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Twickenham
TW1 4DQ

@ The Russell
Petersham Road
Richmond
TW10 7AH

@ Grey Court
Ham Street
Richmond
TW10 7HN

@ Darell
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Richmond
TW9 4LH

Telephone: 020 8948 0047 Email: info@strathmore.org.uk Website: www.strathmore.richmond.sch.uk
Head teacher: Sarah Hurtado

Dear Parents/ Carers, Governors and Trustees

STRATHMORE SCHOOL BOARD OF GOVERNORS END OF YEAR REPORT 2025

As Chair of Governors, I am pleased to present this end-of-year report for the 2024–2025 academic year. This has been a year of continued commitment, resilience, and growth at Strathmore School, a school that serves learners with a wide range of complex and profound special educational needs. On behalf of the governing board, I would like to commend the leadership team, staff, parents, and most importantly, our incredible learners for their ongoing dedication and achievements.

Governance Overview

This year, the Governing Board has continued to fulfil its statutory responsibilities, focusing on strategic leadership, financial oversight, safeguarding, and promoting inclusive, high-quality education for all learners. Working closely with the Auriga Academy Trust Board, Headteacher, and Senior Leadership Team, we have ensured the school remains strategic and focused on its four School Development Priorities (SDPs), alongside best practices in inclusion, safeguarding, and staff wellbeing. Throughout the year, we have carefully monitored progress, providing appropriate challenge and support to drive improvement.

Key developments include:

- **Governance Development:** Governors have undertaken additional training in safeguarding, Prevent, GDPR, and Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity, as well as other continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities. They attended regular meetings and training sessions to stay informed, including the AfC SEND Futures Conference in October 2024. Further CPD focused on best practice areas such as EHCP processes, therapeutic approaches to behaviour, and safeguarding. In addition, I have attended regular borough-wide Chair Network meetings, AfC Director briefings, and meetings with Munira Wilson MP to stay up to date with local and national developments, share best practice, and strengthen our partnership with AfC.
- **Governor Visits:** Regular curriculum link governor visits took place throughout the year in the form of lesson observations and learning walks. These visits focused on evaluating the impact of the curriculum, gathering pupil voice to understand their learning experiences and perspectives, and ensuring safeguarding practices were consistently embedded across the school. This ongoing engagement enabled governors to gain valuable insights into classroom practice, celebrate areas of strength, and identify opportunities for further development.



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- **Self-Evaluation:** A governance review was conducted early in the Summer Term to celebrate successes, reflect on current practices, and identify opportunities for further growth. This proactive and constructive process led to the development of an updated action plan for the next academic year, designed to strengthen impact, enhance accountability, and build on the strong foundations already in place to support the school's ongoing success.
- **Government Consultations:** Our board also contributed to the Ofsted *Improving the Way Ofsted Inspects Education* consultation and the SEND System Green Paper review. We will continue to monitor developments from the Education Select Committee and the Schools White Paper, where important recommendations — particularly those concerning EHCPs — are expected to be discussed and debated.

School Performance and Learner Progress

Although performance data in special schools cannot always be measured using standard academic metrics, we remain focused on progress towards individualised outcomes, as outlined in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Highlights from this year include:

- Continued progress in communication, independence, and emotional regulation across all key stages.
- The development of semi-formal and informal curricula tailored to the specific needs of pupils.
- Strong engagement in therapeutic interventions, including speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, music therapy and physiotherapy.
- Governors scrutinised progress data through regular reports from the Headteacher and through link governor discussions with middle leaders.

School Improvement and Curriculum

We are proud of the progress made in strengthening the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of our pupils. The bespoke and differentiated learning pathways—whether focused on sensory development, communication and interaction, or preparation for adulthood—are continually evolving.

This year, the leadership team has focused on improving literacy and communication, supported by the implementation of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools across key phases including Gestalt Language Processing. The governing board has monitored the impact of these strategies, and early evidence points to improved engagement and communication for many pupils.



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Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Safeguarding remains a central priority. Governors, including the link governors for safeguarding, have regularly reviewed procedures and attended training to ensure compliance and best practice. The school's safeguarding culture is strong, and the staff's understanding of complex needs and vulnerabilities continues to be exemplary. Mental health and wellbeing support for pupils and staff has also been a focus. The introduction of staff wellbeing nurture weeks and pupil emotional regulation zones has continued to have a positive impact, and we will continue to monitor and support these efforts.

Key achievements include:

- Safeguarding has been enhanced through regular meetings between the Link Governors and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), ensuring robust oversight, continuous updates on safeguarding practices, and prompt action on emerging issues.
- The introduction of a Wellbeing Strategy has further supported both learner and staff mental health, with excellent uptake of wellbeing days helping to foster a positive and supportive school culture.
- In addition, behaviour support planning has improved, and staff have received enhanced training in de-escalation techniques, including the widespread adoption of TEAM TEACH practices, contributing to a safer and more consistent approach to managing challenging behaviour.

