



**Draft minutes of the Governing Body (GB) meeting
of Archbishop Runcie First School
Wednesday 16 July 2025**

Present:

Sarah Pickett / Sarah MacRae (Chair)
Molly Allan, Paul Baker, Fatima Begum, Greg Farrell (in school and later by virtual link), Katie Hogg, Diana Lavin, Rae Lowe, Kate Massey (Headteacher),
Cecilia Pacitti, Lonie Sebahg (via virtual link) and Andrew Shipton

Quorum

Governors in post: 13; quorum: 7; governors present: 13

In Attendance:

Claire Hepple ~ Clerk, Governor Services

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Sarah Pickett welcomed everyone to the meeting at 5.41pm. Rev Paul Baker offered an opening prayer.

2. Declaration of interests.

Circulated:

- Declaration of business and pecuniary interests form 2024 - 2025

There were no declarations made relating to the business of the meeting.

3. Identification of any additional / urgent items not on the agenda.

Governor use of school emails

Sarah Pickett suggested that governors set up alerts for emails received to their school email addresses to their personal email addresses. The Headteacher advised that an app may be easier to use. Three governors reported problems using school email addresses and were asked to contact the Newcastle City Council (NCC) IT service desk for assistance.

Action: M Allen, P Baker and D Lavin

LED Lighting

Discussion about proposed LED lighting was deferred to Item 12.

4. GB membership and appointments update

Local Authority governor vacancy

The Chair had contacted a potential future Local Authority (LA) governor and it was hoped that she would join the GB next term.

Foundation Governor

Sarah Pickett's term of office as a Foundation Governor appointed by the Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas, Gosforth, would end on 8 September 2025. Sarah had advised that work commitments meant she was unable to continue for a further term. Paul Baker was asked to search for a new Foundation Governor.

Action: P Baker

Safeguarding Link Governor

Sarah MacRae intended to take on the role of Safeguarding Link Governor and would also shadow Greg Farrell, Health and Safety Link Governor. Katie Hogg advised that although work commitments restricted her availability, she would be happy to share the Safeguarding Link Governor responsibility with Sarah MacRae.

Parent Governors

- Greg Farrell's term of office as a Parent Governor would end on 8 March 2026. Greg would be ineligible to stand for another term as a Parent Governor as his child no longer attended the school. Greg noted his willingness to become a different type of governor.
- Fatima Begum advised that since moving house, her child may change schools and she asked if she could remain a Parent Governor; this was confirmed.

5. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2025 – 2026

Sarah MacRae had self-nominated for the position of Chair of Governors. No other nominations were received. Sarah left the room to allow governors opportunity to discuss the nomination. Upon her return to the room, Sarah MacRae was congratulated upon her **election** as Chair of Governors 2025 – 2026.

Lonie Sebahg had self-nominated for the position of Vice-Chair of Governors advising that, ideally, she would prefer to be a Co-Vice-Chair as she would work remotely in 2025 – 2026. Lonie's virtual link to the meeting was temporarily withheld whilst governors discussed the nomination and the link reinstated for Lonie to be informed that she was **elected** Vice-Chair. Sarah Pickett encouraged governors to consider the role of Co-Vice-Chair as it was felt important that a governor who was available in person could share the role. **A governor queried time allocation for the role** and was advised that usually the Chair performed most tasks, however, this academic year, the Vice-Chair had been more involved.

Action: Governors

At this point in the meeting, Sarah MacRae took over chairing.

6. Draft minutes of the previous GB meetings

Circulated:

- GB draft minutes, 9 April and 21 May 2025

Draft minutes of 9 April and 21 May 2025 were **approved** as true records. A confidential item from 9 April 2025 was tabled and **approved** without further update.

Matters arising from the above minutes

GB membership and appointments update (page 2)

Sarah Pickett had contacted someone who may wish to join the GB as LA Governor.

Draft minutes of the previous GB meetings (page 2)

- Following changes to the Clennell Education Solutions website, Rae Lowe, School Business Manager (SBM), noted her intention to add all governors to the new website.

Action: R Lowe

- A governor monitoring visit report on SEND had been circulated for this meeting.

