

Approved Minutes for the meeting of the Capella House School Local Governing Body held on 25 February at 5.00pm virtually via Teams.

Link to Papers [CAP-24-3 250225](#)

Items in square brackets are references to documents found in the folder CAP-24-3 250225.

Members of the Governing Body in attendance virtually: Peter Bailey, Niale Cleobury, Michele Coleman (Item 1 to 3 only, Kirsty Craik, Simon Gordon (Chair), Sue Holt (from Item 3), Secil Ozkan (appointed in), Roger Mills, Claire Richmond and Dominic Sunderland (Headteacher).

Members of the Governing Body absent: Meredith Hamilton and Kate Nepstad.

Also in attendance: Julie Adams, Governance Professional and Paul Roberts, Trustee.

Clerk: Gilly Hudson

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

- 1.A The Governing Body **welcomed** Roger Mills and Sue Holt as Trust appointed Co-opted governors.
- 1.B The Governing Body **noted** Julia Morley has been appointed a Member of the Auriga Academy Trust from 5 February 2025 and has therefore stepped down from the LGB. The Governing Body expressed their thanks to Ms Morley for her service to Capella House School.
- 1.C The Governing Body **discussed** the appointment of Secil Ozkan and **agreed** to appoint her as a Co-opted Governor for a four-year term with immediate effect.
- 1.D The Governing Body **received** apologies from Meredith Hamilton and Kate Nepstad and **agreed** to consent to their absence.
- 1.E 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. Minutes

The Governing Body **noted** the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2024 [CAP-24-2-03A Previous Draft Minutes 271124.pdf](#) were not available and would be presented at the next meeting for approval. **(ACTION)**

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

3. Headteachers Report

The Governing Body received a report from the Headteacher [CAP-24-3-03 Capella House School Headteacher Report.pdf](#)

- 3.A General Update and key risks
- 3.B Pupil Numbers for 2024-25 and Attendance
- 3.C Safeguarding and behaviour
- 3.D Pupil progress and achievements

- 3.E Receive School Development Plan and Self Review
- 3.F Visitors Reports
- 3.G Partnerships and community links
- 3.H Staffing
- 3.I Learner, Family and Community Voice
- 3.J Finance Commentary
- 3.K Health and Safety / Premises Update

Supporting papers [CAP-24-3-03C DSL Report to LGB 2025.02.14.pdf](#), [CAP-24-3-03C LG-NC Safeguarding 031224.pdf](#), [CAP-24-3-04F 2024 Autumn SIP Report Capella.pdf.url](#), [CAP-24-3-03li Capella House - new starters Sept 2024.pdf](#), [CAP-24-3-03lii Capella House Parent Survey - December 2024.pdf](#), [CAP-24-3-03liii Pupil Survey - December 2024.pdf](#), and [CAP-24-3-03liiv Staff Survey December 2024.pdf](#)

The Headteacher **presented** his report and advised that since writing a further two students have joined taking the roll up to eighty. One was at primary and one at secondary. The discussions with Achieving for Children in providing a demountable are continuing and the school has implemented a deadline of by the end of this half term, to allow planning to be agreed. Achieving for Children (AfC) would assist in securing the planning decision. Staffing the provision should not be problematic. There is a teacher covering maternity leave who has expressed a wish to remain. It is now in AfC's hands.

The Headteacher **explained** that the development of the Hub with Richmond-upon-Thames College requires approval from the Board of Trustees. There would also need to be confirmed agreement with AfC and the College themselves. This would be expected to be in place this academic year. It would not impact the day to day running of the school.

The Headteacher **invited** questions from the Governing Body.

The Governing Body **questioned** the proposed additional class and asked if the therapy provision would also need to be increased. The Headteacher **advised** that if this was seen to have an impact, contingency arrangements had been discussed. The Governing Body **asked** if the profile of pupils who would be accepted would remain the same, expressing concerns about whether an additional class would stretch the school's resources. The Headteacher **clarified** that any extra class would adhere to the school's current admissions criteria and policy.

Pupil premium

The Governing Body **noted** the request in the School Improvement Partner report advising the Pupil Premium Report was not on the website. The Headteacher **advised** that this was completed before the December requirement. This is a three-year strategy reviewed annually.

