>	<p>NBE 22/11/2024</p> <p>AK / NBE 22/11/2024</p>
AC/08/2425	<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 and recovery plans ➤ Sustainability of Post 16 and plan to increase numbers ➤ Staff survey results / equal opportunities for staff ➤ Staff training provision 	
AC/09/2425	<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/10/2425	<p>Complete report to trustees The report to trustees was discussed and completed within the meeting.</p>	
AC/11/2425	<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 18th November <u>at 5.30pm</u> at Retford Oaks Academy</p> <p>The meeting closed at 18:38pm</p>	

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	<p>Signed...  (chair) Date.. 08/10/2024</p> <p>Print.....A Knight</p>	