



Minutes of the meeting of the Howden School
Local Governing Board
Thursday 11 December 2025 at 5.30pm



GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mrs S Warnes (Chair, SW), Mr E Allison (EA), Mrs A Bahadur (AB), Mrs T Comstive (CT), Mr R Gardiner (RG), Mrs M Millar (MM), Mr J Nixon (Headteacher, JN), Mrs S Symington (SS)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Mr M Brown (Executive Director of Education, MB), Mrs J Doyle (Deputy Headteacher, JD), Miss R Southorn, DSL, RS), Mrs G Stafford (Governance Professional, GS), Mrs L Tester (Deputy Headteacher, LT).

Throughout these minutes a question is indicated by Q followed by the initials of the questioner and a comment is marked by C.

15 WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the second meeting of the academic year and announced that L Tester had been appointed Headteacher today after a two-day selection process. On behalf of the Board, Lisa was congratulated and J Nixon was thanked for the transformation he had made to Howden School. Both were wished the best in their next posts. JN thanked the Board and especially the Chair for her support.

16 APOLOGIES

C Millward

Resolved: Consent was given to the absence of the above governor.

17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made specific to this meeting.

18 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (18 September 2025)

Resolved: The minutes from the last meeting were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, SW.

19 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

19.1 People Services to produce a termly summary of staff short term absence, long term absence and maternity - this data will be introduced on PowerBI in the new year

19.2 Suspensions per 100 students for SEN and PP to be included in future behaviour reports – to be incorporated in the governor PowerBI behaviour report

- 19.3 SLT to consider the school appetite for a PTA or fundraising group and if the decision is made to go ahead, to go out to parents seeking interest** – this will not be going ahead
- 19.4 Safeguarding for governance: refresher 25/26 and suspensions and exclusions modules to be completed in the autumn term** – all governors had completed the safeguarding refresher. Two have yet to complete the Suspensions and Exclusions module
- 19.5 M Millar and C Millward to be given PowerBI access** - complete
- 19.6 Clerk to discuss the social media content of the Governors' Code of Conduct with the Director of Governance** – code has been amended and accepted by the Board
- 19.7 All governors to carry out an autumn term Link visit and complete the Link form (templates found on GovernorHub)** – 5 link visits have been completed

20 HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

- September 2026 intake is likely to be close to PAN
- Headteacher appointed today – 16 applications, 6 shortlisted, 2 to the final day
- Director of Maths appointed, along with a Reflections Manager and Bridge Manager
- School went into a lockdown on 14 November. Was a false alarm but lots learnt from this and students behaved impeccably
- New style SEF in place

JN: The appointment of Lisa as Headteacher is an incredible appointment. That means we now need to appoint a Deputy Head. The Trust are giving us support in the interim; Amanada Welsh will teach, there will be SENDCO support at least one day a week and supply will be approved to cover vacant posts.

Q: (SW) Is there no plan yet for replacing the SENDCO?

MB: We are looking at ways that we can cover this. K Middleton will support with the admin side of SEN.

Q: (SW) Will the daily SEN offer look any different?

JN: Operationally no. We have a clear list of what we need to do and what we need to provide. The Bridge will be fully operational from January, and we have looked at all the EHCPs and logged when the annual reviews should take place on Arbor. Knowing when all the reviews must take place enables us to forward plan.

C: (SW) It is pleasing that we are close to PAN for the new Year 7 students.

JN: Yes, we have 132 first choice and 34 second choice.

Q: (EA) The comms to parents regarding the lockdown read very well. What have you learned about mobile phone usage during the lockdown?

JN: Basically, students should not have been on their mobiles; they were told not to, but they did. However, the students' behaviour was exemplary during this time.

JD: At a time of heightened anxiety such as a lockdown children reach out to their parents. It was unfortunate that a small minority spread misinformation, so the priority is about education of the facts. We will share a briefing about the learnings from the lockdown that we have gathered from the Behaviour and Attitudes Senate, staff feedback and student voice.

EA: It is good that the learnings have been positive. We know there are some areas where the alarm cannot be heard as clearly. It is also unclear how different the alarms are between fire and lockdown.

JN: We are looking to coordinate the alarms across the Trust as staff move between sites and some students do too. I would also like there to be a member of shared services with an emergency mobile so we be in contact in situations like this.

LT: It has been positive as it is helped us identify the issues in a real situation. We now have a clear action plan in place to improve the site. Most learnings have been around student management, but we have also asked for a quote for access pads on the doors. We have also reviewed who has access to live CCTV footage.

RS: I shared the experience at a recent DSL meeting, and we plan to practise this again during unstructured time. Following the practise I will cascade the good practise.

Q: (EA) Has there been any progress towards improving security at the school gates?

LT: No, although this may tie in with the car park improvement bid.

SW: Well done to all during the lockdown and for the important reflections after the event.

