

**Approved minutes of a meeting of the Capella House School Local Governing Body held on 30 September 2025 at 5.00pm at Capella Secondary School (RTS Conference Room)**

[Link to Teams Meeting](#)

[Link to Papers CAP-25-1 300925](#)

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 CAP-25-1 300925.

**Members of the Governing Body in attendance:** Kirsty Craik (with the exception of Item 4.8), Fiona Johnstone (appointed during Item 1) and Meredith Hamilton,

**Members of the Governing Body in attendance virtually:** Peter Bailey and Asif Mullan (Chair),

**Members of the Governing Body absent:** Şecil Ozkan and Claire Richmond.

**Also in attendance:** Dominic Sunderland, Headteacher; Heads of Centre: Maria Landeira Frias and Philip John (Items 1 and 2 only); and Andy Whiteside, Trustee.

**Clerkin attendance:** Julie Adams, Governance Professional.

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

- 1.1 The Governing Body **noted** apologies for absence had been received from Claire Richmond. The Governing Body **agreed** to consent to her absence and **requested** that the Governance Professional follows up the absence of Secil Ozkan. **(ACTION)**

The Governance Professional **informed** the LGB of Sue Holt's resignation due to personal circumstances.

The Chair of the Local Governing Body **introduced** himself following his appointment by the Trust Board on 18 September 2025. He detailed his background in executive recruitment and NGO work in health and education and declared his personal interest in the success of the school as a parent of a child attending the primary school.

All other attendees introduced themselves. The Chair **expressed** the importance of all governors being active participants and stated his intention to have individual conversations with governors to gauge their interests and commitment.

- 1.2 Fiona Johnstone **introduced** herself explaining her background in HR at BP before retraining as a teacher. She had worked in both independent and state schools across KS1 and KS2 and was currently a SENCO at a newly formed independent school with a high proportion of SEND children. She also noted her previous experience as a safeguarding governor at another primary school. The Governance Professional **recommended** Ms Johnstone's appointment as a co-opted governor to the Governing

Body. The Governing Body **agreed** to appoint Ms Johnstone with immediate effect as a co-opted governor for a period of four years.

- 1.3 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 Governing Body **received** a presentation on pupil progress for school year 2024-2025, including external assessments [CAP-25-1-02 Whole School Progress Data 2024-25].

Maria Landeira de Frias, Head of the Primary Centre, **presented** on improvements made to assessment methods over the past four school years, noting that initial methods like Maths Assessment for Learning and Teaching (MALT) and National Group Reading Test (NGRT) for reading in Primary, and a single benchmarking approach, did not accurately reflect pupil progress, especially for those with specific needs or in foundation subjects. Ms De Frias detailed changes to assessment: MALT is now assessed four times a year, and NGRT in Primary twice a year, to provide more frequent data points. Pupil progress is assessed three times per year recognising three, six- and twelve-months progress and is now individualised for each child in core areas, developed in collaboration with speech and language therapists and teachers. Foundation subjects and writing are now assessed using a percentage-based tool to show progress more accurately, developed with the English lead and speech and language therapists, incorporating key stage criteria and the national curriculum.

The Governing Body **asked** how the progression of pupils is measured, and if there are set performance indicators for individual student progress against desired outcomes. Ms de Frias **advised** that individualised assessment, created by analysing previous years' data and speech and language levels, provides the indicator for each child's performance against expectations. This approach is highly individualised, requiring manual analysis for each child and subject. Ms de Frias **explained** that early interventions in primary school were expected to lead to greater impact and improved data reflection in future years as more pupils transitioned from primary to secondary within Capella House School. The Governing Body **noted** that the small cohort sizes lead to statistically significant variations, however, it was better to focus on individual pupil journeys rather than year-on-year comparisons. The Headteacher **advised** that during meetings with teachers the Heads of centre will challenge targets set for individual pupils.

Philip John, **reported** on the positive Year 11 leavers' results from the summer. All pupils on a functional skills pathway passed their exams, and all three or four pupils on a GCSE pathway achieved above a Grade 4, with one pupil achieving a Grade 7 in English. All pupils, bar one, achieved a range of entry-level qualifications. Mr John **noted** that the current Year 11 cohort (July 2026 leavers) has a very different profile, with only one pupil undertaking a single GCSE (English), and the majority following an entry-level pathway.

