

THE GOVERNING BOARD OF SOUTHGATE SCHOOL

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Board held at 5.30 pm at the school on Wednesday 3 December 2025.

PRESENT

Mr R Baines (Chair), Ms R Cranmer (Head Teacher), Mr M Cleve, Mrs L Drye, Mr M Holland (Vice-Chair), Ms L Jackson (Associate Member), Mrs W May, Mrs J Wittrick.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs S Dunn (Minute Clerk)
Ms K Emptage (Deputy Head Teacher)
Ms J Hallas (School Business Manager)

The meeting started at 5.40 pm

	Item	Minutes	Action
24.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, CONSENT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	Apologies for absence had been received from Mr C McCombe, Ms A Morris and Mrs S Norman, all with consent. There were no declarations of interest.	
25.	NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS TO BE BROUGHT UP UNDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS	There were no items notified to be raised under Any Other Business.	
26.	REPRESENTATION	Governors noted the two vacancies for Co-opted Governors. The Chair reported that there was a plan in place to fill these.	
27.	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2025	RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the following amendments:	

	Item	Minutes	Action
		<p><u>Minute 6 (c), 7 and 11</u> The correct spelling of Mr M Cleve's name.</p> <p><u>Minute 6 (c)</u> The Head Teacher's Performance Management Panel would comprise of the Vice-Chair and Ms Morris.</p>	
28.	MATTERS ARISING	<p>(a) <u>Declarations of Business Interest (Minute 2 (b) refers)</u></p> <p>The Head Teacher had issued declarations to Governors and seven had been returned.</p> <p>Action: Remaining Governors to complete and submit their declarations by the end of the Autumn term.</p> <p>(b) <u>Committee Membership (Minute 6 (a) refers)</u></p> <p>The meetings schedule had been amended and reissued to Governors.</p> <p>(c) <u>To Appoint Governors with Specific Responsibilities (Minute 7 refers)</u></p> <p>The dates for the wellbeing forums had been provided to Governors.</p> <p>The Deputy Head had been unable to provide curriculum visit dates due the redrafting of the QA programme. Governors needed to approved the QA document first.</p> <p>(d) <u>Standards and Effectiveness – 15 October (Minute 11 (a) refers)</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been drafted and shared with Governors.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 15 October 2025 be noted.</p> <p>(e) <u>Pay Committee – 15 October 2025 (Minute 11 (b) refers)</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been drafted and required approval by the Committee.</p> <p>Action: Approve the minutes of the Pay Committee meeting 15 October 2025</p>	<p>Governors</p> <p>Mr Holland & Ms Morris</p>

