



**Approved minutes of the Governing Body (GB) meeting  
of Archbishop Runcie First School (ARFS)  
Wednesday 25 September 2024**

**Present:**

Sarah Pickett (Chair)  
Paul Baker, Fatima Begum, Katie Hogg, Diana Lavin, Rae Lowe, Sarah MacRae,  
Kate Massey (Headteacher), Cecilia Pacitti, Lonie Sebahg and Andrew Shipton

**Quorum**

Governors in post: 12; quorum: 6; governors present: 11

**In Attendance:**

Liane Aitken	~	Assistant Director of Education, DEB, from 5.51pm until 6.21pm
Molly Allan	~	Prospective Foundation Governor
Gill Booth	~	Interim Director of Education, DEB, from 5.51pm until 6.21pm
Claire Hepple	~	Clerk, Governor Services
Maria Irving	~	Safeguarding Consultant, Clennell Education Solutions (CES) from beginning of meeting until 5.45pm

**1. Safeguarding refresher training**

Circulated:

- Annual governor refresher, key information checklist

Maria Irving delivered safeguarding refresher training from 5pm until 5.45pm.

The Chair requested that governors register on the Clennell Education Solutions website.

**Action: Governors**

**2. Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence**

This item was deferred to Item 4.

**3. Gill Booth and Liane Aitken (DEB)**

Liane Aitken and Gill Booth, in attendance to talk about school admissions, were introduced to governors. Gill was interim Director of Education and envisaged that a permanent appointment would be made in January 2025. Liane and Gill thanked the GB for the invitation to the meeting. Liane explained that her remit, as a former

solicitor, was to advise schools on legal governance. Gill and Liane presented a series of slides on school admissions. The following points were noted:

- The background of church schools was as charities to teach the poor.
- Overarching elements of the Church of England vision for education were listed.
- Schools must adhere to the DfE School Admissions Code, 2021.
- Certain elements must be in the school Admission Policy that were in the model policy.
- Point 1.37 of the School Admissions Code, 2021, related to clarity about faith based oversubscription criteria.
- The Diocesan position was that GBs should review criteria and decide whether faith based criteria should continue to be in their Admission Policy. GBs should think about what was right for their local context. Gill Booth advised that the new Bishop of Newcastle had been asked where thinking was regarding this aspect. Many schools had removed church places as they prevented local children from admission. The Bishop believed that schools should serve communities.
- If faith based criteria was used, it should be used carefully with thought given to the purpose it served. Gill noted a common question was whether school was a faith school or a church school. Archbishop Runcie Church of England First School was a church school, there for all and for children of no faith. Church schools were originally for the whole community.
- Questions to consider when reviewing criteria were listed.
- There was a six week window for consultation.
- The GB must agree the school's Admission Policy by 28 February 2025.

The Chair advised that this was an opportunity to understand the Diocesan point of view and a decision would not be reached at this meeting. A committee had been set up to look at this and would draft a revised Admission Policy to be brought to the GB for review later this term. The Chair observed that local context had changed recently.

Liane asked if parents currently applied for church places; a governor responded that she had been the only one to do so last year.

**A governor spoke of an example where two churches existed and there was one church school.** Gill noted a few examples of secondary schools with many villages and churches feeding in. There were increasing questions about equity and justice for all children in the community. **The governor noted that it depended upon the mission of the school and how big Gosforth was. There were many poorer families but if the Admission Policy was solely based on distance from school, it excluded many families of more modest means.**

Liane advised that the Local Authority had a duty to place children in good schools. If church places were removed, criteria would be based on distance. It was not possible for the school to serve the whole of Gosforth. **The governor noted that there were poor people in Gosforth who may live at a geographical distance from the school.** The Headteacher noted that historically, families living in nearby local authority housing, walked past the school to go to another school, now the school served the more immediate locality. **The Headteacher queried Looked after Children and deprivation criteria.** Liane advised that this would be hard to define but inclusion of a social or medical reason supported by professionals was possible. **The SBM suggested demonstrable criteria as eligibility for Free School Meals. The Chair queried whether this would prove an administrative burden. The SBM responded that although not straightforward, it was no**