The Governing Body **asked** if lower academic profile of the current Year 11 cohort, compared to the previous year was a pattern observed elsewhere. Mr John **advised** that the difference was attributed to the cohort joining during COVID-19 and may not be as acute for mainstream settings. He attributed some of the difference to the consultation process for admissions which

had been less rigorous during COVID. For example, where a pupil would now be observed by a speech and language therapist or Head of Centre and the supporting documentation would confirm whether the school could meet need, this hadn't been possible to assess remotely during lockdown.

Mr John **discussed** Key Stage 3 data, highlighting that the current summative assessment for more able pupils in spelling and maths does meet the school's needs, as some Year 7, 8, and 9 pupils were working above the highest grade of the MALT assessment (which goes up to 14). A solution was not yet in place, but consideration is being given to this issue.

Mr John **identified** that a high number of pupils were below expected in English last year, partly due to the secondary English lead being on maternity leave and a non-specialist teacher covering. Another issue affecting English is it is scheduled for Period 1 and when pupils are late, this impacts their learning. Following a **question**, the Headteacher **confirmed** that secondary pupils do have a Monday morning assembly and daily form time before Period one. He stated that the lateness issue affects a small group of pupils who are often late beyond form time. It is an ongoing difficulty, and the school is now working with a new family liaison worker to address it, as previous efforts with parents have not yielded significant improvements. The Governing Body **asked** if the English Lead had returned. The Headteacher **advised** she had and that interventions were in place where this was needed however, his preference was to ensure pupils were in school on time.

The Governing Body **commended** the staff for the work done to deliver the superb outcomes for the Y11 leavers acknowledging that these are built on strong foundations from below, and viewed it as an accolade for the entire school.

The Governing Body **asked** if a resolution had been found to issues relating to the withdrawal of AQA functional skills qualifications. The Headteacher **explained** that while a solution has been found, the new exam boards offer more language-based questions, which is challenging for pupils with speech and language needs. The school has acknowledged this and is adapting its curriculum and speech and language sessions to support pupils with the new exam format. The school considered City and Guilds but found the centre approval fee too high for the small number of pupils. The Headteacher **emphasised** that while qualifications were helpful, the primary goal was to equip young people with the requisite skills in Maths and English for college access. He **noted** that established links with local providers allowed for trust in the school's assessment and that colleges often conducted their own entry assessments.

*Philip John and Maria Landeira Frias left the meeting*

### 3. Minutes

- 3.1 The Governing Body **received** the draft informal notes of the meeting held on 8 July 2025 [CAP-25-1-03.1 Previous Draft Informal Notes 080725.pdf] and **approved** them as an accurate record of the meeting.

- 3.2 The Governing Body **noted** that a confidential item from the Board of Trustees would be discussed at the end of the meeting.

See also Confidential Appendix A to these minutes

Andy Whiteside, Trustee **advised** that the Board was keen to hear about assessment from the Local Governing Bodies at their next meeting. He also conveyed the Board's appreciation for the work undertaken on the benchmarking process, which had resulted in considerable staffing adjustments and changes at the other two schools in the trust, although fewer changes were required at Capella House School.

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

Supporting Papers: Trust Board Minutes, Capella House School Minutes

#### **4. Headteachers Report**

The Governing Body **received** a report from the Headteacher CAP-25-1-03 Capella House School Headteacher Report.pdf.

##### 4.1 General Update and key risks

The Headteacher **provided** highlights from his report, noting the successful establishment of the Richmond College Hub, which provides essential support for academically able pupils who cannot cope in a mainstream setting, addressing a significant gap in the post-16 landscape.

Kirsty Craik, who works at the College Hub, elaborated on the initial challenges of integrating Capella students into the college environment. She **noted** that having a direct leadership contact at the college has improved things, but the main difficulty lies in communication and 'joined-up thinking' within the large college environment due to differing operational approaches. She highlighted the need for a gradual 'drip feed' approach when working with FE lecturers, many of whom do not have formal teacher training. She detailed the tenacity required to advocate for Capella students and the individualised support provided, ranging from GCSE maths to English and accessibility strategies. The number of pupils in the Hub had dropped from ten to eight. She praised the Capella pupils for their ability to self-advocate and their understanding of their own needs.

