

Approved Minutes for the meeting of the Strathmore School Local Governing Body held on 25 November 2024 at 5.00pm at Strathmore School (Grey Court Campus) and virtually on Teams

[Link to Teams Meeting](#)

[Link to Papers STR-24-2 251124](#)

Key:- ➤ Note; ⦿ Discussion; ☑ Discussion and Decision; **XX** Sponsor/Lead; **X mins** allotted time.

Members of the Local Governing Body in attendance: Ayushi Bagga, Rebecca Branch, Jane Curzon (Chair), Marc Dodi, Laura Dyer, Sarah Hurtado (Headteacher), and Sarah Terrey.

Members of the Local Governing Body in attendance virtually:– Dev Desai, Michael Jacob and Alex Lee.

Members of the Local Governing Body absent: John Nicholl and Mitch Pender.

Also in attendance: Assistant Headteachers: Adriana Martyr and Luis Ferreira, Susie Connor (AAT Finance Director), and Paul Roberts (Vice-Chair of Trustees).

Clerk in attendance : Julie Adams

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

- 1.A The Governing Body **received** apologies from Mitch Pender and John Nicholl and agreed to consent to their absence. The Chair **advised** that flowers had been sent to Mr Nicholl's family on behalf of the school and governing body.
- 1.B The Chair **reminded** all governors that they must abide by the Auriga Academy Trust Declarations of Interest Policy and should **declare** if they have an interest in any matter that comes before them. There were no declarations made.

2. Presentation

The Governing Body **received** a presentation from the Auriga Academy Trust Finance Director, Susie Connor on the Strathmore School Budget for 2024-25 and 3 year forecast.

The Finance Director **explained** that the main income source is per-pupil funding from the Department for Education, supplemented by pupil premium funding from the local authority based on a banding system. Additional funding comes from grants such as the Teachers' Pay and Pensions grant. The banding system is based on pupil need, determined by annual reviews. SC noted that higher bands are historically underfunded.

The Governing Body **discussed** the standardisation of annual reviews and the impact of their quality on school funding. The Finance Director **explained** that work is ongoing to address discrepancies between school assessments and local authority banding.

The Governing Body **queried** the flexibility of the new system for pupils transitioning from nursery to reception with existing ECHPs and adjusting banding if a child's needs are reassessed after entering reception. The Finance Director confirmed a process exists for early annual reviews and adjustments, emphasising the importance of prioritising these reviews for funding and staffing

purposes. The Governing Body **noted** historical funding challenges for higher bands and the lack of inflation increases highlighting the ongoing challenge of limited resources for high needs. The Finance Director explained that there is a new Core School Budget grant that includes support for inflationary costs of support staff pay awards.

The Finance Director presented the funding projection for the next three years, The Governing Body acknowledged the difficulty of budgeting in the current environment. The Finance Director explained that staffing costs are approximately 82% of the trust's expenditure and for Strathmore School this is 89%, exceeding the national benchmark of 82-85%. This is attributed to the underfunding of higher bands in the banding system. The Finance Director explained that the new Carecalc model, while more accurate in assessing needs, still faces the issue of finite resources not covering the required levels of support. The current budget assumes minimum funding equivalent to the previous year due to uncertainties with the CareCalc model. Work is ongoing with the local authority to ensure accurate banding assessments and funding. The Finance Director clarified that budget underspends continue into the next year.

The Governing Body also addressed strategies for balancing the budget, including efficiency measures, contract reviews, and income generation opportunities such as renting school facilities. The Finance Director explained that the core focus remains on education, not income generation. The Finance Director outlined the funding projection for the next three years, noting that the initial budget showed depletion of reserves by year three. A revised budget, incorporating the new Core School Budget grant, presents a healthier outlook, but future funding remains uncertain.

The Governing Body questioned the Trust's financial policy regarding reserves and the need to prioritise essential spending. The Finance Director explained that capital expenditure is being closely monitored, and that the Trust has a healthy reserve currently compared to other Trusts but they continue to remain vigilant due to the 3-year position.

