



**Approved minutes of the Governing Body (GB) meeting
of Archbishop Runcie First School (ARFS)
Thursday 23 November 2023**

Present:

Sarah Pickett (Chair)
Paul Baker, Greg Farrell (via virtual link), Sarah Hawkins, Katie Hogg, Diana Lavin,
Rae Lowe, Sarah MacRae, Kate Massey (Headteacher), Cecilia Pacitti,
Lonie Sebahg and Andrew Shipton

Quorum

Governors in post: 13; quorum: 7; governors present: 12

In Attendance:

Claire Hepple ~ Clerk, Governor Services

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 5.39pm. Rev Paul Baker offered an opening prayer.

An apology for absence received from Ted Thomas was **accepted**.

2. Declaration of interests.

Circulated:

- Register of Interests form 2023 - 2024

There were no interests declared in the business of the meeting. Governors returned completed Register of Interest forms to the Clerk. The Clerk would remind governors to complete forms.

Action: Clerk

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

Greg Farrell would give a short presentation on health and safety.

4. GB appointments / membership update.

Greg Farrell joined meeting at this point via a virtual link, 5.52pm. He was asked to present his findings on health and safety procedures to the GB. Greg referred governors to a report circulated (Item 10c) following a visit to the school to monitor health and safety. Greg advised that it was good practice to have an overarching policy which referred to procedures.

The Chair asked whether the amount of work involved was manageable; this was confirmed by Greg who stated that it would build upon work already carried out by Ted Thomas. **She asked whether it was a case of procedures already in place cross referencing each other more transparently;** this was confirmed by Greg who noted that currently, documents were in different places and needed to be consolidated to one place.

The Chair noted the need for these elements to appear on a Risk Register and sought the views of other governors. A governor felt that it was worth showing documentation to the Local Authority (LA) although believed additions to documents had been made rather than changes. Rae Lowe, School Business Manager (SBM), sounded caution about changing LA documents. **The Headteacher asked whether the documents originated from work carried out by another First School in the Gosforth Schools' Trust** and was informed that the Headteacher of that First School had worked with the LA to overhaul policies. The Headteacher advised that if documents had been agreed with the LA, she did not believe ARFS should deviate from them, however, if the documents belonged to the other First School and had simply been rubber stamped by the LA then that was slightly different. The Headteacher noted that the school bought into the LA Health and Safety Service Level Agreement which meant that the LA had responsibility.

The Chair noted that Greg Farrell proposed to work with the SBM to streamline documents; the Headteacher was of the opinion that it was the LA Greg needed to work with. Greg advised that he was not ready to present a document as further work with the SBM was needed to add detail to the proposal. **The Chair noted her concern for the SBM's workload.** The SBM reported that current systems worked, the LA Health and Safety representatives had checked school and were happy. **The Chair advised that Greg Farrell should speak to the LA Health and Safety representative to establish whether it was worth spending further time on this** and thanked Greg for work carried out so far.

Action: G Farrell

GB membership

Diana Lavin had become a Foundation Governor 'Parochial Church Council of All Saints, Gosforth' from 22 November 2023, vacating the position of Foundation Governor 'Newcastle Diocesan Board of Education'. Sarah MacRae, whose term of office as a Parent Governor would end on 8 December 2023, had begun to complete an application form for this position. Until Sarah MacRae's appointment as a Foundation Governor was confirmed, the GB **approved** her as an Associate member of the GB from 9 December 2023. Following a discussion on procedural matters related to the Foundation Governor appointment, the Chair recorded her intention to seek clarification from a representative of the Joint Education Team, Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Boards of Education.

Action: Chair

The Headteacher would advertise the Parent Governor vacancy when the Chair sent paperwork through.

Action: Headteacher / Chair

5. Draft minutes of the previous GB meeting

Circulated:

- GB draft minutes, 13 September 2023

Matters arising from the above minutes

Declaration of interests (page 3)

It had already been noted that the Clerk would remind governors to complete a Register of Interests form, Item 2.

