

**Approved minutes of the meeting of the Auriga Academy Trust Board held on Wednesday 12 March 2025 at 6.00pm via Teams**

[Link to Teams Meeting](#)

[Link to Papers Board-24-4 120325](#)

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

Items in square brackets are references to documents related to this agenda found in the folder Board-24-4 120325.

**Trustees of the Auriga Academy Trust in attendance:** Sarah Baker (from Item 4), Lucinda Christian-Lim, Chris Euden, Rebecca Gonyora, Lorna Goodwin, Paul Giuffredi, Jonathan Pallas (Chair), Paul Roberts and Andy Whiteside.

**Also in attendance:** Ivan Pryce (Chief Executive Officer), Susie Connor (AAT Finance Director, Items 1 -11b only), Jane Curzon (Chair of Strathmore School LGB, Items 1 to 10 only) and Niall Brady (Chair at Clarendon School LGB, Items 1 to 10 only).

**Clerk:** Julie Adams.

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

- 1.A The Board of Trustees **noted** there were no absences. any members who are absent and to receive any apologies for absence, and to **decide** whether or not to consent to their absence.

The Chair advised that Mark Roe had decided to step down from his role with effect from 3 March 2025.

- 1.B The Chair **reminded** all members of the Board 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. He advised that declarations of interests would again be requested before the section of the meeting dealing with Confidential issues and recorded in the Confidential minutes of the meeting.

Lucinda Christian-Lim advised that she worked for the South West London Integrated Care Board. There were no other declarations made at this point.

## **2 Therapies Presentation**

The Board of Trustees welcomed Kerri Morgan, Director of Therapies. Ms Morgan advised that her presentation and CPD Menu had been included in the papers for the meeting she would welcome questions at the end.

The Director of Therapies advised that the Outreach offer was launched in December and started with attending the Primary Headteacher's meeting and circulated to all schools in the Richmond area. This was based on a Training and CPD menu. The resources for many of the options on the menu had already been developed for in-house use and could therefore be

pitched with minimal additional workload. Another option offered to schools would be to visit their school, review their practice and suggest advice, training and systems either specifically for pupils with additional needs or for all pupils.

The target market had been anyone covered by AFC and any other boroughs which currently place pupils in Auriga schools. She had worked with the CEO to also make connections with other MATs and local higher education institutions (e.g. Roehampton and UCL). Her capacity had been limited due to having to cover a maternity leave, but as that vacancy had now been filled, she is much more able to meet a wider spectrum of potential markets. For example allied health professional, as students nurses may need some of the courses offered as part of their accreditation. She noted that there may be opportunities with local NHS Trusts or further afield.

The Director of Therapies explained that this approach was chosen as it allows the current learners in the Trust to be prioritised to meet statutory responsibilities. It is important that further capacity is built before this is developed further. As mainstream schools struggle with the increasing number of pupils with additional needs, this gives an opportunity to support them by delivering training outside of school day.

There have been 8 contacts who are actively engaged and there has been lots of positive responses. There are also 3 connections which will definitely be moving forward. Coombe Academy Trust have requested 1 session currently and this is likely to increase. Tangle Park are also interested. The Director of Therapies is also participating in the stakeholder group at Roehampton University to help support the development of the Speech and Language and Occupational Therapist courses including providing lectures. This may also lead to placements in Auriga Academy Trust schools and impact recruitment in the future.

The Director of Therapies acknowledged that one of the barriers for schools is the pressure on their budgets. Some schools have requested a 'credits' type system similar to the one provided by AfC School Improvement. It would be hoped that School Improvement Partners in Kingston and Richmond may signpost schools to our services.

The Director of Therapies is also looking at external accreditation for the courses. There is a cost implication for this. Accreditation for up to 10 courses would be £1,000. This may help when moving into new markets such as Health.

As a new service the Director of Therapies is aware that she needs to build a reputation. This had started to be established with a good response from schools for speech and language training through Capella House School but they are not yet known as a training provider. It is hoped that word of mouth will be able to bring in more bookings.

