



Northern Arch

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Mowden Schools

Local Governing Body Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 19th November 2025 at 5.30 pm

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

MINUTES

Present (Governors)	Michelle Dunwell, Rebecca Foster-Snook, Paul Freeman (Chair), Sarah Heslop, Danielle James, Jonathon Reay, Jackie Saint and Lexi Wilkinson (Head Teacher).
In attendance	Tim Fisher: Chief Executive Officer Nikki Wade: Head of Operations 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
	PART A: Procedural items	
1.	<p><u>Election of Chair</u></p> <p>The Governance & Policy Officer opened the meeting. Nominations were sought and received to elect a Chair to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED that Paul Freeman be appointed Chair to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.</p> <p><i>(Note: Governor Paul Freeman in the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.)</i></p>	Governance & Policy Officer
2.	<p><u>Election of Vice Chair</u></p> <p>Nominations were sought and received to elect a Vice Chair to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.</p> <p>In his absence from the meeting, the Governance & Policy Officer advised, on behalf of Governor Ben Hall that he was happy to be nominated as Vice Chair for this academic year, subject to no other Governor wishing to hold this position for the academic year.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED that Ben Hall be appointed Vice Chair to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.</p>	Governance & Policy Officer

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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

3.	<p><u>Welcome, Introductions and confirmation quorum present</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.</p> <p>It was confirmed that a quorum was present.</p>	
4.	<p><u>Apologies for absence and their acceptance</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Governors Nick Bowerman, Ben Hall and Helen Livingstone.</p>	
5.	<p><u>Notification of items of urgent other business</u></p> <p>None</p>	
6.	<p><u>Declaration of Personal and Pecuniary Interests</u></p> <p>None</p>	
7.	<p><u>Membership Document</u></p> <p>The current Membership document was noted for information.</p> <p>Governor Diane Turner had stepped down as Governor as of the 11th of November 2025. The Chair advised that a thank you letter had been sent on behalf of the Governing Body for all her hard work and involvement as a Governor at Mowden Schools over the years.</p>	
8.	<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 18th June 2025 and Mowden Schools Local Governing Body Strategy Meeting 24th September 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.</p> <p>In relation to Minute 3 of Mowden Schools Local Governing Body Strategy meeting held on the 24th September 2025, Governors requested that a summary report be provided by the Head of Admissions and Marketing regarding how the marketing of Mowden Schools was progressing (including any statistics) and any feedback from the Open Evenings held for perspective parents in the Autumn Term.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED that Minutes of Mowden Schools Local Governing Body held on the 18th June 2025 and Mowden Schools Local Governing Body Strategy Meeting held on 24th September 2025 be confirmed as accurate record and should be signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>Head of Admissions & Marketing</p> <p>Governance & Policy Officer/ Chair</p>

PART B: Business Items for Discussion		
9.	<p><u>Chair's Report</u></p> <p>The Chair advised that he had been on a recent visit to Mowden Schools in his governance role and had noted the positive atmosphere around the schools.</p> <p>The Chair reported that the Partnership wide Governance & Development day held on the 11th October 2025 had been a very useful and productive event and thanked the Partnership for organizing the event.</p>	
10.	<p><u>LGB Remit & Responsibilities</u></p> <p>The Head of Operations provided a presentation on the Local Governing Bodies' remit and responsibilities. She advised that Local Governing Bodies provide a vital and important link between the Directors and the academies. They also provide a unique insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by their communities.</p> <p>Governors serving on the Local Governing Body focus on key areas including safeguarding; special educational needs and disabilities; standards and stakeholder engagement. A copy of the presentation would be circulated to Governors.</p> <p>Governors requested that a standing item be added to the bottom of future Mowden School's agendas, allowing them to identify what work the committee had done to benefit the students at the end of each meeting.</p> <p>Governors advised that further understanding of the new Ofsted framework was important, as well as the new curriculum and assessment review. Governors requested that a future Governor item on the curriculum and assessment review would be helpful.</p>	<p>Governance & Policy Officer</p> <p>Governance & Policy Officer</p> <p>Head Teacher</p>
11.	<p><u>Safeguarding Training Local Context</u></p> <p>The Deputy Head Teacher (A.J) provided safeguarding training to the Local Governing Body, focusing on the local context. He advised that at present Mowden had no children on child protection plans. There was noted to be an increase in the number of Looked After Children within Mowden Schools.</p> <p>Mowden Schools continued to focus on online safety training for both pupils and parents/carers. It was noted mobile phones are not currently banned from the school however, must be handed into school during school hours.</p> <p><i>(Governor D. James left the meeting after consideration of the above item.)</i></p>	
12.	<p><u>Head Teacher's Report</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher provided a comprehensive report to the Local Governing Body. She advised that monitoring had been undertaken this term with Senior Leaders having completed a focused review of writing across the school, including two drop-ins per class to observe pupil progress throughout their unit of work. Book looks and pupil discussions provided further insight, supported by external input from the Executive Director of Education. The Chair of Mowden Local Governing Body had undertaken Governor monitoring and joined leaders for some Key Stage 1 visits.</p>	