GB appointments / membership update (page 3)

- Andrew McCabe had formally stepped down as Foundation Governor 'Parochial Church Council of All Saints, Gosforth'.
- Advertisement of the Parent Governor vacancy had been noted earlier in the meeting, Item 4.

Draft minutes of the previous GB meeting (page 4)

- The Chair had emailed skills audits to D Lavin, S Hawkins and R Lowe.
- Katie Hogg had opened a new line of enquiry with the Fire Brigade about parking and traffic on Christon Road and would feedback to governors when she received new information. **A governor suggested that a city councillor be approached about this matter.**

Action: K Hogg

- Cecilia Pacitti had become the school's representative on the Worship Council and advised that she would attend meetings whenever possible.

Governance documentation and requirements for agreement and confirmation (pages 4 – 6)

- The Clerk had investigated origins of the process for dealing with non-attendance of governors at GB meetings as detailed in the GB Handbook and advised that it was from Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance 'The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools'.
- Sarah MacRae had amended the GB Handbook and it was circulated for approval at this meeting, Item 6a.
- The Headteacher had recirculated the School Development Plan (SDP). The Clerk would add review of SDP for the previous academic year to September GB meeting agendas.

Action carried forward: Clerk

- The SBM would check responses to a Microsoft Form issued to governors to confirm their reading of Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023.

Action: SBM

Governor monitoring and training plans for the year (page 7)

- The Chair had circulated a revised version of governor roles.
- Dates had been set for Link Governors monitoring the SDP to visit school.
- An Ofsted fact sheet had been shared with governors.
- An in-house governor training session had been organised for 10 January 2024.

Policy review (page 8)

Amendments detailed in the minutes of the previous GB meeting had been made to the Attendance Policy.

Financial items (page 9)

The PE Strategy had been circulated to the Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) and Finance Staffing and Premises (FSP) Committees.

Impact (page 10)

Ted Thomas was absent from the meeting and feedback of ideas received about engagement with the wider community was deferred to the next GB meeting.

Action: T Thomas

6. Governance documentation and requirements for agreement and confirmation

Circulated:

- GB Handbook 2023 – 2024
- The GB Handbook which had been revised based on discussions was **approved**.
- It was confirmed that D Lavin's DBS clearance had been received.

7. Headteacher's report / school improvement

Circulated:

- Headteacher's report, autumn term 2023
- School Development Plan 2023 – 2024 v8
- Self Evaluation Form summary, October 2023, revised after SIP visit
- High quality teaching – Evidence summary
- Interventions – Evidence summary

a) Headteacher's report

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for an in depth report although noted the need for it to become more concise. The Headteacher advised that she would produce longer reports in autumn and spring terms and a shorter report in the summer. The Chair and Vice-Chair would discuss content of spring and summer Headteacher reports.

Action: Chair and Vice-Chair

A governor asked whether any Early Careers Teacher (ECT)s had been signed off yet; it was reported that one ECT was in their first year and three ECTs were in their second year and would not be signed off until July 2024.

Responses from parents to questions asked of them on page 10 of the report were queried, particularly question 4 'My child has been bullied and the school dealt with the bullying quickly and effectively'; 72% had stated that their child had not been bullied, 20% had agreed or strongly agreed. The governor noted that it was not possible to know whether 20% was bad. The Headteacher advised that the questions were from Ofsted and that 8% of parents had felt that bullying was not dealt with effectively.

The Chair queried responses to question 6, 'When I have raised concerns with the school they have been dealt with properly' to which 30% of parents or carers had not raised a concern and 63% had agreed or strongly agreed. The Headteacher advised that she had met with the 7% (three people) who did not feel the matter was dealt with properly.

A governor asked whether the school was full and was informed that there were a couple of places in Reception. The Chair added that some other schools in the area also had places available in their Reception year.

The Chair referred governors to page 6 of the report and the Behaviour Log table. She noted that it was not possible to view trends and make comparisons as data from this time last year was not provided. For future reports, the Headteacher would add data for purposes of comparison.

