

**Minutes of the Retford Oaks Academy Committee meeting
held on Monday 7th July 2025 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	
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	
Miss Sophie Babu <i>start date postponed</i>	SB	Appointed	A

In attendance	Initials	Position	
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	A
Mr A Cooper	AC	Vice Principal	
Miss Kirsty Simpson	KS	Teacher	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional (GP)	

<i>Quorum numbers</i>	5	<i>Governor's present</i>	9
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Item No	Item	Action/ by who/when
AC/61/2425	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Mr Dickinson who has been called up for Jury service and these were accepted by the committee.	
AC/62/2425	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/63/2425	Governor Responsibilities The chair shared the governor roles and responsibilities on screen and said it was an opportune time, with new governors in post to remind everyone of the remit of a governor within the MAT (Multi Academy Trust). The chair noted the Department for Education's four core governance functions explaining that the third function around finances is a responsibility held at Trustee level with our scheme of delegation. Discussion was held around the lack of oversight of financial information and the governance professional agreed to feed back to the trust that a	

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	<p>financial summary would be a useful document for LAC's to receive for information. [Action]</p> <p>The 'do's' and 'do nots' were reviewed in the meeting and all governors confirmed that they understood their role.</p> <p>All governors were reminded to read the code of conduct and sign it by completing the signing form, linked in the agenda. [Action]</p>	NB 14/07/25
AC/64/2425	<p>Safeguarding Training</p> <p>The safeguarding update was not available to share at the meeting and will be sent to all governors to review before the end of term.</p>	Govs 14/07/25
AC/65/2425	<p>Governance report</p> <p>Mandatory requirements.</p> <p>All governors were reminded to complete the Code of conduct, update their declarations of interests and complete the Skills Audits. The governance professional will send links to all governors with actions still outstanding following the meeting. [Action]</p> <p>Training</p> <p>The chair informed that committee that he and Mrs Bryn-Jones had attended the recent governance conference and fed back that the speaker was very good, she shared some very good ideas about how to progress governance and move things forwards. The chair encouraged everyone to review the slides that were shared within the Governance Professional's report.</p> <p>LINK visits</p> <p>The chair reminded all governors of the importance of scheduling and completing link visits and feeding back to the committee. The governance professional explained that recent visit reports had been added to the folder within the portal and all governors have access to this to review them.</p> <p>Action Plan, Self Evaluation, Skills Audits</p> <p>The chair proposed that a separate meeting be arranged with all governors to review the self-evaluation, skills audit results and current action plan with a view to drafting the action plan for 2025-2026 and all agreed to attend a meeting in September to complete this activity. The governance professional will schedule the meeting [Action]</p> <p>LINK governor roles</p> <p>The chair told the committee that Link visits and link governor engagement appears to be a weakness and this is an area for improvement, with that in mind and being conscious that the next Ofsted visit may be imminent, the chair suggested that the most important link roles be picked up by two governors.</p>	NB & Govs 14/07/25 NB & Govs 14/07/25

