



Northern Arch

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

The Rydal Academy

Local Governing Body Meeting Minutes

Monday 17th November 2025 at 1.00 pm, The Rydal Academy

Present (Governors)	Mark Gray (Chair), John Armitage (Head Teacher), Johanna Thurland, Katie Turnbull, Melanie Chapman, Troy Turner and Joanna Reed.
In attendance	Jon Tait: Executive Director of Education Nikki Wade: Head of Operations Marcus Dickinson: Designated Safeguarding Lead Selina Costello: Darlington Traveller Education Lead Teacher 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 Mark Gray be appointed Chair to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.</p> <p><i>(Note: Governor Mark Gray 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>Governors RESOLVED that Johanna Thurland be appointed Vice Chair to serve until the first meeting of the Autumn Term 2026/27.</p>	Governance & Policy Officer
3.	<p><u>Welcome, Introductions and confirmation quorum present</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and 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 Gaurav Bhatia, Eddy Gnaglo and Joanne Keane.</p>	

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denotes support and challenge provided by Governors

5.	<p><u>Notification of items of urgent other business</u></p> <p>There was one item of Other Business: (Minute 23 below refers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/Carer Questionnaire - Uniform 	
6.	<p><u>Declaration of Personal and Pecuniary Interests</u></p> <p>None</p>	
7.	<p><u>Darlington Traveller Education Annual Report</u></p> <p>The Darlington Traveller Education Lead Teacher provided a report on the Darlington Traveller Education Service. She advised that the service supports GRT (Gypsy Roma Traveller) children and young people from ages 0 to 25 years old to access and stay in education. The service offers a responsive reflective support service to ensure that all children and young people have an opportunity to enjoy success. The service works with several schools in the local area and has links with universities, health and a number of wider agencies.</p> <p>Governors noted that the service continued to receive positive feedback from training and workshops that have been delivered. They noted that the number of referrals was highest in Year 3 and enquired why it was high in this particular year group? The Darlington Traveller Education Lead Teacher advised that it tended to be the age when pupils required more literacy support.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Darlington Traveller Education Lead Teacher for her report and presentation.</p> <p><i>(The Darlington Traveller Education Lead Teacher left the meeting after consideration of the above item.)</i></p>	
8.	<p><u>Jon Tait (Executive Director of Education) – Partnership Support Presentation</u></p> <p>The Executive Director of Education provided a presentation to the Local Governing Body on the current work he was undertaking to develop the quality of teaching, professional learning and curriculum development across all schools and phases of education across the Partnership.</p> <p>He has developed a quality assurance programme which is used across the Partnership. He conducts, along with other senior leaders, thematic reviews within the schools and colleges. A professional learning network has been developed within the Partnership with information being provided by podcasts, current articles and opportunities for professional development for all staff. A leadership development programme has also been developed called 'Arch:lead' which brings colleagues together to learn from one another, share expertise and grow as a community of leaders.</p> <p>A dashboard bespoke to the Partnership has been developed bringing together data from all of Northern Arch Learning Partnership's Academies, which allows comparisons to be made, trends to be analysed and actioned upon where necessary.</p>	

	<p>Governors were pleased to note this positive work across the Partnership and the benefits for staff. They asked if it involved a substantial time commitment for staff? The Executive Director of Education advised that it did not involve a large commitment for staff and would also hopefully help reduce their workload. Staff Governors on The Rydal Local Governing Body advised that they had found the Partnership's professional support network to be very positive and could engage with the resources when they were able.</p> <p>Governors asked if 'trauma informed practice' was shared across the Partnership? The Executive Director of Education confirmed that it was used as part of the professional development of staff across the Partnership.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Executive Director of Education for his presentation.</p>	
9.	<p><u>Membership Document</u></p> <p>The following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor Tracy Vaughan had stepped down as a General Governor as of 26th October 2025. The Committee noted all the hard work Tracy had undertaken for the Local Governing Body. • The Governors' terms of office that were due to end in the Autumn term and in the Spring Term. 	
10.	<p><u>Approval of minutes/review of actions/matters arising – The Rydal Academy Local Governing Body 16th June 2025</u></p> <p>Draft Minutes of The Rydal Academy Local Governing Body held on the 16th June 2025 had been shared with the Local Governing Body prior to the meeting, a copy of which is held on file.</p> <p>All actions had been completed or would be reported back to this Autumn term meeting of the Local Governing Body.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Local Governing Body meeting of The Rydal Local Governing Body held on the 16th June 2025 be confirmed as an accurate record and should be signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>Chair/ Governance & Policy Officer</p>
PART B: Business Items for Discussion		
11.	<p><u>Chair's Report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>action taken</u> - no new updates • <u>correspondence</u> – no new updates 	
12.	<p><u>Safeguarding Training Local Context</u></p> <p>The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) provided safeguarding training to the Local Governing Body, focusing on the local context. He advised that there were several</p>	