**harder than obtaining proof of attendance at certain churches.** Liane would check whether this was possible. **Action: L Aitken**

**The SBM noted that places may be given to children living a distance away, however, they may then face issues with admission to middle school. The Chair advised that the middle school currently prioritised named feeder schools in Admission Policies.** ARFS fed into Gosforth Central Middle School with pupils of 3 named feeder school given priority for a place; they then fed into the academy. This year, the academy was oversubscribed, their admissions criteria was applied but has been questioned and many appeals lost. **There was need for thought about how schools fed into one another. The school's mission was to serve the locality. The Chair noted a duty to consider the context of the Gosforth Schools' Trust of which the school was part.**

Gill Booth commended thought given by governors to a child's journey and that this was a helpful thing to do. Some families may want their children to attend a local school as they could not afford to travel. Focus should be on what is best for the children.

Governors thanked Liane Aitken and Gill Booth for their presentation. *Liane Aitken and Gill Booth left the meeting at 6.21pm.*

Sarah MacRae explained to governors that although the school was not a full member of the Gosforth Schools' Trust, she was a director of the Trust and noted that the school was in an unusual situation.

Admission Committee membership was confirmed as Katie Hogg, Sarah MacRae, Kate Massey and Cecilia Pacitti.

#### **4. Declaration of interests.**

Circulated:

- Declaration of business and pecuniary interests form 2024 - 2025

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 6.25pm. Rev Paul Baker offered an opening prayer.

Prospective Foundation Governor from St Nicholas, Gosforth, Molly Allan, was introduced and a round of introductions took place.

An apology for absence, received from Greg Farrell, was **accepted**.

Governors had returned completed Declaration of interests forms to the Clerk. There were no interests declared in the business of the meeting.

#### **5. Identification of any additional / urgent items not on the agenda.**

The Chair noted the recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection; this would be covered later in the meeting, Item 9.

The SBM invited governors to a coffee morning to be held on 27 September in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support.

#### **6. GB membership and appointments update**

##### **a) Governor vacancies**

The Headteacher would contact a possible prospective governor to fill the Local Authority (LA) Governor vacancy.

**Action: Headteacher**

#### **b) Succession planning**

Sarah Pickett advised that she would not continue as Chair of Governors beyond this academic year and that anyone interested in the role should contact her.

It was noted that Katie Hogg would shadow Sarah Pickett as Safeguarding Link Governor this year and would take on this role in full next academic year.

### **7. Procedural items**

#### **Circulated:**

- Governing body handbook, September 2024
  - GB procedures, 2024 – 2025
  - GB code of conduct, 2024 – 2025
  - National Governance Association (NGA) model delegation planner 2024 – 2025
  - Delegation planner 2023
  - Governors' year planner 2024 - 2025
- Subject to minor amendments to Link Governor information in the GB Handbook, the GB Handbook was **approved**.  
**Action: Clerk**
- GB procedures 2024 – 2025 were **approved**.
  - Governors **agreed** the GB Code of conduct 2024 – 2025 and their **agreement** to follow it was recorded.
  - The NGA model delegation planner was compared with the school's existing planner and an amendment to responsibility 2 **agreed**: to ensure the school's admission arrangements complied with the School Admission Code and were fair, clear and objective would be the responsibility of a committee rather than GB.  
**Action: Clerk**
  - The Chair and Vice-Chair would update the Year planner with revised dates.  
**Action: Chair and Vice-Chair**

### **8. Draft minutes of the previous GB meetings**

#### **Circulated:**

- GB draft minutes, 26 June 2024

Draft minutes of 26 June 2024 were **approved** as a true record. A confidential item would be tabled at the GB meeting in November.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **Matters arising from the above minutes**

##### **GB membership and appointments update (page 2)**

- Governors had discussed prospective governors earlier in the meeting, Item 6.
- Paul Baker would join the Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) Committee.