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	<p>Link roles were agreed as follows:</p> <table> <tbody> <tr><td>SEND</td><td>PBJ and AK</td></tr> <tr><td>Safeguarding</td><td>DC and AK</td></tr> <tr><td>Careers / Post 16</td><td>AH and SB</td></tr> <tr><td>GDPR</td><td>JP</td></tr> <tr><td>H&S</td><td>AS</td></tr> <tr><td>PP / Performing Arts</td><td>KM</td></tr> <tr><td>Attendance</td><td>PBJ</td></tr> <tr><td>Stakeholders</td><td>SM and LCW</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Governors suggested that when the governors meet to discuss the self-evaluation and action plan that it would be beneficial to ask the academy what it feels the governors can offer support with.</p>	SEND	PBJ and AK	Safeguarding	DC and AK	Careers / Post 16	AH and SB	GDPR	JP	H&S	AS	PP / Performing Arts	KM	Attendance	PBJ	Stakeholders	SM and LCW	
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AC/66/2425	<p>Appointment of chair and vice chair for 2025-2026</p> <p>The chair reminded the committee that at the end of each academic year, the chair and vice chair is appointed for the following year. The chair asked in any of the committee members would be interested in putting their names forward for the role of chair of governors.</p> <p>Mr Cartwright expressed an interest but said that he was not sure that he was ready to take over from Mr Knight completely. Mr Knight offered to stay on in the capacity as co-chair for the next 12 months to bring Mr Cartwright into the role. Mr Cartwright agreed that this would be a good approach. Mrs Bryn-Jones volunteered to pick up the role of vice chair. No issues were raised and all governors confirmed that they were happy with the appointments made.</p> <p>Mr Knight and Mr Cartwright were appointed as co-chairs for the forthcoming academic year.</p> <p>Mrs Bryn-Jones was appointed as vice-chair for the forthcoming academic year.</p>																	
AC/67/2425	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 19th May 2025</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting were approved by all attendees.</p>																	
AC/68/2425	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>AC/51/2425 NB to write to SB welcoming her aboard. Complete</p> <p>AC/51/2425 All Govs to consider the role of chair / vice chair. complete</p> <p>AC/53/2425 NB share the list of link roles to all for consideration, complete</p> <p>AC/55/2425 AC/41/2425 AK share SEND link visit reports. Carried forward</p> <p>AC/55/2425 AC/41/2425 DC share Safeguarding link visit report. complete</p> <p>AC/55/2425 AC/44/2425 NB to ensure SEND newsletters are shared with governors. complete</p> <p>AC/59/2425 LD to ensure exam results on website are updated this up with marketing. Carried forward</p>	AK 14/07/25 LD 14/07/25																

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	All governors welcomed the SEND newsletters and were happy to continue to receive them via email from the governance professional.	
AC/69/2425	<p>Principals Report</p> <p>Standards – Teaching & Learning Handbook Update</p> <p>Mrs Widdup introduced Kirsty Simpson who leads on Teaching and Learning for the academy. Miss Simpson presented an overview of the current approach to core teaching techniques being delivered at the academy explaining that the key focuses are on AFL (assessment for learning), diagnostic questioning and SEND has been a big focus since December in nailing down expectations and giving staff a model to work with.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> what ‘fingers on chest’ means and Miss Simpson described the approach whereby students can demonstrate that they know an answer by displaying the correct finger (A,B,C or D for example) across their chest rather than putting up their hand. She added that whiteboards are also used in some lessons for more extended answers, students can write their answer on the whiteboard and hold it up.</p> <p>Miss Simpson went on to describe the of mark schemes to help scaffold and support students and she told the committee that AFL is now part of the QA cycle that is ongoing throughout the leadership pop ins.</p> <p>There is an expectation that every lesson starts with a ‘Do Now’. This will be a list of 4 questions to get students started right at the beginning of the lesson while students are arriving, the register is being taken and the class is getting settled. Miss Simpson displayed some data from recent pop ins which demonstrates that after 6 weeks, this is now up to 100% across the academy. She went on to describe the method in more details explaining that it offers a good opportunity to check understanding, supports with recall, provides a stable routine, encourages independence and ensures that quality work is in place form the very start of the lesson.</p> <p><u>Governors questioned</u> the drop in the data identified in week 2. Miss Simpson said it was when the full academy walk was in place, so there was more data and Mrs Clough-Watson added that week 2 was also during a time of exams. <u>Governors then wanted to know</u> how many members of staff are carrying out the pop ins and how many are done a week. Miss Simpson told the committee that 5 senior leaders do 5 pop-ins a week, so around 25 lessons a week. <u>The governors then wondered</u> whether all staff will receive pop-ins. Mrs Widdup confirmed that Miss Simpson keeps a detailed spreadsheet to ensure that all staff are being assessed. <u>The governors asked</u> if this approach would continue as a constant and Mrs Widdup confirmed that it will.</p> <p>Miss Simpson told the committee that she is developing a model to support SEND students starting with QFT (quality first teaching) strategies,</p>	