	<p>Suspensions were noted to remain low and attendance was above the national average.</p> <p>Regarding staff health & wellbeing Governors asked if further information could be brought back to Governors regarding how staff access employee health and wellbeing services, how it is communicated to staff and costs to the budget.</p> <p>Governors discussed the school improvement priorities for Mowden Schools, as set out in the Head Teacher's report. Progress towards priorities were rag rated in the report. Governors advised it would be useful in future reports to include comments regarding the progress made towards these priorities. It would also be helpful in the rag rating to indicate 'expected progress' at the current point in time rather than just progress towards the final objective.</p> <p><u>Risk Register</u></p> <p>Governors considered the Mowden Schools' Academy Risk Register. It was noted one of the most significant risks was falling numbers on roll.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED that the Mowden School's Risk Register be approved.</p>	<p>Head Teacher</p> <p>Head Teacher</p>
<p>13.</p>	<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. A Finance summary up to the 30th September 2025 was circulated at the meeting, and it was noted that there was a small surplus.</p> <p>Teaching staff have received the uplift in salaries of 4% and support staff have received the increase of 3.2% back dated to the 1st April 2025.</p> <p>Governors noted that Wraparound provision was to be brought in house from January 2026 and Governors would be kept informed on progress with regard to this provision.</p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p><u>PE & Sports Premium</u></p> <p>The Deputy Head Teacher (A.J) reported upon the PE & Sports Premium for 2024-25. Governors noted that the digital expenditure reporting form had been duly completed at the end of the last academic year and signed by the Chair. It outlined how PE and sports premium funding had been used and the impact the spending had on achieving the aims and objectives of the funding.</p>	
<p>15.</p>	<p><u>Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 25-26</u></p> <p>Governors considered and noted the Pupil Premium Strategy Statement for 2025-26 for Mowden Schools. The Pupil Premium Strategy Statement would be forwarded to Directors for approval by the Standards Committee.</p>	<p>Governance & Policy Officer</p>

16.	<p><u>Chief Executive Officers' Update Report</u></p> <p>Governors noted the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Autumn term report. It was noted learning environments at both secondary academies have benefitted from significant investments over recent months. The new post of Head of Operations had commenced in November 2025. Pay agreements had been reached for all sections of staff in the Trust.</p>	
17.	<p><u>Policies:</u></p> <p>Trust approved policies Summer Term 2025 were noted for information:</p> <p>Risk Management Policy, Procurement Policy and Health & Safety Statement of Intent and Capability Policy (Schools).</p> <p>Mowden Schools Policies Autumn Term 2025:</p> <p>i. Mowden Schools Local Governing Body to review:</p> <p>The following policies were reviewed by the Local Governing Body.</p> <p>Behaviour and Recognition Policy, Anti Bullying Policy (Schools), Safeguarding Policy, SEN Information Report and Local Offer 2025 and SEN Policy 2025.</p> <p>The Local Governing Body had no additions to add to the policies which would now be forwarded to the Standards Committee for approval in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>ii. Approval by Mowden Schools Local Governing Body:</p> <p>After careful consideration Governors RESOLVED to approve the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and RSE Policy.</p>	<p>Governance & Policy Officer</p>
18.	<p><u>Special Interest Governors</u></p> <p>It was noted any further remaining vacancies for link Governors would be looked at next meeting in March 2026.</p>	
<u>PART C: Standing Items</u>		
19.	<p><u>Trust Scheme of Delegation</u></p> <p>The current Board approved Scheme of Delegation was noted by the Local Governing Body.</p>	
20.	<p><u>Feedback from the Governance Development Event</u></p> <p>As previously reported at Minute 9 above, Governors agreed that the Governance Development Event held on the 11th October 2025 had been a useful and informative event.</p>	

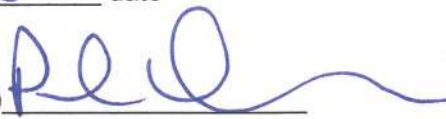
Part D: Concluding Items		
21.	<u>Approval of documents for inspection</u> Governors RESOLVED that the agenda, approved minutes and supporting documents be made available for public inspection with the exception of information concerning identifiable pupils and/or teachers/staff.	
22.	<u>Next meetings 2025/26 Academic Year</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 11th March 2026 5.30 pm, Mowden Schools • Wednesday 10th June 2026 5.30 pm, Mowden Schools 	
The meeting concluded at 8.00 pm		

Action Log

1.	Appointment of Chair	Governance & Policy Officer
2.	Appointment of Vice Chair	Governance & Policy Officer
8.	Signed minutes – Minutes of the 18 th June and 24 th September Summary report on progress of marketing of Mowden Schools	Governance & Policy Officer & Chair Head of Admissions & Marketing
10.	A copy of LGB Remit & Responsibilities Presentation forwarded to Governors Agenda item to help identify what work the Committee has done to benefit the students at the end of the meeting Future item regarding the curriculum and assessment review.	Governance & Policy Officer Governance & Policy Officer Head Teacher
12.	Further information be provided to Governors regarding staff access to employee health & wellbeing services. School improvement priorities – Future reports to include comments regarding the progress made towards priorities and rag rating to indicate 'expected progress' at the current point in time rather than just progress towards the final objective.	Head Teacher Head Teacher
15.	Pupil Premium Strategy Statement to be forwarded to the Directors' Standards Committee for approval.	Governance & Policy Officer
17.	Policies forward to the Standards Committee for approval following LGB review.	Governance & Policy Officer

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

on: 11.03.26 date

Signed by: (Chair) 

Printed name: Paul Freeman

APPROVED