Other solutions to overcoming the barriers previously described include working with the AfC outreach co-ordinator for bought in services, to provide specialisms where they are unable to provide. Students and student placements, where they may recommend to their host provider. Also Deputy and Assistant Headteachers have promotional materials when they attend network events and forums. Also when therapists are going out to assessments and

consultations, they can suggest and refer for appropriate training and support to the whole school.

In terms of a more formal promotion, a launch of a Therapy Service on some social media platforms, such as Instagram and Tiktok. This will have video and photo content. It will cover all services provided, with helpful tips and information. It will promote activities in school and what can be provided as outreach. All websites will be updated and ideally it would be useful to expand those areas.

The Director of Therapies had planned a soft launch of the service with a conservative income target of £7,500 (25 sessions delivered). This had taken into account the forecast capacity issues at the start of the year. Dependent on the type of session these would be priced between £100 to £350.

The Director of Therapies pointed to the Outreach menu which could be accessed by QR code and had been included in the meeting papers and invited questions.

The Board of Trustees thanked the Director of Therapies for an informative and detailed presentation. The Board of Trustees noted they may have contact information for other potential users of the service, including other schools, and would be happy to share these with the Director of Therapies **(ACTION)**.

The Board of Trustees asked if approaches had been made to Additionally Resourced Provision Schools with Speech and Language provision and the independent sector. The Director of Therapies advised that she would be doing this as she now had the capacity to do this.

The Board of Trustees asked if, as finance was an issue for schools, whether the outreach could be organised to be delivered to clusters or commissioning to pre-formed groups of schools. The CEO advised that he had discussed this with the newly appointed AfC School Improvement Lead. Because they work with multiple schools they can identify schools with similar needs and signpost to the Director of Therapies.

The Board of Trustees, while noting the amount of work already undertaken, asked if projections beyond the 'conservative' first year had been made and if they had adjustments if accreditation for courses had been achieved. The Director of Therapies was looking into it currently. She noted that if accreditation is not needed to access new sectors, such as Health, there would be little value in pursuing it.

The Board of Trustees suggested that the Trust's location could also position them to access other areas of north-west and south-west London. They noted that targeting mental health support teams in schools and in health sectors was also another potential service user.

The Board of Trustees noted that when reviewing the websites, there was no 'pop-up' on the Trust website and this also it was not on the individual schools websites. This should be addressed to increase the profile of the service.

The Board of Trustees suggested approaching the SENCo network and offering 'taster' sessions could be offered to showcase the training. The Board of Trustees asked if teaching assistant development and direct work with pupils in other schools was also being considered. The Director of Therapies reported that these were also dependent on capacity, as most schools do not have a therapy provision themselves. It would be an ambition to be able to create an expanded team to do direct work outside the Trust.

The Board of Trustees like the idea of also working with higher education institutions and suggested she make contact with St Mary's University's Initial Teacher Training provision who host an annual SEN conference every year.

The Board of Trustees queried the price point of the outreach offer. Given the substantial skills and expertise behind the programme, they felt that it was 'unbelievably low' in comparison with other skilled professionals. The Director of Therapies felt that given school's financial situation it was hoped to get some early wins. The Board of Trustees noted that often persistence and perseverance with following up interest that will result in bookings.

The Board of Trustees agreed that there were lots of positive, real actions being taken by the Director of Therapies and that they would not wish to see this hampered by lack of allocated funding or resources and advised that funding requests should be seriously considered, for example with the accreditation process. Noting the over-run of the presentation the Chair reflected that he had found the presentation 'inspiring', especially as this had been a strategic goal a year or so ago and was now operational. Trustees noted their action to forward any useful contacts from their networks to the Director of Therapies and thanked her for her presentation.

The CEO advised that a planned meeting with the ICB to discuss this and other issues had been cancelled at short notice. He had requested that this be rescheduled as soon as possible. He felt that the most beneficial partnership would be with the School Improvement Partner team.