Persistent absence

Regarding attendance, the Governing Body **noted** the level of persistent absence and **asked** if transport issues were a contributing factor. The Headteacher **explained** that persistent absentees are generally due to wellbeing and health concerns, particularly among secondary KS4 students who are known to AfC and welfare services. This issue is common in schools, not just special schools. The Governing Body **noted** that the approach agreed in their previous meeting in

addressing these issues through communication and support rather than sanctioning and fining was a healthier approach especially in a special school setting.

The Governing Body **asked** if the sleep workshops for parents had helped with behaviour and were better attended than before. The Headteacher **explained** the aim is to work with parents for positive mental health outcomes for the pupils and there is no direct correlation between the workshops and attendance levels. Building relationships with parents and de-stigmatizing mental health issues are also important goals in the longer term. The school is also making parents and students aware there is mental health service support available which is hoped to work across all the issues affecting the pupil.

The Governing Body **noted** that persistent non-attendance is complex, and **enquired** whether there is a formal cut-off period if a pupil refuses to attend school. The Headteacher **confirmed** there is no formal cut-off point but it is the responsibility of AfC, through a multidisciplinary team to decide if the placement is sustainable after a period of intervention. Alternative solutions such as medical tutoring or different provisions are also considered in these situations.

The Governing Body **acknowledged** the analysis of attendance in the report is useful. It would also be useful to see some measure against the preceding year.

The Governing Body **noted** that schools and AfC are reluctant to have a child unattached to a school, as AfC would be liable for the child, as this would create a Child Missing Education. The issue is not just persistent absentees but also the need to hold spaces for cases going to tribunal where there are lengthy delays.

Tribunals

The Headteacher **confirmed** that there are two pupils in primary whose places are being held, he is participating in attend legal briefings, which planned an additional demand on his time. These tribunals are expected at the least in December 2026. The Governing Body **expressed concern** that children are waiting this length of time and that this prevents other children from accessing the places and getting the education where needs could be met. The Governing Body **asked** if the two pupils were attending any school currently. The Headteacher **advised** they did attend another school currently.

The Headteacher **explained** that the Trust CEO has raised this with AfC as that it is an inefficient use of resources. The main difficulty is that it is a legal process which is not able to be altered and confirmed, following a question that the process could not be expedited. The Headteacher **advised** that local authorities tend to lose 94% of the cases that go to Tribunal. The Governing Body **asked** if the places being held for tribunal could be allocated to other children. The Headteacher explained that there would be a safety risk to accommodating nine pupils in a class that was designed for seven. The Governing Body **discussed** ways to improve efficiency. The Governing Body **suggested** that this should be escalated to the Trust Board, to consider engaging with elected Councillors to release the spaces. The Governance Professional **advised** that this issue could be highlighted in the Governing Body report the Trust Board. **(ACTION)**. In addition, the Chair **requested** that tribunals be added explicitly to the appropriate risk area in the risk register. **(ACTION)**

Non-core subjects

The Governing Body **noted** a governor visit which had looked at core subjects (Maths and Phonics). The Governing Body **asked** about progress and the evaluation and reporting metrics of non-core subjects, such as PE. The Headteacher **explained** that development in these areas is seen in the KS4 outcomes. The Governing Body **discussed** the importance of giving students experiences and access to the curriculum to build skills for KS4 qualifications. They **noted** that there are softer metrics, such as participation in history and art lessons used to measure progress. The Staff governor **noted** that a recent local workshop she had taken the pupils to, colleagues had been impressed that her students had already been introduced to charcoal drawing, so these experiences are helpful to teachers to benchmark against.

The Governing Body **asked** what support is there for pupils exceeding expectations, referencing the Y11 Maths student in the papers. The Headteacher **explained** that the goal is to get all students to take the relevant Foundation paper which would allow a grade 5 to be achieved. In cases like this support would be put in place for the pupil to access a Higher paper to reach a grade 4 or higher. Staff continually review progress and do not just 'settle' for foundation qualifications.

Cost of pupil places

The Governing Body **asked** about SEN funding for places at Capella House School. He Headteacher **explained** that there is an initial £10k in notional funding plus additional banding values from £12k to £36k with the average being £26k. The Governing Body **estimated** that approximately £50k is then being spent by the LA on the unused tribunal places.

The Governing Body **asked** about Kingston borough pupils being treated as 'out-of-borough'. The Headteacher confirmed that AfC using CareCalc and this is across both Kingston and Richmond boroughs. He **explained** that the LA had agreed to guarantee income for the schools to the end of the academic year in July. There is a need to ensure that the significant income discrepancies are addressed for individual pupils. The Headteacher had received training on this from AfC as the language used in the Annual Reviews is key. The Parent Governor **noted** that this language does not necessarily celebrate the achievements of the young person but focusses on a 'worst day' scenario. She added that though there have been problems with the software there does not seem any intent to move away from it as the contract is for 5 years.