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	<p>then a more bespoke intervention approach into the EEF's (Education Endowment Foundation) 5 a day.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if the pop-ins are also checking that staff are delivering the SEND model as well. And Miss Simpson confirmed that this will be part of the whole strategy. <u>The governors then wanted to know</u> if there is a similar approach to ensure that the students already exceeding are being challenged as well. Mrs Widdup explained that is part of the CPD activity that she delivered recently in terms of using mark schemes and delivering teaching to the right grade. Governors acknowledged that it must be quite challenging in mixed groups and Mrs Widdup said it is difficult but needs to be done to ensure that, particularly in mixed ability options, everyone is being taught at the right level, she added that flexible grouping as part of the EEF strategy is supportive for this.</p> <p>Miss Simpson displayed the inverted triangle and explained that those students at the base of the triangle require more bespoke strategies. She went on to tell the committee that every 3 to 4 weeks she and the SENDCO spend time walking around the academy, discussing the strategies and how best to support the SEND students and build greater staff confidence in SEND. These regular learning walks are a mechanism to identify further training needs. Where it is identified that there is a need and staff require support, then additional support is provided. Next year will focus on adaptive teaching to meet need across the academy.</p> <p>The 4 key strategies described in the exemplar shared with governors will form part of the CPD cycle for the next 2 years to ensure that all staff understand the approach. <u>Governors asked</u> if this would be part of induction for new staff members and Mrs Widdup explained that the induction calendar runs alongside the main calendar so all new staff will have access to the training and added that any existing staff identified as requiring additional training can be built in with the induction training cycle as well.</p> <p>Mrs Clough-Watson said that sometimes staff will do something amazing and may share this with colleagues but forget to tell Miss Simpson and this approach will hopefully ensure that best practice is more widely shared and recognised.</p> <p><u>Parent governors wondered</u> if detail about this would be shared with parents adding that having sight of such a positive approach would be welcomed. Mrs Widdup suggested that a half termly newsletter to parents to share what is being done might be a way of addressing this and Miss Simpson said she could build this into the other newsletters she's doing.</p> <p><u>Governors referred to</u> the 'exit ticket' described by Miss Simpson in her presentation <u>and wondered</u> if it may cause disruption at the end of the lesson as students are trying to leave. Miss Simpson explained that students aren't being held back to provide feedback and it is not always written and handed in, it can be verbal feedback.</p>	

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	<p><u>The governors complimented the approach and asked</u> if it is something that can continue to be built upon and developed further. Mrs Widdup said that the improvement plan will build up gradually throughout the year and then at the end of the year there will be an assessment and it will continue to evolve upwards. Miss Simpson added that she would like to see reading and literacy on there for next year. Mrs Widdup told the committee that as she oversees two academies within the trust, both with different priorities on their plans, she can see the different areas of focus and encourage the academies to share their best practice with one another.</p> <p><u>The governors wondered</u> if staff had bought into the approach and Mrs Clough-Watson said that staff buy in has increased over time, through the pop ins and positive constructive feedback has started to build staff confidence and encourage them to support each other. She went on to share that the '4 q's' expectation was difficult to start with but the value is being seen and this will build confidence in the approach further.</p> <p>Mrs Simpson told the committee that the INSET plan on day one is to focus on the new lesson structure and then day 2 taking staff around the 4 areas delivered by staff members sharing best practice.</p> <p><u>The governors wanted to know</u> if the same approach is being taken at the ROAC (Retford oaks Alternative Curriculum). Mr Cooper said that this needs to be more bespoke for those students as the strategies to support those students need to be different.</p> <p>The chair thanked Miss Simpson for attending the meeting and sharing her presentation and Miss Simpson left the meeting.</p> <p>Standards - AIP (Academy Improvement Plan)</p> <p>Mrs Widdup told the committee that the current plan is being evaluated and will be brought to the next meeting but went on to share the draft priorities for next year. She said that there will be a continuation of the activity around SEND. She explained that the initial work centred around ensuring the academy was compliant and now that sure-ing up of this has been done the focus will shift to looking at the impact of the work put in place to ensure that outcomes are improving and suspensions and exclusions are reducing for SEND students.</p> <p>Improving outcomes is the second priority and includes stretch and challenge to ensure that students are working at appropriate levels. It will also focus on ensuring that all students at AC (alternative curriculum) and AP (alternative provision) meet outcomes and that the provision is providing good value for money.</p> <p>Priority three is around attendance. Attendance is slightly below the national average but attendance directly correlates with outcomes so the</p>	