Headteacher's report and school improvement (page 4)

- Governors had received training on the permanent exclusion process from another provider.
- Insurance arrangements had recently changed to educational insurance through Zurich Insurance and the Headteacher felt that current lettings arrangements should remain in place for now.

Policies (page 6)

The Complaints Procedure would be reviewed later in the meeting, Item 11.

Statutory responsibilities: safeguarding, health and safety, risk management, data protection, equality duty (page 7)

The Chair and Katie Hogg had been unable to attend the summer term safeguarding audit.

Governance items (page 8)

Elective Home Education (EHE) and Partial Timetables had been added to TLA Committee agendas. EHE and Partial Timetables were now reported in Headteacher's reports.

7. Headteacher's report and school improvement

Circulated:

- Headteacher's report to the GB, summer 2025
- School Development Plan 2024 – 2025
- Climate Action Plan, 2025 – 2026
- Demographics 2024 – 2025
- Governors Year Planner 2025 - 2026

Headteacher's report

An updated Headteacher's report was tabled with blue text denoting additions to the report. The Headteacher highlighted points from her report:

Staffing

- Updates for discussion included a request by the Site Manager to reduce working hours from 7.30am – 4.30pm to finish at 1.30pm; these working arrangements had been agreed and would be reviewed at the end of the autumn term.
- A new cleaner appointment would be reviewed at the end of the autumn term.
- Some pupils with challenging high needs had joined Nursery in April; funding for these pupils could not be approved until September. A parental request to increase their child's attendance from 15 hours to 30 hours could not be agreed until funding was available. **Sarah Pickett queried this**; the Headteacher believed that attending school for a full day would be very distressing for the pupil.
- Two Reception pupils were assessed for Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)s. The Deputy Headteacher had attended a mediation meeting where one EHCP was

overturned. Reception class had no full time general support as all TAs worked with specific pupils with needs.

- The Year 1 teacher would relocate elsewhere.

Greg Farrell left the meeting at this point (6.15pm) and rejoined the meeting virtually from home.

- 22 pupils were expected to join Reception in September. The budget had been set for 24 pupils and it was hoped that more children would join. 15 pupils from the current Nursery would join Reception and it was thought that they would be very able.
- £32,000 had been received for one to one support for a pupil in Reception (Year 1 in September) as there were no special school places available in the city.
- A teacher had requested flexible working, reducing days worked to four per week. This had been agreed for one year.
- It was hoped that a support staff member who had provided maternity cover could be retained beyond February 2026.
- The Deputy Headteacher and current Year 2 teacher had visited another school which offered continuous provision for Year 1.

Data

- Year 2 data had been updated. Discrepancies between teacher assessments and SATs data was attributed to comparison of data which was not like for like.
- Attainment data had been added.
- 67% of Reception pupils had achieved a Good Level of Development.
- 93% of Year 1 pupils had passed the Phonics screening test.
- Year 4 Multiplication check results had slightly dipped this year compared with last year, however, there were more SEND pupils in current Year 4.

Extra-curricular activities

Feedback from pupils and parents on staff run activities had not been positive and these activities had added to staff workload. Going forward, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would run social action groups. A parent had offered to help with choir. Rae Lowe added that different sports providers would run the remaining extra curricular activities after school.

Sarah Pickett asked if parents paid for the clubs; there was a cost for participation in sporting clubs.

Sarah Pickett asked about participation of Pupil Premium pupils in extra-curricular activities. The Headteacher responded that uptake by Pupil Premium pupils was quite high and there was need to consider this for the next cycle of the Pupil Premium strategy. It was possible that Pupil Premium funding may pay for half of the cost; this would be discussed at the FSP Committee.

Action: FSP Committee

The Headteacher added that the new Ofsted framework would focus on Pupil Premium, SEND and children in the care of Social Services.

Attendance

- Attendance had been analysed by the TLA Committee.
- 17 of 22 persistent absentees were girls which matched the national trend.

- A pupil missing in education had been taken off roll.
- Five pupils had received certificates for 100% attendance this year.
- Instances of use of reasonable force / positive handling had decreased this academic year compared to 2023 – 2024.