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		<p>(f) <u>Finance and Resources Committee – 15 October 2025 (Minute 11 (c) refers)</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been drafted and shared with Governors.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 15 October 2025 be noted.</p> <p>The quiet rooms' quotes had been shared with Governors.</p> <p>(g) <u>Governing Board Development: Actions and Priorities 2025-26 (Minute 15 refers)</u></p> <p>This item would be discussed later in the meeting (Minute 33 refers).</p> <p>(h) <u>External (Minute 12 (e) refers)</u></p> <p>Q. How did the school get on in the My Best School Trip competition? A. The school got to the final but was not chosen as winner. A finalist's certificate has been put up in school.</p> <p>(i) <u>Governor DBS Requirements (Minute 19 refers)</u></p> <p>Kirklees Governor Clerking Service had provided information to the school about keeping records of Governors' DBS checks.</p> <p>Some Governors reported issues with accessing SharePoint and the two-factor authentication.</p> <p>Action: Governors SharePoint issues to be raised with the school's IT team.</p>	<p>Ms Hallas</p>
29.	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING	<p>The Governors agreed that this item would be discussed ahead of the item on Reports from Committees.</p> <p>A report had been produced and had been shared with Governors. Ms Hallas presented key items from the report which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reconciliation at the end of period 7 had been completed 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school was within budget in all areas except supplies and services where agency costs had been incurred. The school would receive some income from absence insurance to cover this - The school had remained within total budget up to period 7 and forecasted that this would be the position at year end - The insurer was taking approx. three months to settle absence claims; however no claims had been declined <p>Q. Does the delay cause a problem?</p> <p>A. No, claims are monitored for settlement and at year end outstanding claims will be included in the close down procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The reduction of on using taxis and staff cars was working well and expenditure had been significantly reduced without impact on pupils or provision. - Spending on agency staff had been offset by insurance monies, use of support staff and wellbeing/HR processes - There had been some unplanned expenditure on IT to replace faulty equipment and purchase software - Spending on the personalised curriculum and staff training were in line with expectations <p>Q. Given the pupil profile, do staff have to undertake additional medical training?</p> <p>A. Yes, training in several different areas is needed, for example peg feeding.</p> <p><i>Mrs Drye joined the meeting at this point</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school had given the go ahead to the contractors for the sensory garden and forest school works - There had been seven responses from parents regarding Friends of Southgate (FOS) and five parents were interested in joining the committee. A coffee morning with the parents and Parentkind would be set up to move things forward. Mrs Wittrick offered her support with fundraising and FOS and Mr Baines said he would also attend the coffee morning to show Governor support <p>Action: School to inform Mrs Wittrick and Mr Baines of the dates for the coffee morning, as both indicated that they would attend</p>	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kirklees Council had been challenged regarding the bandings of some pupils who had been at the school a while. The changes would hopefully take effect in the Spring term and this will be closely monitored <p>Q. How have these discussions been going?</p> <p>A. The council has been receptive and the school has been able to provide evidence of a child's needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Out of area funding had been chased up and all monies were being received - Setting a budget for 2026-2027 would be a challenge due to the announcement in the Autumn Budget and the status of the Kirklees Special Schools Review. Kirklees Council had recognised that a transitional phase could be required. Loss of finance personnel with SEND experience at the council was also a concern - Approx 56% of staff were on the Upper Pay Scale (UPS) and seven more were expected to reach UPS within two years. Whilst this showed good staff retention, the school acknowledged that staffing costs would be increasing and would be looking at a whole school approach to make best use of staff experience <p>Q. If the budget is underspent at year end will the council claw this back?</p> <p>A. The school is allowed to keep 10%; the budget is monitored and any underspend would be within the 10% limit. Increasing staffing costs will have an impact on the year end outcome.</p> <p>Q. Is there a high level of staff absence at the moment?</p> <p>A. It feels like there is a high level now, especially in the last few weeks. Impact is felt differently depending on which staff are off and the areas where they work.</p> <p>The Governors thanked Ms Hallas for her report.</p> <p><i>Ms Hallas left the meeting at this point.</i></p>	
30.	REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES	<p>(a) <u>Standards and Effectiveness Committee – 3 December 2025</u></p> <p>Action: Minutes of the meeting would be prepared and shared with Governors.</p> <p>Mr Holland presented a summary of the key points discussed at the meeting, which included:</p>	Ms Hallas

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School Development Plan (SDP) - Governors' Action Plan - The Beach Ball perspective - Governor recruitment and selection - GDPR Policy - Absconding Policy, following a recent incident <p>(b) <u>Finance and Resources Committee – 3 December 2025</u></p> <p>Action: Minutes of the meeting would be prepared and shared with Governors.</p> <p>The key points of the meeting had been presented to Governors under Financial Monitoring and Management (Minute 29 refers).</p> <p>(c) <u>Head Teacher's Performance Management Panel – 3 November 2025</u></p> <p>The Vice-Chair reported that the meeting had gone well and a high level of achievement had been demonstrated. Targets for next year had been set. The Vice-Chair reported that the support given by the external advisor, Ms J Nellis, had been invaluable.</p>	Ms Hallas
31.	HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT / DATA REPORT AND GOVERNORS' QUESTIONS	<p>The Head Teacher had provided a written report to Governors ahead of the meeting and presented key points to Governors:</p> <p>(a) <u>Pupils</u></p> <p>There were 181 pupils on roll. The three places had been filled and transitions were being planned with a view to starting in school in February 2026. The school acknowledged the impact of this on the budget. Places for September 2026 were being worked on. The next setting for some of the Year 11 cohort had already been agreed, which is positive in comparison to previous years.</p> <p>Q. Does the tribunal process apply to post-16 provision? A. Yes.</p> <p>Q. Has the workload been affected by the number of consults being received? A. Yes, there have been 48 consults received. Feedback on the consults has been requested as it affects how other consults are dealt with. Four tribunals are also underway.</p>	

