

Approved Minutes of the meeting of the Clarendon School Local Governing Body held on 26 November 2025 at 5.00pm at Clarendon Secondary School (RTS Conference Room)

[Link to Teams Meeting](#)

[Link to Papers CLA-25-2 261125](#)

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 CLA-25-2 261125.

Members of the Governing Body in attendance: Nataliya Bennett, Jenny Bissett, Niall Brady (Chair), Beth Reynolds and Hanna Shepard.

Members of the Governing Body in attendance virtually: Kelly Faulkner and Aminta Townshend.

Also in attendance: Niall Dumigan (Headteacher); Heads of Centre: Angela Mason and Michael Sinanan; Miranda van Manen, Designated Safeguarding Lead (Item 1 and 2 only) and Andy Whiteside, Trustee,

Clerk in attendance: Julie Adams, Governance Professional.

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

- 1.1 The Governing Body **noted** all members of the Governing Body were present
- 1.2 The Chair **reminded** all members of the Governing Body 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 Headteacher **advised** the Governing Body that there was a current Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) investigation affecting the school. The Governing Body, **noting** they could be made aware of any of the detail of the allegation, **asked** if the Headteacher felt that the process and procedure in place had worked as intended to date. The Headteacher **confirmed** his confidence that the correct action had been taken at the correct time, but **noted** that there would be learning for the organisation as a result of the situation.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) **presented** her report, noting a continued increase in instances of sexualised behaviour, primarily involving the same pupils who struggle with impulse control and understanding safe boundaries. The DSL **reported** that she planned to visit Dysart school to learn from their interventions and was also seeking further training on the issue.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead **noted** an increase in online safety incidents, often linked to bullying. The Headteacher **added** that the school has signed up to the 'Smartphone Free Childhood' campaign and is developing a new policy which includes workshops for parents.

The Governing Body **asked** if similar incidents of sexualised behaviour and online safety issues had been observed in other schools within the Trust. The DSL **advised** that she works with Capella and Strathmore schools and sees very similar incidents with teenagers with impulse control issues and inappropriate online communication.

The DSL **reported** that four Single Point of Access (SPA) referrals had been made in the current term, with a fifth made on the day of the meeting. She **expressed concern** that the threshold for intervention is high, meaning some referrals for families in crisis were not met as there was no immediate risk of harm. Following a **question** from the Governing Body, the Designated Safeguarding Lead clarified that multiple referrals can be made and do not need to have different themes. An escalation in the situation would be noted in a subsequent referral, and it is also possible for multiple professionals to submit referrals for the same case. The Governing Body **praised** the approach of staff to not self-moderate referrals even though prior experience may indicate that thresholds may not be met for the service, i.e Mental Health Support Team

There were 72 safeguarding concerns reported in the first half-term, compared to 145 in the whole of the previous year. This was viewed positively as an indication that staff are more proactive in reporting low-level concerns following effective training.

The DSL provided updates on several initiatives, including staff wellbeing sessions, a forthcoming INSET on the Hackett Continuum for sexualised behaviour, and the integration of behaviour tracking with safeguarding records on CPOMS.

Parent coffee mornings were being held, with the school nurse due to contribute on topics identified via a parent questionnaire which received 19 responses. The Governing Body **asked** if there were virtual options for parents to engage with school initiatives, given that many travel from a distance. The DSL **confirmed** that the school aims to be flexible, offering online options for parents' evenings, and that this could be extended to coffee mornings. The Headteacher **noted** that attendance at these mornings was improving. The DSL **explained** that she was working with the Family Engagement worker to develop a leaflet to signpost to different charities and support services.

The DSL **reported** that the Loudmouth theatre group had delivered a workshop on misogyny for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. A future workshop was being organised for independent travellers on responding to inappropriate behaviour on public transport.

The newly appointed Safeguarding Link Governor **agreed** to meet with the DSL before the end of term (**ACTION**).

The Governing Body **thanked** the DSL for her presentation.

Miranda van Manen left.

The Governing Body **asked** if there was also a need to recruit a DSL for the new school site. The Headteacher explained that the current DSL would divide her time across the three sites. The model would be the same as other satellite sites, where the Head of Centre is the de facto

Deputy DSL, ensuring a full-time DSL presence. Safeguarding experience would be a key criterion in the recruitment process for the Head of Centre.

