



Northern Arch

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Mowden Schools

Local Governing Body Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 18th June 2025 at 5.30 pm

Mowden Junior School, Conyers Avenue, Darlington, DL3 9DE

MINUTES

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| Present (Governors) | Michelle Dunwell, Rebecca Foster-Snook, Paul Freeman, Sarah Heslop, Peter King, Danielle James, Helen Livingstone, Jonathon Reay, Jackie Saint and Diane Turner. |
| In attendance | Iain Clyde: Chair of Directors Jon Tait: Executive Director of Education Lisa Bainbridge: Deputy Head Teacher, Mowden Schools Alistair Johnson: Deputy Head Teacher, Mowden Schools Angela Taylor: School Business Manager, Mowden Schools Laura Hawksby: Governance and Policy Officer |

| Item | Description of discussion | Action |
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| | PART A: Procedural items | |
| 1. | <u>Welcome, Introductions and confirmation quorum present</u> The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. It was confirmed that a quorum was present. | |
| 2. | <u>Apologies for absence and their acceptance</u> Apologies for absence were received from Governors Nick Bowerman and Ben Hall. | |
| 3. | <u>Notification of items of urgent other business</u> None | |
| 4. | <u>Declaration of Personal and Pecuniary Interests</u> None | |
| 5. | <u>Membership Document</u> The current Membership document was noted for information. | |

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Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Vane Terrace, Darlington, DL3 7AU:
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denotes support and challenge provided by Governors

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| 6. | <p><u>Approval of minutes/review of actions/matters arising</u></p> <p>Draft Minutes of the Mowden Schools Local Governing Body held on Wednesday 2nd April 2025 were considered and had been shared with the Local Governing Body prior to the meeting, copies of which are held on file.</p> <p>All actions had been completed and there were no matters arising.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED that Minutes of Mowden Schools Local Governing Body be confirmed as accurate records and should be signed by the Chair.</p> | Governance & Policy Officer/ Chair |
| | PART B: Business Items for Discussion | |
| 7. | <p><u>Chair's Report</u></p> <p>There were no new actions taken or correspondence to report.</p> | |
| 8. | <p><u>Head Teacher's Report</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher provided a comprehensive update report to the Local Governing Body, a copy of which is retained on file.</p> <p>Areas of discussion included:</p> <p><u>Staffing</u></p> <p>The Governors were advised that the 2025-26 Staffing Structure had now been drafted, subject to any changes before the end of the Summer Term.</p> <p><u>Curriculum and Standards – Review of Geography & History Assessments after One Year (2024-25)</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher advised that a review had been undertaken of Geography and History assessments after one year. The results of the review were set out in the report, demonstrating that curriculum coverage and children's knowledge acquisition in Geography and History is strong. The assessments have been used to make some minor adjustments to the curriculum and the knowledge gained to make some changes to the assessments themselves. There was noted to be a future development area in each subject: compass direction knowledge in Geography and timelines knowledge in History.</p> <p>A work scrutiny of History had also been completed. Each Teacher submitted three children's books at the three different ability levels. The Head Teacher advised that there was a high level of work and good consistency right across the schools.</p> <p>The Executive Director of Education advised he would be undertaking learning walks at Mowden Schools to help support and verify what senior leadership had observed, providing another Trust level of support and challenge to the school.</p> | |

