

Approved Minutes of the meeting of the Strathmore School Local Governing Board, held on 25 September 2023 at 5.00pm at Sir Richard Reynolds School Campus

Members of the Local Governing Board (LGB) in attendance: Rebecca Branch, Jane Curzon (Chair), Marc Dodi, Laura Dyer, Sarah Hurtado (Headteacher), Alex Lee, Mitch Pender and Amy Upton.

Members of the Local Governing Board (LGB) absent: Dev Desai

Clerk in attendance : Julie Adams

Also in attendance: Lauren Crew (Deputy Head), Adriana Martyr (Assistant Head - Secondary) and Laura Wrigglesworth (Assistant Head- Primary)

1. Welcome, apologies, declarations of interest and items from the Clerk.

1A. The Governing Board **noted** apologies had been received from Dev Desai. The Governing Board **agreed** to consent to his absence.

The Governing Board **noted that** Tom McFall had left the Governing Board in August as he had moved location, and that Aminta Townshend had been asked to join the Governing Board of Clarendon School to support governance there.

The Governing Board **noted** their thanks to Tom and Aminta and noted that recruitment was in progress to fill the three vacancies (2 co-opted and 1 parent governor). The Governance Professional advised that governance recruitment was proving difficult across the Trust and locally and nationally.

ACTION: The Governing Board requested that to ensure recruitment of new governors is informed by an understanding of the skills gaps, a review of the skills audit conducted in June should be undertaken done by the Chair of the Governing Board in conjunction with the Governance Professional.

ACTION: The Governance Professional will provide both induction and recruitment packs to the Chair of the Governing Board, with a view to having the vacancies filled by the November LGB meeting.

1B. The Chair of the Governing Board reminded governors that all members of the LGB must abide by the Auriga Academy Trust Declarations of Interest Policy and should also **declare** if they have an interest in any matter that comes before the LGB.

ACTION: All governors must review and confirm completion of the Declarations of Interest and Confirmations on GovernorHub by the end of October 2023.


JC

2. Appointment of Vice Chair and Lead Governors

2A. The Governing Body **noted** that Rebecca Branch and Marc Dodi had agreed to be nominated for the role of Co-vice Chairs for the academic year 2023-24. The Governing Board **approved** the nominations for recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

2B. The Governing Board **appointed** Rebecca Branch and Jane Curzon of to the roles the Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Link Governors.

The Governing Board **noted** that a governor on the LGB has been approached for the role of Finance Link Governor as is considering the role. The role will also be offered to the existing members and any new members that onboard before the November LGB.

ACTION: Finance Link Governor to be appointed before the November LGB

3. Minutes of the previous Governing Board meeting

3A. The Governing Board **noted** the draft minutes of the meetings held on 20 April 2023 and 20 June 2023 were not available. The Governing Board **agreed** that this was not a situation which could be allowed to continue as it had hampered the preparation of other papers.

The Governing Board **noted** the new process for production of actions and minutes as detailed in the Operational Procedures -action items circulated two school days following the meeting; draft minutes within 5 school days and a further 5 days for the Chair to approve the draft minutes for wider circulation.

ACTION: The Governance Professional committed to having the minutes of 20 April 2023 and 20 June 2023 prepared by 9 October 2023. The Governing Board **agreed** that they would be circulated and approved via email.

3B. The Governing Board noted the report from the former Chair of the Governing Board which had been shared with the Board of Trustees following the June LGB meeting.

3C. The Chair of the Governing Board advised governors that the former Chair had drafted a report but that this had not been circulated. There was no set Trust template.

ACTION: The Governance Professional **will email** a copy of the Clarendon report to the Chair of the Governing Board, who would liaise with the former Chair to create a Strathmore Report. This would be circulated by email and placed on the school website.

3D. The Chair of the Governing Board **shared** printed copies of the 2022-23 Governance Development Plan and governors reviewed the outstanding actions.

The Headteacher **advised** that she would like specific governor involvement in the areas of attendance, leadership development and the Preparation for Adulthood areas of the SDP and these linked with Item 6G on the Headteacher's report.

