



**Approved minutes of the Governing Body (GB) meeting  
of Archbishop Runcie First School  
Wednesday 13 September 2023**

**Present:**

Sarah Pickett (Chair)  
Paul Baker, Sarah Hawkins, Katie Hogg, Diana Lavin, Rae Lowe, Sarah MacRae,  
Kate Massey (Headteacher), Lonie Sebahg, Andrew Shipton and Ted Thomas.

**Quorum**

Governors in post: 13; quorum: 7; governors present: 11

**In Attendance:**

Claire Hepple ~ Clerk, Governor Services  
Dan Tolan ~ Safeguarding consultant, Clennell Education Solutions, in  
attendance from beginning of meeting until 6.10pm

**Apologies**

**received from:** ~ Cecilia Pacitti

**Absent:** ~ Greg Farrell

**1. Safeguarding refresher training**

Circulated:

- Resource book

Dan Tolan highlighted the following points:

- There should be a cycle of governor scrutiny: identifying safeguarding priorities, monitoring to test and reporting. **A governor sought clarity on expectations and whether the monitoring to test should happen each term;** Dan Tolan advised that it was best practice to allow enough time between monitoring of safeguarding and reporting findings at meetings. It was noted that safeguarding was covered at every meeting.
- An annual Safeguarding Audit set the action plan for the year ahead, covering measures in place, what the school worked towards and identified any areas not yet considered.

*Paul Baker and Sarah Pickett joined the meeting during the training at 5.38pm and 5.40pm respectively.*

- Staff should understand filtering and monitoring processes.

- Safeguarding in out of school settings was covered by KCSIE, 2023. If wraparound care took place in school, the same policies applied as those in school. **A governor asked whether it was the responsibility of governors to check procedures were in place in out of school settings;** this was confirmed.
- The difference between Children missing in education and absence was clarified.
- Candidates shortlisted for jobs in school would be subject to online searches.
- From February 2023, it had become a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose was to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday. **The Chair queried whether there was a statutory duty to report this if staff or a governor became aware of an older sibling of a pupil at the school in this situation;** Dan Tolan responded that it was unlikely this was legally binding, however, a duty of care superseded this.

**Asked whether the CES Safeguarding Audit had been updated;** governors were advised that changes were highlighted yellow on audits. **Asked if the Safeguarding Audit should be circulated to the GB;** this was confirmed.

**A governor queried key stakeholders** and was informed that the wider Gosforth Schools' Trust and anyone with a vested interest in the school, for example, parents and pupils were key stakeholders. 'Do your children feel safe in school?' was a question which would be fed back into safeguarding systems.

**A governor observed that the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy appeared very lengthy by comparison with other policies. Another governor felt that it may be overly long and complicated.** Dan attributed its length to definitions and the Chair noted that it was akin to a handbook.

**A governor queried need for revision each year when very little had changed. The Chair felt that regular revision kept it at the forefront of attention and set the culture each year.** Dan added that the format of the Safeguarding Audit aligned with KCSIE and in that way it was kept fresh.

**A governor questioned how effective the impact of KCSIE was and how much difference it made.** Dan responded that he believed it worked and ensured everyone knew what they needed to know. **A governor asked whether it should go further and include information for parents.** The Headteacher advised that there was a children's version of the Safeguarding Policy on the CES website. The Chair added that every newsletter to parents advised them who they should approach about any issues.

Dan was thanked for the training. *Dan Tolan left the meeting at 6.09pm.*

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Claire Hepple was introduced as the new Clerk for GB meetings; Bob Wilson would clerk committee meetings this academic year.

An apology for absence was **accepted** from Cecilia Pacitti. Greg Farrell was absent.

Andrew Shipton led governors with an opening prayer.

## 3. **Declaration of interests.**

Circulated:

- Register of Interests form 2023 – 2024

Governors were asked to return completed Register of Interest forms to the Clerk.

**Action: Governor**

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

There were no additional or urgent items identified.

**5. GB appointments / membership update**

**Staff Governor**

Rae Lowe, School Business Manager, had been elected Staff Governor.

**Foundation Governor**

Andrew Shipton would email a reminder to Andrew McCabe to request formal notification that he had stepped down as a Foundation Governor, 'Parochial Church Council of All Saints, Gosforth'.