Action: Headteacher

A confidential item (A) was discussed at this point.

The Headteacher reported that on World Tolerance Day, two pupils were unable to visit to a Hindu temple as part of an educational trip; one pupil had not been given permission and the other pupil remained at home because of 'recent world events'. The Chair noted that Hinduism was covered in class in any case.

The Chair noted an issue of persistent absence among pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding, 33% of whom were categorised as persistently absent from 4 September 2023 – 27 October 2023 compared with 8% of non-Pupil Premium pupils. The Headteacher advised that by comparison with national figures, persistent absence overall was not too bad. Many measures and procedures were in place to address absence which included telephone calls to families by the Headteacher and collection of pupils from their homes by the Attendance Officer. Some parents were to be fined for taking holidays during term time having received prior warnings that fines may be issued. The LA Head of School Effectiveness had recently recommended that GBs appoint a Link Governor to monitor Attendance however, the Chair felt this unnecessary as attendance was discussed thoroughly at committee level.

The Headteacher was thanked for a comprehensive report.

b) School Development Plan

The SDP was a working document which would continue to evolve. There had been three governor visits this term covering the three main strands, Teaching, Targeted academic support and Wider strategies.

A temporary section had been added to the end of the SDP to provide governors with information about behaviour in Key Stage (KS) 2 which was now significantly improved. **A governor commented that behaviour had been attributable to the dynamics a particular cohort** and the Headteacher noted the impact of several ECTs. The School Improvement Partner had visited school the previous day and had confirmed the improvement in behaviour in KS2.

c) Self Evaluation Form summary

The Headteacher explained that red text in the SEF denoted direct links to the SDP. **The Chair highlighted that the last Ofsted report had stated that Early Years needed improvement. Early Years now self-evaluated as good / outstanding; a credit to the Early Years team and to the Headteacher's leadership.**

The Headteacher commented that the Deputy Headteacher who had joined from another school believed that personal development was given much greater focus at this school than elsewhere. The Headteacher affirmed that pupils of the school had a rich experience.

High Quality Teaching document.

The High Quality Teaching – Evidence Summary provided useful background reading for governors to assist their understanding of the rationale behind the SDP. The document explained what high quality teaching should look like and that it should be responsive to pupils' needs. It was noted that the biggest impact on SEN was high quality teaching.

Interventions – Evidence Summary

Short, sharp, research based interventions were carried out. An evidence summary had relayed the effect of separation which was used only as a last resort; staff did not want to remove pupils from class. The document was shared with governors to develop their awareness of practice in school. The Headteacher advised that sections were from National Professional Qualification for Headship training materials.

A governor asked what made the biggest impact. The Headteacher advised that responsive teaching, use of live assessment and scaffolding of learning rather than differentiation made an impact. Pupils did not work on different tasks but were appropriately assisted to acquire the same learning. Teachers imparted knowledge and followed this up with questions. The SBM advised that it was about having a toolkit and a range of strategies to try. The Headteacher advised that training had been carried out with teachers and Teaching Assistant (TA)s and there was need to provide coaching on flexible groupings of pupils.

Greg Farrell left the meeting during this item.

8. Policy review

Circulated:

- Admission Policy 2024 – 2025
- Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for Newcastle upon Tyne maintained schools and academies 2025 – 2026, draft for consultation
- Consultation: Newcastle Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2025 - 2026
- SEN and Disability Policy, September 2023
- Model Pay Policy for Teachers and Support Staff 2023 - 2024
- Overarching management of Health and Safety in school systems
- School Complaints Procedure 2023 - 2024

Admission Policy 2025 – 2026

The Headteacher advised that the substance of the Admission Policy 2025 – 2026 was unchanged from 2024 – 2025 with only changes of dates.