The Governing Body queried the financial implications of the expansion plans. The Finance Director explained that the trust expects the local authority to cover the costs of new sites. There had been an initial meeting with the local authority to discuss the financial model and provisional cost models have been presented to the local authority, but no final agreements have been signed or agreed by the Trust as it will not take on financial risks. The Governing Body queried the specific financial plan for the new Strathmore at Hampton High campus and the impact of the uncertainty of the student funding for it. The Finance Director explained that the financial model provided to the local authority had incorporated the pupil profile information but there is no final agreement.

The Governing Body queried the school's autonomy in budgeting and the trust's assurance processes. The Finance Director explained that headteachers are responsible for their budgets, which are challenged by both the Finance Team and Chief Executive Officer. The Governing Body are expected to review monthly finance reports and raise concerns to the Trust as Trustees have ultimate responsibility for the trust's financial health. The Finance Director explained that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) views the trust's finances as a whole and can intervene where there is a deficit forecast.

Supporting papers: [P1 Management Accounts](#), [02 AAT 3 Year Budget Summary.pdf](#), , Headteacher report Item 10, Finance Link Governor report and questions arising

3. Minutes

3.A The Governing Body **received** the draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2024 [[STR-24-2-03A Previous Draft Minutes 300924.pdf](#)] and the associated set of confidential minutes [STR-24-2-03A Draft Minutes 300924 -CONF.pdf](#) and **approved** them as accurate records of the meeting.

3.B The Governing Body **noted** completed actions from the previous meeting

Number	Extract	Owner	Status
1	All Governors to update their register of interests on GovernorHub	ALL	On agenda
2	Governance Development Plan and Annual Governance Report to be presented to the next LGB meeting	JC	On agenda
4	Questions on the Apprenticeship paper to be submitted to the Headteacher	ALL	None Received - Complete
8	HT to share video on being a Strathmore Learner (Amy Upton) with governors	JA	Complete
9	Safeguarding monitoring form to be shared by Safeguarding Link Governors on a termly basis	JC /RB	On agenda
10	New Attendance Policy to be approved at the next LGB meeting	SH	On agenda
11	All Governors to undertake safeguarding training and read Part 1 of KCSIE and confirm these actions on Governorhub when complete.	All	On agenda
15	Full SEF to be presented at the next meeting	SH	On agenda
16	Chair / Vice Chair to review the applications for Threshold, recommend to the Pay Committee and report the outcomes to the next LGB meeting	JC /RB /MC	Complete
17	Pay Progression recommendations to be shared with the Pay Committee	JA	Complete
18	Staff Wellbeing Survey to be reported to the next LGB meeting	SH /LF	On agenda
19	Leavers and parents Survey to be reported to the next LGB meeting	SH	On agenda
20	Finance Link Governor to circulate finance report to governors after reviewing P12 accounts	MP	On agenda
21	Governors to send questions arising from the Finance Link Governors report to the Chair	All	On agenda
22	Trust Finance Director be invited to the next LGB	JA /JC	Complete
24	JC to discuss with JP the comment about 'pushback from Strathmore'	JC	Complete
25	Comments regarding the Governance proposal to go to Chair to feedback	All	Complete

The Governing Body noted the governance consultation that took place in September and concluded in October and that the forthcoming Trust Board meeting would finalise any decisions. The Chair had requested a conversation with the Chair of Trustees to discuss feedback.

3.C The Governing Body **considered** actions arising from the previous meeting that were incomplete

The Governing Body discussed outstanding actions from the previous meeting, including updates on H2H2/accident reporting, safeguarding monitoring, attendance policy, GovernorHub training, and link governor visits. Progress was reviewed on curriculum

support, with DD sharing his approach to the maths curriculum. Updates were also provided on the cyberbullying/online safety presentation, safeguarding leader accreditation, governance development plan, behaviour data analysis, and trust objectives.