**Action: Andrew Shipton**

**Parent Governor / Foundation Governors**

Sarah MacRae's term of office as Parent Governor would end on 8 December 2023. It was confirmed that Sarah would be appointed a Foundation Governor, 'Newcastle Diocesan Board of Education', once Diana Lavin moved from 'Newcastle Diocesan Board of Education' to 'Parochial Church Council of All Saints, Gosforth'. Parents would be notified of the Parent Governor vacancy during the second half of this term.

**Action: Headteacher and Chair**

**Induction and ongoing support of new members**

New governors were asked to contact the Chair directly should they require any support or training for their governance role. See item 7 for further discussion of support for new governors.

No changes to governors' contact details were recorded.

**6. Draft minutes of the previous GB meeting**

Circulated:

- GB draft minutes, 28 June 2023

The draft GB minutes of 28 June 2023 were **approved** as a true record; no confidential items were identified.

**Matters arising from the above minutes**

**GB appointments / membership update (pages 1 and 2)**

GB membership arrangements had been discussed earlier in the meeting, Item 5.

**Consideration of new DfE guidance on collecting and publishing governor diversity data (page 2)**

The Chair had collected governor diversity data. Rae Lowe advised that whilst findings were as expected, the exercise would assist the GB to give more thought to increasing diversity. She suggested that wording advertising governor vacancies refer to under representation in certain areas and that the GB welcomed applicants of other faiths and those who had no faith.

**Preparation for autumn term governance items (page 2)**

Governor Services had received a revised Delegation Planner.

### **Draft minutes of the previous GB meeting held on 23 March 2023 (pages 2 and 3)**

- An updated GB Handbook would be considered for approval later in the meeting, Item 7b.
- The Chair thanked governors for completion of a Skills Audit. Skills audits would be emailed to D Lavin, S Hawkins and R Lowe.

**Action: Chair**

- Katie Hogg would open a new line of enquiry with the Fire Brigade regarding parking and traffic on Christon Road.

**Action: K Hogg**

- The Headteacher had not received any emails from governors regarding the Worship Council vacancy. It was suggested that this should form part of the SIAMS Link Governor role, so Cecilia Pacitti was **agreed** as the school's representative on the Worship Council. The role entailed attendance at a selection of monthly meetings. The Headteacher would inform Cecilia and set up links on her behalf.

**Action: Headteacher and C Pacitti**

### **Headteacher's report (pages 4 and 5)**

- It was confirmed that new Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework questions would be included on the Governor Visit Form and as items on the agenda of each committee.
- Work was ongoing to reduce the length of the Headteacher's report.

### **Policy review (page 6)**

A revised Attendance Policy would be considered for approval later in the meeting, Item 10.

### **Reports from governing body committees (page 6)**

Minutes of the TLA Committee had been circulated among papers for this meeting, Item 12.

## **7. Governance documentation and requirements for agreement and confirmation**

Circulated:

- GB Code of Conduct 2023 – 2024
  - Proposed committee memberships 2023 – 2024
  - GB Handbook 2023 – 2024
  - Proposed governor roles, September 2023
- a) The GB Code of Conduct 2023 – 2024, based on the National Governance Association (NGA) model, was **agreed** by governors who also **agreed** to abide by it.
- b) The Chair drew governors' attention to the section on Attendance and apologies in the Meetings section of the GB Handbook. The Clerk would investigate the origins of the process for dealing with non-attendance of governors at GB meetings.

**Action: Clerk**

The GB Handbook would be recirculated following further changes made by Sarah MacRae. A governor felt that the importance of governor training should be emphasised within the Handbook; it was noted that the Handbook stated that

training was encouraged. The Chair asked that governors inform her via email of any training undertaken.

**Action: Sarah MacRae**

'Support for new governors' section in the GB Handbook was discussed and the following suggestions were received:

- Provision of a list of websites and contact telephone numbers where new governors might seek help.
- A history of the school (vision document) to provide useful background. These are two separate docs.
- A mentor / buddy arrangement with an experienced governor (including time allotted to understand access to different platforms and documentation available).