	<p>children open to services within the school. There were a number of vulnerable pupils and families with multi-agency involvement and complex needs. There had been an increase in parental/carer mental health issues and associated neglect. There are several tailored provisions provided to these families by the school including: delivery of the Freedom program and Rockpool program for parents and children, access to a non-class based Designated Safeguarding Lead, 7 Shadow DSLs (including all Senior Leadership Team), non-class based Personal Development and Wellbeing Lead (Assistant Headteacher), parenting programs and support, as well as collaborative projects with the local woman's refuge.</p> <p>Governors asked if parents/ cares who are struggling are put in touch with those that could help them? The DSL confirmed that they are signed posted to the correct people and organisations who can assist them.</p> <p>It was noted that there has been an increase in the number of Looked After Children (LAC) in the school. Provision provided by the school to support these children included: a Phase Lead LAC lead professional; priority support from cohort Teaching Assistants and trauma informed practice.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the DSL for the training provided to Governors.</p>	
<p>13.</p>	<p><u>Head Teacher's Report</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher reported upon The Rydal Academy Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which included context information about the school, self-evaluation, the Risk Register and Academy Development Plan. The QIP feeds into The Rydal Academy Risk Register and self-evaluation of any areas that need to be improved upon. The self-evaluation element of the report would be updated as the Academic Year progressed.</p> <p>As advised at the last meeting of the Local Governing Body, the Head Teacher reported that in-year transfers were high at Rydal and were due to reasons such as parents/carers moving out of the area, mobility of GRT pupils, and allocated places for pupils at special schools. Children who have moved to being electively home educated (EHE) are factored into the in-year leavers figures.</p> <p>Governors asked if the in-year admission numbers for 2025-26 were currently low due to it being still early in the Autumn term? The Head Teacher confirmed that was correct. Governors asked about the success of marketing of The Rydal Academy? The Head Teacher confirmed there had been a lot of work undertaken regarding marketing the school and he would know more by the next Local Governing Body meeting regarding pupil number predictions for the next academic year.</p> <p>Governors asked if Ofsted when reviewing attainments for the Academy, would also review the high level of progress in closing the attainment gap at the school? The Head Teacher advised that at present he did not know if context would be applied to the framework criteria to form part of an Ofsted inspection judgment.</p> <p>Governors noted the diverse community of pupils at Rydal and enquired if there had been any increases in racist incidents/behaviours. The Head Teacher confirmed there had been no increase.</p>	

	<p>Governors noted the Rydal Academy Risk Register which had been reviewed and updated by the Head Teacher and Head of Operations and was now brought back for Governors' consideration. <i>Governors requested that the addition of a key to the Risk Register would help in understanding the colour coding on the register. Governors also requested that additional wording be added to risk number A06 in the effects column to reputational damage so that it reads 'reputational damage as a result of a critical incident.'</i></p> <p>Governors RESOLVED to approve The Rydal Academy Risk Register subject to the above amendments.</p>	Head Teacher
14.	<p><u>PE and Sports Funding Strategy 25-26</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher reported upon and the Local Governing Body noted the PE and Sports Funding Strategy for 2025-26. The strategy set out how PE and sports premium funding would be used in the 2025-26 academic year.</p>	
15.	<p><u>PE and Sports Funding Strategy 24-25</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher reported upon the PE and Sports Funding Strategy for 2024-25. The strategy 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. The information had been duly submitted to the DfE (Department for Education) and signed by the Chair.</p>	
16.	<p><u>Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 25-26</u></p> <p>Governors considered and noted the Pupil Premium Strategy Statement for 2025-26 for the Rydal Academy. The Pupil Premium Strategy Statement would be forwarded to Directors for approval by the Standards Committee.</p>	Governance & Policy Officer
17.	<p><u>Music Development Plan 2025-26</u></p> <p>Governors noted the music development plan for The Rydal Academy for 2025-26. A copy of the plan would be placed on the Academy's website.</p>	
18.	<p><u>Chief Executive's Officer's 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>	

