



# Northern Arch

## LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

### Board of Directors' Meeting

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 at 5.00 pm  
at the Rydal Academy, Rydal Road, Darlington, Co.Durham, DL1 4BH

### MINUTES

Directors present:	Iain Clyde (Chair), Tim Fisher (CEO), Zoe Beach, Emma Chawner and Mavis Lord.
In attendance	Glen Hart: Chief Financial Officer Lisa Marron: Chief Operating Officer Jon Tait: Executive Director of Education Sam Kochaniec: Head of People Laura Hawksby: Trust Governance and Policy Officer

Item	Description of discussion	Action
	<b>PART A: Procedural items</b>	
1.	<b><u>Welcome, Introductions and confirmation quorum present</u></b>  The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.  It was confirmed that a quorum was present.	
2.	<b><u>Apologies for absence and their acceptance</u></b>  Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Directors: Geoff Liddle, Tarryn Lloyd Payne and Graham Wynn. Apologies were also received from Nikki Wade (Strategic Development Officer).	
3.	<b><u>Notification of items of urgent other business</u></b>  None	
4.	<b><u>Declaration of Personal and Pecuniary Interests</u></b>  Director Emma Chawner declared a pecuniary interest and took no part in the discussion or voting in relation to 'Approval of External Auditor' (Minute 12 below) as she had worked alongside one of the companies tendering for the external audit contract in her professional capacity.	

Registered office address  
Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Vane Terrace, Darlington, DL3 7AU:  
Company Registration Number 07533271  
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denotes support and challenge provided by Governors

5.	<p><b><u>Approval of minutes/review of actions/matters arising – Board of Directors 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025</u></b></p> <p>Draft Minutes of the Board of Directors from the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025 had been shared with Directors prior to the meeting, a copy of which is held on file.</p> <p>All actions have been completed or included for this meeting of the Committee as requested by Directors.</p> <p>Governors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025 Board of Directors were confirmed as an accurate record and should be signed by the Chair.</p>	<b>Chair/ Governance &amp; Policy Officer</b>
<b>PART B: Business Items for Discussion</b>		
6.	<p><b><u>Chair's Report</u></b></p> <p>The Chair reported that he had attended all Local Governing Body (LGB) Committee meetings this Summer Term. This had allowed the Chair of the Board to thank all academies in the Partnership for their hard work in helping ensure the Partnership operates effectively as the key link between the Academy and focusing on key areas of safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities, standards and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>He advised that all Academies retained their local identity, whilst preserving the vision of the Partnership. At all of the Local Governing Body meetings pupil numbers were identified as the greatest risk. The Risk Register at each of the academies was being developed further with the support of the Strategic Development Officer.</p> <p>The Governance Development Event had been noted by the Governors at the LGB meetings as being on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025, providing an opportunity for development and collaboration across the Partnership.</p>	
7.	<p><b><u>Membership Document</u></b></p> <p>The Governance and Policy Officer provided an update report regarding the governance membership in the Partnership.</p> <p>The following were noted:</p> <p>a) To note appointments as previously approved by Directors during the Summer Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Joanna Reed (Support Staff Governor Rydal LGB) as of the 22 May 2025 approved by Directors.</li></ul> <p>b) To note resignation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lucy Clark (Support Staff Governor Hurworth LGB) as of the 11 April 2025.</li><li>General Governor Vicky Maddison (General Governor Longfield LGB) as of the 20 May 2025.</li><li>General Governor Tracey Tyler (General Governor QE LGB) as of the 3 June 2025.</li></ul>	



