



Northern Arch

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Standards Committee

Held at The Rydal Academy

4.30pm, Thursday 20th November 2024

MINUTES

Present (Directors)	Zoe Beach (Chair), Iain Clyde, Michael Garmston and Tim Fisher (Chief Executive Officer).
in attendance	John Armitage: Head Teacher, The Rydal Academy Laurence Job: Principal, Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College Angela Sweeten: Head Teacher, Longfield Academy Sam Reilly: Assistant Head Teacher, Hurworth School Sam Kochaniec: Schools HR Manager, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Nikki Wade: Strategic Development Officer, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Laura Hawksby: Governance & Policy Officer, Northern Arch Learning Partnership

Item	Description of discussion	Action by
1.	Election of Chair The Governance & Policy Officer opened the meeting. Nominations were sought and received for the position of Chair for the remainder of the ensuing Academic Year. Directors RESOLVED that Director Zoe Beach be appointed Chair for the ensuing Academic Year. (Note: Director Zoe Beach in the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.)	Governance & Policy Officer
2.	Election of Vice Chair Nominations were sought and received for the position of Vice Chair for the ensuing Academic Year. Directors RESOLVED that Director Iain Clyde be appointed Vice Chair for the remainder of the ensuing Academic Year.	Governance & Policy Officer

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3.	<p>Welcome, introductions and confirmation quorum present.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and it was confirmed that a quorum was present.</p>	
4.	<p>Apologies for absence and their acceptance and welcome</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received and accepted for Professor Graham Wynn.</p>	
5.	<p>Notification of Items of Other Business</p> <p>There were no items of other business.</p>	
6.	<p>Declaration of personal and pecuniary interests</p> <p>a) Register of Interest</p> <p>Directors and those present had completed their annual Register of Interests to declare any relevant business or pecuniary interest and close family relationship between members and / or other trustees and / or employees. Registers would be updated during the academic year should circumstances change.</p> <p>b) To declare any personal or pecuniary interest in any matters arising from the agenda of the current meeting</p> <p>Directors and those present were reminded that they should declare any personal or pecuniary interest in any matters arising from the agenda of the current meeting.</p> <p>No declarations of interest were received.</p>	
7.	<p>Approval of Minutes</p> <p>Draft Minutes of the Standards Committee held on the 20th June 2024 had been shared with Directors prior to this meeting, with a copy held on file. It was noted that all actions had been completed.</p> <p>With reference to Minute 12 (Standards Committee 20th June 2024) the CEO confirmed that staff and parents' views could in the future be undertaken via questionnaires at Trust level and that this was something that would be explored further with a view to the results reported back to Board at the appropriate time.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on the 20th June 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and should be signed by the Chair with a copy retained on file.</p>	Governance & Policy Officer

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8.	<p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) explained that there were no new updates to the Strategic Plan since last reported to the Board. Moving forward the intent of the plan would not change significantly, however it would be developed to reflect the next strategic steps and growth strategy for the Trust.</p> <p>Directors noted Arbor would be replacing SIMS as the Management Information System (MIS) at the 3 schools (QE College is currently on a separate MIS system).</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p>	
9.	<p>ADEMSS Report</p> <p>Standards:</p> <p>The Strategic Development Officer presented key trends and headline data from across the Trusts' schools and college to the Standards Committee. Directors questioned levels of attendance and it was noted attendance is generally strong across all academies and is being addressed where particular groups are below average. Collaboration across academies is developing well at both senior and more operational levels, with the relaunched Trust Groups and peer-to-peer leadership support during inspections evidencing the impact of this.</p> <p>Directors asked why SEN (Special Educational Needs) were increasing across the Trust and why permanent exclusions numbers had also increased. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) advised that more pupils/students were presenting with challenging needs and that mainstream education was not always appropriate for these pupils to meet their needs. The CEO and Chair of Trustees would continue to take a Trust strategic view in how to plan for this within the Trust.</p> <p>Directors requested that where appropriate on future reports the relevant numbers for each category be included as well as the % and also results one level below in order to help provide context to the data being reviewed.</p> <p>Safeguarding:</p> <p>Directors asked what the overall safeguarding picture was across the Trust. The Chief Executive Officer advised that safeguarding was strong with a positive culture of sharing safeguarding good practice across the Trust. The CEO advised there has been increases in level of need with pupils and students.</p> <p>It was noted 2 successful Ofsted visits this term had demonstrated a high level of assurance for Trustees regarding safeguarding</p>	Strategic Development Officer

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	Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted and that a Safeguarding ADEMSS report would be presented at the next meeting of the Standards Committee.	Strategic Development Officer
10.	<p>Ofsted Reports</p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer advised that during the Autumn term, the Trust had two full OFSTED inspections producing a very positive upwards trend. Longfield Academy had moved from Inadequate to 'Good' in all areas and QE from 'Good' to 'Outstanding' in all areas.</p> <p>Directors congratulated and thanked staff for all their hard work on these excellent outcomes. Head Teacher of Longfield advised that she had felt the full support of the Trust during the Ofsted inspections.</p>	
11.	<p>Academy Updates:</p> <p>A new format had been used for the Academy schools/college updates setting out at top level progress, strategic challenges and key risks and what support is required from the Trust. Directors advised that they found the new format for reporting extremely useful, whilst still being able to deep dive to greater levels of detail into the Local Governing Body and Head Teachers'/Principals' reports if required.</p> <p><u>Hurworth School</u></p> <p>The Assistant Head Hurworth School provided updates to the Directors. She advised results were very strong (Attainment 8 - 55.13) and were the second highest GCSE outcomes in the borough (unvalidated). The quality assurance processes continue to be embedded to ensure quality of education is good and driving progress. Parental engagement is good.</p> <p>It was noted there had been a dip in pupil numbers at Hurworth reflecting changing demographics. English Literature and Language results had been slightly lower than expected, however measures had been identified to address this. Special Educational Needs (SEN) had increased in the Academy and permanent exclusion figures for Sept 2023-July 2024 were higher than in the previous period.</p> <p>The school was working on developing a consistent behaviour policy and working with students regarding complex behaviours and implementing clear strategies. The reading strategy continued to be embedded and the school were working to diminish the disadvantaged pupil's gaps. The school continued to market and develop communication with the local community, develop the Personal Development curriculum beyond the classroom and continued discussions regarding Hurworth Resource Base were noted.</p> <p><u>Longfield Academy</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher Longfield Academy advised on the successful Ofsted outcome and that Longfield was now 'good' across all areas. Positive responses had been received from prospective parents at the latest Year 6 Open evening and from the Ofsted questionnaires. Attendance was still above national average and safeguarding remained strong. The 8</p>	