Leadership and Management

- The Year 2 teacher had attended Read Write Inc training and would teach many Phonics lessons next year.
- The Diocesan offer of a School Improvement Partner for three days, taken as six half days had been purchased. The School Improvement Partner would feedback to governors at the summer term GB meeting.
- School had received many compliments.
- Sarah Pickett drew governors' attention to serious complaints received last term and this term, none of which had been upheld. She thanked governors involved for dealing with them noting the considerable amount of work involved. Paul Baker, Katie Hogg and Cecilia Pacitti were particularly thanked. She advised that the complaints had been dealt with in compliance with the Complaints Policy.
- Additional paid work time of 15 minutes had been given to after school club staff for locking up.

Premises and Finance

- A reflective film covering skylights in Nursery had not lowered heat levels. This year, there had been sustained hot spells and there was need to look at how to cool Nursery down. School may need to apply for windows that opened. Rae Lowe advised that the matter had been followed up with Diocesan Climate Action personnel. Sarah MacRae noted need to look at how the building would react with climate change.
- Hosting a French school on site had not progressed as there was insufficient space.
- Historically, the LA had bought insurance on behalf of schools. Now, the school bought an educational insurance package from Zurich Insurance. The Headteacher had recently attended a presentation about insurance and noted need for greater understanding about coverage. The FSP Committee would follow this up.

Action: FSP Committee

- The Headteacher noted average numbers of pupils attending breakfast and after school clubs. School had changed the way parents paid and they now either paid for the first hour or for a two hour slot. Very few parents had taken up the one hour slot. A cost comparison would be conducted. Rae Lowe advised that opening at 7.45am was popular with parents. Responses to a questionnaire of parents had indicated little interest in a 7.30am start.

Lunches

Increase in the cost of lunch to £3 had not seen a significant impact. Currently, 28 pupils paid for lunches. Of those pupils entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals, almost all took lunches. The FSP Committee would give this further consideration.

Action: FSP Committee

A service level agreement for PE had not been purchased as there had been uncertainty about the continuation of Sport Premium funding; the funding had since been confirmed.

Andrew Shipton joined the meeting at 6.40pm.

Safeguarding

- Sarah MacRae and Andrew Shipton would undertake refresher safer recruitment training on 15 October.
- A coffee morning held by the LA for SEND parents had been held in an attempt to manage parental expectations.

School Development Plan review 2024 - 2025

The SDP had been RAG rated. The Headteacher advised that most priorities from 2024 – 2025 would continue in 2025 – 2026. Areas for development identified during the Ofsted inspection earlier this year would continue to be worked on.

Climate Action Plan

Climate Action Plan was circulated for information.

Demographics

This report showed the pupil profile of the school.

Governor Planner

Committee meetings were arranged in the first half of terms and GB meetings in the second half of terms. It was important to ensure that FSP Committee meetings aligned with the financial calendar. Governors were asked to consider their memberships of committees. Committee memberships would be agreed at the GB meeting in September.

On behalf of all governors, Sarah MacRae thanked the Headteacher and all staff for their work over this academic year. The Headteacher noted that it had been a very challenging year, however, all had supported one another.

8. Sports Premium budgeting return

Circulated:

- Reporting PE and sport premium grant expenditure, categories of grant spending
- PE funding evaluation form 2024 - 2025

Rae Lowe advised that an online tool was now used to enter figures to the report. The report showed how Sport Premium funding was spent and would be published on the school's website by the end of July. The Headteacher expressed her delight that the funding would continue and hoped that a governor would conduct a link visit connected with this. **A governor asked if the funding would continue to pay for training of staff;** this was confirmed. The funding would also pay for sports equipment. Governors **approved** the report. A Link Governor for PE would be sought at the GB meeting in September.

Action: Clerk

9. Governor Impact

Governors suggested the following ways their decisions had positively impacted outcomes:

- Involvement in complaints and permanent exclusion procedures.
- Training.
- Governors had participated in SIAMS and Ofsted inspections.

- The Admission Policy had been changed to make school more inclusive.

Sarah MacRae paid tribute to the huge amount of involvement from governors and the strategic element to their work this year.