Recruitment

The Headteacher **advised** that a support staff member from Clarendon School is being trialled for the family support worker role. This will allow them to develop experience and see if it is a role suitable for them. He **reported** that maternity cover for the Speech and Language therapist had also been appointed.

Use of AI

The Governing Body **asked** how AI is used in school planning. The Headteacher is working with LGFL to develop how it is used. He **assured** the Governing Body that its intent is not to deskill teachers as they still need to have the pedagogical knowledge. He is encouraging teachers to use it as a dialogue to refine their planning. The Staff Governor **advised** that she used it in planning a street art lesson and it reduced the admin burden for her. It is beneficial to embed AI operationally and teach students how to use it effectively at KS4. The Headteacher also **commented** that it can be useful in managing behaviour issues related to autism. Support staff have used it to rephrase or better explain something to a pupil who is neurodiverse.

The Governing Body **enquired** how technology is being used to prepare students for life after school. The Headteacher **identified** 'Capella Town' as a key area where children are learning functional skills to prepare for life after school. The Governing Body **noted** that all pupils have Chrome books and are being taught to use them safely and effectively, within the prescribed limits. The Headteacher **added** that teachers have cited pupils finding online resources or articles they have come across as being helpful to others, and those being incorporated into lessons.

The Governing Body **asked** if AI assisted the personalisation of teaching content to individual passions. The Headteacher **advised** that this was more possible with AI. He was teaching 'branching databases' and AI had helped him to link this to animals which helped with the engagement of students.

The Governing Body **asked** if the school is digital-ready and if it required additional funds to provide equipment, such as VR headsets. The Headteacher **advised** that he felt that they had the appropriate equipment for now, and did not need any further investment unless there would be a meaningful benefit.

Paul Roberts **added** that the Trust had recently retendered for the IT support provider contract. The Headteacher had also participated in that process. The Board of Trustees have acknowledged that whilst an 'Innovation' element was not part of the tender process, it is a key piece of work that needs to be undertaken to address teacher workload and innovation in the classroom. The Governing Body **agreed** to receive a presentation on AI at a future meeting.

(ACTION)

Michele Coleman left.

SIP

The Headteacher **reported** the school has received the first visit from the newly appointed SIP. It was a positive start and a good reset to confirm the school's internal assessment of the provision.

The Governing Body **picked up** the concern in the SIP report regarding the reduction in functional skills courses and asked if any progress had been made on substituting comparable courses. The Headteacher is working on this and there is feedback going to the examination boards. Nothing new can be created from scratch. He is discussing alternatives and skills-based training rather than knowledge-based courses. The school is also supporting self-directed pathways for learners. The Governing Body **noted** that employers do not necessarily require certificates but will always want people who can cope with a workplace environment and have interpersonal and organisational skills.

Safeguarding

The Governing Body **noted** the use of SENSO software and **asked** if this monitors students' computer use at home. The Headteacher **explained** that if they use the school credentials then anything suspicious will be picked up. Pupils are limited to what they can access, and a lot of content would be blocked anyway. Pupils, especially in secondary can sometimes bypass this by not using their school account, however, this is mitigated by helping them to learn good online safety practices in school, through online workshops and Police visits.

The Governing Body **asked** about Prevent and online radicalisation as they expect there to be crossover in the findings of the SEN and Southport Inquiries. The Parent Governor **noted** there had been some work locally amongst Local Safeguarding Partners around the local Prevent Offer. The Headteacher **confirmed** that the biggest issues are online habits and behaviours. The school has good relations and links with CEOPS, but these behaviours can be overlooked until it is too late.

The Governing Body **asked** if the PSHE curriculum is refreshed to accommodate topical discussions. The Headteacher **advised** that timetables would be reviewed, and big world events will be covered, such as Ukraine and Gaza recently. The school will give a balanced view, however, pupils all use social media so there is also a need to enable pupils to discern the information they see. The Governing Body **asked** if these would be documented and the themes reflected to evidence the values of the school. The Headteacher **confirmed** they were. He added that what was not captured is feeling of kindness and the appreciation that not everyone thinks or responds in the same way.