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	<p>aim is to be above the national average and to reduce PA (persistent absence) to below the national average. <u>Governors asked for</u> clarity on the PA figures this year compared to last year. Mr Cooper told the committee that PA last year was 30.18% and this year is has gone down to 26%. Mrs Widdup added that 1% is considered a significant shift.</p> <p>Mrs Widdup told the committee that the academy has access to attendance data for current year 6 that will be transitioning to Retford oaks in September so have already started to address the issue in advance of the students starting.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> what the threshold is to be categorised as PA and Mr Cooper said it is 10%. Mrs Widdup said that the measure as a percentage is not a helpful way record the figures as 90% does not sound like a bad percentage in general terms, however when you explain it in terms of lost days learning it becomes more understandable for parents and students.</p> <p><u>The governors then asked</u> if there are students on roll that don't ever attend the academy. Mrs Widdup confirmed that does happen and for that reason, students are not enrolled now until they set foot in the school.</p> <p>Priority four is around the 6th form. There has been a lot of work on academy budgets because of government funding cuts and unfortunately the 6th form is a financial drain on the rest of the academy. KS5 funding does not cover the cost of educating KS5 and therefore money is being taken from KS4 to support them. Therefore, a piece of work will be completed to look at recruitment of students, the offer from ROA and in comparison with other offers in the local area, and other ways of providing an education for students? <u>The governors questioned</u> whether there was an option to share some of the 6th form teaching with Tuxford Academy. Mrs Widdup said it isn't as simple solution due to the timings of the school days and marrying timetables together is difficult.</p> <p>Mrs Widdup said that consideration is being given to delivering teaching in a similar way to the university model of a recorded lecture supported by small group tutorials. <u>Governors were concerned</u> said that recorded sessions might be too much for KS5 students to be expected to access appropriately. Mrs Widdup acknowledged the comments but explained that there needs to be a more financially appropriate model.</p> <p><u>Governors wondered</u> about tapping into student voice to start to identify earlier what current students will want to see in 6th form. Mrs Widdup agreed and said we also need to focus on local employers. Mrs Clough-Watson added that it is important to understand that the academy can't change the offer every year to accommodate students' preferences due to wider implications around staffing for example. <u>Governors then suggested</u> that consideration be given to what other local schools are offering and to either compete or fill their gaps and maybe if the local schools took a joined-up approach to offer different options rather than compete with one another as they are all struggling with the same issue.</p>	

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	<p>Governors also acknowledged that apprenticeships are another competitor to 6th form. Mr Cooper said that location / local geography is another factor to take into account as many students live outside of Retford and closer to some post 16 colleges. Mrs Widdup told the committee that those involved will be approaching it with a blank piece of paper. <u>Governors wanted to know</u> if work experience would be reintroduced for year 10 as this will help students to identify what they might want to do at post 16 and Mrs Widdup confirmed that it would be returning.</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> if there will come a point where the 6th form is dropped altogether. Mrs Widdup said schools do not have to provide a 6th form but Retford Oaks provides an education from 11-18 and if this was to be changed to 11-16, then they would need to seek approval from the department for education to do this. Currently a minimum of 8-12 students per class to be viable. Governors reflected that the academy might fail to attract higher achievers if they did not have a 6th form to offer.</p> <p>Standards - Attendance</p> <p>Mr Cooper referred to attendance data and told the committee that the current year 10, SEND cohorts and (FSM) free school meals cohort are lagging in relation to the rest of the academy. He and Mr Hunt have reviewed the reasons for the issues with year 10 and he told the committee that there are a number of students in year 10 with anxiety, SEND, reduced timetables etc. he is also looking at emergency HLN (High level Needs) funding for some students to support with alternative provision.</p> <p>In terms of SEND and FSM, both have 2 PDE sessions each week to work around attendance for those students in PA are in danger of dropping into PA. The number in PA has now stabilised but work continues needs to push on to get the number to reduce. By ensuring SEND students are being catered for it will bring down their levels of anxiety and improve attendance, this will also have a positive impact on suspensions. With regards FSM cohorts, heads of year are meeting with students and talking to them about attendance contracts. To try and reduce suspensions which impacts on attendance figures, directed moves and managed moves are also utilised. Simple things like addressing the times of day that students on reduced timetables arrive and leave can impact on attendance figures too, if they arrive after the start of the day and leave before the afternoon register, they appear as though they have not attended as they have not picked up morning or afternoon marks.</p> <p>The chair recognised the positive shift over the year and expressed congratulations from governors to all staff involved acknowledging the work that is being done. Mr Cooper thanked the chair for his comments.</p>	