*Kerri Morgan left the meeting.*

### 3 Minutes and Resolutions

3.A The Board of Trustees **received** the draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2024 [[Board-24-4-03A Previous Draft Minutes 171224.pdf](#)] and **approved** them as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.B The Board of Trustees **noted** the completed actions from the previous meeting

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
2	Chair of Trustees to share proposals for changes to the Performance Management Process for Trust SLT and feedback requested	JP/ IP/ LGB Chairs/ Trustees	On agenda
4	The CEO would invite the Director of Therapies to present at the next Board meeting on Outreach	IP	On agenda
5	A Growth working group to be set up (JP, PR, AW, IP + Poss LCL)	JP	Completed
7	Chair of the LGB and CEO would liaise to determine what, if any, elements of the information provided for the INSET day proposal should be added to and to agree the process and timeline for this to be done, with the LGB taking responsibility for organising the secondary consultation	NB/ IP	Completed

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
8	LGB Chairs to advise the Chair if they, or their governors require an overview of the financial health of the Trust	SG /NB/ JC	Completed

Action #2 . The Chair reported that he had a good meeting with the Headteachers and CEO to discuss the suggestions for the performance management process for Headteachers. The Board of Trustees agreed this action was now closed.

- 3.C The Board of Trustees **considered** the actions arising from the previous meeting that are incomplete.

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
1	Chair and Governance Professional to review dates and times of Committee meetings	JP / JA	asap
3	Chair of Strathmore LGB to share the meeting notes from the Directors Termly briefing with Trustees	JC	asap
6	CEO to support Headteachers to explore support for families seeking support due to the agreement of additional INSET Days in October half term.	JP	ongoing

Action #1 - This was currently in progress and proposals would be shared before the next meeting.

Actions #3 and #6 – The Board of Trustees noted these were also now closed.

- 3.D The Board of Trustees **noted** a Chairs Resolution for the approval of the IT Supply Tender [Board-Res-24-03D IT Support Tender - signed.pdf.url](#) and agreed the appropriate process had been followed with their full involvement in the decision-making outside of a meeting.
- 3.E The Board of Trustees **noted** the Special Resolution of Members to appoint new Members [Mem-Res-24-04 SPECIAL Appointment of Members - signed.pdf](#) and agreed that at the AGM, Members appeared more challenging than in previous years.
- 3.F The Board of Trustees **noted** an additional paper which had been circulated which would be considered during the Confidential section of the meeting . There were no other matters arising that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

#### 4 CEO Report [CEO - 60 mins](#)

The Board of Trustees is recommended to receive a report from the [Board-24-4-04 CEO report.pdf](#) to include Items 4A-4H: (CEO-60 mins).

- 4.A General Update
- 4.B Risk Register and commentary
- 4.C Pupils
- 4.D Tangley Park
- 4.E Safeguarding Update
- 4.F Staffing summary
- 4.G Trust Strategic Objectives
- 4.H Staff Training including approval of the Staff Training Proposal.

Supporting Papers – [Supporting Papers](#)

The CEO presented his report, highlighting the increased risk to maintaining and building staffing capacity. He advised that both Clarendon and Capella House Schools are still looking for a family support worker and not Strathmore School as stated in his report. In addition, the resignations of the Strathmore School Deputy Headteacher at Easter and the Headteacher at the end of the academic year keep this risk high. He advised that the closing date for the applications is Monday 24 March. To date the advert had 970 views, 6 applications had been received and 6 further applications were in draft. A recruitment panel had been agreed by the Governance and Nominations Committee and The CEO invited questions on his report.