	<p><b><u>Appointment</u></b></p> <p>Approval was sought to the appointment of Blake Harrison (General Governor Longfield Academy Local Governing Body)</p> <p>After careful consideration, Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> to appoint Blake Harrison as a General Governor to Longfield Academy Local Governing Body, with the date of appointment at the receipt of a valid DBS certificate.</p>	<b>Governance &amp; Policy Officer</b>
9.	<p><b><u>CEO's Report</u></b></p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) presented his July 2025 report to the Board. Directors noted that the appointment of the Head of Admissions and Marketing and that the 'People Team' were now working as one team across the whole Partnership. A new MIS (Management Information System) had been implemented at Longfield, Rydal and Hurworth and a new HR system across the Partnership.</p> <p>Key risks and strategic challenges were noted by Directors, including student/pupil recruitment. Across the Partnership improving outcomes and learning environments across the academies remained a high priority. Progress continued to be made towards meeting the recommendations of the SRMA (School Resources Management Advisors) report, particularly in relation to investment and leadership costs in the academies. Directors advised that the SRMA visit had focused upon the 3 schools, and would the Partnership also be reviewing that level of scrutiny to the other new academies in the Partnership? The Chief Operating Officer advised that this was correct.</p> <p>Directors asked what was driving the significant IT investment? The CEO advised that it was towards Windows 11 compliance which had been planned for and was progressing well.</p> <p>Directors asked whether when considering any new growth opportunities, the capacity of the Partnership was considered along with the proper due diligence? The CEO confirmed level of growth was considered having due regard to the sustainable rate appropriate for the Partnership, with all due diligence completed and approval received from Directors.</p>	
10.	<p><b><u>Hurworth Base</u></b></p> <p>The CEO provided a verbal update regarding the Hurworth Resource Base and current opportunities. The potential use of capital funding was discussed and considerations regarding revenue funding. Directors would be kept updated of any new updates and developments.</p>	
11.	<p><b><u>Proposal for Executive Team Structure</u></b></p> <p>The CEO sought approval to the Chief Operating Officers' role being removed from the structure on the retirement of the current postholder and a new role of Head of Operations created and advertised internally in line with the Partnership's 'People Strategy'.</p>	

	<p>Directors asked if a mapping exercise would be undertaken and a review of realignment of duties? The CEO confirmed that this was correct.</p> <p>Directors asked if a job specification would be created and the CEO confirmed it would form part of the job advert.</p> <p>Directors asked if there were no suitable internal applicants for the post of Head of Operations whether the Partnership would look for a suitable external candidate. The CEO confirmed that was correct.</p> <p>Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the updated Executive Team Structure removing the Chief Operating Officer's role upon the retirement of the current postholder and a new role of Head of Operations be approved, with the new post advertised internally.</p>	CEO/Head of People
12.	<p><b>ADEMSS Reports:</b></p> <p><u>Aims</u></p> <p>Directors reviewed and considered the current aims of the Partnership.</p> <p>Directors requested when the Aims were next brought back for Directors consideration that an explanation of progress towards priorities that were not currently rag rated green be provided.</p> <p><u>Developing People</u></p> <p>Directors considered and received the new People Strategy which complements the Partnerships' vision and values by supporting people activity that will maximise staff engagement and embed a culture of high performance.</p> <p>Directors asked if this was intended to also retain and attract talented people to the Trust? The Head of People confirmed this was correct.</p> <p><u>Environment</u></p> <p>Directors noted that this report had been reviewed and considered by the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025.</p> <p>Directors noted that Health and Safety inspections across the Partnership were now complete with positive feedback provided, with a log of rag rated actions noted. The annual asbestos surveys took place at Hurworth, Longfield and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form. Training on asbestos awareness has been delivered to the Trust Executive Team as part of a new requirement. The School Estate Management self-assessment standards had now been completed, following new guidance released in April 2025, with the results set out in appendix 2 of the Environment report.</p>	CEO/SDO





There have been no major estates issues other than an insurance claim regarding hot water pipes at Hurworth. The latest rounds of Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids were noted to have been unsuccessful.

**Money -**

- a) **Approval External Auditor** - Directors considered the appointment of a new External Auditor for the Company (Northern Arch Learning Partnership) as the Partnership required, in accordance with the Academies Trust Handbook, to retender every 5 Years for this service. The Partnership went out to tender to 3 companies based on those with academies experience and in total 2 companies returned tenders.

Directors asked if a new school or college were to join the Partnership would this add to the cost of the Auditors' services? The CFO confirmed that the price remained fixed regardless of the growth of the Partnership.

Directors **RESOLVED** that

1. it be recommended to Members to approve the appointment of Clive Owen LLP to hold office from the period ending 31st August 2026 until the 31st August 2028 ( a three year contract period) based upon Clive Owen LLP having extensive expertise as External Auditors, a good understanding of the Trust having previously been auditors for the Trust, a local presence, have provided robust challenge and represented the best value for money.
2. A written resolution be circulated to all Members seeking the appointment of the Company's Auditors Clive Owen LLP to hold office from the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026 until the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2028.

**Governance &  
Policy Officer**

- b) **Internal Auditor** – Directors noted that the time line and process for the internal audit tender had been approved by the Finance, Resources Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025, with an initial contract having now been awarded and a stand still period of 1 week contract in place until the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025.

c) **School Resource Management Advisor – Progress Update**

Directors noted progress made towards the School Resource Management Advisor's (SRMA) recommendations.