The Governing Body **suggested** consideration of a three-DSL structure for the future, given the school's expansion to a third site and the potential impact on the current DSL's capacity. The Headteacher **confirmed** that changes to the leadership structure were being considered to accommodate the school's significant growth of approximately one-third. He outlined a potential model where one named DSL holds ultimate accountability, while operational duties are carried out by site-specific DSLs. The Head of Primary **added** that guidance permits multiple DSLs across different sites, provided one individual has overarching responsibility. The Headteacher **agreed**, emphasising the importance of a coordinating role to ensure a consistent safeguarding culture is maintained across all sites.

3. Minutes

- 3.1 The Governing Body **received** the draft and confidential draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2025 [CLA-25-2-02.1 Previous Draft Minutes 011025.pdf] and **approved** them as an accurate records of the meeting.
- 3.2 The Governing Body **noted** the completed actions from the previous meeting, including the four actions arising from the Confidential minutes.
- 3.3 The Governing Body **discussed** the action to trial a RAG rating of progress data clarifying the original request. The Governing Body **agreed** that the data now provided was appropriate and this action could be closed.

The Headteacher **reported** that the review of Outcome Stars for tracking personal development targets was ongoing. He noted that the responsible colleague was currently absent but that the system was working very successfully, particularly for pupils at the 'Gateway'. He suggested that the colleague could be asked to give a 5-10 minute presentation on the topic to the LGB at a future meeting. **(ACTION)**

Regarding the establishment of a Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the Governance Professional **advised** that governors should not be founding members due to potential conflicts of interest. She **clarified** that while governors should not be on the committee, the PTA would be a useful forum for stakeholder engagement once established. A Trustee **summarised** that governors could catalyse and support the PTA's creation without being directly involved in its initiation. The Governing Body **agreed** to close this action and monitor the progress of the PTA.

- 3.4 The Governing Body **noted** the latest published Board meeting minutes. The Governing Body **received** a verbal update from Andy Whiteside from the Trust Board. The last Board meeting covered staff progression, end-of-year financial reporting, and safeguarding, but the main focus was the proposed merger. A joint due diligence exercise on finance and HR arrangements, conducted by the two central teams, had concluded there were no 'show stoppers' to prevent the consultation on the merger from proceeding.

He **explained** that both Trust boards had agreed to proceed to a formal consultation, which went live before the half-term break and would run until 1st December. A steering group would then review the feedback and make a further recommendation to the boards for their December meetings.

The Governing Body **queried** the statement that the proposed merger was not for financial reasons, given the Trust's previously challenging three-year financial forecast. Mr Whiteside clarified that whilst immediate financial pressures had been mitigated through recent actions, the long-term outlook remained uncertain. The merger was presented as a 'financial opportunity' to create efficiencies and resilience by spreading central costs over more schools, rather than a 'financial imperative' driven by an immediate deficit. He **commended** the excellent response from the Headteacher and Governing Body in response to concerns raised following the benchmarking review.

The Governing Body **asked** about the proposed funding model for the new trust, specifically whether it would involve GAG pooling or top-slicing. Mr Whiteside **advised** that Chief Operating Officer was developing a fair transition arrangement, but the final model was not yet decided. It was acknowledged that GAG pooling with mainstream schools could present a risk. The funding model would be included in a list of 'non-negotiables' to be formally agreed between the two trusts.

Mr Whiteside **addressed** perceptions that the merger was a takeover. It was explained that while Coombe is larger by pupil numbers, the financial sizes of the two trusts are more comparable. It was emphasised that leadership roles would be shared to create a balanced team, with Auriga Academy Trust providing the Deputy CEO, COO, Director of Therapies, and the Chair of the new combined Trust Board. The Governing Body **asked** if these appointments should be advertised externally. Mr Whiteside **explained** that the merger was legally a transfer of assets to the other trust, which already has a CEO, there was no requirement to advertise that role. The Governance Professional **added** that the COO of Auriga Academy Trust would move into a vacant COO post at the other trust under TUPE regulations.

Mr Whiteside **explained** that a 'shadow' version of the combined trust board would be formed in the new year to review the integration plan. The Governing Board **expressed** a concern about how lessons learned regarding communication between the Trust and its schools would be applied in the new structure, and whether schools had a formal voice in the current merger discussions. Mr Whiteside **acknowledged** that the current focus was on the high-level merger of the two boards, but the next phase would involve reviewing and aligning the schemes of delegation and LGB structures. It was agreed that this work was important and would be addressed following the Department for Education's approval of the merger.