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Ofsted priorities were now all rated green and the behaviour system is embedded. Careers accreditation in all 8 areas of the Gatsby Benchmarks are at 100%.

Pupil numbers continued to be monitored. It was noted that the number of Elective Home Educated children were increasing and that there was an increase in numbers of students with complex needs.

The School continued to work upon the same priorities as last year, focusing on 3 areas:

- Brain Base Learning
- Collaborative Planning
- Developing the Whole Child

The school continued to track and put in intervention for persistent absence, review Alternative Provision procedures, to embed changes in the curriculum across all subjects and focus on Year 11 to continually improve results.

QE Sixth Form College

The Principal provided updates to Directors. He advised that following the recent Ofsted inspection 'outstanding' outcomes had been achieved across the board with no areas for improvement. Good progress had been made to achieve the College's priorities for 2023/24. Exam results, including Sixth Sense Value added data, has been outstanding. The number of new applicants for 2025 has increased in comparison to previous three years and the conversion rate of applications to enrolments improved in 2024. However, the total student population has remained approximately 100 lower for the last two years than the previous trend. There had been a significant increase in enrichment take-up with very positive views of students and of parents/carers.

The college was working upon five priorities: High grades; attendance; EDI; recruitment and leadership. The College's Strategic Development Plan has been updated to reflect the Colleges' academisation and changes regarding funding rates and student population. Attendance remained a key priority and new strategies have been researched and implemented. Currently, attendance is the highest it has been in the past 4 years. The risks posed by issues connected to student progression and destinations are being mitigated by a range of activities.

Rydal

The Head Teacher of Rydal updated Directors. He advised pupil numbers in the Nursey were strong. Pupil numbers in other cohorts were also up from this time last year at the start of the Academic Year. There were no progress measures for 2024 or in 2025, however growth from Reception Baselines continued to be more than double the national average year on year. He advised of strong audit results for Darlington Borough Council 2-year-old provision audit (June 24). Safeguarding practice is recognised as being exceptional at Rydal as noted in the Darlington Borough Council audit (March 24).

The Head Teacher advised that exclusions and suspensions are on a 3-year upward trend, however significantly reduced in 2024/25 year to date. Future Reception intake numbers continued to be uncertain due to low birth rate and have been variable over the last 4 years.

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	<p>There was an increasing level of need with regards to safeguarding and SEND (Special Educational Needs).</p> <p>The school is working on key improvement priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To close the attainment gap from Reception Baseline across all subjects by increasing the percentage of pupils working at Age Related Expectation (ARE+) and at a Higher Level Review sequencing of the curriculum linked to relationships education and cultural diversity to ensure sufficient coverage of important knowledge to further enhance learning. To embed further schemes of work to iron out any remaining variability in implementation, so that all pupils can make the gains in subject specific knowledge, skills and understanding intended. <p>Directors RESOLVED that the update reports be noted and any resulting support required from the Trust.</p>	
12.	<p>Terms of Reference Standards Committee</p> <p>Directors considered the draft terms of reference for the Standards Committee. Directors requested that there be an element of self-reflection at the end of the year to ascertain whether the terms of reference had reflected the work undertaken by the Committee.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the terms of reference for the Standards Committee be approved and brought back to the Summer Term meeting to reflect on whether the work undertaken by the Committee matched the terms of reference.</p>	Governance & Policy Officer
13.	<p>Policies for Approval</p> <p>After careful consideration Directors RESOLVED that the following policies be approved: Family Friendly Policy (Schools), Leave of Absence Policy (Schools) and Staff Health & Wellbeing Policy (Schools).</p> <p>Directors requested that the following policies be further reviewed and brought back to Directors: Disciplinary Policy & Procedures, Flexible and Phased Retirement Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Grievance Policy and Procedure for Teachers and Support staff. The Biometrics policy would also be considered further and whether it was required to be a stand alone policy.</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>Strategic & Development Officer /Governance & Policy Officer/HR</p>

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14. Approval of Documents for Inspection

Directors **RESOLVED** that the agenda, approved minutes and supporting documents be made available for public inspection with the exception of information concerning identifiable pupils and/or teachers. The Ofsted reports for Longfield and QE would not be available for inspection until their official publication.

15. Date and time of future meetings:

- Full Board of Directors– 18th December 2024 at 5.00 pm

The meeting concluded at 6.35 pm

These minutes were approved by the Standards Committee, as follows:

Signed by: (Chair) Z Beach

On: (date) 31. 03. 2025

Printed name: ZOE BEACH

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