

**Summary of discussions of the Local Academy Committee meeting
held on Monday 17th November at 5:30pm at Retford Oaks Academy**

Membership	Initials	Governor category	Absence
Mr A Knight Chair	AK	Appointed	
Mr D Cartwright	DC	Appointed	
Mrs P Bryn-Jones Vice	PBJ	Appointed	
Mr A Silcock	AS	Appointed	A
Mr J Purle	JP	Appointed	A
Dr Ann Harris	AH	Elected Parent	A
Mrs Sarah Miles	SM	Elected Parent	
Mrs L Clough-Watson	LCW	Staff Governor	A
Miss Sophie Babu start date postponed	SB	Appointed	A
Mrs J Wilson	JW	<i>Appointed in meeting</i>	

In Attendance	Initials	Position	Absence
Mrs H Widdup	HW	Executive Principal	A
Mr L Dickinson	LD	Principal	
Mrs Bally Ward	BW	Bespoke Provision and Inclusion Lead	
Mrs Claire Gould	CG	SENDCO	
Mr Richard Stewardson	RS	Assistant Principal	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance	

Quorum required	4	Governor's present	4
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Outstanding Actions Log

C	= Complete	CF	= Carried forward	I	= Incomplete (carried forward more than once)
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Agenda item	Meeting Ref	Action Required	Responsible Person	Timeline	Update	Status
AC/68/2425	2425 - 6	[carried forward AC/55/2425 AC/41/2425] AK share SEND link visit reports.	AK	14/07/25	Action carried forward	I
AC/01/2526	2526 - 1	Contact PBJ regarding absence	NB	30/09/2025	PBJ contacted NB and sent retrospective apologies for missing the meeting	C
AC/02/2526	2526 - 1	Complete Declaration of Interests	AS	30/09/2025		CF

AC/02/2526	2526 - 1	Send meeting invitation to all governors	NB	30/09/2025	Meeting scheduled Monday 13th October at 5:30pm	C
AC/02/2526	2526 - 1	Consider the performing arts link role	ALL GOVS	13/10/2025		CF

Q = Question from Governors

A = Answer from senior leaders

Agenda item	Key points / Summary	Action Required	Responsible Person	Timeline
AC/11/2526	Apologies for absence - Apologies received and accepted from LCW, AS and AH - No apologies received from JP [ACTION]	Contact JP regarding non-attendance	NB	24/11/25
AC/12/2526	Declarations of Interest There were no changes to declarations of interest made at the start of the year and no declarations in relation to the agenda.			
AC/13/2526	Appointment of new governor - Jacqueline Wilson Mrs Wilson (JW) introduced herself to the committee having observed at the previous meeting and previously met with the chair, principal and governance professional. Mrs Wilson left the room to allow the committee to vote on her appointment. The committee voted unanimously to appoint JW with immediate effect. JW returned to the meeting and was welcomed aboard. [ACTION]	Formalise appointment and set up induction session	NB	19/12/25
AC/14/2526	Minutes and action log Feedback on the new format Action Log rather than minutes of meeting dated 22 nd September 2025 was received. More detail to be put into the outstanding actions at the top of the action log. [ACTION]	Expand on the information in the outstanding actions	NB	24/11/25