The Board of Trustees noted the consultation on the accountability reforms proposed by Ofsted. They discussed the softening of the attitudes of Government towards academies with a number of their Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) Team coming from an academy background. The Board of Trustees noted that there was no consistent view emerging from the sector; some felt it was an improvement and some felt that it was going to revert back to a 'tick-box' exercise. The CEO emphasised that much will be determined by how any new Ofsted framework is implemented and the consistency of that implementation. The Board of Trustees noted the discussion at the Clarendon School's LGB where the Headteacher advised they may be likely to have an Ofsted Inspection next term. This may be under the current Framework or voluntarily as a pilot for the new Framework. The CEO advised that schools will continue to deliver for the pupils and then assess themselves against the whatever measures when they are agreed. This may have to be done at pace if there is an inspection. The CEO advised that he would be making a submission to the Consultation and encouraged Trustees to do so as well. **(ACTION)**. The Board of Trustees agreed that there was no particular risk or opportunity for the Trust provided by the Consultation.

The Board of Trustees asked if there had been any update on the Tangle Park arrangement for academic year 2025-26. The CEO advised that the DfE had been trying to establish Tangle Park as a virtual school but had been unable to. The current students will remain on Capella House Schools roll for September 2025. In addition, Beckmead Trust are looking at suitable space in primary schools in the Borough for a new intake in 2025-26. The Board of Trustees asked if there are any implications of this reflecting on the disruption that it had caused initially to Capella House School. The CEO advised that this should not cause any further impact as those 'teething' problems have now been resolved. The Trust will have a longer period of time to make arrangements for the students than they did previously.

The Board of Trustees noted that the Chairs Network Meeting had discussed the financial benchmarking information which had also been discussed in depth at the Finance and Resources Committee meeting. The Board noted the Chair of the LGB's were keen to support their Headteachers with this process. The Finance Director explained that this process was undertaken every year as part of the budget setting process, it was just commencing slightly earlier than in previous years. The CEO advised that initial meetings with Headteachers, the CEO and Finance Directors were taking place on 19 March. The Board of Trustees welcomed the Chairs support to the Headteacher for this potentially sensitive and confidential matter.

The Board of Trustees noted comments in the CEO report regarding families returning late from holidays in September and taking holiday in term time. The Board of Trustees asked if this was a concerning issue and what measures were in place to reduce this as this appears to be an increasing trend. The CEO explained that this observation was made at Clarendon School,

predominantly at the Primary Centre as their attendance figures were lower than in the other schools. At a recent joint Heads meeting, he had encouraged sharing of strategies they had used to improve attendance. One of the key contributors to this was the quality of their previous family support worker and the inability to appoint to the resulting vacancy. Encouraging parents to arrange medical and other appointments at the beginning or end of the day. The Board of Trustees asked if there was any information on whether the absences correlated to previously declined holiday requests. The CEO advised that this information was not collected. The Board of Trustees agreed that attendance is currently an operational issue currently and would continue to be monitored.

*Sarah Baker joined*

The Board of Trustees noted that sickness absence had been a challenge over the last few months with norovirus and cold and flu viruses being prevalent. The Board of Trustees asked if the Bradford Index is used to review impact on operational impact. The Finance Director advised that the Managing Health and Attendance Policy contains set triggers for attendance standards for employees. These are set in line with local authority practice.

The Board of Trustees thanked the CEO for his report.

## **5 Finance** **CEO / FD - 10 mins**

The Board of Trustees received the [P5 Management Accounts](#). The Finance Director advised that the minutes of the last Finance and Resources Committee had been circulated along with the questions from the Chair of the Committee and her responses.

The Finance Director highlighted that, whilst the management accounts are showing a slightly better position than forecast, this is a result of a timing difference when costs will be received. The overall in-year forecast remains negative rising from a deficit of £450k to £640k. The Finance Director noted that income from AfC has been at least guaranteed for 2024-25. She felt that following some discussion with AfC this would be extended to 2025-26 but this had not been confirmed. A further operational meeting with AfC had been arranged regarding Carecalc as there are still a high number of discrepancies for individual pupil funding

