

**Minutes of the Retford Oaks Academy Committee meeting  
held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 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	
Mrs P Bryn-Jones	PBJ	Appointed	
Mr A Silcock	AS	Appointed	
Mr J Purle	JP	Appointed	
Mr K Morgan	KM	Appointed	
Dr Ann Harris	AH	Elected Parent	
Mrs Sarah Miles	SM	Elected Parent	
Mrs L Clough-Watson	LCW	Staff Governor	

<b>In attendance</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Position</b>	
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional (GP)	

<i>Quorum numbers</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Governor's present</i>	<i>9</i>
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<b>Item No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action/ by who/when</b>
<b>AC/49/2425</b>	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b> All members were present.</p> <p>The chair welcomed Mr Morgan back from his recent travels and introduced Mrs Harris and Mrs Miles to those governors not present at the last meeting.</p>	
<b>AC/50/2425</b>	<p><b>Declaration of interest and notification of any changes to declaration made.</b> 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>	
<b>AC/51/2425</b>	<p><b>Local Academy Committee membership</b> <b>Governor candidate – Sophie Babu</b> The governance professional confirmed that references have been returned satisfactorily and signed off by the Chair, Mrs Knight. Mr Knight added that having met with Sophie it was clear that Sophie would be a valued addition to the committee. After a brief discussion, academy committee governors agreed that Miss babu would be elected to the committee for a four-year term of office. The governance professional will formally write to Miss Babu welcoming her and will initiate her induction. <b>[Action-NB]</b></p>	<b>NB 23/05/25</b>

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	<p><b>Consideration for the role of chair of governors</b></p> <p>The chair explained that he will come to the end of his term of 4 years as chair of governors. There will be an election in the July meeting and he suggested that all governors should have a think about whether they would like to put themselves forward ahead of the next meeting. The governance professional explained that support and training will be provided by the trust for the newly appointed chair and vice chair and Mr Knight added that he will remain on the committee and will be available to support who ever steps into the role. <b>[Action – Goves]</b></p>	<p><b>Goves</b> <b>07/07/25</b></p>
<b>AC/52/2425</b>	<p><b>Local Training</b></p> <p>The governance professional reminded all governors to watch the training if they haven't already done so as it is helpful to give some understanding of where roles and responsibilities lie.</p>	
<b>AC/53/2425</b>	<p><b>Governance report</b></p> <p>All governors were reminded to complete any outstanding mandatory training as soon as possible, details of all outstanding training is contained within the GP Report.</p> <p><b>Governor action plan update</b></p> <p>The Governance Professional explained to governors that they will soon be asked to complete a skills audit which will help in developing the action plan for next year.</p> <p>The chair expressed that an area of concern at the moment is that link visits are not being completed by all link governors. With recent changes in personnel there are also important link governor roles that need to be filled. It was agreed that we will look to re-establish link roles at the start of the next academic year with a focus on the mandatory roles around Safeguarding, SEND, GDPR and Careers. The governance professional will share the list of link roles to all for consideration. <b>[Action – NB]</b></p> <p><b>Governor Link visits reports</b></p> <p>Mr Silcock attended the most recent health and safety meeting and shared a summary of his report which will be placed on the governance portal. Important points to note were that a brief refresher should be given on all absence procedures, the emergency lockdown procedure has been checked, and the system works, a final test date is no longer required due to a recent incident requiring a lockdown. Training in operation of fire extinguishers for new staff should be reinstated if possible.</p> <p><b><u>Governors wanted to know</u></b> how many years are left before the building is no longer a PFI. Mr Dickison said that there are still a lot of years to go. <b><u>Governors then asked</u></b> if the plans to change the dining space had been scrapped. Mr Dickinson said that nothing has been put in place to extend the dining room due to a shortage of funding available to make the changes. Mr Dickinson went on to explain that he had been hoping that the local authority might support this change due their request for the</p>	<p><b>NB 06/06/25</b></p>