Buddy arrangements for new governors were **agreed** as follows:

- Ted Thomas would buddy Paul Baker
- Sarah Pickett would buddy Rae Lowe
- Sarah MacRae would buddy Diana Lavin

c) The following committee memberships were **agreed**:

**Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) Committee\***

Sarah MacRae (Chair)

Katie Hogg

Kate Massey

Cecilia Pacitti

Sarah Pickett

Lonie Sebahg

**Finance Staffing and Premises (FSP) Committee\***

Sarah Hawkins (Co Chair)

Lonie Sebahg (Co Chair)

Greg Farrell

Rae Lowe

Kate Massey

Sarah Pickett

Ted Thomas

**Admissions Committee**

Sarah Hawkins (Chair)

Paul Baker

Kate Massey

Sarah Pickett

Andrew Shipton

**Headteacher's Performance Management Review Panel**

Sarah MacRae

Sarah Pickett

Alison Stephenson (School Improvement Partner)

\*Paul Baker and Diana Lavin will attend both FSP and TLA on a trial basis ahead of making a decision about which to join.

d) The Headteacher's Performance Management Review had taken place earlier that day. Governors were informed that targets for last academic year had been met and three new targets set for this academic year:

- o To close the gap in attainment between vulnerable pupils and non-vulnerable pupils
- o To develop the leadership structure
- o To develop policies, processes and systems to ensure the school ran more efficiently in areas of staff and pupil welfare

(precise wording of targets would be sent to the Headteacher by the School Improvement Partner).

The three targets formed part of the School Development Plan and governors were asked to visit the school to monitor progress towards reaching the targets. The School Improvement Partner would also review progress on targets during termly visits to the school. It was noted that the GB needed to review the SDP for 2022 - 2023 and that, in future, a review would take place at the first GB meeting of the academic year. The Headteacher would circulate the SDP to governors and governors were asked to respond with any queries.

**Action: Clerk and Headteacher**

e) Governors **agreed** that their contact details may be shared with other members of the GB.

f) There was no update to Next of Kin information.

g) The school was compliant with the Equality Act. Equality objectives and the Public Sector Equality Duty were published on the school's website.

h) All governors had been appropriately checked by the DBS service and Section 128 checks carried out. Diana Lavin's DBS clearance was ongoing. The Single Central Record had been checked earlier that day by the Chair and by the School Improvement Partner.

i) Governor details were up to date on Get Information About Schools (GIAS) and on the school's website.

j) Rae Lowe would capture confirmation from governors that they had read Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023, via Microsoft Form

**Action: Rae Lowe**

## 8. Governor monitoring and training plans for the year

Circulated:

- Governors Year Planner 2023 – 2024

### a) Monitoring plans for the year

Governors noted the content of the Year Planner for this academic year.

### b) Appointment of Link governors

The following Link governor arrangements were **agreed**:

**Admissions appeals**

Sarah Hawkins

**Children in Care**

Sarah MacRae

**General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

Ted Thomas

**Health and Safety**

Greg Farrell and Ted Thomas

**Safeguarding**

Sarah Pickett (Katie Hogg to shadow)

**SEND**

Sarah MacRae

**SDP**

Paul Baker, Diana Lavin and Lonie Sebagh

The Chair would recirculate a revised version of governor roles agreed at the meeting.

**Action: Chair**

The Headteacher would email dates when the School Improvement Partner would visit school to the Link governors monitoring the SDP.

**Action: Headteacher****c) Training**

Governors were asked to book onto any training they felt might be useful to them.

**d) Plans for in-house training session**

The Chair would share an Ofsted fact sheet with governors following in-house Preparation for Ofsted training last academic year. The Clerk was asked to request staff workload and wellbeing training for this academic year.

**Action: Chair and Clerk****9. Headteacher's verbal update / school improvement****a) School Improvement Plan**

The Headteacher's targets for this academic year had been discussed earlier in the meeting. It was noted that Ofsted used the term disadvantaged rather than vulnerable. Development of leaders across all levels was a target as there were staff new to school and new to their current posts. Systems and procedures would be refined. A current skeleton plan would be revised and then circulated to governors.

**b) Self Evaluation Form (SEF) update**

The Headteacher would update the SEF in collaboration with the new Deputy Headteacher, Key Stage (KS)1 and Early Years leaders during the second half of this term. Involvement of the new leadership would give them ownership of the SEF.

**A governor asked what would happen if Ofsted inspected the school the next day** and was advised that the Headteacher would update a summary SEF.