<p>AC/15/2526</p>	<p>SEND local offer, information report 2025/26 and annual review 2024/25 inc. all vulnerable groups (reports for websites) including Impact of funding.</p> <p>CG introduced the documents she had prepared and that were shared with all governors prior to the meeting and asked if there were any questions.</p> <p>Q - What sort of support is being given to students with EHCPs over the GCSE period? A - Adhering to all relevant guidance and supporting the children to give them the best chance to achieve.</p> <p>Q – Last year there were over 220 children on the SEND register and now it is much lower, why? A – Previously if a child had a literacy screener they were automatically placed on the register even if they had not been receiving any additional support. They have been removed from the register and many of them now have a ‘monitoring’ classification which is ‘I’. Some of the 69 ‘I’ were previously incorrectly classified as ‘K’ and others have been flagged by primaries and are currently being monitored.</p> <p>Q – How are you finding the information coming from primaries? A – CG said she welcomes the knowledge into school from primaries and the district SENDCO for Notts has been in several times. Students that should be coming to ROA have been tending to look for places elsewhere. The LA (local authority) is getting more involved to help CG get into primaries and do Q&As, share leaflets and get the word out about the ROA offer to prospective parents.</p> <p>Q – Why have parents of SEND children been looking elsewhere? A – Many have been looking to The Elizabethan Academy because they have a nurture group. LD added that there was some reputational damage from the previous SENDCO explaining that CG has done a lot of excellent work to rebuild it.</p>			
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	<p>Q – How are staff trained to support SEND students? A - All teaching staff receive training to highest SEND needs.</p> <p>Q - How many hours does that equate to? A – Individual sessions are generally an hour and the INSET in February was a full day of training delivered on SEND. Training and development on SEND should be a constant reminder, and every session needs to include some training on SEND. LD added that SEND is front and centre in all sessions.</p> <p>Q – How is the TA’s support distributed? A - 1 is in SS4, 1is in the HUB and the rest are in lessons.</p> <p>Q - How many have SEND experience? A – all of them are fully involved in all SEND training.</p> <p>SENDday Wednesday is the day CG can meet with parents and she ensures that she is available every Wednesday.</p> <p>Q – How have parents bought into SENDday Wednesday? A – feedback is requested via an MS form from all parents that have attended, and this has been very positive.</p> <p>Q – How have staff bought into the SENDday Wednesday newsletters? A - It has been very positive, the drip-feeding approach has been well received, staff have used some of the newsletters as reference tools and have them pinned up in their offices for example.</p> <p>Q – Has any progress been made with the courtyard area, there were discussion around making planters from pallets. A - LD said that the courtyard is currently a trip hazard and needs the LA to level the area before this can progress. CG told the committee that having that quieter outside space for children will be extremely valuable.</p> <p>Q – Can you expand on the Inclusion Team and how often they meet?</p>			
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	<p>A – The inclusion team meets every Monday morning to discuss the high hitting students and how best to support them. There are SEND ambassadors, one for each department involved in this.</p> <p>Q – Are the SEND ambassadors all teachers?</p> <p>A – Yes, they’re all teachers and a mixture of experienced teachers and ECT (Early Career Teacher) staff.</p> <p>LD added that the use of external AP is decreasing because of the work that BW and CG are doing with the inclusion team.</p> <p>Q – are any of the TA’s LSA’s (Learning Support Assistants) or are they just teaching assistants.</p> <p>A – we are looking at getting one of them ELSA trained.</p> <p>Q – How are the results of the EHCP reviews recorded and shared.</p> <p>A – This is done through Provision Map, a round robin is available for all teachers to feedback.</p> <p>Q – Outside of lessons, are we managing to offer extracurricular activities to SEND children.</p> <p>A – In terms of learning choices, CG is currently in talks with GO and WS to consider some more bespoke options for SEND students as one size does not fit all. Consideration is being given to life skills courses as an option for children with SEND</p> <p>Q – The SEND information report has no information under the heading for Looked After Children, is there a reason for this?</p> <p>A – governors must have been provided a previous version of the document. NB will ensure the correct version is distributed. There are 7 looked after children at ROA. [ACTION]</p> <p>Q – Please can you check the statement about bullying to ensure it reflects the trust policy on bullying? Section 1.2.3 on the bullying policy states that bullying can be a one-off incident.</p>	<p>Distribute the correct version of the SEND information report to Governors</p>	<p>NB</p>	<p>24/11/25</p>
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	<p>A - LD said he will pick this up with PK and adjust if necessary. [ACTION]</p> <p>Q – Are the 6 TA’s assigned to support with SEND sufficient for the number of SEND students at the academy? A – 2 of the TA’s are part time and work 4 days. CG is applying for more funding to employ more TA’s to support as they are thinly stretched.</p> <p>Q – Are TA’s timetabled according to the EHCPs. A – funding is apportioned in levels from notional, low, medium, high AFN and then HLN (high level needs), students classed as exceptional HLN should have full support in all lessons, but we don’t have the manpower to support with this.</p> <p>LD told the committee that there has been a significant increase in the bids being put in since CG has become SENDCO and CG explained that each bid takes about 6 hours to put together and this is why progress is not as quick as she would like. <u>Governors commended CG and expressed concern</u> that she is being given the correct amount of support to be able to complete this work.</p> <p>The chair said that governors appreciate the difficult job CG is doing and are concerned she has the right resources. CG said that KA only gets 3 lessons in her supporting SENDCO role, she is brilliant, but she would like more hours.</p> <p>Q – does SENDCO support need to be self-funded? A - LD explained that if money was no object CG would not teach at all and KA would teach much less.</p> <p>Q – Is CG teaching as well as being SENDCO through choice or because the school needs her to be teaching? A – LD said that it valuable to continue to teach some lessons when in a leadership role, he still teaches for example.</p> <p><u>Governors expressed concerns</u> given the recent issues around SEND and the valuable work that CG is delivering, that CG isn’t put under so much pressure</p>	<p>Review the trust policy and SEND information report and ensure they are accurate</p>	<p>LD</p>	<p>24/11/25</p>
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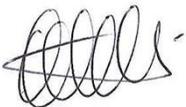
	<p>that she will struggle. There is also a concern around succession and contingency planning.</p> <p>Q – to CG – do you get the support that you need from the MAT. A – the family SENDCO is not always the most supportive and CG finds she needs to go elsewhere for training such as local authority. LD expanded on this explaining that there are other staff within the trust who we can work with to share best practice and support, the expertise is there but might not necessarily come directly from the strategic leader.</p> <p>Q - Why are there no children with EHCPs in years 12 and 13? A – entry criteria for 6th form is a barrier for these children and the 6th form cohort is much smaller than the whole school, currently stands at around 50 students in total. However, some children with EHCPs have continued their education at Alternative Provision.</p> <p>Governors commended and thanked CG on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There appears to be a much more positive relationship with the LA. - KA had been a very valuable support from personal evidence. - There has been significant positive change in reputation and direction. - Work CG has done is invaluable. <p>Q – Are you seeing any of this positivity coming through in KPI’s for SEND. A - Attendance is moving in the right direction and further incentives are being put in place to encourage SEND students to come to school.</p>			
<p>AC/16/2526</p>	<p><u>Pupil premium evaluation and evidence of impact on outcomes 2024/25 and review of strategy for 2025/26 (to go on website by 31/12/25)</u></p> <p>LD said that the PP strategy is a tweak of the last 3 year plan, it focusses around aspirations and broadening horizons with £42 per child put aside for trips from the PP budget.</p>			