Governors **expressed their concern** that moving from monitoring EHCP areas in link roles to monitoring SDP areas may result in increased workload, loss of historic awareness and as they had reduced numbers, this may overload governors.

Governors **noted** that there were some synergies with EHCP areas and some parts of the SDP priorities citing Literacy, Phonics, Maths and SEMH as examples. Governors **commented** that the Headteachers reports have become more detailed and give a better overview of data, which provides a better route to hold the Headteacher accountable without requiring a visit. Governors **explored** options of managing the workload including deciding the best time to review the impact of some of SDP priorities. For example, it may be useful to review leadership in the summer term if it is still being embedded in Autumn and Spring. The Senior Leadership team requested that visits do not take place in the Spring term as this is a short term and very busy for staff with pupils' annual reviews.

ACTION: All governors **agreed** to undertake two visits per year, one of which could be virtual if the area of focus could accommodate that.

ACTION: The Chair of the Governing Board, working closely with the Headteacher and Co-vice Chairs would **review** the link governor roles and **circulate** Link Governor proposals for comment, to enable the first visits to take place in the second part of the Autumn term.

The Governing Board **discussed** succession planning, training and induction and how this would be a key area for the Local Governing Board with the number of new governors joining the Board. The Governing Board **noted** that the programme for LGB self-review would be similar to 2022-23. Governors **requested** that exit interviews with the three governors who have left should be undertaken. The Governance Professional advised that the Board of Trustees are also looking into the governor's exit processes. Jane Curzon **agreed** to remain the Link Governor for training.

ACTION: The Chair of the Governing Board will review the exit process for governors as there is nothing in place at present. She would also **raise** training at the Chair and Vice-Chair network meetings, with the suggestion of creating clear signposting to essential, desired and enhanced training courses for governors.

The Governing Board **recognised** that one of the areas for their direct action arising out of the responses to the Parents Survey (Item 6H) was the lack of awareness of the role of Governors. The Governing Board **discussed** opportunities to become more visible in the parental community – attendance at events and open mornings and publishing the governing board calendar on the website.

ACTION: The Chair of the Governing Board Co-vice Chairs would re-draft and circulate the Governance Development Plan for 2023-24 to enable progress to be updated in the November LGB meeting.

4. References from the Board of Trustees

The Governing Board **received** and **noted** a report from the Board of Trustees following their Board meeting on 12 September 2023, including the Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference Procedures and Code of Conduct.

The Governance Professional **advised** that the main changes had been to reflect current practice, clarification on the role and engagement of the Finance Link Governor and on terms of reference for Committees. She **confirmed** that the Board of Trustees are reviewing the ethos and vision of the Trust, and this will be updated further as the year progresses.

The Governing Board **agreed** that the implementation of the new Scheme of Delegation (flat structure) had largely worked. They **felt** that the LGB Chairs attendance at Board meetings allows the schools to have a voice, however, **suggested** it would be helpful if Trustees become more proactive and aware of what is happening in individual schools.

5. Link Governor and other Governor Visit Reports

The Governing Board **agreed** that any outstanding link governor reports from 2022-23 would not be required, but that going forward, all governors would undertake visits as agreed in Item 3D.

The Governing Board **noted** that they could also report on training or other events they attend if that would be useful to other governors.

ACTION: The Governing Board **agreed** that when completing visit reports, if subsequent visits were made on the same area, these would be added to the initial report (in a similar way to the SIP reports). This would ensure progress could be evidenced more clearly.

ACTION: The Chair of Governors would review the Strathmore Link Visit pro-forma, to remove the prompts and re-circulate the template to governors.

6. Headteacher report

The Governing Board **received** a report from the Headteacher [[STR-LGB-23-01-06 Headteacher Report-CONF](#)].

6A. Potential risks

The Headteacher reported that an online system for the recording and monitoring of Risks is being implemented across the Trust. Rag-rating of risks would be presented at the November 2023 meeting and every subsequent meeting.