A governor asked about numbers of church places and was advised that the school rarely received church applications. **A governor thought that being a Church of England school may dissuade people from applying as they may regard it as a form of indoctrination.** **A governor noted that there was no Church of England High School and therefore a lack of continuation from First School onwards.** **The Chair noted the need to ask whether the policy was appropriate.** The Headteacher noted the need to consider SIAMS diocesan education. **The Chair recommended that governors reflect upon any changes required to the Admission Policy 2026 – 2027 and a formal vote take place at a GB meeting in the summer term with regard to any proposed changes.** A consultation on any proposed changes would then take place in autumn 2024.

Action: Governors

Governors **approved** the Admission Policy 2025 – 2026, unchanged from 2024 – 2025.

The SEND Policy, Pay Policy (reviewed by the TLA Committee), Overarching management of Health and Safety in School Systems and Complaints Policy were also **approved**.

9. Financial items

Circulated:

- Expenditure report 2023 – 2024
- Financial report headlines, period 7, 2023 - 2024
- SFVS self-assessment, November 2023

Budget monitoring / expenditure update, period 7, 2023 – 2024

Governors were informed that the budget had changed significantly over the last two months and the budget balanced in years one and two. A small deficit of £28,240 existed in the forecast for year three. Supply staff was an issue. A meeting with the LA Business Manager would take place. Challenges faced by the school were replicated in other schools across the city and country because of unfunded pay rises and difficulties in recruitment. **The Chair commented that it was clear how hard the Headteacher and SBM had worked to achieve the difference to the budget.**

A confidential item (B) was discussed at this point.

The Chair queried an overspend of £11,000 for supply teachers and asked whether this was included in the projection for the budget; this was thought to be the case.

The Chair noted a saving of £28,000 as the school was unable to recruit. The SBM advised that supply teachers and TAs were used, however, permanent staff would be preferred for consistency.

The Chair asked what may be cut from next year to produce a balanced budget. Some school trips would not take place. The SBM noted a surplus from Wraparound care. The Chair advised that upscaled staff salaries were included in the budget.

Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

The Clerk would check with the LA Senior Auditor whether the SFVS could be approved via email. If this was not possible, governors would meet via a virtual link to approve the SFVS.

Action: Clerk

10. Reports and feedback from GB committees / governor monitoring / governor training

Circulated:

- TLA minutes, 3 October 2023
- FSP minutes, 4 October 2023
- Visit report on health and safety by G Farrell and T Thomas, 25 October 2023
- Governor visit protocol template, September 2023
- Visit report on e-safety by L Sebahg, 13 November 2023

- Visit report on SDP Strand 4 by S Pickett and L Sebagh, 20 November 2023

Governors were thanked for visiting the school and for their reports. The Chair noted that it was great that all strands of the SDP had been covered.

Governors provided short verbal summaries of their findings:

- Paul Baker had recently visited every class and obtained good responses from pupils. He would plan another visit in the near future.
- Lonie Sebagh had monitored E-Safety, following the addition of filtering and monitoring to KCSIE, 2023. She had reviewed checklists and reported that she awaited information from the LA.
- Lonie Sebagh and the Chair had conducted a wellbeing visit, to review another strand of the SDP. They had had incredible interviews with six members of staff including support staff, the SBM and teachers. They had not visited KS2 but the SIP spoke to ECTs in KS2. They were reassured that staff were currently happy and they planned to revisit later in the year to capture the views of new members of staff once they had settled in. The Headteacher added that the school Improvement Partner checked in with the ECTs in KS2 to ensure they received the support they were entitled to and both were reported to be happy.
- Diana Lavin had met the Headteacher to discuss the SDP. She noted that mentoring four ECTs involved a lot of work. Teachers were responsible for an average three subjects. The Leadership structure continued to develop in the right direction.

Diana intends to carry out a link gov visit for Music as she already supports the school choir. She noted that it was important to ensure that external staff did not deliver extra-curricular sessions for their own benefit. It had been hard work to ensure their participation in an event at the Cathedral in the summer term. Diana would like to observe a Music lesson provided by the external music teachers. She queried how progress in this subject was relayed to the Headteacher and would follow this up during a subsequent visit.