The Governing Body **asked** as to whether the online consultation form was a suitable method for all parents, particularly those who may not use technology. Mr Whiteside **confirmed** that alternative, in-person 'surgery' sessions with the CEOs of both trusts had been made available. This multi-faceted approach was developed following advice from the Department for Education on best practice for consultations.

A Governor **asked** if governors were expected to complete the consultation survey, commenting that it was complex and that parents may feel the merger is a 'done deal'. Mr Whiteside **confirmed** that governors were encouraged to respond via the official channel to centralise feedback. It was **acknowledged** that the LGB's continued role in holding the new trust board to account would be vital in protecting the school's identity.

- 3.5 The Chair **advised** that he had had discussions with the Headteacher who had reported significant failings by the IT provider, Turn IT On (TIO), including a period of two to three weeks in September when the school's filtering and monitoring systems were inactive. This major safeguarding failure was discovered by school leadership, not proactively identified by the provider. The Head of Primary expressed alarm that the failure was discovered by chance.

The Governing Body **asked** what steps had been taken to address issues. It was **reported** that the specific issue had been rectified and assurances had been given that it would not reoccur. In addition, the COO had raised all concerns from Clarendon Secondary with TIO, invited the Head of Secondary to monthly review meetings with the provider and encouraged him to raise any concerns directly with them.

The Head of Secondary **voiced concerns** about the provider's expertise with Google systems, which is particularly worrying as other schools in the Trust plan to transition to Google. He **noted** they were slow to resolve issues and appeared to lack the expertise of the previous company.

The Governing Body **asked** about the appointment process and length of contract for the current IT provider. The Governance Professional **explained** that a formal tender process was undertaken by an appointed panel, with a proposal made to the Trust Board. The final decision was based on identifying the provider who best met the specification detailed on the original tender. She confirmed that the Head of Secondary had been a member of the Panel. The Head of Secondary **advised** the procurement process had been contentious. He felt that the views of the school leaders on the panel, who preferred a different provider, appeared to have been ignored. The Governance Professional referring to the relevant Resolution and minutes of the meeting **advised** that the panel had been split and the final decision had had to be adjudicated by the CEO as there had been an impasse in the decision making. The contract had been for three years.

The Headteacher **expressed concern** that the same provider holds the contract for the hardware installation at the new school building. The Governing Body expressed fears about the potential for costly mistakes and the school's ability to hold the provider to account. The Headteacher **stated** that, based on his experience with the provider, he would urge the Trust to withdraw from the contract if it were possible. The Chair noted that there were often issues uncovered when IT contracts were transferred and suggested that possibility of withdrawal based on breach of contract could be explored with the Trust. He would raise these issues in his report to the Board (**ACTION**).

There were no other matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Headteachers Report

The Governing Body **received** a report from the Headteacher CLA-25-1-03 Clarendon House School Headteacher Report.pdf to include Items 3-11. The Headteacher **thanked** governors for their comments and questions on his report received in advance of the meeting and advised that responses had been added. The Governing Body **agreed** to work through his report section by section..

4.1 General Update and key risks

The Headteacher **provided** a verbal update on the school's self-review against the new inspection framework, which came into force in November. He **explained** that due to the significant changes and the need for accuracy, written judgements would be withheld from governors until full moderation was complete. He anticipated no areas would be judged below 'secure', but noted that other schools were receiving 'attention needed' judgements areas under the new, more nuanced framework. Challenges were identified, particularly regarding the 'inclusion' criteria which now requires greater staff awareness of pupil disadvantage. 'Personal development and well-being' and 'leadership and governance' were highlighted as expected areas of strength.

The Headteacher stated he expected 'leadership and governance' to be an area of strength, given the work undertaken by the leadership team and the governance improvements made since the previous inspection.

The Governing Body **asked** if the Headteacher had considered how the school would manage the complexity of logistically arranging visits to three sites. The Headteacher **acknowledged** that this would affect the senior leadership team, but that thought had been given to basic timetables and planning already. The Governing Body **asked** if the used of the Ofsted 'Buddy' had been given some thought as this was planned to support senior leaders. The Headteacher **advised** that he would rather be responsible for this role as he felt it was important for co-ordination. He suggested that perhaps the CEO who would also be supporting may also assist and know the school well enough to fulfil this role.