The Governing Board **queried** the use of the word '*well-being*' in relation to Risk 4 on the register. They were unclear if this referred to physical or mental well-being as it was linked to Health and Safety. The Headteacher **confirmed** that she interpreted this as both physical and mental as the application of policies and procedures impacted on the safety of all learners and staff.

The Governing Board **queried** how the risks had been arrived at. The Governance Professional advised that some were broad and across all Trust schools. The Headteacher confirmed that some were specific to the school itself, for example, maintaining the quality of leadership when the Deputy Headteacher is on maternity leave will need to be closely monitored. An advertisement for a maternity leave deputy Headteacher is being drafted and recruitment planned.


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ACTION: The Headteacher will **confirm** the meaning of well-being in the context of Risks with the Chief Executive Officer in her next meeting with him.

6B. General Update

The Headteacher **confirmed** that there had been a positive and intense start to the year. This is largely due to the preparation and planning for the new year by the senior leadership team.

There have been two new Early Career Teachers join the staff.

6C. Pupil Numbers

The Headteacher reported that there are 117 pupils now on roll across all the campuses, including an eighth pupil at the Darell campus. The school is oversubscribed. Over the summer approximately 30 consultations for placements had been received from the LA. Senior Leaders are planning for the 2024-25 intake and for the top two oldest year groups as there is a bottleneck at the Russell Campus.

The Governing Board **queried** how spaces are filled when pupils move to other schools. Senior Leaders explained that any consultations received from the Local Authority are reviewed by all the Headteachers in the Trust and CEO and their professional judgement is used to ensure the correct school is offered to the parents, who at times name a Trust school which would not be suited to the needs of the child.

The Headteacher **explained** that in some instances visits to the pupil's current school are made before an offer is made. Darell campus has one learner on an assessment placement.

The Governing Board **requested** confirmation of the numbers of pupils receiving pupil premium. Senior Leaders reported that this was unlikely to increase from the numbers in the report. The Governing Board **asked** if pupil premium spending could be evidenced for each learner as historically this funding had been used to ensure all pupils had access to Higher Level Teaching Assistants. The Headteacher advised that the Pupil Premium Review and Strategy for the coming year will be presented at the November LGB meeting to allow it to be published on the website before the deadline of 31 December 2023.

ACTION: Senior Leaders explained that anonymised case studies for learners receiving Pupil Premium grant have already been created and will be shared at the November LGB meeting with the PPG report for 2022-23 and Strategy for 2023-24.

6D. Attendance

The Governing Board **congratulated** leaders on the improved attendance figures at the start of term, specifically with the reduction in the numbers of learners not returning from holiday.

The Headteacher **advised** that attendance is a key priority for this academic year. She is working closely with the Chair of the Governing Board to understand the issues with learners who are persistently (less than 90% attendance) and severely absent (less than 50% attendance).

Governors **queried** if the school works with the Educational Welfare Officer to issue fines to families where the children were persistently absent. Senior leaders **explained** that in

many instances issuing a fine would not improve the situation, instead an approach of stern conversations and support is offered. As previously reported the Headteacher **explained** that in some cases the learners benefit from taking holidays in term time due to autism for example. These are assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher to ensure there is not a precedent set. The Headteacher **explained** that the Attendance Policy clearly outlined the expectations for learners' attendance.

Governors **discussed** strengthening the Headteachers stance on this attendance by introducing a Home/School Agreement or Code of Conduct for parents. The Headteacher **agreed** that this was something that she had considered, incorporating treatment of staff and use of social media etc.

Amy Upton **informed** governors that there may be an increase in the lateness of learners to the Darell Campus due to significant roadworks which are planned to last until Christmas near the school.

6E. Behaviour and Safeguarding

The Headteacher **explained** that Lauren Crew had taken over as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the school. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding, demonstrated in the gaining of the 'Leaders in Safeguarding' Award and Leading Parent Partnership Award. The outcomes of Safeguarding Audit from the Local Authority had not been received by any school in the Trust although this had been requested.