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	<p>academy to take larger numbers however the birth rate is now dropping and the school aren't breaking PAN every year. <b><u>Governors wondered</u></b> if building additional space for separate Key stages might be an option and Mrs Widdup explained that because the building is a PFI building and is not owned by the academy and structural changes come at a significant cost and Mr Dickinson added that any work requested must first be approved by the PFI and ultimately delivered by the PFI at an inflated cost. <b><u>Governors asked</u></b> if the PFI would plan and price up any requests and Mr Dickinson said that they first thing they would do would be a capacity survey.</p> <p><b><u>Governors asked</u></b> why staggering lunchtimes had not worked. Mr Dickinson explained that it had been difficult to keep the noise down which was too distracting for the students not on lunch.</p> <p>Governors asked if the local authority might still request that they take a larger PAN. Mrs Widdup said they are still working with the trust around numbers and if additional funding will be applied, however it look unlikely to affect Retford Oaks.</p>	
<b>AC/54/2425</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting dated 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025</b></p> <p>The minutes from the meeting were approved by all attendees.</p> <p><b><u>Governors asked</u></b> if anyone had been appointed as SENDCO. Mr Dickinson confirmed that Claire Gould had been appointed, and this had been communicated to parents and carers.</p>	
<b>AC/55/2425</b>	<p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p><b>AC/37/2425</b> NB to contact AS re non-attendance. <b>complete</b></p> <p><b>AC/39/2425</b> Schedule meeting with SB and AK/LD. <b>complete</b></p> <p><b>AC/41/2425</b> Gobs – complete outstanding mandatory training. <b>ongoing</b></p> <p><b>AC/41/2425</b> AK share SEND link visit reports. <b>Carried forward</b></p> <p><b>AC/41/2425</b> DC share Safeguarding link visit report. <b>Carried forward</b></p> <p><b>AC/44/2425</b> SM / LD to meet to discuss if SM can support with SEND. <b>complete</b></p> <p><b>AC/44/2425</b> NB to ensure SEND newsletters are shared with governors. <b>carried forward</b></p> <p><b>AC/44/2425</b> NB to obtain and share academy events with governors <b>complete</b></p>	
<b>AC/56/2425</b>	<p><b>Principals Report</b></p> <p>Mr Dickinson referred to the principal's report and reviewed the key points. The Academy Improvement Plan (AIP) was reviewed up to the Easter period. Priority 1 - the gap between SEND and non-SEND students is reducing, however suspensions have increased beyond the desired level. Priority 2a - trial exams take into account maths English and science, it is expected that the attainment figures will move in a positive direction, the variation in outcomes shows history as the bottom subject but additional work has been completed, and history has improved. The number of students at alternative curriculum in year 11 is 16 which is the highest</p>	