	<p>Q – How much of the £42 budget per student is actually taken up by them? A – All PP students are being supported to commit the money to a trip.</p> <p>Q – Looking at the plan, the supporting evidence is generic, there doesn't appear to be a breakdown of how the money is being spent. How do we evidence that the money spent on teaching is being applied to improve the experience of those children in receipt of PP? A - By recruiting more teachers and reducing the class size the experience is improved as more support can be offered. The main way we will impact them is in the classroom, for example part of KS's wage is taken up by the PP so that the training etc is applied in the right place.</p> <p>Q – what about funding for equipment for PP students? A - CG said that school provide all the ingredients from the PP funding for PP students in DT, all PP students get free revision books for example. Breakfasts and vouchers are also provided.</p> <p>Q – It would be helpful for governors to have a detailed document to provide a more in-depth breakdown of how PP is being spent and ensure governors feel confident if asked by Ofsted about this. A - LD will put something together to share with governors [ACTION]</p> <p>Q – How does mentoring work? A – DG works with students around aspiration and talks with them about their behaviour in school etc. mentoring is bespoke to the needs of the group, for example, Staff are going on additional training to support children susceptible to social media and toxic influences, primarily this is working with groups of young men to get them to use critical thinking to recognise the toxic content on social media rather than telling them it is wrong, getting them to see that for themselves. There is a group of students working with support from Asda to create a bake sale enabling them to take responsibility for the work they are doing.</p>	<p>Share a detailed breakdown of how PP budget is spent with governors.</p>	<p>LD</p>	<p>08/12/25</p>
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	<p>Q –What about educational aspirations for those on PP rather than just the social and mentoring work.</p> <p>A - There is mentoring based on targets and grades, delivered by DG and other members of staff including SLT. They work with students that are classed as vulnerable rather than just PP. BW said that students are being taken to other providers such as Lincoln college and North Notts College to build on aspiration and work towards all students having a path to follow, engaging with different careers pathways, apprenticeships etc. This starts early with those students that are disengaged to try and find them a pathway. LD added that ROA fund all the transport to look at colleges and universities etc to remove as many of the barriers as possible for these students.</p> <p>The chair recognised this work and commended BW, telling the committee that last year every student on AP found a next step.</p>			
<p>AC/17/2526</p>	<p>LA safeguarding audit (to be returned to LA by 31/12/25)</p> <p>RS explained the new format of the Safeguarding audit and described the areas within the audit that had been classified as ‘partially met’. All of the partially met areas have been broken down into actions that PK (Patrick Knight – Strategic Safeguarding Leader) will follow up with the DSLs.</p> <p>There was discussion about the culture of self-referral at Retford Oaks and how conscientious staff are about self-reporting. Particularly if they have been involved in breaking up scuffles between students for example.</p> <p>Q - Do staff get specific training in restrictive practice.</p> <p>A - Some staff are trained in restrictive practice, however staff understand and are aware that they can step in if necessary to ensure the safety of students.</p> <p>Q - Are the main areas of concern still around self-harm and mental health as previously reported?</p>			