The Governing Body **asked** if initial 'teething problems' at the new college Hub are being addressed and the strategies and timeframes involved for their resolution. The Headteacher **observed** that the college hub arrangement worked well at the senior level (between himself and the college principal/director of learning support) and at the ground level, but the middle tier presented a longer journey due to the differing operational cultures. The Headteacher **confirmed** that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was in draft for the college hub partnership, but it had not yet been signed by all parties, with the delay being attributed to AfC. The Trust's COO, Susie Connor, had been chasing the MOU from a Trust perspective. While the service level agreement for costs was in place, the overall MOU was stalled with AfC. Andy Whiteside, Trustee, **suggested** that this should be escalated to the Trust Board to pursue its signing and offered to add it to the

agenda for its next liaison meeting with AfC meetings as the Board handles strategic interactions with AfC. The Trust's CEO is also pursuing the matter. **(ACTION)**

The Headteacher **mentioned** the new multi-use games area at the secondary campus, which has positively changed the dynamic of break times and provides quieter spaces for some pupils. Staffing was reported as stable, with absence rates last year being low compared to national standards for special schools.

#### 4.2 Pupil Numbers for 2025-26 and Attendance

The Headteacher **gave** several **examples** of the work undertaken by the new Family Support Worker. This included helping a family complete council forms, meeting a parent off-site (including a persistently absent pupil's mother in Kingston) to build trust and offer softer support, supporting another family with medical appointments and understanding their child's conditions, and writing a letter to the housing association on behalf of a family regarding unsanitary conditions. He also highlighted the importance of informal chats with parents and her instrumental role in reassuring new parents and coaching them through behaviour incidents.

The Governing Body **asked** if there was sufficient capacity in the Family Support Worker role, given that it is only for one day per week. The Headteacher **acknowledged** that there is a desire to expand the role's hours. It was suggested that funds from existing service provisions could potentially be diverted to increase the Family Support Worker's time, as an in-house employee has more of a vested interest in the school.

The Governing Body **raised a concern** that awareness of the Family Support Workers role may not be understood by parents. The Headteacher **agreed** that raising engagement is a target for the post-holder. He **acknowledged** that read receipts for whole-school communications could be as low as 10%. Following a suggestion by the Governing Body, the Headteacher agreed to include a standing item about the Family Support Worker and her role in the school newsletter to improve visibility and awareness. **(ACTION)**

Andy Whiteside **commented** that Family Liaison Officers have had a major impact at the other schools in the Trust and **noted** that networking between the post-holders was beneficial.

#### 4.3 Safeguarding and behaviour

The Governing Body **noted** that safeguarding was a strength of the school, characterised by a non-complacent attitude, reflectiveness, adaptiveness to changing student needs, and consistent, high-quality reporting.

In terms of behaviour, it was **noted** that the primary site is excellent at recording all incidents, which helps direct support effectively and identify external needs. The secondary site is under-reporting, and work is being done to remove the stigma for staff around reporting incidents, framing it as part of building a holistic picture of a pupil.

A Governor **reflected** on his attendance a recent parent coffee morning which the Mental Health Support Team presented to explain their role. The Governing Body **asked**

about the uptake and advertising of mental health support in school and if it is sought out by students. The Headteacher **explained** that mental health support is targeted. Pupils are identified via Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings, safeguarding logs (CPOMS), behaviour logs, or staff observation. The mental health lead, coordinates support through three pathways: in-school interventions, the Mental Health Support Team (offering CBT, friendship groups, anti-bullying groups), and referrals to specialist services like CAMHS or external health partners. Parents are notified on a case-by-case basis.

#### 4.4 Pupil progress and achievements

The Governing Body **noted** this had been covered within the presentation at the start of the meeting.

The Governing Body **asked** how consistency is maintained where Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) are shared across the school sites. The Headteacher **explained** that there is one SaLT and one therapy assistant on each site. The Therapies Lead bridges consistency across both sites. A fortnightly therapies meeting is held for the entire therapy team to ensure consistency, share best practice, and for in-house moderation.

#### 4.5 School Development Plan and School Self Review

The Chair **noted** that the School Development plan had not had the level of governance scrutiny as it may during its development stages as it had in previous years, however, advised that in discussions with the Headteacher and from attendance at meetings last year the priorities appeared reasonable. The Headteacher **recognised** there had been significant change in the LGB membership since the last meeting. He **reiterated** the role of link governors in monitoring School Development Plan (SDP) priorities, such as teaching and learning, finance, safeguarding, and attendance. He **explained** that these roles involve visits to the school, meeting with relevant staff (e.g., finance director, DSL, family liaison worker), and reviewing evidence and policies to understand school practice. He **stated** that his focus is assigning one governor to one priority for simplicity.