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	<p>number in any year group. Attendance has been impacted and the number of students at alternative provision is down.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson told the committee that some students have been withdrawn from exams due to mental health and <b><u>governors asked</u></b> if the academy are still doing as much as possible in house to support students with mental health issues. <b><u>Governors then further questioned</u></b> the AIP identifying that priority 2a was on track and now isn't, wondering if this was due to outliers. Mr Dickinson clarified that Term 1 was on track and Term 2 is also on track and there is an error in the report. The Governors then wanted to know if some of the 'no's within the plan are getting close to being changed to 'yes's' and Mr Dickinson said that there are many factors that need to be met before a 'no' can change to a 'yes', some of the factors are minor but the targets have been set deliberately challenging.</p> <p><b>Attendance</b></p> <p>Mr Dickinson said that attendance has been impacted by outliers and is now significantly improved with the PA (persistent absence) figure better. The pupil premium gap still needs more work. <b><u>Governors noted that</u></b> there are differences between the ROA figures and the attendance reports from DfE. Mr Dickinson explained that some errors with the reporting have been identified and reported to the DfE but it may take 6 months to be rectified. <b><u>Governors wanted to know</u></b> if students taking holidays during term time has had an impact on PA figures and how the academy is tackling this.</p> <p>AK asked about holidays and the impact on PA. Mr Dickinson explained that the default position is holidays taken during term time will be unauthorised with a fine. A very small number may be unauthorised without a fine. <b><u>Governors then asked for clarity</u></b> that a student has to take 5 consecutive days unauthorised before a fine is issued. Mr Dickinson explained that this is likely to change, and it will apply to 5 days across a year. He went on to tell the committee that 6<sup>th</sup> form attendance is strong. Governors were reassured to see the PP and SEND attendance figures aren't significantly below national average. <b><u>Governors identified that</u></b> year 10 seem to spike a bit in terms of attendance. Mr Dickinson said there have been meetings to discuss this with the head of year 10 and other staff members and work is ongoing to get parents into the academy to explain the importance of attendance for those students and try to improve the numbers. <b><u>Governors then asked</u></b> if there are any particular issues with the year 10 cohort. Mr Dickinson said there are some anomaly cases in that year group, there are no trends as such, but mental health issues are a concern in this year group which is potentially a hangover from covid. Mrs Widdup told the committee that attendance data has already been received for the incoming year 7 cohort <b><u>and governors then asked</u></b> if the academy already know the students that are likely to have issues with attendance. Mrs Widdup said that the students with 100-95% attendance is the lowest within the trust but having the information to tackle this head on before the summer means that contact can be made early. Governors recognised that there are some students on roll that will never attend. <b><u>Governors then questioned whether</u></b> some of the incoming cohort might</p>	

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	<p>have poor attendance due to holidays in term time and asked if this was visible in the data. Mrs Widdup said the data is received using codes so it will simply appear as authorised and unauthorised, she went on that not all primary schools apply the same rules with regards fines for unauthorised absence and this is something that is made clear to parents when their children come to ROA. <b><u>Governors referred</u></b> to a previous comment from Mr Dickinson that not all parents are fined <b><u>and asked</u></b> if it's on compassionate grounds. Mr Dickinson confirmed that has the case in some instances and Mrs Widdup added that fines are decided by the principal on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Mr Dickinson told the committee that a permanent exclusion was issued recently, the GDC (governors discipline committee) was held this morning and upheld the exclusion. He explained that the exclusion was in relation to an incident that resulted in the lockdown of the academy to guarantee the safety of all staff and students.</p> <p><b>Trips</b> The trips offered for year 7 are significant and consideration is now being given to the cost to parents and the number being offered will be reduced. <b><u>The governors asked</u></b> how PP (pupil premium) funding supports with trips and Mr Dickinson said that PP students received two £10 vouchers to put towards trips. Governors queried the '?' beside some of the trips listed in the paperwork and Mr Dickinson explained that some of the trips are incentives/prizes for attendance for example.</p> <p><b>Staff Survey</b> Mr Dickinson asked if there were any questions from the staff survey overview shared in his report. Governors commented that it appeared to be positive, however a proportion of the answers chosen were 'neither better nor worse' and questioned if the survey was anonymous adding that it is likely that at the negative responses across the questions are from the same person. Governors noted that there appeared to be a good climate, and results show a positive picture. <b><u>Governors identified</u></b> that the question about the trust was particularly in the middle and Mrs Widdup felt that from a staff perspective the trust does not impact on the day to day. Mr Dickinson added the many staff don't recognise Mrs Widdup as being 'the trust' and that when decisions are made and shared they are done from the academy perspective. <b><u>Governors questioned</u></b> the level of engagement with the survey appearing quite low in terms of numbers that replied and Mrs Clough-Watson suggested that the time it takes to complete the survey and the length of time that the survey is open could be considered to improve staff engagement. <b><u>Governors wondered</u></b> if it might be better to allow respondents to enter comments but the consensus amongst the committee was that less people would respond. Mr Dickinson explained that he has categorised the positives, the areas for development and the misconceptions to be addressed with staff. Governors welcomed the response to the question about pupils feeling safe in school where most responses were strongly agree. <b><u>Governors then</u></b></p>	