Directors asked if progress has been made across the three schools to reduce total expenditure of all staff pay and all schools are heading towards the



	<p>recommended benchmark? The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) confirmed that was correct as evidenced in the budget benchmarking 2025-26 SRMA progress update report within his report.</p> <p><b>d) Federation of Mowden Schools Academy Trust - Closing Account</b> Directors noted the financial statements of Mowden Federation as of 28th February 2025 and prior to the transfer into Northern Arch Learning Partnership (NALP). The NALP central team have been undertaking the monthly accounts process since September 2024 under a Service Level Agreement. The audit findings report was noted to be a clean report with the one outstanding action resolved during the year. Reserves of £572k will transfer into NALP. The next steps would involve rolling Mowden Federations balances into NALP's accounts for closure of the 31st August 2025 financial statements.</p> <p><b>e) Investments</b> Northern Arch Learning Partnership current investments were noted by Directors.</p> <p><b><u>Standards</u></b></p> <p>The Executive Director Education provided an update on the data dashboard he has been developing and used attendance &amp; behaviour data as an example to demonstrate how the dashboard will present information for analysis across the academies. It will be used for reporting to Trustees and as a management tool for senior leadership. Directors agreed that this was a helpful and looked forward to future reports.</p> <p>The Executive Director of Education also advised progress was being made towards the fully automated Power BI dashboard.</p> <p><b><u>Safeguarding</u></b></p> <p>The Executive Director Education reported upon a sample Partnership Safeguarding Report, developed by the DSL at The Rydal Academy, which is a proposed format for a Partnership-level report for Directors. Directors requested that the report also be supported by/incorporate a Safeguarding data dashboard? The executive Director of Education confirmed it would. Directors asked when they were likely to see the first live data? The Executive Director of Education explained that live data for all academies was always available and that a version of the dashboard would be available by the end of the year.</p>	
13.	<p><b><u>Feedback and Recommendations from Finance, Resources and Audit Committee 24th June 2025</u></b></p> <p><b>a) Budget 2025-26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan</b></p> <p>Following discussions at the Finance, Resources &amp; Audit Committee, Directors at that meeting confirmed that they would recommend the Budget 2025-26 Medium Term</p>	



	<p>Financial Plan, subject to amendments to the budget setting processes to ensure clear profiling methodology and clear coding of budget lines. This had now been included and were circulated to the Board of Directors as part of the papers for the Full Board on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025.</p> <p>After careful consideration Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Budget 2025-26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan be approved.</p> <p><b>b) Management Accounts to 30th April 2025</b></p> <p>The Management Accounts to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025 had been reviewed by the Finance, Resources &amp; Audit Committee and were now recommended to be received by the Full Board of Directors.</p> <p>Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Board of Directors receive the Management Accounts to the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025.</p> <p><b>c) Partnership Health &amp; Safety Statement of Intent</b></p> <p>The Partnership's Health &amp; Safety Statement of Intent has been recommended for approval by the Board by the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee.</p> <p>After careful consideration, Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Partnership Health &amp; Safety Statement of Intent be approved.</p> <p><b>d) Risk Management Policy</b></p> <p>The Partnership's Risk Management Policy has been recommended for approval by the Board by the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee.</p> <p>After careful consideration, Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Risk Management Policy be approved.</p> <p><b>e) Partnership Operational Risk Register</b></p> <p>The Partnership Operational Risk Register was reviewed by the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> June, with no recommendations for amendments and was now recommended for review by the Board.</p> <p>The Board carefully reviewed the Partnership Operational Risk Register and received it with no recommendations for amendments.</p>	
14.	<p><b><u>Feedback from Standards Committee 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025</u></b></p> <p>The Chair of the Standards Committee provided feedback from the meeting of the Standards Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025. She advised that information had been</p>	