Attendance and Learner Engagement

Attendance remained a challenge nationally and locally, particularly in special schools, post-pandemic. However:

- Attendance at Strathmore remained above the national average for special schools.
- The school implemented family engagement initiatives and transport partnerships, resulting in improved punctuality and reduced persistent absenteeism.
- Governors continue to monitor attendance trends and the impact of interventions closely.

Leadership and Staff Development

We recognise the school's leadership team for their calm, purposeful, and child-centred approach. Notable achievements:

- Successful recruitment and induction of new staff, including specialist support assistants i.e. two new Family Support Workers.



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- Expansion of the coaching and mentoring programme, enhancing classroom practice and career development.
- The Headteacher continues to foster a collaborative culture, and governors are confident in the capacity of the current SLT and structure to support the transition period of the new Headteacher.

Premises and Health & Safety

- Significant improvements to outdoor classroom learning spaces, sensory spaces and the development of Zones of Regulation.
- Risk assessments and compliance with all statutory health and safety checks have been routinely carried out throughout the school year.
- Plans underway for further sensory room/ garden enhancements and additional learning resources for 2025/26. The Grey Court campus is currently in the process of tendering for a new sensory room to be installed in the latter part of 2025.

Finance

The Governing Board has worked closely with the school's Headteacher and AAT Finance Director to ensure the school's finances are well managed and aligned with strategic priorities. Funding continues to be a challenge, particularly given rising costs and the complexity of meeting diverse needs, but we are committed to using resources wisely and advocating for adequate support. A balanced budget was achieved, with effective use of SEND-specific funding and additional grants.

Inclusion and Pupil Voice

Ensuring every pupil's voice is heard remains a guiding principle. Staff have worked hard to enable all pupils to express their thoughts, preferences, and choices, whether through speech, symbols, signs, or technology. We were particularly proud of this year's first Learner Survey which yielded some insightful results. The Governing Board applauds the school's efforts to promote inclusion both within and beyond the school gates. Community links, inclusive enrichment activities, and parent engagement have all contributed to a richer school experience.

Parental and Community Engagement

The voice of parents and carers remains central. This year:

- The parent coffee mornings, workshops, and annual reviews have been well attended.
- Feedback from the annual parent survey showed strong satisfaction with teaching, communication, and care.



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- Governors have increased direct engagement with families through increased communication avenues.

Looking Ahead

The Governing Board is proud of the school's achievements this year and looks forward to supporting its strategic priorities for 2025–2026, which include:

- The Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Curriculum is extended to include Key Stage 3 learners, ensuring clear skill development from Year 7 to Year 14.
- Systems and strategies are in place to support and develop all learners' communication skills in less structured class-based learning environments e.g. lunch halls, playgrounds, outside learning areas, sensory rooms and during educational trips.
- Play opportunities across all Strathmore learning environments will be further refined to incorporate neurodiverse affirming research 12 and practice which promotes learner voice, engagement and autonomy.
- As a result of strategic and reflective change management, school leaders will maintain excellence in all areas and strengthen leadership capacity during a period of transition.

On behalf of the Governing Board, I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to our Headteacher, leadership team, teachers, therapists, support staff, and volunteers. Your dedication, creativity, and resilience are what make this school so special.

To our families and carers, thank you for your partnership, trust, and continued support. To our learners—thank you for inspiring us every day with your strength, joy, and determination.

The Governors would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Sarah Hurtado, who will be stepping down as Headteacher of Strathmore School at the end of this term. Sarah has led the school with passion, commitment, and care for 15 remarkable years. Under her leadership, Strathmore has grown in strength, reputation, and impact—transforming the lives of so many children and families. As Sarah moves into semi-retirement, we thank her sincerely for her outstanding dedication and tireless service, and we wish her all the very best for the next chapter.

As I conclude my term as Chair of Governors, I am honoured to take up a new role as Trustee of the Auriga Academy Trust. Serving the Strathmore community over the past seven years has been a privilege. I am delighted to share that Chris Buckley-Reynolds will assume the role of Chair of Governors. Chris brings deep professional expertise and a strong commitment to supporting the school's continued success.



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We look ahead to the new academic year with optimism, determination, and a continued commitment to excellence and care. Ofsted has confirmed that the finalised revised inspection framework and full consultation response will be published in September 2025, with inspections under the new approach - moving away from single-word judgements and towards more detailed "report cards" - set to begin in November 2025. As we await their return for inspection, we remain focused on sustained improvement and ensuring the school is well prepared to demonstrate its strengths under both the current and revised frameworks.

Alongside this, we are entering a period of leadership transition, with a new Headteacher taking up post. We are confident in the strength, continuity, and shared vision of the school's leadership team, and in the dedication of staff across all campuses. This new chapter offers a valuable opportunity to build on the strong foundations laid under Sarah Hurtado's exceptional tenure and to continue driving forward the school's vision for inclusive, high-quality education. The Governing Board will ensure that the transition is well supported and that our collective focus on pupil outcomes, wellbeing, and inclusion remains at the heart of all we do.

Jane Curzon

Chair of Governors - Strathmore School

22 July 2025



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