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| | <p><u>Attendance</u></p> <p>Attendance figures were noted to be strong for both the Infant and Junior Schools. The IDSR (Inspection Data Summary Report) for 2025 indicated attendance and persistent absence rates have consistently been in the best 20% of schools with similar deprivation levels in recent years.</p> <p><u>Numbers on Roll</u></p> <p>Numbers on Roll were noted by Governors to remain a challenge and were pleased to note the appointment of the new Head of Admissions and Marketing for the Trust who would help to market the work of the school and the understanding of prospective parents/carers of how to apply and the rules around admission to the school. <i>Governors requested that open days for the school be advertised widely and with consideration of the best impact and timings for the advertisements.</i></p> <p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p>The Deputy Head Teacher provided a safeguarding update. He advised that he had been attending the Partnership DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) network meetings which allow the group to discuss safeguarding and share best practice across the Trust. Prevent training had been completed by the Deputy Head Teacher (A.J) and 'Prevent in Education training for DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Leads).</p> | |
| 8 a.) | <p><u>Risk Register</u></p> <p>The Risk Register for Mowden Schools was considered by Governors. It was noted the number of pupils on roll was the current biggest risk for Mowden Schools.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED that the Risk Register be approved.</p> | |
| 9. | <p><u>Thank you – Iain Clyde Chair of Directors</u></p> <p>The Chair of Directors thanked all Governors on Mowden Schools Local Governing Body for their hard work and time given as volunteers on the Local Governing Body. They had done a great job in helping to contribute to the governance of Northern Arch Learning Partnership, whilst keeping the Partnership's vision of each Local Governing Body preserving their local identity.</p> <p>The recent successes of QE being rated by Ofsted as 'outstanding' and Longfield as 'good' had been celebrated within the Trust. New appointments had included the Executive Director Education, Head of Admissions and Marketing and a new Head Teacher for Mowden Schools.</p> <p>A Northern Arch Partnership Development Day for all Governors, Directors and Members was due to be held on the 13th October 2025 which would include a programme of development and collaboration for all those involved in governance across the Trust.</p> | |

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| 10. | <p><u>Chief Executive's Officer's Update Report</u></p> <p>Governors noted the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) June 2025 report, which included several recent changes and developments amongst senior and Central Team personnel.</p> <p>In late May 2025 the Partnership's received more information from the DfE regarding next year's pay increases for teaching and support. Budgets are being set within assumptions and with due regard to ratios stated in the SRMA (School Resources Management Advisers) report and can already demonstrate improved ratios at all academies compared to last year's position.</p> <p>Governors noted that Arbor Management Information System was being rolled out at Longfield, Rydal and Hurworth Academies in the Trust and asked if this would also be introduced at Mowden? The School Business Manager confirmed this was correct.</p> | |
| 11. | <p><u>Business Manager's Report</u></p> <p>The Business Manager provided a comprehensive report regarding building development & premises, health, safety & security, finance and personnel.</p> <p>It was noted that a staff toilet was due to be installed within the area used by Pre-School during the summer break, following appropriate procurement and safety procedures.</p> <p>The now empty Year 3 classroom was being used to provide a range of facilities for pupils. This included an indoor play area providing desktop activities, a SEN (Special Educational Needs) area and also additional space to enable the expansion of the before and after school provision, via Kids Fun Klub. Governors asked if the expansion of the before and after school provision would be ready by September 2025 and the Business Manger confirmed that this was correct.</p> <p>During 2025-26, there are considerations to develop the spare Year4 classroom into a PPA (Planning, Preparation and Assessment) area for teaching staff, a quite workspace away from the staff room and photocopy area.</p> <p>An independent audit has been completed of Mowden's new website. The audit provided a comprehensive report, with any resulting recommendations having been implemented.</p> <p>A summary of the March 2025 monthly Management Accounts were considered by Governors. It was noted that there was a small deficit, which it was planned to reduce in the 2025 - 26 budget through in year efficiencies. Reserves were noted to be in a healthy position. Preparation of the 2025-26 budget and medium-term financial plan was underway and would be taken to the Trust's Finance, Resources and Audit Committee and Full Board later in the summer term.</p> <p><i>(Note: Governor M.Dunwell left the meeting after consideration of this meeting)</i></p> | |

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| 12. | Timeline Amendments Admission Policy Update The Head Teacher advised and Governors noted that any major changes to the current Mowden's Admissions Policy and arrangements would require consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between the 1 st October and the 31 st January of the school year before those arrangements are to apply. | |
| 13. | Approval of Term Dates 2027/28 Consideration was given to school term dates for the 2027/28 Academic Year, a copy of the report is retained on file. After careful consideration it was agreed by the Local Governing Body that the term dates be approved. Governors RESOLVED that the 2027/28 school term dates, as set out in the report, be approved and forwarded to Darlington Borough Council. | Head Teacher |
| 14. | Policies: a) Mowden Schools Academy Policies: <u>Using the Internet and Digital Media Use Policy and Guidelines</u> Governors considered the Using the Internet and Digital Media Use Policy and Guidelines. Governors requested that the following amendment be added: Page 6 (1 st Paragraph) - the wording ' <i>will be prevented in attending future events</i> ' be amended to ' <i>may be prevented in attending future events</i> '. That this information also be reflected in page 9 of the Policy. Governors RESOLVED that the Internet and Digital Media Use Policy and Guidelines be approved, subject to the above amendments. <u>RSE Policy- cyclical review</u> Governors considered the Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) Policy. The Deputy Head Teacher advised there had been one small amendment, as highlighted in the Policy. Governors RESOLVED that the Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) Policy be approved. b) Trust approved policies Spring Term 2025 were noted for information: Finance Policy (Trust), Reserves Policy (Trust), Investment Policy (Trust), Pay Policy* (Trust), Appraisal Policy* (Trust), Staff Behaviour - Code of Conduct and Addendum* (Trust), Disciplinary Policy & Procedures (Schools), Grievance Policy (Schools), Premises Management Policy (Trust), GDPR Data Protection Policy (Trust), Data Retention & Destruction Policy (Trust), Privacy Notices (Trust), | Business Manager |