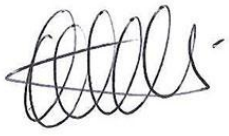
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	<p><u>asked</u> who decides the questions and Mrs Widdup confirmed that it was the Ofsted questionnaire.</p> <p><b>Safeguarding checklist</b> There were no questions in relation to the safeguarding checklist.</p> <p><b>SEND Recovery Plan</b> <u>Governors asked</u> why some comments were both red and amber, the same comment having been red in spring 2 term and amber in summer term 1. Mr Dickinson explained that it is moving in the right direction and has therefore been reflected as amber now. Mrs Bryn-Jones was concerned how this might be misinterpreted and said she would be more than happy to help the SENDCO with narratives and ratings. <u>The governors then asked</u> if there is sufficient staff in place to cover the backlog of work. Mr Dickinson said that Mrs Austerberry is working towards being qualified and is supporting. The governors then asked how many hours Mrs Austerberry is committed to and Mr Dickinson replied – 4 hours per week, he added that TA interviews are underway at the moment to further help the team. <u>Governors wanted to know</u> what was meant by the ‘right to choose’ and asked how large the backlog is. Mr Dickinson said the first thing that needed to happen was to get it compliant, the SENDCO is now working through the backlog. It is a cycle of plan do review which is a 2 term minimum process and this hasn’t previously been communicated with parents effectively. <u>Governors questioned</u> whether some students are on the wrong coding. Mr Dickinson confirmed that the SENDCO has reviewed the list and has allocated the appropriate grading.</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> who quality is assuring the provision map, Mr Dickinson said the SENDCO is doing this at the moment, and it is being audited by the trust. Mrs Clough-Watson said that she was hoping to do some staff training on provision map so that staff can share good practice of the things that they find can work with individuals in their classrooms.</p> <p><u>Governors sought assurance</u> that the number of year 7 children with EHCP’s etc coming into the academy in September was known and being prepared for, noting that the Ofsted new framework has significant focus on inclusion. Mr Dickinson said that Yeoman Park recently received an Outstanding Ofsted and the SENDCO is visiting Yeoman Park to work with staff there and pick up best practice. Another governor shared that the Ofsted review at another school he was involved with was heavily focussed around SEND. Mr Dickinson said that staff recently went to East Leake Academy post Ofsted to be trained to recognise what they need to do in preparation. He went on to describe the inverted triangle which focusses on the pupil passport / EHCP to ensure SEND is part of teaching and learning. <u>Governors asked</u> if the teaching staff are regularly reminded to keep checking the passports and Mr Dickinson confirmed that they will. Mr Dickinson added that the SENDCO had chosen to keep her year 11 and year 13 classes throughout exams but when they have left she will have more time.</p>	



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	<p><b>Risk report</b></p> <p>The viability of Post 16 remains a risk and the number of viable students (those that will meet the entry criteria) is a concern. <b><u>Governors asked</u></b> if the numbers do not increase will the post 16 be viable for next year and further asked what the break-even would be. Mrs Widdup confirmed that the post 16 requires 12 students per class to break even and that it currently is not there. Mr Dickinson explained that rather than competing with other providers to attract students, this time a decision has been made to put together an offer and stick to it. <b><u>Governors asked</u></b> if sixth formers are allowed to leave the building wondering if having more freedom might attract them. Mr Dickinson said that as long as attendance is good, they are given the option to leave when they have a free period.</p> <p><b><u>Governors referred</u></b> to a previous meeting where there had been discussion around delivering lessons in a lecture style over Teams that can be shared across the trust and then consolidated in the classroom in the form of tutorials <b><u>and asked</u></b> if this had been considered in any more detail. Mrs Widdup told the committee that initial feedback was that students might not like this approach, but she feels it should be trialled. She added that no school within the trust has a Post 16 that is breaking even, and this means that the lower key stages are losing funding to prop up the Post 16. <b><u>Governors questioned</u></b> whether only A Levels were offered at Post 16 and Mr Dickinson said there are vocational courses as well as A levels. <b><u>Governors suggested that</u></b> more careers talks for students might help give them more of an idea about what they might want to do at post 16 and beyond adding that giving them exposure to what careers are available would help.</p> <p><b>Health and Safety</b></p> <p>There were no questions regarding the H&amp;S minutes Trip calendar has been shared.</p> <p><b>Cat C trips</b></p> <p>Mr Dickinson summarised the category C trips planned which have all been approved by the committee previously, there were no issues raised by governors.</p> <p><b>Attendance</b></p> <p>Mr Dickinson asked if there were any further questions on the attendance summary and none were raised.</p> <p><b>Exam season update</b></p> <p>Mr Dickinson told the committee that the exam season has started positively. Students are being given a booster / warm up to get them into the right mindset prior to each exam. The maths paper was a challenging paper this year from initial feedback received. The exam inspector came in last Tuesday and the feedback was perfect. The chair of governors wanted to express his thanks to staff for giving their time to deliver extra lessons for students adding that the extra set of mocks has been well supported by parents as they feel students are better prepared for exams.</p>	