##### **Draft minutes of previous GB meetings (page 3)**

Guidance? for budget setting had been sent to G Farrell.

##### **Headteacher's update and school improvement items (page 6)**



- A date in the minutes would be corrected.

**Action: Clerk**

- Consideration of the Music development plan was on the TLA Committee agenda for October.

**Link governor monitoring / link visits / training (page 6)**

- The recent SIAMS visit meant that a wellbeing monitoring visit had been postponed. It was thought that positive feedback from the SIAMS inspection rendered a wellbeing monitoring visit unnecessary at this time.
- Sarah MacRae would meet the school's new SENCo next week.

**Action: S MacRae**

- Lonie Sebahg had completed cyber security training on 4 July 2024.

**Policy review (page 7)**

- The Headteacher had provided information about numbers of church applications received.
- An action for Katie Hogg to contact All Saints' would be added to the minutes.

**Action: Clerk**

**Financial items (page 7)**

The Clerk had contacted the LA Education Funding Specialist about timings of financial reports for governor meetings.

**9. Headteacher's update and school improvement items**

Circulated:

- Inspection data summary report (IDSR), 2023
- Insight statutory assessments report, key results, 2023 – 2024
- Insight demographics of ARFS, 2024 – 2025
- DRAFT School development plan 2024 – 2025
- Self-evaluation form, September 2024
- DRAFT Pupil premium strategy statement, 2024 - 2025

The Headteacher highlighted the following points:

**a) Performance data analysis**

- The IDSR was above national for Year 1 Phonics and Key Stage (KS) 1 Reading Writing and Maths at expected standard in 2023.
- Multiplication tables check had significantly improved upon last year (average score this year 23.4 out of 25 compared with 19.4 out of 25 last year).

**SIAMS inspection**

The SIAMS inspection had been a positive experience. The notification telephone call was received on 9 September and the inspection had taken place on 16 September, carried out by a Headteacher based in Durham. The school had sent the SIAMS SEF, SDP, Ofsted SEF and IDSR in advance from which the inspector had formed a hypothesis to investigate. The inspector had found spiritual and courageous advocacy along with flourishing pupils and staff. The inspector met various members of staff during the course of the inspection including both new and long serving staff, administrative staff, a cleaner, Teaching Assistant (TA)s and teachers. A small group of governors had met the inspector. Year 4 pupils had given the inspector a tour of the school; the Headteacher noted that pupils had been

amazing. The inspector had spoken to parents of SEN pupils. The inspector was very complimentary about the school, commented upon how well cared for it was, how it suited the context of children, was well resourced, was very complimentary about pupils and that governors were involved in challenging.

The Chair noted that the inspector had commented that vision was at the heart of school life. There was an exceptional sense of loving caring family in school, collective worship was a unifier and permeated school and pupils achieved well.

Areas for development included embedding current work on spirituality across the curriculum and the concept of justice beyond the community.

The Chair extended her congratulations to the Headteacher and the rest of staff. The inspection had not been expected this term and it was great to have some external validation of school. The Headteacher commented that the inspection had given everyone a boost before an imminent Ofsted inspection. It was a valuable experience for staff and had affirmed the strengths of the school. Pupils had been incredible, smart and composed. Sarah MacRae observed that it was clear that they loved their school. Governors offered their congratulations to the Headteacher and staff.

#### **b) Demographics**

Mobility and Pupil Premium eligibility was provided by Insight.

#### **c) School Development Plan (SDP) and Self Evaluation Form (SEF)**

- The school's Achievement Partner, Alison Stephenson, had advised that curriculum changes needed to be bedded in. Areas of focus were SEN as there was a new SENCo and ensuring the suitability of an adapted curriculum for SEN pupils. There was a high level of need in Reception and a significant level of Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need across the school.
- White Rose Maths Hub long term plan had been adapted to our school and strengthened by adding real life experience. For example, inclusion of STEM activities and enterprise projects. Pupils would be given additional real life opportunities to use statistical skills in other curriculum areas.
- Reading continued to be stronger than Writing. As a result, writing remained an area for development.
- All staff had been trained on spirituality and the profile of 'look in, look out and look up' would be raised through all that was done. A reflection area had been created providing a space for pupils to have moments of reflection during playtime.
- A renewed focus was on enabling all adults in school to flourish.
- Middle leadership continued to be developed.