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| | <p>Complaints Policy (Trust) and Code of Conduct for Members, Directors and Governors (Trust).</p> <p>* Subject to union approval</p> | |
| 15. | <p>Special Interest Governors</p> <p>It was noted at the previous meeting of the Committee Governors had been linked to Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs (SEN), Looked after children (LAC) & Previously Looked After Children (PLAC), Finance and Premises Health & Safety: (Minute 14 Mowden LGB 2nd April 2025 refers)</p> <p>Further consideration of other link Governor areas would be given at the Mowden Schools LGB Strategy Meeting on Wednesday 24th September 2025.</p> <p>Governor Jackie Saint's SEND (Special Educational Needs) learning walks report was noted by Governors a copy of which would be held on file.</p> | Governors |
| | <u>PART C: Standing Items</u> | |
| 16. | <p>Trust Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>The current Board approved Scheme of Delegation was noted by the Local Governing Body.</p> <p><i>(Note: Governor J. Reay left the meeting after consideration of this item)</i></p> | |
| 17. | <p>Trust Strategic Plan</p> <p>The current Board approved Trust Strategic Plan was noted by the Local Governing Body</p> | |
| | <u>Part D: Concluding Items</u> | |
| 18. | <p><u>Approval of documents for inspection</u></p> <p>Governors 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/staff and commercially sensitive information in accordance with Articles 125 a.), b.) and c.)</p> | |
| 19. | <p>Future meetings 2025/26 Academic Year</p> <p>Governors advised that they wished the Local Governing Body Meetings to remain on Wednesdays where possible, with a start time of 5.30 pm for the next academic year.</p> <p>The Mowden Schools Local Governing Body Strategy Meeting was agreed to be on Wednesday 24th September 2025 at 5.00 pm, Mowden Schools. Governors</p> | |

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| | requested that the Head of Admissions and Marketing be invited to this meeting and the new Head Teacher of Mowden Schools. | Governance & Policy Officer |
| 20. | <p>Chair's Message of Thanks</p> <p>The Chair thanked all Governors, senior leadership, staff at Mowden Schools and colleagues from Northern Arch Learning Partnership for all their hard work in helping support the bringing together of Mowden Schools with the Trust.</p> <p>On behalf of the Governing Body the Chair also wished to express the Governors' deep gratitude for all the hard work and success of the retiring Head Teacher. The Head Teacher also thanked the Governors for their help and support over the years, and that it had been a privilege working at the school.</p> | |
| The meeting concluded at 7.50 pm | | |

Action Log

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| 5. | Minutes of the 2 nd April 2025 – to be signed by Chair | Governance & Policy Officer/Chair |
| 13. | Approved 2027/28 term dates to be forwarded to DBC | Head Teacher |
| 14. | Amendments Using the Internet and Digital Media Use Policy & Guidelines | Business Manager |
| 15. | Further consideration of other Link Governor areas at Mowden Schools LGB Strategy Meeting on Wednesday 24 th September 2025. | Governors |
| 19. | Head of Admissions and Marketing and the New Head Teacher Mowden Schools to be invited to the LGB Strategy Meeting on Wednesday 24 th September 2025. | Governance & Policy Officer |

These Minutes were approved by the Local Governing Body of Mowden Schools, as follows:

on: 19-11-25 date

Signed by: (Chair) 

Printed name: PAUL FREEMAN

