



# Northern Arch

## LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

The Longfield Academy

Local Governing Body Meeting Minutes

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 5.15 pm, The Longfield Academy

### MINUTES

Present (Governors)	Nicola Bales (Chair), Angela Cleasby; Stephen Goodman; Blake Harrison, Tanya Singh (Vice Chair)
In attendance	Claire Howlett (Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Senior Mental Health Lead) Justin Tattersall (Deputy Head Teacher) Nicola Wade (Head of Operations) – Acting Clerk

Item	Description of discussion	Action
	<b>PART A: Procedural items</b>	
1.	<b><u>Election of Chair</u></b>  Nominations were sought for the Chair of the Local Governing Body to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.  Governors nominated and approved Nicola Bales to serve as Chair.	
2.	<b><u>Election of Vice Chair</u></b>  Nominations were sought for the Vice Chair of the Local Governing Body to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.  Governors nominated and approved Tanya Singh to serve as Vice Chair.	
3.	<b><u>Welcome, Introductions and confirmation quorum present</u></b>  The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, including welcoming Blake Harrison to his first meeting. It was confirmed that a quorum was present.	
4.	<b><u>Apologies for absence and their acceptance</u></b>  Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Governors Angela Sweeten and Victoria Foster.	
5.	<b><u>Notification of items of urgent other business</u></b>  None	

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

6.	<p><b><u>Declaration of Personal and Pecuniary Interests</u></b></p> <p>None</p>	
7.	<p><b><u>Membership Document</u></b></p> <p>Governors noted that processes are in place to fill current vacancies including meeting with potential new General Governors.</p>	
8.	<p><b><u>Approval of minutes/review of actions/matters arising – The Longfield Academy Local Governing Body 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025</u></b></p> <p>Draft Minutes of The Longfield Academy Local Governing Body held on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025 had been shared with the Local Governing Body prior to the meeting, a copy of which is held on file.</p> <p>Governors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the Local Governing Body meeting of the Longfield Local Governing Body held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record and should be signed by the Chair.</p> <p>All actions have been completed and there were no matters arising.</p>	
<b>PART B: Business Items for Discussion</b>		
9.	<p><b><u>Chair's Report</u></b></p> <p>It was noted there were no new updates.</p>	
10.	<p><b><u>Safeguarding Training – Local Context</u></b></p> <p>The DSL presented an overview of the local safeguarding context for Darlington, including reference to the numbers of children at risk of extremism and under the Prevent programme.</p> <p>Governors also sought clarification on how referrals to Prevent are made and the DSL confirmed that it could be by the school, youth club leader or other professional.</p> <p>Governors noted the rise in English patriotism and asked what issues have been found regarding this at Longfield. The DSL explained that pupils have been curious and asking questions, rather than presenting with issues, and that the academy has provided awareness training for pupils.</p> <p>Governors asked if anything further can be done to support parents in helping to keep young people safe online. The DSL confirmed that information has been shared with parents (Small Steps) and there are plans for the further sharing of guidance.</p> <p>Governors asked if any Longfield pupils are considered 'missing and/or exploited' and the DSL confirmed that there have been no cases at Longfield for quite some time.</p> <p>Governors asked if there are any cases of pupil involvement with cyber-crime, are staff trained and do they know what to look out for? The DSL confirmed that there are no cases currently but staff are trained and are monitoring.</p> <p>Governors highlighted AI as a risk and asked what is being done to address this?</p>	

	<p>The DSL explained that AI is covered in the life, health and IT curriculum and that the school is investigating a 'locked down' version of AI for pupil use. Pupil online searches are subject to filtering and monitoring and flagged when pupils attempt to access restricted content.</p> <p>Governors asked if Elective Home Education (EHE) is on the rise in Darlington and what are the issues around this? The Deputy Head confirmed that there are around 575 pupils in Darlington who are EHE and that the Headteacher is working with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership in this area.</p> <p>Governors asked if there is any national guidance to follow when young people ask questions about rightwing extremism etc.? The DSL explained that the school works with an Equality &amp; Diversity Police Officer who supports children to explore their curiosities and to question their sources of information, as do staff at the academy.</p> <p>Governors sought further clarification on arrangements for discussing freedom of speech and hate speech with children. The Deputy Head explained that this is clearly set out in the PSHE syllabus and that the culture of encouraging openness and curiosity, in line with the academy's 'PROUD' values, supports this.</p>	
11.	<p><b><u>Head Teacher's Report</u></b></p> <p>The Deputy Head Teacher provided an update report to the Local Governing Body, a copy of which is retained on file. <i>Governors commented on how they like the new format of the papers, finding the information clear and focused.</i></p> <p>The Deputy Head highlighted areas for discussion including the approach to tackling the fall in pupil numbers through a redeveloped open event 'Longfield Festival' and effective use of social media to celebrate and promote the academy.</p> <p><i>Governors asked what the impact of this has been.</i> The Deputy Head confirmed that there has already been increased interest from pupils wishing to transfer to Longfield mid-year and indicative pupil numbers for next year are looking like at least a 25% increase. Feedback from the open event was very positive, with almost double the number of attendees on previous years. Work is continuing with colleagues in the Central Team, in particular the Head of Marketing &amp; Admissions, to build on this momentum.</p> <p><i>Governors asked what OFSTED grades the academy's closest competitors have and the Deputy Head explained that they are also 'Good'.</i></p> <p><i>Governors asked for more information about work being done to promote the academy within local primaries, noting the need to target children rather than just their parents.</i> The Deputy Head explained that 450 local Year 5 pupils have been into Longfield for a social media competition, with extraordinary engagement levels, as well as and other activities such as inviting a local primary to attend a Christmas performance. The team will be evaluating and developing this for future years.</p> <p><i>Governors noted the academy's attendance figures are below the national average and persistent absence is increasing; they asked what is being done to address this.</i> The Deputy Head explained that a strategy is in place, including holding more constructive conversations with pupils, interventions targeting small groups and rewards to promote good attendance.</p>	