10. Reports from committees, link visits and training

Circulated:

- Finance Staffing and Premises Committee meeting minutes, 10 April and 14 May 2025
- Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee meeting minutes, 4 June 2025
- Governor visit report on SEND by S MacRae, 19 March 2025
- Governor visit report on Health and Safety by G Farrell, 16 July 2025

a) Finance Staffing and Premises Committee meeting minutes

Lonie Sebahg, Chair of the FSP Committee, advised that changes to staff working hours had been discussed. Other matters had already been discussed.

b) Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee meeting minutes

Sarah MacRae, Chair of the TLA Committee, advised that the committee had discussed attendance and the higher levels of persistence absence of girls. The Committee would return to this issue as an action point.

Action: TLA Committee

A governor queried how many sessions missed represented 90% absence; Rae Lowe advised that this was one day per fortnight.

c) Governor visit reports

Sarah MacRae highlighted the following points from the report:

- There were ongoing EHCP issues and insufficient funding provided. The Headteacher noted that the LA had a massive deficit budget linked to SEND which impacted pupils.
- Current waiting list for Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) was five years.
- There was right to choose power by GPs. The Headteacher noted that this was an alternative path to CYPS. Rae Lowe advised that via their GP, parents could had right to choose a provider. In the Gosforth area, a private company contracted by the NHS had shorter waiting lists.
- School was fully inclusive. All pupils had attended a residential trip. 69% of pupils attended extra-curricular clubs. There had been a long transition to middle school.

The Headteacher believed that following publication of the Ofsted inspection report, there may be an increase in applications from parents with children with SEND.

The Health and Safety report by G Farrell received earlier that day would be deferred for consideration to the GB meeting on 24 September 2025.

Action: Clerk

d) Feedback from training

- Governors had attended permanent exclusion training.
- Sarah MacRae had attended the Governor Services termly briefing session on 7 May 2025.

The Headteacher would inform governors about dates of complaints training from the Diocese.

Action: Headteacher

e) Governor training for September 2025

The NCC Governor Training Programme would be issued early next academic year and governors were encouraged to attend any training they felt may be useful.

11. Policies

Circulated:

- School Complaints Procedure, 9 April 2025
- Policy on Exclusions from School, October 2024
- Equality Race Diversity and Community Cohesion Policy, September 2024

Subject to minor amendments identified which included removal of the requirement for a complaint to be made in writing and removal of a diocesan email address, School Complaints Procedure was **approved**.

Action: R Lowe

Policy on Exclusions from School was **approved**.

Subject to the addition of page numbers, the Equality Race Diversity and Community Cohesion Policy was **approved**.

Action: R Lowe

12. Financial items

Circulated:

- E3 monitoring report, period 2, 2025 – 2026
- Financial report headlines, period 2, 2025 – 2026
- Annex D, period 2, 2025 – 2026
- Annex D, three year summary

a) Expenditure report

The budget was closely monitored.

b) Financial headlines

Sarah Pickett queried 'trading account' and was advised that this was the after school club.

Sarah MacRae queried the situation if there were 30 pupils in Reception on census day; Rae Lowe advised that the school's financial situation would improve although the time lag in receiving additional funding meant that impact would not be felt immediately.

c) Annex D

Annex D was **approved**.

d) Feedback from LA Senior Auditor following submission of Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

Rae Lowe would follow up a response from the LA Senior Auditor regarding the SFVS.

Action: R Lowe

LED lighting

Rae Lowe informed governors that 95% of lighting in school was old and fluorescent tubes were difficult to find and costly to replace. School had received quotations for LED lighting which varied from £30,000 to £35,000. The cost of the lighting would be recovered within three to five years.

Finance options without capital outlay involved the installation of new lighting and school continuing to be charged the same as usual for electricity. Energy usage would drop and school would pay the difference back to the installation company. After three years, the school would own the LED lighting. There was a five year guarantee and the lights would last on average about ten years. School hoped to install the lighting over the summer. LED lights were efficient and brighter. Dimmable LED lighting giving more flexibility was already installed in the hall. The cost included an upgrade to outdoor lights which would be motion triggered.