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	<p>(b) <u>Ensuring a High Quality of Education at Southgate School Policy</u> A draft policy had been shared with Governors. The policy had been updated; however the principles remained the same. Governors were asked to review the draft and provide feedback to the school in time to ratify the policy at the next meeting.</p> <p>Action: Review the draft policy and provide feedback to the school.</p> <p>The QA process was moving towards a more in-depth review and the wider leadership team would be more involved.</p> <p>(c) <u>Attendance</u> Attendance levels were good compared to Kirklees, regional and national comparators. 128 pupils had > 95% attendance. There was a group of pupils who were considered persistently absent; however, the school understood the reasons for the absence, for example reduced timetable, medical needs. There were also some absences due to unauthorised holidays, which the school closely monitor and challenge when necessary. For all absences the school would take appropriate supportive measures.</p> <p>Q. Does the attendance data include the satellite school? A. Yes.</p> <p>(d) <u>Behaviour and Discrimination</u> Governors noted that in most weeks there had been no bullying incidents and there had been nine incidents of discrimination. The incidents were explained in the report. Incidents could often be due to learned behaviour coming out as a reaction to a crisis. Personal and situational interventions were used. Parents were informed and asked to support the school.</p> <p>The meeting discussed a recent incident in which a pupil had absconded. Governors commented that the incident had been handled well from a health and safety perspective and that the investigation had been open and honest. The meeting discussed a concern about how to effectively report the incident to the police call centre to get an urgent response from them. The Absconding Policy would be reviewed to look at timescales.</p>	<p>Governors</p>

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		<p>Q. Has there been a complaint made? A. The Deputy Head Teacher had carried out an investigation and shared the outcome with the family. The parents are involved in reviewing the PMP. There is no formal complaint.</p> <p>Q. Can Governors see a copy of the investigation report? A. Yes.</p> <p>Q. Are the staff OK? A. Yes, however they were very upset when the incident happened.</p> <p>The Governors thanked the Head Teacher for her report.</p>	
32.	SAFEGUARDING	<p>The Deputy Head Teacher presented information to Governors which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five strategy meetings had been held - 25 Duty and Advice calls had been made - Five Encompass calls had been received - There were eight Looked After Children and 10 post Looked After - There was one New to Care case <p>Governors were informed about one case which had been going for a long time and had been intensive and challenging for staff.</p> <p>The annual safeguarding update had been held on 22 October 2025 and knowledge checks had been issued to staff. The Governors' Safeguarding meeting would take place on 18 December 2025.</p>	
33.	GOVERNING BOARD ACTION PLAN	<p>Governors discussed progress made on the action plan. The plan was updated at the meeting and would be shared with Governors.</p> <p>Action: Share updated Governor Action Plan with Governors.</p> <p>Q. Would it be better to collect views from the Pupil Voice using people the children are familiar with? A. It depends on the child. Some are happy to speak to people they do not know. The school can plan for Governors to speak to pupils where required. It is about ensuring that discussions are relevant, accessible and inclusive.</p>	Head Teacher

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		<p>Governors discussed various options for obtaining views from parents, carers and pupils.</p> <p>Governors noted the following events in school in the lead up to Christmas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christmas performances - Santa visit - Christmas lunch <p>Governors were reminded about the Makaton Advent Calendar, which had very positive feedback from those who had seen it.</p> <p><i>Mrs Wittrick left the meeting at this point</i></p>	
34.	POLICIES FOR REVIEW/APPROVAL	<p>RESOLVED: That Governors approve the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intimate Care Policy 2025-2026 - Off Site Visits and Risk Assessment Policy 2025-26 - Positive Touch Policy 2025-2026 - School Attendance Policy 2025-26 <p>Q. Where do staff record if they need to take medication whilst in school? A. This would be recorded in their personal risk assessment.</p> <p>Q. Can the Off Site Visits and Risk Assessment Policy include reference to Governors? A. The DBS requirements would need to be checked before the policy can be amended. Governors are considered as volunteers.</p> <p>Action: The draft policy “Ensuring a High Quality of Education at Southgate School” would be reviewed by Governors and any feedback would be provided to the school by mid-January 2026 (Minute 31 (b) refers).</p>	
35.	GOVERNOR TRAINING & GOVERNOR VISITS	<p>The Chair had been in regular contact with the Head Teacher by phone.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair had visited the school to discuss the Governor visits proposals.</p> <p>Mr Cleve, Mrs May and Mrs Wittrick had attended the school disco.</p>	

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36.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	There were no items raised under Any Other Business.	
37.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS AND POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS	<p>RESOLVED: That future Governors' meetings be held at the school at 5.30 pm on:</p> <p>Wednesday 4 February 2026 Wednesday 25 March 2026 Wednesday 20 May 2026 Wednesday 1 July 2026</p> <p>The Chair gave his best wishes to those present for Christmas and the New Year. He acknowledged the challenges facing the school and on behalf of the Governing Board gave his appreciation to the staff for dealing with them.</p>	
38.	AGENDA, MINUTES AND RELATED PAPERS – SCHOOL COPY	<p>RESOLVED: That no part of these minutes, agenda or related papers be excluded from the copy to be made available at the school, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.</p>	

Meeting closed at 8:20 pm.