	<p>A - Mental health and self-harm are still high. Data analysed at the end of last half term showed that physical assault, self-harm, issues in the home, conflict and social emotional and mental health ranked highest in 'my concern'. Physical assault in the current year 7 and 8 is being discussed at SLT. LD told the committee that there is an element of children new to school finding ways to assert themselves, but he also wonders what is being drip fed to them via social media potentially exacerbating things further.</p> <p>Q – do staff receive training in conflict de-escalation? A – An external mentor (Simeon) is coming in to deliver this training to staff who will then be using it in tutor groups with students.</p> <p>Governors suggested that Simeon would also be good to talk to groups of children and consideration should be given to this in the future if the budget allows.</p> <p>Q – Do supply staff get the same training as the rest of the staff? A – This can be difficult to deliver, LD acknowledged that it is difficult to ensure that supply staff are checking student passports. The academy has preferred to use cover teachers; they are ROA staff so do have all the same training and know the students rather than supply; however capacity issues have had an impact on this. There is now more capacity to use ROA staff.</p>			
AC/18/2526	There have been no link governor visit reports shared. PBJ will schedule a SEND visit with CG this half term. [ACTION]	Arrange SEND Link visit before end of half term	PBJ	19/12/25
AC/19/2526	Governance Action Plan Draft action plan was shared with all attendees for review and feedback to NB.			
AC/20/2526	The report to trustees was completed by all attendees.			
AC/21/2526	Determine Confidentiality			

	<p>Governors considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any confidential items discussed have been recorded separately. - There had been no Equality Act implications. 			
<p>AC/22/2526</p>	<p>Next meeting Monday 19th January at 5:30 pm at Retford Oaks Academy</p> <p>Apologies were received from LD for the January meeting. Meeting closed at 6:55pm</p>			

<p>Signed by Chair Andy Knight</p> 	<p>Date 17/12/2025</p>
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