The Board of Trustees noted the figures on benchmarking which had been discussed at length at the Finance and Resources Committee meeting. The Finance Director explained that these figures had become more meaningful as many more MATs have adopted the DfE's chart of accounts. Two schools, Strathmore School and Clarendon School in particular had staffing costs near the top of comparator schools. This is being addressed with Headteachers and will inform the budget setting process for 2025-26. The Board of Trustees noted that this may result in material cost reductions for the year 2025-26. The Finance Director advised that general opinion in multiple national and regional forums is that there will be no further money given to schools. It is therefore important that Headteachers work towards an in-year balanced budget. She acknowledged that in some cases it may not be possible to do this, meet pupil needs and ensure the safety of the schools. The CEO added that he had also checked the 30 schools which were used in the benchmarking and in his opinion they were suitable comparisons.

The Board of Trustees asked if the benchmarking had placed the schools in the middle would this change the actions being considered to address the issues. The Finance Director advised that

there is a large difference in cost per pupil (£12k) between Clarendon School and the next closest school. She confirmed that addressing this may change the financial situation for the future. The Board of Trustees noted that Headteachers are being asked to justify the staffing they have and using different inputs such as pupil -facing time, ratios and PPA levels.

The Board of Trustees noted that costs are also likely to increase and that while benchmarking is useful to provide challenge to Headteachers it is a conversation starter and the resulting actions will be crucial in addressing the deficits. The Finance Director confirmed that she is also reviewing non-school costs, premises models and central costs to achieve cost savings

Supporting Papers: [Notes from the Chair](#)

## **6 School Resource Management Self-Assessment (SRMSA)**

The Board of Trustees noted that the SRMSA submission had also had been circulated to individual Trustees for comment and the final draft reviewed in Committee (Audit and Risk and Finance and Resources). The Board of Trustees approved the SRMSA for submission to the DfE. [Board-23-4-06 SRMSA Submission](#).

## **7 Governance CHAIR – 15 mins**

- 7.A The Board of Trustees **received** a verbal update following the AGM. The Chair noted that it had been his first AGM since joining the Trust and invited comments from attendees. The CEO felt that the level of appropriate questioning was an improvement over previous experiences. The Finance Director noted that their wish to meet outside of the AGM to agree what input and communication they needed to receive was a positive indicator. Other Trustees commented on the transparency of the responses to questions that were posed.

The Board of Trustees noted that there were 4 new Members of the total 6. The Chair reflected that Members appeared to have a genuine interest in the governance of the organisation and understand their role to make sure Trustees are doing their job properly. There was also evidence that Members were willing to challenge Trustees about what they do and how they do it. The Chair noted that the Governance Professional had circulated some suggested questions in advance of the meeting and whilst many of the responses were discussed within the Annual Report. The Board of Trustees noted the suggestion from Members at the AGM to tighten up the strategic objectives and KPI's for the coming academic year. This would be considered at the Strategy Session. **(ACTION)**

The Board of Trustees agreed that the timing of the AGM needed to closely follow a Board meeting and supported the Members request to meet twice a year, once at the AGM and one more informal six monthly update. The Chair of Trustees and Governance Professional would review a proposal for the Members to agree with regards to next steps. **(ACTION)**

The Board of Trustees noted that significant work had been undertaken with regards to governance this academic year and its implementation was continuing. The Board of Trustees agreed that a new plan would be developed to reflect any changes or improvements to governance which are required as a consequence of the Strategy

Session in July. **(ACTION)** The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee advised Trustees that a review of governance was part of the internal scrutiny programme for 2025-26.

- 7.B The Governance Professional requested that all Trustees complete their safeguarding training as soon as possible and the Chair of Trustees reminded Trustees to complete the 'Board effectiveness' questionnaire as this would help inform the recruitment process for the Parent Trustee. **(ACTION)**
- 7.C The Board of Trustees **noted** that arrangements and timings for the Trust Strategy Sessions would be circulated outside of the meeting.