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	<p>Mrs Widdup asked if there were any questions on the other information shared within the principals report.</p> <p>Admissions and Staffing</p> <p>Governors asked if the two posts outstanding had yet been filled. Mrs Widdup said that the Spanish teacher position has been filled and the business team role is in for interview tomorrow. Governors wanted to know if new appointments are able to teach up to A Level and Mrs Widdup confirmed that they are. Governors then asked if the roles appointed were new appointments or staff replacements. Mrs Widdup said that she could not go into detail due to confidentiality but that there had been a positive shake up of staff. Governors questioned how much of the teaching staff were supply. Mr Cooper explained the difference between cover supervisors (employed by the academy) and supply teachers (acquired from agencies) and told the committee that there are currently 2 supply teachers, one of who's role has now been filled for September. Governors then asked if external supply staff are trained by DAT and Mrs Widdup said that they don't get DAT trained as often they aren't here for long.</p> <p>Stakeholder - Trips</p> <p>Mr Cooper asked if the committee would approve the Ski trip for 2026-27. The proposal is to return to Austria (same as last year) from 12th to 19th Dec 2026. The cost will be around £1250-£1350 per student with a maximum of 50 students (minimum of 40 students). This will be offered to years 9 and 10 (who will be 10 and 11 at the time of the trip).</p> <p>Governors asked when year 11 mocks are happening and Mr Cooper confirmed that they will be from 12th November to 4th December and the second round is January to February.</p> <p>All governors confirmed that they were happy to agree the trip.</p> <p>Governors asked if payments would be staggered to help parents budget and pay for the trip and Mrs Widdup confirmed they would be.</p> <p>SEND Recovery plan</p> <p>Mrs Widdup asked if there were any questions on the progress of the SEND recovery plan. She went on to inform the committee that Mrs Gould (SENDCO), following the conclusion of year 11 and 13 exams was taken from all teaching to focus on SEND and Mrs Austerberry has not been involved with the curriculum review and has been given less teaching commitments to ensure that they can work together on the plan which is why a lot of the actions have now turned to green.</p> <p>Governors asked if the risk around 6th form remained the only risk on the register and Mrs Widdup confirmed that it was. Governors asked who the head of 6th form will be from September and Mrs Widdup said that as soon as the position had been confirmed, governors would be informed.</p>	

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AC/70/2425	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"> ➤ Teaching and Learning strategies ➤ Quality assurance of teaching ➤ SEND ➤ Attendance and PA ➤ Viability of 6th form ➤ Staffing 	
AC/71/2425	How have the VMV of Trust / Equality been upheld? It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust & Equality has been upheld.	
AC/72/2425	Complete Annual Summary Template on the effectiveness of governance 2024/25 The report to trustees was discussed and completed within the meeting.	
AC/73/2425	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"> - Any confidential items discussed have been recorded separately. - There had been no Equality Act implications. 	
	Date and time of next meeting: Date 22 nd September 2025 at <u>5.30pm</u> at Retford Oaks Academy	
	The meeting closed at 19:14pm	
		
	Signed... (Chair) Date 22/07/2025	
	Print.....Andy Knight..... 	