	<p>Governors sought further clarification on what alternative methods to suspension are utilised by the academy. The Deputy Head explained that the Choices programme, Personalised Learning Centre; a behaviour specialist; counsellors and support from Year Heads have led to a decrease in suspensions. Whilst numbers are beginning to creep up again, there has also been a raising of expectations across the academy and incidents are primarily attributed to the same ten recidivists.</p> <p>Governor Blake Harrison is to visit Choices and the PLC to gain insight and share expertise.</p> <p><b><u>Risk Register</u></b> Governors reviewed the risk register and noted that areas of interest had been covered in other items on the agenda. They also noted that the new format is more robust and purposeful.</p> <p><b><u>Finance Update</u></b> Governors noted the finance update and recognised the hard work undertaken to balance the budgets. Governors asked about arrangements for the letting of facilities and the Head of Operations explained that a new Sports Centre Manager appointment has been made and has made excellent progress so far.</p>	Governor
12.	<p><b><u>Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 2025-26</u></b></p> <p>Governors reviewed and <b>approved</b> the Pupil Premium Strategy Statement for 2025-26.</p>	
13.	<p><b><u>Chief Executive's Officer's Update Report</u></b></p> <p>Governors reviewed the Chief Executive Officer's update report and noted that they can see real support and impact from being a part of Northern Arch.</p>	
14.	<p><b><u>Policies for information</u></b></p> <p>Governors noted the following approved Trust polices for information: Risk Management Policy; Procurement Policy; Health &amp; Safety Statement of Intent and Capability Policy (Schools).</p> <p>Governors reviewed the following Academy policies: Choices Policy (Behaviour Policy); Anti Bullying Policy (Schools); Attendance Policy; Child Protection Policy &amp; Procedures; SEND Information Report 2025 and Special Educational Needs Policy 2025.</p> <p>Governors noted that the Choices Policy has been updated with reference to pupils who are not in the correct school uniform, which now includes '<i>pupils with incorrect footwear will be issued a detention</i>'. Governors asked if this includes pupils who have footwear in poor condition or are unable to provide suitable footwear and it was confirmed that only pupils in deliberate contravention of this rule would receive a detention.</p>	

	<p>Governors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the above policies be forwarded to the Standards Committee of the Board for approval.</p> <p>Approval by the Local Governing Body was sought to the following policies: Careers Programme, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions in School Policy, Relationship and Sex Education Policy and School Uniform Policy.</p> <p>Governors <b>RESOLVED</b> that the above policies be approved.</p>	<b>Governance &amp; Policy Officer</b>
<b>15.</b>	<p><b><u>Special Interest Govs</u></b></p> <p>Governors who had attended the recent open event commented that it was fantastic. A governor who had supported with a Governor Disciplinary Panel for a permanent exclusion commented that it had been well handled by the Partnership.</p> <p>The meeting discussed 'link areas' and agreed on the following, in the absence of a number of other governors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil numbers – Nicola Bales</li> <li>• Attendance – Blake Harrison</li> <li>• Behavior and exclusions – Blake Harrison</li> <li>• Safeguarding – Stephen Goodman</li> <li>• attainment and progress – Tanya Singh</li> <li>• Finance &amp; resources – Nicola Bales</li> </ul> <p>It was also agreed that governors absent from this meeting could 'double-up' on any areas of interest and special interest governors would aim to visit the academy once per term.</p>	
<b><u>Part C: Standing Items</u></b>		
<b>16.</b>	<p><b><u>Trust Scheme of Delegation</u></b></p> <p>The current Board approved Scheme of Delegation was noted by the Local Governing Body.</p>	
<b><u>Part D: Concluding Items</u></b>		
<b>17.</b>	<p><b><u>Approval of documents for inspection</u></b></p> <p>Governors <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.</p>	
<b>18.</b>	<p><b><u>Future meetings 2025/26 Academic Year</u></b></p> <p>Governors noted the following future meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thursday 19 March 2026 - 5.15 pm at Longfield Academy</li> <li>• Thursday 18th June 2026 - 5.15 pm at Longfield Academy</li> </ul>	
<b>The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm</b>		

**Action Log**

1.	Appointment of Chair	Governance & Policy Officer
2.	Appointment of Vice Chair	Governance & Policy Officer
8.	Minutes – to be signed by Chair	Governance & Policy Office/Chair
14.	Policies forwarded to the Standards Committee for approval following LGB review.	Governance & Policy Officer
15.	Governor (B.H) to visit Choices and the PLC to gain insight and share expertise.	Governor

These minutes were approved by the Local Governing Body of Longfield Academy, as follows:

on: 19/3/26 date

Signed by: (Chair) N Bales

Printed name: N BALES