Thanks to Sarah Pickett

Sarah MacRae presented Sarah Pickett with a card and flowers from the GB. Sarah Pickett's hard work over many years as a governor and as Chair of Governors was greatly appreciated. Sarah Pickett responded that she would miss the school but unfortunately lacked time to continue in the role. She thanked governors for letting her serve the school. Governors joined to give Sarah Pickett a round of applause.

Cecilia Pacitti left the meeting at this point, 7.35pm.

LED Lighting

Governors raised the following points:

What were up front costs?

There were none. School would either find £35,000 which it would recover over three years or follow the scheme.

What was the difference between the figure paid now and the one to be paid in three years' time?

Rae estimated that school would save about £10,000 per year although sounded need for caution because of fluctuating energy prices.

Was there reassurance that a supplier would not 'sting' the school and how was this calculated?

This question was unanswered.

Did any other schools use it and was there a government grant?

Rae advised that it could be accessed via Net Zero funding. She advised that if work was carried out through the Diocese, school would have to pay a project management fee. Rae had spoken to one other school that had taken this route. The Headteacher advised that the Diocese would try to source a cheaper arrangement for all schools.

Was there interest in this?

Rae said that she had asked how the company made money and had been informed that it was part of a grant from government and part by working closely with manufacturers.

Was there a ceiling amount to be paid?

This was £7,163 per year. The Headteacher advised that school would continue to pay bills at the current rate.

How long would it take to install?

Ten days. The Headteacher was unsure whether installation could realistically take place over the summer holidays. Rae advised that it could be done in a week over the summer holiday. **Sarah MacRae noted that if approved by governors, it could be installed over the October half term.**

Rae Lowe read out questions and responses from the company. She noted a five year warranty and that the company maintained the lights.

How many hours life was there in an LED?

The Headteacher advised that upon expiry the whole fitting needed replacement.

Would there be holes in the ceiling?

The company would repair any holes.

Sarah MacRae asked that Greg Farrell review the documentation the following day and then liaise with her. Greg commented that it was difficult to assess as information supplied by the company was based on full utilisation and school did not run in this way. Sarah MacRae felt that the decision should not be rushed as it was not fully understood.

Action: S MacRae and G Farrell

13. Gosforth Schools' Trust (GST) update

Sarah MacRae had attended the summer term GST Board meeting on 12 June and provided the following update on topics discussed:

- It was hoped that all Chairs of Governors of GST schools would meet.
- There had been discussion about the proportion of Headteachers and governors at meetings.
- Admissions to Gosforth Academy.
- Great Park Academy would be ready on time.
- A new Admission Policy placed feeder schools above siblings.
- All schools had met the new Chief Executive Officer of the Gosforth Group. It had been noted that future strategy was to bring in primary education.
- Schools had offered support to another school in the GST.

A governor queried whether there had been discussion about the private sector and impact. Sarah MacRae advised that as birth rates had fallen in the city, there were spaces in First Schools. The Headteacher advised that ARFS was quite vulnerable as a one form entry school given capacity in the rest of the system. She noted impact of Havannah First School going to three form entry. **Sarah Pickett asked if the Diocese was aware of the situation;** this was confirmed. **A governor asked if in GST meetings there was a sense that Headteachers promoted their own schools;** the Headteacher responded that this had not been the case. **Governors discussed making more of the school and need to find a way to be distinctively different.** The Headteacher advised that a play group had been started to encourage more people into the school. **A governor observed that parents liked one form entry.** The Headteacher advised that Rae Lowe created Facebook posts and there were banners advertising the school on the high street. Sarah MacRae noted need to look at pupil numbers in September and to analyse where pupils came from. Rae would arrange for posters to be available in pre-schools and nurseries.

Action: R Lowe

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

Circulated:

- Safeguarding audit 2024 – 2025
- The Headteacher referred governors to point 1.15 on the Safeguarding audit which was RAG rated amber with actions for Katie Hogg to undertake safeguarding visits.
- Point 1.42 was RAG rated amber for the summer term as a governor was required to carry out a visit to review online safety. The Headteacher noted that the visit could be carried out remotely and suggested that Katie Hogg or Lonie Sebahg action this.