The Chair noted that it was important for governors to think about how to monitor these areas of the SDP. Traditionally, there had been Link Governors relating to strands of the SDP to be monitored.

The following Link Governors were **agreed**:

SEND (shadowing Sarah McRae)	~	Molly Allan
Maths	~	Fatima Begum
Writing (shadowing Sarah Pickett)	~	Molly Allan
Leadership (development of middle leaders)	~	Andrew Shipton

The Chair asked that the above listed Link Governors contact the Headteacher to arrange a date to visit school and inform the Chair of planned visits.



**Action: M Allan, F Begum and A Shipton**

**d) Pupil Premium Strategy and Sports Premium**

The draft Pupil Premium Strategy was a draft version. It was the next three year strategy for 2024 - 2027. The Deputy Headteacher had taken responsibility for Pupil Premium from this September. Much focus was on vocabulary in Early Years which would support writing. This was agreed by the governing body. SBM to publish on website.

The TLA Committee would review Sports Premium. The SBM pointed out that evaluation of last year and highlights of intentions for this year were included. The SBM would circulate this to governors.

**10. Reports from committees, link visits and training**

Circulated:

- NCC Governor training programme 2024 - 2025

**a) Link visit reports**

At this stage in the academic year, there were no link visit reports.

**b) Training**

With Link Governor responsibilities in mind, the Chair encouraged governors to book onto any relevant training. The SBM encouraged governors to attend Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) training. Governors were reminded of training available through the NGA and CES too.

**11. Policies**

**Circulated:**

- Admissions policy information

The Headteacher would circulate Safeguarding and child protection policy, SEND policy and Attendance policy to governors. Governors were asked to review the policies within seven days and give their agreement via email.

**Action: Headteacher and Governors**

**12. Financial items**

Circulated:

- NCC Schools financial handbook and guide, June 2020
- NCC Scheme for financing schools, June 2023
- NCC Schedule of delegated levels of authority, 2024 – 2025
- NCC School fund constitution, 2024 - 2025

**a) Use of Newcastle Schools Financial Handbook and Newcastle Scheme for Financing Schools**

Governors noted use of the Handbook and Scheme.

**b) Financial delegated levels of authority**

The following delegated levels of authority were **agreed**:

**Contract spending limits:**

Under £10,000	Headteacher
£10,000 - £20,000	Finance, Staffing and Premises Committee

Above £20,000 GB

**Budget virement limits:**

Under £5,000 Headteacher

Above £5,000 Finance, Staffing and Premises Committee

**Authority to sign orders and invoices:** Headteacher, SBM and Administrative Officer

**c) School fund auditor arrangements and School fund balance**

Cheryl Spencer, LA Senior Auditor, was **agreed** as School fund auditor. The Finance Staffing and Premises Committee would review the School fund audit report.

**Action: FSP Committee**

**13. Gosforth Schools' Trust update**

The next Trust meeting would be held on 17 October 2024.

**14. Statutory responsibilities: safeguarding, health and safety, risk management, data protection, equality duty**

**a) Keeping children safe in education, 2024**

A link to Keeping children safe in education, 2024, was included in the agenda for the meeting. The SBM would issue a form to governors to obtain confirmation of their reading of Keeping children safe in education, 2024.

**Action: SBM**

**b) Personal data sharing**

Governors **agreed** that they were happy to share email addresses with other members of the GB.

**c) DBS and Section 128 checks**

It was confirmed that all governors (except new Foundation Governor Molly Allan) had DBS clearance and had received Section 128 checks.