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
3	HT to report on accidents and incidents at the November LGB meeting to include new pupils	SH	17/11/24
5	Laura Wrigglesworth to check date for re-accreditation of Leaders in Safeguarding	LW LC	17/11/24
6	Laura Wrigglesworth locate and share Presentation on Cyber Bullying (if Locatable)	LW	13/10/24
7	JC to update Governance Development Plan and it to be added to Governor folders as a live link	JC / JA	17/11/24
12	A detailed analysis of the Behaviour Data for 2023-24 to be presented at the next LGB to facilitate a deeper discussion on this area	SH /LF	17/11/24
13	Chairs and Vice Chairs to develop guidance on what constitutes an effective Link Governor Visit	JC /RB /MC	17/11/24
14	Link Governor report to be updated with the prompt 'how do Strathmore learners know they are contributors to the community	JC	17/11/24
23	Chair to discuss mentoring with governors	JC / MP / DD	17/11/24
26	Update on Trust objectives for 2023-24 and new Trust 2024-25 Objectives to be shared	AW	asap

Action #3 The Headteacher has met with the Trust Estates Lead but it would be manual job to investigate the accident and incident reports which there is no capacity at the moment to do.

Action #5 The re-accreditation will require a good deal of leadership time and there would be a significant cost. There will be further discussions as to whether this is appropriate. The Safeguarding Link governor will monitor.

Action #6 The cyberbullying presentation will be located when Lauren Crew returns from maternity leave.

Action #7 The Chairs and Vice Chairs will be working on this and will share with the LGB in Early December.

Action #12 A detailed presentation on Behaviour will be scheduled for a future meeting.

Action #13 All governors encouraged to begin their Link Governor visits. Governors shared their experiences and advised they would share their reports.

Action #14 This had been updated.

Action #23 The Chair would speak to the two new governors regarding mentoring support.

Action #26 The Chair would share Trust objectives for 2023-24 and 2024-25.

3.D The Governing Body **noted** the latest published Board meeting minutes and other updates from the Board

3.E The Governing Body **noted** there were no other matters arising that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Supporting Papers: [Trust Board Minutes](#), [Strathmore School Minutes](#).

4. Headteachers Report

The Governing Body received a report from the Headteacher *STR-24-2-04 Headteacher Report.pdf* to include Items A-K. The Headteacher presented her Headteacher's report, covering key risks, pupil numbers, attendance, safeguarding, behaviour, and staff wellbeing. Detailed discussions ensued on each topic, including analysis of behaviour incidents, staff wellbeing initiatives, and the impact of persistent absence. SH also provided updates on recruitment, school improvement partner visits, school self-review, and health and safety.

The Governing Body discussed the risk management matrix and agreed the need to include a key for interpreting the scores, particularly for new governors.

The Headteacher advised that the autumn term had been busy, due to the time needed to support new staff, particularly teachers. Recruitment remained a priority, with ongoing efforts at both school and trust levels. Pupil numbers remained stable, and further demographic analysis was provided in her report following a previous request from the Governing Body.

The Governing Body noted the pupil numbers and demographics, noting a higher percentage of male learners (66%) which correlates with behaviour incidents (73% male).

The Headteacher reported on attendance data, highlighting Strathmore's persistent absence rate of 6.2% compared to the national average of 13% for special schools. The Governing Body discussed the reasons for learner absences, emphasised the School's holistic approach to supporting families and addressing the underlying reasons for absence, rather than penalising with fines.

The Headteacher provided a safeguarding update, noting a recent four-day suspension and one reported incident of sexual harassment (inappropriate touch). The Governing Body noted the schools proactive approach to filtering and monitoring of online activity and how this was tracked for non-school equipment and for visitors. The Governing Body noted that over 50% of learners had social care input and these meetings were structured to include the staff member who was best placed to support, with the lower rating

The Governing Body received a presentation on behaviour in school. There were higher numbers of behaviour incidents in secondary vs. primary, males vs. females, and between campus'. Staff have focussed on non-physical interventions, identifying behaviour triggers, staff training, and wider environmental factors. The Governing Body noted the school's understanding of the medical and physical development context for pupils including hormonal changes in teenagers and information sharing with parents. The Headteacher highlighted that behaviour support plans are updated at least twice a year and shared with parents, transport, and respite providers.

The Governing Body queried the sudden increase in behaviours at Grey Court campus. The Headteacher explained that this was due to a small number of pupils exhibiting physical

behaviours. The Governing Body asked if the vertical streaming with pupils of different ages being in the same class and having behaviour outbursts could impact younger students. The Headteacher advised that this had not been evidenced and most classes contain students of a similar age.