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	<p><b>Feedback from the progress evening</b> Mrs Clough-Watson delivered feedback from the progress evening. After compiling the feedback forms. The Post 16 returned a low number of forms and there wasn't a standout area. The other year groups identified a clearer pattern.</p> <p>Homework – feedback was that parents disagree that their child receives appropriate homework for their age. This has been picked up as a requirement to deliver the message to staff, students and parents about the optional homework.</p> <p>How your child is doing and what they will learn - based on the feedback, further action can ensure that enrichment and experiences are more positive.</p> <p><u><b>Governors asked</b></u> if it is possible to put the full curriculum on Weduc so that all parents can access it and Mrs Clough-Watson said that she is looking at a different way to ensure parents can see what is being offered.</p> <p><u><b>Governors suggested that</b></u> some form of incentive to complete homework might encourage greater uptake. Mrs Clough-Watson was grateful for the suggestion and confirmed she has similar feedback and has a number of tasks to do around this issue, adding that hopefully there will be an improvement next year. Mr Dickinson agreed that some things take time.</p> <p><u><b>Governors further wondered</b></u> if having homework as optional means that students therefore choose not to do it. Mr Dickinson said that he is asking heads of department to look at what more can be done to do increase the homework return rate, adding that staff need to be on the same page with regards homework as do students and parents.</p>	
AC/57/2425	<p><b>How have governors held the school leaders to account?</b> 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>➤ Attendance</li> <li>➤ Mental Health support</li> <li>➤ SEND provision, identification, resourcing</li> <li>➤ Staff wellbeing</li> <li>➤ Parent Feedback - particularly homework</li> <li>➤ Viability of Post 16</li> </ul>	
AC/58/2425	<p><b>How have the VMV of Trust / Equality been upheld?</b> It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust &amp; Equality has been upheld.</p>	
AC/59/2425	<p><b>Complete report to trustees</b> The report to trustees was discussed and completed within the meeting.</p> <p><b><i>Governors expressed thanks</i></b> to staff for the extra work being put in to support students with exams, revision sessions etc.</p>	



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	<p><b><u>Governors asked</u></b> if there is fundraising for things that the budget doesn't stretch to and wondered if there is something that they can do. Mrs Widdup explained that there are to comply with but as long as they are adhered to, it should not be an issue.</p> <p><b><u>Governors questioned why</u></b> the exam results data on the website still refers to 2023 results and asked why it has not been updated with 2024 results. Mr Dickinson agreed to pick this up with marketing. <b>[Action- LD]</b></p>	LD 23/06/25
AC/60/2425	<p><b>Determination of Confidentiality</b>  <b>Equality Act consideration</b>  <b>Nolan Principles</b>  <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>- Confidential items discussed have been recorded separately.</li> <li>- There had been no Equality Act implications.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting:</b>  Date 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at <u>5.30pm</u> at Retford Oaks Academy</p> <p>The meeting closed at 19:32pm</p>	
	<p>Signed...  (Chair) Date 23/06/2025</p> <p>Print.....Andy Knight.....</p>	