<p>19.</p>	<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>The Rydal Academy Policies Autumn Term 2025:</p> <p>i. The Rydal Academy Policies Autumn Term Local Governing Body to review</p> <p>The following policies were reviewed by the Local Governing Body:</p> <p>Behaviour and Self-Regulation Policy, Anti Bullying Policy (Schools), Attendance Policy, Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy, SEND Information Report 2025-26, SEND Local Offer 25/26 and Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy 2025/26</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 The Rydal Academy Local Governing Body</p> <p>After careful consideration Governors RESOLVED to approve the Nursery Admissions Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Personal, Social Health and Relationships Education (PSHRE).</p>	<p>Governance & Policy Officer</p>
<p>20.</p>	<p><u>Governor Link Responsibilities Paper</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher provided a report reviewing the current link governor responsibilities and arrangements with recommendations to update for 2025-26 in line with the new quality improvement and assurance cycle.</p> <p>After careful consideration, Governors RESOLVED to approve the following new link Governor specific responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding • Inclusion • Curriculum & Teaching (including ECT / ITT) • Achievement (including LAC/PLAC and Disadvantaged) • Attendance & Behaviour, Personal Development & Well-Being (including careers) • Early Years • Leadership & Governance <p>The Governance & Policy Officer would send out a form to ascertain Governor's preferences in taking up the above roles.</p> <p>Governor monitoring reports from J Thurland for LAC (looked after children) & PLAC (previously looked after children) and SEND (special educational need and disabilities) including SEMH (social, emotional and mental health needs) were considered and noted by the Local Governing Body.</p>	<p>Governance & Policy Officer</p>

	<u>Part C: Standing Items</u>	
21.	<p><u>Trust Scheme of Delegation</u></p> <p>The current Board approved Scheme of Delegation was noted by the Local Governing Body.</p>	
22.	<p><u>Feedback from the Governance Development Event</u></p> <p>Governors agreed that the Governance Development Event held on the 11th October 2025 had been a valued and informative event. It was good to have the perspective of other Governors from the schools and College within the Partnership.</p>	
	<u>Part D: Concluding Items</u>	
23.	<p><u>Any Other Business:</u></p> <p>Parent/Carer Questionnaire (uniform) –</p> <p>The Head Teacher advised that the recent parents' questionnaires had been very positive and that he would share via email to the Governors the results.</p> <p>Parents/Carers had been asked in the questionnaire for their preference regarding the school uniform and whether to move towards an active uniform. The majority of parents supported the active uniform option or did not have a preference. The Head Teacher therefore sought Governors' approval to from September 2026 the school moving to an active uniform only. The benefits of this would include helping more children to be appropriately dressed for PE, simplify the current system, and making the uniform more affordable and comfortable for the pupils.</p> <p>Governors RESOLVED to approve the adoption of active uniform from September 2026.</p>	<p>Head Teacher</p> <p>Head Teacher</p>
24.	<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.</p>	
25.	<p><u>Next Meeting 2025/26 Academic Year</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 March 2026 at 1.00 pm, The Rydal Academy • 15 June 2026 at 1.00 pm, The Rydal Academy 	
	The meeting concluded at 3.00 pm	

Action Log		
1.	Appointment of Chair	Governance & Policy Officer
2.	Appointment of Vice Chair	Governance & Policy Officer
10.	Signed minutes – Minutes of the 16 th June 2025	Governance & Policy Officer & Chair
13.	Risk Register: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addition of a key explaining the colour coding • Update of wording at Risk Number A06 	Head Teacher
19.	Policies forward to the Standards Committee for approval following LGB review.	Governance & Policy Officer
20.	Form to be forwarded to Governors to ascertain their preferences for new Governor link responsibilities.	Governance & Policy Officer
23.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of parent/carer questionnaire to be shared via email to Governors. • Active Uniform to be adopted from September 2026. 	Head Teacher

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

on: 16.3.26 date

Signed by: (Chair)

Printed name: J THURLAND