Capella Town

The Governing Body **asked** if there was any support which could be provided for Capella Town. The Headteacher advised that it would be useful for governors to visit to get to know the school with a professional curiosity. **(ACTION)**

Staff development

The Governing Body **asked** about the development of middle leaders referred to in the SIP report. They **asked** if there are any initiatives being considered. The Headteacher **advised** that the school is releasing teachers to participate in local or national groups related to their subjects. There has been funding for National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), and staff are encouraged to pursue these opportunities.

Following a question from the Governing Body, the Headteacher **confirmed** there was no further update to give yet on CPD for the three agreed additional INSET days in October half-term 2026.

Pupil Survey

The Governing Body **discussed** the response rates to the pupil survey, noting the quarter of students who did not feel they had a specific person in the school to talk to about any concerns. The Headteacher **assured** the Governing Body that survey results are always discussed at the student council meetings and there is a 'You Said...We did' in used assemblies. The school also has an 'I am worried' email address. He **reflected** that in some cases there needs to be a clearer context set for the 'concern'.

The Governing Body **noted** that therapists create bespoke plans for each pupil to meet. This could be a drain on resources (planning time etc.) The Governing Body **asked** if there was a method for systemising the development of these plans to reduce workload. The Headteacher **had not considered** this using a systems-led approach as each pupil's need was different and were engaged in different ways to the schools' universal provision and individualised plans. He **felt** it would be difficult to adopt a one-size fits all approach.

Parent Survey

The Headteacher **confirmed** more parents had responded to the survey than previously, but there are concerns about survey fatigue. Parents are better engaged when attending workshops.

The Governing Body **suggested** using webinars for parents as an alternative to parents needing to attend the school in the evening for workshops. The school plans to upload bite-sized informational videos on the website for parents to access at their convenience.

Finance Commentary

Staff costs remain an ongoing issue, particularly with the need to recruit for both teaching and therapy roles. The Headteacher **acknowledged** the concern but **noted** that the school is well-managed. As a newer school in the Trust, Capella has been able to benchmark costs against Clarendon and Strathmore to put a solid business model in place.

The Governing Body **asked** if there are any financial implications with the Tangle Park arrangement. The Headteacher **advised** there have been some administrative frustrations but there are no financial issues. Any Auriga / Capella costs are covered by AfC who are keen to support the arrangement.

Regarding funding, the Governing Body **asked** if the school is aware of expenditures for the new sites. The Headteacher is working closely with the Trust on costs for the Post 16 provision; other matters are with AfC. Paul Roberts added that the Trust Board has explicitly not given approval to open the new sites for Clarendon and Strathmore Schools, despite the advanced stages of the planning, until AfC have confirmed the funding is guaranteed as cost neutral. The Governing Body **noted** the closure of a Strathmore satellite provision and asked what learning the Board had taken from that financial model. The Trustee **confirmed** that the Board is attempting to ensure that longer term sustainability their ability to work for the public benefit is secured.

4. Governance

- 4.A The Governing Body **reviewed** the membership overview [CAP-24-3-05A Governor Overview inc. Training.pdf.pdf](#). The Governance Professional **reminded** governors to address any confirmations or training highlighted in red, especially safeguarding training.
- 4.B The Governing Body **noted** that the significant area for development had been related to their vacancies. Noteworthy progress had been made on this area which had resulted in three new governors joining the meeting. Further work would be undertaken to support their mentoring and induction.
- 4.C The Governing Body **received** a Link Governor Visit Report from Peter Bailey and thanked him for his visit and report, noting there were no matters to be brought to their attention. [CAP-24-3-05Ci LG-PB-Teaching 080125.pdf](#)

5. Approval of Policies / Statements

The Governing Body noted there were no policies for approval.

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

The Governing Body **noted** their discussions on AI, absence, tribunals and safeguarding. The Governing Body **agreed** that the impact of Tribunals should be escalated to the Board of Trustees.

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

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
1	Governance Professional to ensure minutes of meeting 27 November are available for the next meeting	JA	30/04/25
2	Chair of Governors to include potential risks relating to Tribunals via the Summary report to the Trust Board	SG	12/03/25
3	Headteacher to identify Tribunal risk on his Risk Register	DS	asap
4	Headteacher to deliver a presentation on AI at a future meeting	DS	next meeting
5	Governor Visits to be arranged, particularly to see Capella Town	All	next meeting

7. Confidentiality

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

The date of the next meeting is **7 May 2025 at 1.00pm**



sg (May 21, 2025 18:01 GMT+1)

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21/05/25


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Final Audit Report


2025-05-21


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