4.2 Pupil Numbers for 2025-26 and Attendance

The Headteacher **reported** that the school's attendance figures were above the national and London averages for SEND schools. It was **noted**, however, that pupil premium persistent absence remained a challenging area which could potentially impact the school's inclusion performance. The Governing Body **acknowledged** that attendance issues are common in a SEND setting.

The Headteacher **mentioned** that there were early signs of improvement in the data this year, with the differential between pupil premium persistent absence and overall absence narrowing considerably. This progress was attributed to the work of the Parent Partnership Coordinator, who had been working closely with families to address attendance issues.

The Governing Body **asked** if it was the behaviour of one or two individuals which was affecting the school's overall performance in this area. The Headteacher confirmed that this was the case, suggesting that while behaviour was generally good, a small number of pupils were impacting the overall figures.

The Governing Body **noted** that attendance targets for mainstream schools had been published and **asked** if a similar guidance had been published for special schools. The Headteacher **confirmed** that no such report had been received but there may be more information forthcoming in the spring term in the governments expected White Paper.

4.3 Safeguarding and behaviour

The Governing Body **noted** the discussion in Item 2.

4.4 Pupil progress and achievements

The Headteacher **provided** an update on pupil progress and achievements, noting the difficulty in judging achievements using standard toolkits due to their focus on national averages, which are unsuitable for an SEND setting. It was reported that the school uses standardised assessments, a practice not common in all special schools, and that the full implementation of the 'Earwig' internal tracking system would provide a more robust and unified measure of achievement.

4.5 School Development Plan and School Self Review

The Governing Body **noted** this had been discussed at Item 4.1.

4.6 Visitors Reports

The Governing Body **noted** that the draft report had not yet been received.

4.7 Partnerships and community links

4.8 Staffing

The Headteacher **reported** on the recruitment plan for a new Head of Centre. The role would be advertised in December to extend the application window and attract a strong pool of candidates. The unique nature of recruitment in the education sector was also discussed. The Headteacher confirmed that a governor would be invited to support the process, for which a provisional date of 29th January had been set. Interested governors should advise the Headteacher of availability (**ACTION**).

4.9 Learner, Family and Community Voice

4.10 Finance Commentary

The Finance Link Governor **advised** that she had not yet been invited to any review meetings this academic year. The Headteacher said that the Period 2 accts have just been published and a meeting date would be arranged shortly. He would ensure liaises to arrange the meeting (**ACTION**)

4.11 Health and Safety / Premises Update

The discussion covered several premises-related issues. It was **noted** that a recent heating failure had been repaired. The built-in air conditioning in the meeting room, which is an Richmond upon Thames School room, remains broken, but the school is not responsible for its repair.

The Headteacher **provided** an update on the new school site construction, stating that the aim was for the building to be watertight by February. Staff visits could then be arranged from February onwards, with potential pupil visits in the summer term, depending on progress. The Head of Primary **added** that an official opening ceremony would take place at some point in the next year and that this and circulating photographs would assist in promoting the new site.

The Head of Primary **indicated** that some parents were resistant to moving their children to the new site. It was **explained** that if pupils did not move for Year 6, a place might not be guaranteed for them in Year 7. It was **noted** that having something physical to show parents would make it easier to persuade them that the move would be beneficial for their children. The Governing Body **asked** how many existing pupils who would be moving to the new site compared to new pupils. The Headteacher **explained** that the school intended to relocate 18 pupils from the primary site, comprising mixed-age groups with approximately three or four pupils from each year group.

4.12 Term Dates 2026-27

The Headteacher **presented** the proposed term dates for 2026-27, which included two additional school-specific INSET days on top of the six approved by the Trust. The two additional days proposed for the school were 4th January and 23rd July. The rationale for the July date was to allow staff to prepare classrooms for the new academic year, enabling September INSET days to be prioritised for training and development.

The Governing Body **asked** if the proposed term dates were aligned with other schools in the borough. The Headteacher confirmed that the dates broadly align with the local authority (AFC) primary school dates, which was considered more beneficial for parents making childcare arrangements.