Diana felt that people in the community were unaware that the school existed and some parents thought that the school was solely for those who were of Church of England faith. She noted that public music performances could help with local public relations and Diana would work with the Music Lead on this.

11. Gosforth Schools' Trust update

Circulated:

- Gosforth Schools' Trust minutes, 8 June 2023

Sarah MacRae provided the following update:

- Terms of reference had been shared with GBs.
- Gosforth Central Middle School Published Admission Number (PAN) would increase to 150 in September 2024.
- Transport would be funded because some schools had to travel some distance to events whereas others did not. The Headteacher noted that taking six pupils to an event required two members of staff. In some cases, only four schools would participate in an event; this issue should be discussed at the next meeting. Pupils did not attend many events as staff could not be released. **A governor suggested that parents could take their children to events held after school.**

- Schools would be required to pay for the next training day costs and could not opt out.
- The training day in June 2024 was about wellbeing.

The Headteacher added that there had been much discussion about the purpose of the Trust.

12. Governors' statutory responsibilities

Circulated:

- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Compliance Report, 2022 – 2023
- Meeting digital and technology standards

Governors' statutory responsibilities had been covered in the Headteacher's report.

A Safeguarding Audit had been carried out by the Safeguarding Consultant from Clennell Education Solutions. Findings were mainly green on a traffic light system. The Headteacher would circulate the audit and action plan.

Action: Headteacher

13. Governance items for information

Circulated:

- Governor priorities, autumn term, 2023

Priorities for governors this term were Headteacher wellbeing training, attendance and focus on disadvantaged pupils, less than half of whom entered secondary education at the expected standard for Reading Writing and Maths.

14. Newcastle Promise Board (NPB) update

Circulated:

- NPB subgroup summary, autumn 2023 half term 1

The summary was provided for governor information.

15. Impact

Governors contributed the following thoughts about the difference they made to outcomes for pupils:

- Governors had visited school to check strands of the SDP.
- Governors had received first-hand accounts of the impact on wellbeing of the new leadership structure. Teachers in key stages had their own mentor and key stage leader and felt well supported. The Chair noted implementations the Headteacher had put in place for the wellbeing of staff filtered down to pupils. It was clear how much staff loved their work, loved the pupils and wanted what was best for them and that this culture permeated throughout school.

A governor queried how energy and momentum was maintained and the Headteacher noted the importance of having someone to offload to and being sounding boards for each other.

16. Confirmation of future meeting dates:

Meetings would take place on the following dates:

Governing Body: (starting at 5.30pm in school)

- 27 March 2024
- 26 June 2024

Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee: (starting at 12.30pm via Zoom)

- 17 Jan 2024
- 24 April 2024

Finance Staffing and Premises Committee: (starting at 4pm in school)

- 31 January 2024
- 8 May 2024

The Chair thanked governors for their attendance. There was no further business and the meeting closed at 7.49pm.

Signed Date
Chair of Governors

Action summary

Item no.	Action	Outcome
2	Clerk to remind governors to complete Register of Interests form	
4	G Farrell to speak to LA Health & Safety representative to establish whether continuing with document revision is worth time	
4	Chair to seek clarification from representative of Joint Education Team, Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Boards of Education re. Foundation Governor appointment	
4	Headteacher to advertise Parent Governor vacancy	
5	K Hogg to feedback to governors re. parking and traffic issues and contact local councillor	
5	Clerk to add review of SDP for previous academic year to September GB meeting agendas	
5	SBM to check responses to Microsoft Form issued to governors to confirm their reading of KCSIE, 2023	
5	T Thomas to feedback ideas received about engagement with the wider community at next GB meeting	
7	Chair & Vice-Chair to discuss content of spring and summer Headteacher reports	
7	Headteacher to add behaviour data from same time last year to future Headteacher reports to highlight trends	
8	Governors to reflect upon any changes required to Admission Policy 2026 – 2027	
9	Clerk to check with LA Senior Auditor whether SFVS can be approved via email	
12	Headteacher to circulate safeguarding audit and action plan to governors	