The Governing Body **noted** the significant number of children with social care input on roll. Senior Leaders **explained** that under normal circumstances this would demand a large amount of leadership time in liaising social care. Currently, however, there are only 4 out of 10 social care workers across the borough (i.e. 6 vacancies). It is expected that when the borough appoints to those vacancies there will be an influx of case meetings etc. Senior Leaders did confirm that they continued to monitor and support the pupils and families with the support of the Family support worker.

The DSL **reported** that some of the safeguarding files for new students had not yet been received. The Governing Board **questioned** if this was related to the lack of social care co-ordination at the Local Authority. The DSL **advised** that if the learner's previous provision used CPOMS she would be notified, and the file transferred when requested. Provisions which do not use CPOMS need to send the information separately.

The Headteacher **advised** that the processes of reporting low-level concerns have been changed by the LA to ensure that the Local Authority Designated Officer is advised in every case. Previously this had been to the discretion of the Headteacher. There have been two low level concerns reported, which are being investigated.

The Governing Board **asked** who conducted the investigation and if the member of staff under investigation was supported through the process. The Headteacher **confirmed** that the investigation would be done by someone with no prior involvement/knowledge of the case and that staff could be supported by their own representative. This was all detailed in the policy, which was working well.

Senior leaders reported that they were investigating the causes of an imbalance of reporting on CPOMS between campuses.

ACTION: The Headteacher **will report** on the imbalance of reporting on CPOMS between campuses in her next Headteacher Report to the LGB in November 2023.

The Governing Board **asked** if the pupils currently Behaviour Support Plans (BSP - 64% in July 2023) were generic or individualised to each pupil. Senior leaders **confirmed** that these were specific to each pupil and reminded governors that the high staff to learner ratios in the school enable all adults working with learners to understand the triggers and de-escalation strategies which work with that learner. This, combined with the '1,2,3' BSP rating system is expected to reduce instances of poor behaviour over time, and hopefully lead to the removal of the BSP for the learner. .

6F. Quality of Education and Pupil Performance

The Headteacher **confirmed** that 95% of pupils had met or exceeded their targets with 82% of learners meeting all their targets from their annual review. New data will be available and shared with governors in January 2024, although staff continually check and review pupil progress.

6G. Update on School Development Plan and programme for governor monitoring and priorities

The Senior Leadership Team **detailed** the 4 priorities for the coming year and **explained** that these priorities are ambitious and are likely to develop over the next few years. They have given careful consideration to the wording used to describe them.

Priority 1: *All learners aged 14-19 will follow an appropriate and aspirational pathway to prepare them for life after Strathmore.*

This is being researched currently and is expected to be implemented in September 2024 and ensure that an individualised offer is given to all 14-19 learners and will link in with the opening of the new campus.

Priority 2: *As a result of improved staff pedagogical knowledge, all learners of all abilities, age, disabilities will be provided with evidence-based approaches that positively impact their progress and wellbeing.*

A number of initiatives are contained within this tackling inequalities with pupils who have EAL, possibly linked to parental understanding and language skills; developing the approaches to acquiring receptive language skills (Amy Upton is undertaking a SSAT Leadership Fellow project with a focus on the Gestalt Language programme), establishing a Nurture programme; and enhancing induction to ensure that it is differentiated to the ability and experience of new members of staff (a new teacher will not need the same as an experienced mainstream teacher).

Priority 3: *The Strathmore curriculum will have breadth, be diverse and individualised to support knowledge progression and retention.*

The curriculum will be developed to build on the skills and knowledge learners rather than revisiting particular topics.

Priority 4: *Leadership development will support our growing school.*

This is key to address and has been discussed as a risk previously. In addition, leadership capacity for the new site will need planning.

The Governing Board **raised concerns** that an adequate funding model and plan for leadership capacity on the new site needs to be in place. The Governing Board **queried** the sensibility and benefits of opening a new site as opposed to opening a new school. The Governing Board **asked** if the headteacher had capacity to lead a school which would expand by approximately a quarter. The Headteacher **advised** that this needs careful consideration.