The Governing Body asked if there had been an increase in staff attending hospital as a result of learner behaviours. The Headteacher advised that whilst she didn't have the numbers to hand it appeared that this was no more than in previous years. The Governing Body noted that teaching strategies would be reviewed to minimise this type of incident and in addition when the staff member returned to work it would be reported. The Headteacher added that temporary or agency staff would also be included should there be any triggers for the learner identified.

The Governing Body discussed staff wellbeing, including survey results and initiatives being adopted in school. The Headteacher advised that staff are recognising the impact of working with special needs students, but time and resources remain stressors. There is a low utilisation of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) due to perceived lack of resources and long waiting lists. The Governing Body discussed the shared responsibility for wellbeing, the effectiveness and anonymity of wellbeing initiatives, and the need for ongoing support.

The Governing Body noted that 7 learners are not meeting targets and that interventions in place. The Governing Body asked how the school communicated this with parents. The Headteacher confirmed there is a focus on open communication with parents regarding learner progress and explained the school's communication procedures and how additional engagement with other partners may be required, such as the therapy team.

The Governing Body noted the report of the new School Improvement Partner(SIP). The Headteacher noted that these were in line with the views of the previous SIP, and this was reassuring that a fresh pair of external eyes had the same views.

The Headteacher was redrafting the Self Evaluation of the school and this would be shared later in the year.

The Headteacher provided updates on HR, including the successful recruitment of AU as Assistant Headteacher, ongoing TA interviews, a teacher resignation, and a TLR for behaviour and wellbeing. She also confirmed that preliminary conversations have started about opening another class at the Russell campus, dependent on cost and staffing.

The Headteacher advised that the relatively high number of data breaches reflected a culture of reporting which was being encouraged.

The Governing Body requested that more in depth information relating to the School Development Plan should be included in the next few meetings to ensure that they have a good understanding of the ongoing actions in those areas.

The Headteacher reported that her performance management had taken place.

The Governing Body discussed the Board's proposal to add three INSET days to the October half term in ~~2025-26~~. The Governing Body expressed concerns about the impact on parents, particularly those with respite and childcare needs, noting a particularly low response rate from parents to the consultation. They noted the importance of explaining the rationale for the timing to parents, emphasising pedagogical benefits and felt that the statement had been well drafted. The Governing Body acknowledged the benefit for teachers and potentially for parents who could then access better holiday deals. The Governing Body noted that staff feedback had not been requested into the consultation. The Governing Body agreed to support the recommendation with the caveat that it be reviewed and monitored for effectiveness. The Governing Body also requested that efforts to secure respite options and possibly financial assistance to parents who may be in need of it be explored.

5. Governance

The Chair of Governors raised concerns about the volume of paperwork, noting it took nine hours to prepare for this meeting.

The Governing Body discussed options to streamline reports, possibly through shorter updates and interim summaries and acknowledged the improved quality and detail of reports. The Chair advised that she would seek to get a greater understanding of the needs of the Trust from the Headteacher's reports.

The Governing Body noted that all other matters relating to governance had previously been discussed.

6. Approval of Policies / Statements

The Governing Body noted the attendance Policy would be presented at the end of the academic year to reflect the closure of the Darrell Campus.

7. Review impact, planned actions and agree feedback to the Board of Trustees

The Governing Body **noted** that following this meeting the Chair creates a summary for the Board meeting.

The Governing Body **noted** that there had been good discussion and understanding now following the finance presentation.

Supporting Papers – [16. Committee reporting template.docx](#)

8. Confidentiality

The Governing Board agreed that the discussion at the meeting, the background papers, and any reports identified as confidential above, and the minutes contained in the confidential appendix to the minutes relating to item 10, should remain confidential and be excluded from the published minutes and papers.

The date of the next meeting is **27 January 2025**

Jane Curzon

Jane Curzon (Sep 18, 2025 16:25:28 GMT+1)

Jane Curzon

Chair of Strathmore School Local Governing Body

18/09/25






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Final Audit Report

2025-09-18

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