**15. Governance items**

**Circulated:**

- NCC GoverNews, autumn 2024
- NCC Key guidance, autumn 2024
- Newcastle Promise Board (NPB) and subgroups key messages, summer 2 2024
- Newcastle Schools' Forum minutes, 26 June 2024

GoverNews included an article written by the LA Assistant Director, Education, who suggested that governors may find it useful to receive the weekly Education Update. He also advised that more details about the new Children's Wellbeing Bill would be forthcoming. An article on cyber security recommended that at least one member of the GB should complete cyber security training. There was information about school attendance, questions asked at recent Ofsted inspections and a useful list of initialisms and acronyms.

Key guidance included links to DfE Working together to improve attendance, DfE policy paper Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and



children's services systems and a report from the National Governance Association about governance workload.

## 16. Governor impact

Governors contributed the following suggestions about how they had positively impacted pupils' outcomes:

- Governors had met with the SIAMS inspector and had spoken about their involvement in school.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair had participated in the Headteacher's performance management review. The Headteacher spoke of feeling supported by governors.
- During curriculum visits, a governor had talked about the history of the school and what that meant.
- Governors had agreed to extend contracts of two support staff working in Reception and Year 4; this had been invaluable as the cohort presented challenges.
- Governors had agreed 30 hours Nursery provision as part of a long term strategy.
- A governor led the choir.
- A break out space, created by converting part of an office, had made an impact.
- Re-evaluation of the Admission Policy to ensure alignment with current community needs would have an impact.

It was **agreed** that the Admissions committee would meet at 4.30pm on a date to be confirmed via WhatsApp.

**Action: Admission Committee**

*Cecilia Pacitti left the meeting at this point, 7.31pm.*

## 17. Future GB and Committee meeting dates

GB and Committee meetings would be held on the following dates:

**GB meetings** (starting at 5.30pm in school):

- 20 November 2024
- 9 April 2025
- 21 May 2025 (for approval of budget)
- 16 July 2025

**Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee meetings** (starting at 4.30pm, except for meeting on 23 October, via Microsoft Teams):

- 23 October 2024 at 5pm
- 5 March 2025
- 4 June 2025

**Finance Staffing and Premises Committee meetings** (starting at 4.30pm, except for meeting on 10 October, via Microsoft Teams):

- 10 October 2024 at 5pm.
- 5 February 2025
- 14 May 2025

## 18. Any other business

The Chair thanked governors for their attendance and contributions. The meeting closed at 7.33pm.



## Action summary

Item no.	Action	Outcome
1	<b>Governors</b> to register on Clennell Education Solutions website	
3	<b>L Aitken</b> to check whether disadvantage criteria can be added to Admission Policy	
6	<b>Headteacher</b> to contact possible prospective governor to fill the LA Governor vacancy	
7	<b>Clerk</b> to make minor amendments to Link Governor information in GB Handbook	
7	<b>Clerk</b> to amend Delegation Planner as detailed in minutes	
7	<b>Chair &amp; Vice-Chair</b> to update Year planner with revised dates	
8	<b>Clerk</b> to table confidential item from 26 June 2024 at next GB meeting	
8	<b>Clerk</b> to correct date in minutes of GB 26 June 2024	
8	<b>S MacRae</b> to meet school's new SENCo next week	
8	<b>Clerk</b> to add action for Katie Hogg to contact All Saints to GB minutes 26 June 2024	
9	<b>M Allan, F Begum and A Shipton</b> to contact Headteacher to arrange date to visit school & inform Chair of planned visits	
11	<b>Headteacher</b> to circulate Safeguarding and child protection policy, SEND policy and Attendance policy to governors. <b>Governors</b> to approve via email within 7 days	
12	<b>FSP Committee</b> to review School fund audit report	
14	<b>SBM</b> to issue a form to governors to obtain confirmation of their reading of Keeping children safe in education, 2024	
16	<b>Admissions committee</b> to arrange date to meet at 4.30pm	

Signed .....  ..... Date 20/11/24.....

Chair of Governors