**A governor queried the attainment gap in relation to more able pupils** and was advised by the Headteacher that focus was upon all pupils achieving Age Related Expectations (ARE).

**10. Policy review****Circulated:**

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2023
- SEND Policy, February 2023
- Attendance Policy, September 2023

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy was **approved**.

**Attendance policy**

The Headteacher explained that the Attendance policy was an amalgamation of the model policy from Newcastle City Council and the school's existing policy. Yellow highlighted text indicated wording from the existing school policy to be carried forward.

**The Chair queried use of social media to contact parents** and was advised that social media was used as much as possible because school was required to find out the whereabouts of families. Rae Lowe advised that permission would be sought for certain computers to access Facebook as monitoring and filtering processes did not permit its use. **A governor queried when a pupil was deemed missing from education**; this was when they had missed twenty days of education and their whereabouts was unknown. Rae added that even if a pupil moved abroad, the school was unable to remove them from the school roll for twenty days.

**A governor noted repetition of wording on page 10**; the Headteacher would check this.

**Action: Headteacher**

**A governor queried a requirement for pupils to be absent from school for two days after being physically sick**; the Headteacher responded that this impacted attendance quite a lot and some parents asked if their children could return to school before then as they appeared to be in good health. **Asked if this requirement was common practice**, the Headteacher advised that it was recommended by the NHS. **The Chair suggested that documentation be amended to state that this was a recommendation only.**

**Action: Headteacher**

The Attendance Policy was **approved** subject to the amendments detailed above.

The Health and Safety Policy and SEND Policy would be circulated for approval at the November GB meeting.

## 11. Financial items

Circulated:

- Expenditure report, period 4, 2023 – 2024
- Annex D, period 4, 2023 – 2024
- Financial report headlines, period 4, 2023 – 2024
- Schedule of delegated levels of authority, 2023 – 2024

### a) Budget monitoring / expenditure update

Referring to the Financial report headlines, the Headteacher drew governors' attention to overspends and noted how they impacted three year balances. The school had been asked to justify why it had carried forward more than 8% of the budget; Rae Lowe advised that much of this was attributable to Wraparound.

Governors **agreed** Annex D, period 4, 2023 – 2024.

### b) Schedule of delegated levels of authority 2023 - 2024

The following contract spending limits, budget virement limits and authority to sign orders and invoices were **agreed**:

Contract spending limits:

- Under £10k to Headteacher
- Between £10k and £20k to Chair or Vice-Chair or Chair of FSP Committee
- Above £20k to GB or FSP Committee

Budget virement limits:

- Under £5k to Headteacher
- Above £5k to FSP Committee



Authority to sign orders and invoices:

- Headteacher or Acting Headteacher

### **c) Pupil Premium / Primary PE / sports funding**

The Headteacher advised that the three year Pupil Premium Strategy required minor tweaks. **A governor observed that pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding had outperformed ineligible pupils** and was informed that this was cohort specific. National averages would be added to the Strategy to provide a benchmark. The Chair observed the strategy was in place for three years and the Headteacher responded that it was not possible to achieve a shift within a year and a three year time period was realistic. The Pupil Premium Strategy would be renewed at the end of this academic year.

The PE Strategy for 2023 – 2024 would be written and impact of last year reviewed. The Chair requested that the Strategy be circulated to the TLA and FSP Committees this term.

**Action: Headteacher**

### **12. Reports and feedback from GB committees / governor monitoring / governor training**

Circulated:

- TLA Committee meeting minutes, 7 June 2023
- Report on SIAMS strands with focus on collective worship by C Pacitti and T Thomas, 10 July 2023

Governors noted the content of the committee minutes and visit report.

### **13. Governors' statutory responsibilities**

There were no items to report.

**A governor asked whether the school had Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC);** there was no RAAC in school.

### **14. Newcastle Promise Board (NPB)**

Circulated:

- Message from Chair of NPB to all Headteachers, September 2023
- NPB and Sub-groups, key messages, summer 2, 2023

The Chair noted increased awareness of the NPB and how it worked. The Headteacher advised that staff had received an update on the NPB. **A governor asked if any members of staff were on the NPB;** they are not. It was noted that the school was updated via a contact on the Gosforth Schools' Trust.