Action: K Hogg / L Sebahg

- Sarah MacRae would attend the next visit by the Safeguarding consultant on 12 September. Katie Hogg would check her availability for this visit.

Action: K Hogg

- Governors were advised that point 2.12 RAG rated amber, Early Help refresher training, had been booked.
- Point 4.2 to hear Pupil Voice could be achieved at the same time by Katie Hogg or Sarah MacRae.

Action: K Hogg / S MacRae

- The main health and safety concern was the glass roof in Nursery.
- There had been no data protection breaches. Rae Lowe reported continuous improvement in this area.
- Risk assessments were based on models from the NCC and others were specific to school. Rae Lowe advised that risk assessments were updated whenever anything happened and were monitored by Greg Farrell, Health and Safety Link Governor.
- The Equality Policy which contained equality objectives had been approved earlier in the meeting.

15. Governance items

Circulated:

- NCC Key Guidance, summer 2025
- NCC GoverNews, summer 2025
- NCC Governor priorities, summer 2025
- Newcastle Promise Board (NPB) sub-group summaries, summer 1 and 2 2025

A new format GoverNews featured articles on support for pupils who were Young Carers, risk management, information on the Healthy Start initiative and chairing a board whilst having a full time job.

Key Guidance included links to a DfE report showing correlation between attendance and attainment (missing 10 days of school in Year 6 decreased chances of achieving expected standard in Reading Writing and Maths by 25%) and updated DfE guidance to governing boards on SEND. There was a link to a school readiness survey based on the 2024 Reception cohort which found that 34% of pupils did not know how to listen or respond to a simple instruction and 25% were not toilet trained.

Governor priorities highlighted SEND capital projects around the city and increase in permanent exclusions with questions governors might ask of their schools about this. Possible changes to Ofsted inspections were reported. The importance of ensuring pupil readiness for the new academic year was noted.

16. Meeting dates 2025 – 2026

Governors **agreed** the following meeting dates:

GB meetings (starting at 5.30pm in school):

- 24 September 2025 (including Safeguarding refresher video training)
- 3 December 2025
- 25 March 2026
- 15 July 2026

Admissions Committee meetings (starting at 1pm via Microsoft Teams):

- 13 November 2025
- 12 February 2026
- 12 March 2026
- 30 March 2026

Teaching and Learning Committee meetings (starting at 4.30pm via Microsoft Teams):

- 15 October 2025
- 11 February 2026
- 13 May 2026

Finance Staffing and Premises Committee meeting (starting at 4.30pm via Microsoft Teams):

- 22 October 2025
- 4 February 2026
- 20 May 2026

17. Any other business

There was no further business. Governors were thanked for their attendance. The meeting closed at 8.09pm.

Action summary

Item no.	Action	Outcome
3	M Allen, P Baker & D Lavin to contact NCC IT service desk for assistance using school email addresses	
4	P Baker to search for new Foundation Governor	
5	Governors to consider role of Co-Vice-Chair	
6	R Lowe to add all governors to new Clennell Education Solutions website	
7	FSP Committee to discuss whether Pupil Premium funding should pay for half cost of extra-curricular activities	
7	FSP Committee to examine coverage provided by Zurich Insurance	
7	FSP Committee to further consider uptake for school meals	
8	Clerk to add assignment of Link Governor for PE to September GB agenda	
10	TLA Committee to analyse attendance & higher levels of persistence absence of girls	
10	Clerk to add consideration of Health and Safety report by G Farrell to GB agenda in September	
10	Headteacher to inform governors of dates of complaints training from Diocese	
11	R Lowe to make minor amendments to School Complaints Procedure	
11	R Lowe to add page numbers to Equality Race Diversity and Community Cohesion Policy	
12	R Lowe to follow up obtaining response from LA Senior Auditor re. SFVS	
12	S MacRae & G Farrell to liaise re LED lighting	
13	R Lowe to arrange for posters advertising school to be available in pre-schools & nurseries	
14	K Hogg / L Sebahgh to review online safety remotely	
14	K Hogg to check her availability for attending Safeguarding consultant visit on 12 September	
14	K Hogg / S MacRae to hear Pupil Voice	