	received for each of the Academies noting what was going well and the biggest risks. The largest risk remained pupil numbers across the Partnership.	
15.	<p><b><u>Update from Executive Director of Education</u></b></p> <p>The Executive Director of Education (EDoE) provided a presentation of strategies that were being developed and rolled out as part of his role in developing the quality of teaching, professional learning and curriculum development across all schools and phases of education across the partnership. The EDoE advised of progress made so far.</p>	
16.	<p><b><u>Governance Report</u></b></p> <p><b>a) Committee Structure</b></p> <p>In order to ensure effective governance and sufficient oversight of key areas, Directors were asked to consider a proposal to adjust the Committee Structure as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance, Audit &amp; Risk Committee</li> <li>• Standards Committee</li> <li>• People &amp; Environment Committee [incorporating the Pay &amp; Review Committee]</li> </ul> <p>The proposed remits for each of the Committees were set out in the report. It was noted that once the Governance structures have been agreed, the duties identified on the Scheme of Delegation will be spilt by Committee/group/individual to which they have been delegated and this will be used to inform the Terms of Reference for each Committee.</p> <p>Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the structure as set out above, including a new People &amp; Environment Committee be approved.</p> <p><b>Directors' Skills Audit</b></p> <p>The results of the Summer Term Directors Skills Audit were noted. In relation to skills, there were no specific areas for development or recommendations for training arising from the audit. All statements had an average score of 3.4 (out of 4) or more; over 50% have an average score of 3.8 (out of 4) or more.</p> <p>With regard to experience, there were no specific areas arising from the audit and no specific experience requirements that were required to be filled at the present time.</p> <p><b>Diversity Audit</b></p> <p>The results of the Summer Term Directors' Diversity Audit were noted. A diversity of thought, voices and perspectives is essential to effective governance. It is also important for the Partnership to assess how far the Board's composition reflects the community it serves. It is hoped that with the development of the Partnership Dashboards, comparative data will be available for pupils/students across the Partnership. The following considerations were noted:</p>	SDO & Governance & Policy Officer





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• in future recruitment, aim to recruit some Directors in the 18 to 40 years category.</li><li>• monitor gender balance in future recruitment, working towards a 50:50 split</li><li>• once comparable ethnicity data on pupils/students is available, compare with the diversity profile of the Board to ensure that, as far as possible, the Board is representative of the community it serves.</li></ul>	
17.	<p><b>Draft 2025/26 Schedule of Meetings</b></p> <p>Directors considered the draft 2025/26 schedule of meetings, which included the Partnership Development Event scheduled for Saturday 11th October 2025.</p> <p>Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the 2025/26 schedule of meetings be approved and circulated to Members, Directors and Governors.</p>	<b>Governance and Policy Officer</b>
18.	<p><b>Complaints Summary 2024-25</b></p> <p>In line with the Partnership's Scheme of Delegation, a Complaints Summary 2024/25 of formal complaints (stage 2 or above of the Partnership's complaints policy) raised between July 2024 – July 2025 (from 1st March 2025 for Mowden Schools) were noted and considered by Directors.</p>	
19.	<p><b><u>Policies</u></b></p> <p>After careful consideration Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the following policies be approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools Capability Policy</li><li>• College Capability Policy</li></ul>	
<b>Part D: Concluding Items</b>		
20.	<p><b><u>Approval of documents for inspection</u></b></p> <p>Directors <b>RESOLVED</b> 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/staff in relation to the Executive Team Structure and Complaints Summary 2024-25.</p> <p>In addition the following reports and background documents be excluded from public inspection in relation to Article 125 c due to their commercial sensitivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hurworth Base</li><li>• External and Internal Auditors</li></ul>	<b>Governance &amp; Policy Officer</b>
21.	<p><b><u>Date and time of next Meeting:</u></b></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 5.00 pm</li> </ul>	
	The meeting concluded at 7.30 pm	

### Action Log

5.	Minutes Board of Directors 10 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 to be signed by Chair.	Governance & Policy Officer/ Chair
7.	Membership Document – appointment of Blake Harrison General Governor Longfield Academy	Governance & Policy Officer
11.	Executive Team Structure – Head of Operations Position to be advertised internally	CEO/ Head of People
12.	AIMS Section ADEMSS Report – when next reported to include progress towards priorities not currently rag-rated green.	CEO
12.	Approval External Auditor – written resolution to be circulated to all Members seeking the approval of appointment of the Company's Auditors.	Governance & Policy Officer
16.	Setting up new Committee Structure, including People & Environment Committee	SDO/Governance & Policy Officer
17.	Circulate draft 2025-26 Schedule of Meetings	Governance & Policy Officer
20.	Exclusion of Documents to Public Inspection	Governance & Policy Officer

These minutes were approved by the Chair of the Board of Directors of Northern Arch Learning Partnership as follows:

on: 13 Oct 25 date

Signature: 

Print Name: JI CYDE