### **15. Governance items for information**

Circulated previously:

- NCC Key guidance, autumn term 2023
- NCC GoverNews, September 2023
- NCC Training programme 2023 – 2024

Governors noted the content of these documents.

## 16. Impact

Governors contributed the following ways in which they made a difference to outcomes for pupils:

- The Headteacher's performance management shaped future actions and reviewed actions of last academic year.
- A new Deputy Headteacher had been recruited.
- Governors were satisfied that effective safeguarding procedures were in place through checking the Single Central Record.
- More Link governors had been appointed providing strength in numbers.
- A skills audit had been undertaken to analyse where the strengths of the GB lay.
- The collective worship monitoring visit had been revelatory for a governor with regard to the atmosphere in school and teaching of religious education.
- Governors had toured the school and observed how funding had been spent to prioritise support for pupils' learning and wellbeing.
- There was a new management structure in place.
- New computers had given flexibility in the way the curriculum was delivered. There was now no space solely dedicated to computers.
- Additional independent spaces had been created for use by Phonics groups.

### Community involvement

**Ted Thomas noted one area of impact for the GB could be creation and improvement of a community beyond school.** The Headteacher commented that post Covid pandemic, it had become harder to get people involved and whilst there were many schools in Gosforth, it was not a village with a centre. Governors noted that pupils already visited a local care home and the carol service was a community event.

The following suggestions were received from governors:

- Pupils could send Christmas cards to residents of care homes
- A theme chosen to involve the community.

It was noted that the primary function of the Parent Teacher and Friend Association (PTFA) was to raise money for the school rather than to create community outreach.

The Chair stated that any actions should have a purpose and help give pupils an understanding of the wider community. She felt that the conversation had been useful and required further thought. Ideas were to be emailed to Ted Thomas who would consider potential activities with low impact for the workload for the GB.

**Action: Ted Thomas and Governors**

## 17. Confirmation of future meeting dates:

Meetings would take place on the following dates:

**Governing Body:** (starting at 5.30pm in school)

- 23 Nov 2023 (revised date **agreed**, School Improvement Partner in attendance)
- 27 March 2024
- 26 June 2024

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

- 28 Sept 2023 (revised date and time **agreed**; L Sebahg gave apologies)
- 17 Jan 2024
- 24 April 2024

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

- 4 October 2023
- 31 January 2024
- 8 May 2024

The Chair thanked governors for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.15pm.

### Action summary

Item no.	Action	Outcome
3	<b>Governors</b> to return completed Register of Interest forms to Clerk	
5	<b>A Shipton</b> to email reminder to A McCabe to request formal notification that he has stepped down as Foundation Governor	
5	<b>Headteacher</b> to inform parents of Parent Governor vacancy in second half of this term	
6	<b>Chair</b> to email skills audits to D Lavin, S Hawkins and R Lowe	
6	<b>K Hogg</b> to open new line of enquiry with Fire Brigade re. parking and traffic on Christon Road	
6	<b>C Pacitti</b> to become school's representative on the Worship Council. <b>Headteacher</b> to inform C Pacitti and send links	
7	<b>Clerk</b> to investigate origins of process for dealing with non-attendance of governors at GB meetings	
7	<b>S MacRae</b> to amend GB Handbook and recirculate to governors	
7	<b>Clerk</b> to add review of SDP for previous academic year to September GB meeting agendas. <b>Headteacher</b> to recirculate SDP to governors	
7	<b>R Lowe</b> to seek confirmation from governors that they have read Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023, via Microsoft Form	
8	<b>Chair</b> to circulate revised version of governor roles agreed at the meeting	
8	<b>Headteacher</b> to email dates when School Improvement Partner visiting school to Link governors monitoring SDP	
8	<b>Chair</b> to share Ofsted fact sheet with governors. <b>Clerk</b> to request in-house staff workload & wellbeing training	
10	<b>Headteacher</b> to address repetition of wording on p10 of Attendance Policy and change requirement to recommendation re. 2 days absence after sickness	
11	<b>Headteacher</b> to circulate PE Strategy to TLA and FSP Committees	
16	<b>Governors</b> to email ideas about engagement with wider community to T Thomas; <b>T Thomas</b> to consider potential activities with low impact for workload of GB	

Signed .....  .....  
Chair of Governors

Date .23/11/23..