A governor **expressed** continued reservations about the need for eight INSET days when other local special schools reportedly manage with five. The Governing Body **asked** the views of the senior leadership team on the proposed INSET days. The Head of Primary spoke in favour of the additional INSET days. She **noted** the benefits for upskilling all staff, including Teaching Assistants, covering necessary training such as Team Teach, and providing quality time for the whole staff to train together. The Head of Secondary concurred.

An action was placed on the Headteacher to correct typographical errors in the document before publication (**ACTION**) and the Governing Body **approved** the term dates as proposed.

5. Governance

5.1 The Governing Body **received** the membership overview. The Governance Professional **confirmed** the parent governor election process was underway, with materials having been distributed. The closing date for nominations was 1st December, and one parent had already expressed interest. Should no other candidates come forward, this individual would be appointed. It was anticipated that a parent governor would be in place for the next meeting. She **advised** that a Clarendon governor had highlighted that the NGA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training could not be undertaken twice and would amend the training matrix **(ACTION)**. A personal email would be circulated to all governors advising current information held, as well as outstanding confirmations and training before the Christmas break. **(ACTION)**

5.2 The Governance Professional **reported** that the Governance and Nominations Committee
5.3 had agreed that annual reports not already produced would not be required. The Governance Professional **added** that the governance development plan remained a valuable document, particularly in light of potential Ofsted inspections. The Chair felt both were required and would produce retrospectively **(ACTION)**.

The Governance Professional **thanked** those who had responded to the internal scrutiny governance survey. She informed the meeting that the information from this audit would be reviewed at the Audit and Risk Committee's March meeting and anything of note raised with LGB's arising from their report which was awaited.

5.4 The Governance Professional **noted** several governors interests in visiting the school and suggested that governors could combine their visits with upcoming school events, such as nativities, to make the best use of their time. A list of dates would be circulated. **(ACTION)**

The Governance Professional advised of two cross-trust Panels which need to be formed on 17 December 2025 and asked for volunteers. **(ACTION)** Two governors advised of their availability.

6. Approval of Policies / Statements

6.1 The Governing Body **received** the Pupil Premium Statement and Strategy for publication. The Headteacher **presented** the Pupil Premium Statement and Strategy, reporting that funding had been reduced by approximately £6,000 compared to the previous year. He confirmed that spending priorities were unchanged, with around £2,000 spent on items such as uniforms, food, and taxis. The Headteacher **explained** that a full review would be conducted next year to inform a new three-year strategy. He **noted** that while academic gaps had been successfully closed, a gap remained concerning pupil attendance, and proposed that the next strategy should funnel proportionally more funding towards attendance-focused support. The Governing Body **approved** the Pupil Premium Statement and Strategy for publication.

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

The Governing **noted** the significant discussions on safeguarding and IT which would be fed back to the Board, alongside the continued engagement of the Governing Body and progress of the new build.

The Governing Body **noted** the actions arising from this meeting.

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
1	DSL and Safeguarding Link Governor to meet before the end of term	BR / MvM	asap
2	Family engagement co-ordinator to present to Spring LGB	ND / AJ / JM	01/02/26
3	Outcome Star's to be presented at the next LGB meeting	JG /ND	01/02/26
4	Governors advise HT of availability to participate in recruitment of new Head of Centre (poss 29/1/26)	All / ND	asap
5	Headteacher to arrange regular meeting with COO and Finance Link Governor	ND/NB/SC	asap
6	HT to amend typos on term dates before publication	ND	asap
7	Training matrix to be updated to note EDI training with NGA is only once unless changes to legislation	JA	asap
8	Emails to be sent to governors confirming current information, outstanding confirmations and training before Xmas break	JA	19/12/2025
9	Chair to draft Annual Report and Governance Development Plan	NB	asap
10	List of dates for Xmas Festivities to be circulated to governors	ND / JA	Dec-25
11	Volunteers required for Panels on 17 December 2025.	All / JA	asap

Supporting Papers – [17. Committee reporting template.docx](#)

8. Confidentiality

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

The date of the next meeting is **25 February 2026 (papers due 11 February 2026)**

Niall Brady

Niall Brady (Feb 26, 2026 17:11:15 GMT)

Chair of the Clarendon School Local Governing Body

26/02/2026







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Final Audit Report

2026-02-26

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