The Governing Board **queried** if previous priorities on the SDP had been fully included in plans going forward. Senior Leaders explained that while these may not be whole school areas of development, they will have been incorporated into subject lead or other action plans.

The Governing Board were pleased that a longer-term view of addressing the School Development Priorities was being undertaken by the senior Leadership Team.

The Governing Board **agreed** that the programme of monitoring the SDP had been fully discussed and follow up actions planned during Item 3D.

- 6H. Learner, family & community voice (inc [Summer 23 Parent and carer Survey](#))
The Governing Board asked if the responses that were marked 'strongly disagree' had been followed up. Senior Leadership advised that if they were trackable, they had been addressed.

The Governing Board **requested** year on year comparative data should be included on the surveys conducted and that the surveys should be consistent as much as possible

ACTION: the Headteacher **will** provide comparative data where available for the surveys.

- 6I. Finance Commentary (inc. Lead Governor Report from 5A)
The Headteacher **reported** that all budgets had been allocated. The Governing Board **noted** that there was no Finance Link Governor appointed at this point; this **must** be addressed to comply with the Scheme of Delegation.

- 6J. Visitors Reports (including [Summer SIP Report](#)) and Visits
The Headteacher **reported** that John Johnson has planned visits for the coming year with the first being on the 18 October. Work undertaken by staff during a training workshop showing how they demonstrate the culture and ethos of the school would be showcased. The Headteacher was keen that governors also attend this session as it would provide a useful triangulation point.

ACTION: All Governors to confirm to Sarah Hurtado if they can attend on the 18 October.

- 6K. HR Commentary
The Headteacher advised that over the summer a new HR system was implemented across the Trust. This will give senior leaders the ability to manage sickness, absence and other HR processes more closely. There is an issue with reviewing information from last year and this is being progressed by the Chair of the Governing Board and Head teacher.

- 6L. CPD inc [dates for Autumn Term](#)
The Headteacher reported that CPD dates for the year have been planned.

- 6M. Parental Engagement
The Chair of the Governing Board **advised** that there may be changes to the FOSS governance including Chair and Vice Chair positions.

The Governing Board **suggested** that having representation from various organisations who provide support to parents (respite) etc at school events would be a good form of support.

ACTION: The Headteacher would explore options with the family support worker to create signposting at school events to access support.

6N. Community Events

Strathmore School received a new mini-bus provided in conjunction with funding from the Victoria Foundation.

ACTION: The Headteacher and Chair of the Governing Board will liaise with the Victoria Foundation to see if a launch for the minibus can be planned

6O. Health and Safety and Premises

The Headteacher reported that SLT had participated in a mock cyber security attack and were taking learning points from that. She is also co-ordinating with colleagues to ensure all emergency plans and Personal Evacuation Plans are reviewed.

The Governing Board **asked** if a cyber breach would affect the door security as these are automated with use of an electronic fobb

ACTION: The Headteacher would confirm if physical security of the doors/gates to schools would be impacted in the event of a cyber attack.

7. Approval of Policies / Statements

ACTION: The Headteacher would circulate slides confirming the changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 to all governors.

ACTION: All governors will undertake the AfC Safeguarding for Governors course.

ACTION: Low level Concerns policy will be brought to the LGB meeting on the 20 November.

The Governing Board **approved** the Strathmore School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2023-24.

8. Review of Impact, planned actions and feedback to the Board of Trustees

ACTION: The Chair of the Local Governing Board would draft a summary of the meeting, circulate for comment to provide to the Board of Trustees meeting on the 19 October.

9. Confidentiality

The Governing Board **agreed** that the discussion at the meeting, the background papers, and any reports identified as confidential above, should remain confidential and be excluded from the published minutes and papers.

The date of the next meeting is 20 November 2023.

Signature: Jane Curzon
Jane Curzon (Jan 30, 2024 14:10 GMT)

Email: jcurzon@strathmore.org.uk
Chair of Governors


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Final Audit Report


2024-01-30

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