21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Year 11 students completed a round of mocks in October, and the results were as follows:

- Basics 4+ 59% and Basics 5+ 33%
- Attainment 8 44
- Science achieved strong pass rates
- English and maths are still a concern; however predictions are strong
- Subjects of concern are Design and Technology and Food
- The disadvantaged and SEND gaps are closing
- Raising Attainment and Progress meetings (RAP) focus on students achieving at least a grade 5 in English and maths
- Parents' Evening took place 4 December where students received their mock exam grades

LT: This year we completed a full suite of mocks. All were marked standardised and moderated. Overall outcomes were positive, and this year's cohort is strong. We held our raising attainment conference last week and parents' evening the same week. I am looking further into the attainment 8 figure as this appears a bit low when predictions are strong.

Q: (SW) Is the entry for Combined Science correct at 248?

LT: Yes, as 8 are studying separate sciences.

C: (SW) Design and Technology mock results are low.

LT: Yes, there has been a huge amount of instability in the department; there has been a resignation, we are interviewing next week so hopefully the department will be settled from February half term.

Q: (SW) Are you confident with the department leads' accuracy of predictions?

LT: Yes, there will be a further round of mocks followed by more QA by the Trust Directors of English and maths and cross moderation.

SW: It is always good to see how other year groups are progressing, so we would like to see other data when it is available.

LT: The first data capture for Year 10 is in May but as that is so far away, we are doing a temperature check of where we are so we will have data to share with you. English, maths, geography, history and science are all following the same curriculum across all Trust secondaries. We are also aligning the key stage 3 curriculum across the Trust too.

ACTION: Year 10 performance data to be shared with the Board when available

22 PUPIL PREMIUM STRATEGY

The strategy is a 3-year strategy and will be reviewed in the spring term 2026. This will then be brought to governors in the March meeting.

Resolved: Governors were content to approve the existing strategy until a new strategy is ready for review

23 SEF and School Development Plan

The SEF is a new style document that is being trialled. The school leaders graded the school as:

Safeguarding – Met

Inclusion – Not achieved

Curriculum and Teaching – Expected

Achievement – Expected

Attendance and Behaviour – Expected

Personal Development and Well – Being – Expected

Leadership and Governance – Expected

Q: (EA) Why has Inclusion been graded NA (not achieved)?

JN: There are currently too many gaps, and we are not matching the criteria of expected. There is lots of work to be done on inclusion.

LT: This section includes anyone facing barriers, disadvantaged SEND and those open to social care, so it is very fluid.

MB: The expectations of the new framework are much higher than previously and the feedback from those that have been through it suggest it is very intense.

C: (MM) I find the colour coding very confusing will the SEF always look like this?

JN: We're trying it, but it does need more detail.

SDP

JN: We have kept the school development plan succinct, with no major changes as we have been short staffed in the SLT group to work on this.

C: (AB) As Careers Link, I met with C Scott and careers must be in the SDP.

JN Yes, we do need to put it in.

SW: I really like the three-year plan with the different step changes. Do you hope to get more staff involved with this plan?

LT: Yes, we will involve middle leaders, and they will then feed down to their own department. As we haven't had chance to work on this lots of priorities will roll over.

24 ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR REPORT

24.1 Attendance

Real time PowerBI attendance and behaviour data is now available to governors.

- Today's attendance is 93.8% - girls 93.2%, boys 94.4%. Attendance is above national average
- SEN 91.8%
- Disadvantaged 91.3%
- Year 9 is below other year groups at 92.7%
- Data from 5 September to 30 November - attendance for all students ever on roll this academic year was 94.3%

JD: The lockdown affected attendance as lots of children were picked up by parents, affecting attendance by 0.2%. Also, there has been a sickness bug going round students and staff. We launched the 20 days of Christmas with rewards for full attendance but then the sickness bug hit and lots of good attendees were affected. We are launching the 12 days of Christmas soon to give more people the opportunity to achieve 100%. We want to reward them.

Q: (MM) Why is Year 9 attendance down?

JD: This has been affected by the lockdown and the implication of term time holidays. The cost of living is forcing families to go away when its cheaper.

24.2 Behaviour

- Behaviour has improved over the last 3 years with suspensions per term reduced year on year
- There have been 69 suspensions to date this academic year – 25 by boys, 44 girls
- 48 by disadvantaged
- 31 suspensions by students in Year 10
- There has been one permanent exclusion to date

Suspension data

Year	No. of Suspensions	No. of Days	No. of Students
7	3	3	2
8	4	7	1
9	19	31	5 (4 have had 18 suspensions)
10	30	40.5	16 (7 have >1)
11	13	16	4 (3 have >1)

Q: (SW) Is work going on with the repeat offenders?

JD: Yes, we have alternative provision, we work with all repeat offenders and have behaviour plans.

Q: (SW) Is there a correlation between behaviours and inclusion not yet being right?

JD: Yes. Lots of behaviours are seen by the younger students and we need to develop different pathways for some.