## 8 Committee Summary Reports ➤ CHAIR – 10 mins

- 8.A The Board of Trustees **received** the summary reports from the Committee Chairs [Board-24-4-08A Committee Chairs Summary Reports.pdf](#). The Chair of Trustees thanked the Chairs of the Strathmore and the Standards and Effectiveness Committee for providing them. The Chair of Trustees felt that these documents are very useful to give an understanding of what is happening in those meetings and also to flag up any issues. The Board of Trustees and LGB Chairs noted that it also gave them more visibility of what was happening across the organisation.
- 8.B The Board of Trustees noted that there were no matters arising from the summary reports that have not previously been covered on the agenda.

Supporting draft minutes for noting

- Finance Committee -28 January 2025 and 4 March 2025
- Audit and Risk Committee – 4 March 2025
- Governance and Nominations Committee -
- Clarendon School LGB, 26 February 2025,
- Capella House School LGB, 25 February 2025
- Strathmore School LGB, 24 February 2025

## 9 Approval of Policies / Statements CEO – 5 mins

The Board received **the following policies** for approval including the [Board-24-3-09 Policy Change Summary](#) (Folder [Policies for Approval-Noting](#))

- 9.A AAT Finance Policy Mar 25
- 9.B NEW AAT Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy Mar 25
- 9.C AAT Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure Mar 25
- 9.D AAT Risk Assessment Policy and Guidance Mar 25
- 9.E AAT Health and Safety Policy Mar 25
- 9.F NEW AAT managing Menopause at Work Policy Mar 25
- 9.G AAT Grievance Policy and Procedure Mar 25
- 9.H AAT Disciplinary Policy and Procedure Mar 25
- 9.I AAT Code of Conduct Mar 25
- 9.J AAT Whistleblowing Policy Mar 25
- 9.K AAT Complaints Procedure Policy Mar 25

The Board of Trustees noted that they had been updated by relevant subject matter experts and reviewed by the relevant sub-committees. The Board of Trustees approved the policies.

The Board **noted** the following policies approved by the CEO since the last meeting.

- 9.L AAT Social Media Policy EDH Mar 25
- 9.M AAT Parents to be - Adoption Leave Policy for Support Staff - SHR25
- 9.N AAT Parents to be - Adoption Leave Policy for Teachers - SHR25
- 9.O AAT Parents to be - Maternity Leave Policy for Support Staff - SHR25
- 9.P AAT Parents to be - Maternity Leave Policy for Teachers - SHR24.docx
- 9.Q AAT Parents - Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Policy - SHR25
- 9.R AAT Parents - Shared Parental Leave and Pay Policy - SHR25

The Board of Trustees thanked the Finance Director for the significant amount of policy work she had undertaken

## 11 Confidential items

*Jane Curzon and Niall Brady left the meeting*

See also Confidential Appendix A to these minutes

## 10 Review impact, planned actions and agree feedback to the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees **noted** the extensive discussions regarding Outreach, proposed accountability measures and financial position.

The Board of Trustees **noted** the actions arising from the meeting.

Number	Extract	Owner	Status	Due Date
1	All Trustees to share contact information for potential users of Therapy Service with the Director of Therapies	all		asap
2	All Trustees invited to respond to the consultations on Curriculum and Ofsted individually if they wished	all		end of April 2025
3	Strategic objectives and associated KPI's to be refined following suggestion from Members	IP / all		Strategy Session (10 July)
4	Proposal on Member engagement with Trust Board to be proposed to Members	JA / JP		next Member meeting
5	Governance Development Plan to be drafted for AY 25-26 following Strategy Session	JP		01/09/25

## 12 Confidentiality

The Board of Trustees agreed that the discussion at the meeting the background papers , and the reports identified as confidential above, {and the minutes contained in the confidential appendix to the minutes relating to item 11,) should remain confidential and excluded from the published minutes and papers

The date of the next Board meeting is **21 May 2025**

Jonathan Pallas

Jonathan Pallas (Jun 4, 2025 08:09 GMT+1)

04/06/25

04/06/25







# Board-24-4-00 Approved Minutes 120325

Final Audit Report

2025-06-04

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