Q: (MM) Why was the recent permanent exclusion hearing rescinded?

JD: It was a very complex case. The virtual schools have sourced an alternative provision for this child. The student will remain on our roll but will not come back into the school.

Q: (SW) How long will they stay on our roll?

JD: Until they move out of the area.

C: (MM) During my Behaviour and Attendance Link visit I attended the senate meeting, and we spoke about the lockdown and how behaviour data is quality assured. JD is aware of all the hot spots for behaviour.

25 SAFEGUARDING REPORT (data 4.9.25 – 30.10.25)

- The main area of need is mental health with the second focus area being conflicting behaviours
- 13 families are open to Early Help with one new referral
- 4 Children in Need
- 4 children under Child Protection
- 10 Looked After Children
- 8 Operation Encompass notifications
- 16 Conflicting behaviour logs – these are a small minority and are not indicative of a wider pattern.
- Reduction in inappropriate sexual behaviour logs from 30 last term to 7 this term
- The number of CPOMs logs has increased from the equivalent time last year as staff are more alert to record and there are more concerns on Year 7
- Vaping is a concern, so the safeguarding curriculum has been modified to address this
- CPOMS Insights is being used by the DSL – will share with governors at a later date

JD: DSLs across the Trust seek advice from RS, how she drives safeguarding is outstanding.

JN: Agreed – RS is doing a phenomenal job.

C: (SS) During our Safeguarding Link visit we saw the data that is mentioned throughout this report. We were shown staff central record checks and staff training records, safeguarding at this school is secure.

C: (TC) We saw how passionate, thorough and inciteful RS is and able to back up any decision with supporting evidence. We were extremely impressed.

Q: (SW) There are five bullying concerns on Smoothwall alerts and one bullying case being monitored. Can you provide further detail?

RS: The one that was monitored has been categorised as bullying as there was a repeated chronology of behaviour. The Smoothwall alerts were not bullying; they were one off incidents. We have written a bullying proforma to understand what is and what is not bullying. JD took this to the Behaviour and Attendance Trust meeting.

Q: (SW) Do staff get to be made aware of what is happening with these initiatives?

RS: Yes, absolutely.

Q: (MM) I am surprised to see a concern around vaping – I thought this had been resolved with the new style toilet areas?

RS: Vaping has reduced dramatically but there was an issue in the Key Stage 4 toilets as they are the old model. These are now locked.

26 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

- 178 formal complaints were received across the whole Trust last year (2023/24 212)
- 10 were from Howden parents, this is just 1.5 complaints per 100 students
- No Howden complaints have escalated beyond stage one
- The reasons for the 10 complaints were spread across a range of categories, indicating no cause for alarm in a particular category

Governors felt assured that complaints are dealt with appropriately and the more conversations are had with parents the more issues will be dealt with informally.

27 SEND REPORT

- 13% of students (90) are SEN Support (national is 13.4%)
- 4.4% of students (30) have an EHCP (national is 3.1%)
- Most support is needed in Year 7 with 23 SEN Support and 9 EHCP students
- Annual review dates are logged on Arbor allowing forward planning
- LS will step down from her SENDCO role 31/12/2025

Q: (SW) Can you cope with the high amount of support needed in Year 7?

JN: Yes.

Q: (SW) At the Chairs' meeting last night we discussed how do we moderate between schools the threshold of when students are judged to be SEN support. I will feedback following the Trust SEN lead presenting at the next meeting.

JN: That is a huge question – and also what criteria are met for students to be taken off the register. We need to ensure students are on there for the right reason.

28 GOVERNANCE UPDATE

Training

- All governors had completed the Safeguarding for Governance: Refresher module.
- 2 governors (TC and CM) to complete the Exclusions and Suspensions module

Membership

Following LOD's resignation from the Board the Clerk will go out for interest in the Parent Governor vacancy in the new year.

Link Visits

The following visits had been completed:

Attendance and Behaviours – MM – 18/11/2025

Careers – AB – 13/11/2025

Community – LOD – 1/10/2025

Health and Safety – EA – 23/10/2025

Safeguarding – TC and SS - 13/11/2025

SW is booked for a SEND Link visit 15/12/2025.

ACTION: T Comstive and C Millward to complete the suspensions and exclusions training module

29 NEXT MEETING DATE

Thursday 5 February 2026 5.30pm, pre-meet at 4.45pm.

30 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

31 AGREED ACTION POINTS

31.1 ACTION: People Services to produce a termly summary of staff short term absence, long term absence and maternity (minute 19.1)

31.2 ACTION: Suspensions per 100 students for SEN and PP to be included in future behaviour reports – to be incorporated in the governor PowerBI behaviour report (minute 19.2)

31.3 ACTION: Year 10 performance data to be shared with the Board when available (minute 21)

31.4 ACTION: T Comstive and C Millward to complete the suspensions and exclusions training module (minute 28)

Part A closed at 7.37pm.