The Chair **emphasised** the importance of all governors actively participating in these link roles and having their responsibilities clearly defined. Peter Bailey **agreed** to continue in his link role for teaching and learning. The Chair advised that he would contact all governors to discuss the allocation of link roles with each in order to reflect their interests and experience outside of the meeting to ensure these are in place by the next meeting.

**(ACTION)**

#### 4.6 Visitors Reports

Andy Whiteside **advised** governors of the importance of the School Improvement Partners reports which build on each visit conducted over the year providing a valuable reference for governors, [CAP-25-1-04.6 2025 Summer SIP Report Capella House.pdf]. The Headteacher **added** that the SIP's role is to quantify the school's judgements and provide supportive challenge, which is beneficial during inspections as it offers an external, independent assessment of the school's evidence. The Governing Body **asked** if the SIP's report starts anew each year. The Headteacher **confirmed** it did, but that previous points and progress would carry over. Following a question, he **advised** that the reports are

produced every term following her visit. The Governing Body **enquired** about the focus for the upcoming visit. The Headteacher **explained** that the initial visit would involve a three-hour review of existing documents, including the School Evaluation Form (SEF), School Development Plan (SDP) priorities, pupil premium data, and attendance figures.

#### 4.7 Partnerships and community links

[CAP-25-1-04.6AfC letter to all Headteachers Sep 2025]

The Governing Body **observed** that partnership and community work was developing well, citing the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the DJ'ing group who had taken part in the summer barbeque for families. They **reflected** that this was good to see given that the school had grown over time and had been significantly impacted in this regard due to Covid in its early days.

The Governing Body **expressed** a desire to see more parental involvement and asked if there was a Parent Teacher Association. The Headteacher **advised** that there was a 'Friends of Capella' group but this in the early stages of forming, with one particular parent taking over its leadership. The Governing Body **noted** that having a charitable status would be beneficial in gaining sponsorship or fund matching from other organisations. The Chair and Headteacher **agreed** to follow this up with the Chief Operating Officer **(ACTION)**. Andy Whiteside **advised** that he would share contact information with Jane Curzon, another Trustee who had been heavily involved in the setting up of the 'Friends of Strathmore' Group. **(ACTION)**

#### 4.8 Staffing

See also Confidential Appendix A to these minutes

#### 4.9 Learner, Family and Community Voice

#### 4.10 Finance Commentary

#### 4.11 Health and Safety / Premises Update

Supporting Papers: SDP, SEF, SIP reports, Management Accounts, HR Summary

### 5. **Governance**

5.1 The Governing Body **reviewed** the membership noting three vacancies and the importance of recruitment for the governing body.

5.2 The Governing Body **received the** Governance documentation approved by the Board of Trustees at their meeting on 18 September, [CAP-25-1-05.2 Governance Documents for 2025-26]

5.3 The Governing Body **noted** that due resignations the Chair and Vice Chair the Annual

5.4 Report and Governance Development Plan had not been prepared. The Governance Professional **advised** that following discussions with the Chair it may be prudent to focus on recruiting and supporting governors to get to know the school through visits **(ACTION)** and

to develop that awareness, rather than trying to retrospectively develop a report. The Governance Professional **suggested** that a governance development plan could evolve over the next few meetings.

There were no Link Governor visit reports received.

## 6. Approval of Policies / Statements

The Headteacher **clarified** that two policies, the safeguarding policy and the online safety policy, were being presented for approval. He explained that both were adopted from model policies based on best practice from the London Grid for Learning and the local authority, and were adapted for the school's specific context, making them straightforward for approval.

The Governing Body **approved** the following policies and procedures.

6.1 CAP-25-1-05.1 Capella House Keeping Children Safe Policy.pdf

6.2 Capella House Online safety Policy

## 7. Election / Appointment to key LGB roles for October 2025-26

The Governance Professional **reported** that she had spoken with Fiona Johnstone who agreed to take on the Link Safeguarding Governor role. She also **stated** that there was a need to recruit a governor with finance experience and that the position of Vice-Chair was vacant. Whilst **acknowledging** that the LGB could operate without a Vice Chair, the Chair encouraged governors to consider the role and invited anyone interested to put their name forward. He **confirmed** he would also approach his own network to help fill the vacancies and encouraged other governors to do the same. **(ACTION)**

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

The Governing Body **noted** that the report should include the Hub and the associated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and engagement from AfC or lack thereof, the positive impact of the new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) on pupils, and the LGB's ongoing discussion regarding attendance.

Mr Whiteside **suggested** that that the Family Liaison Officer role should be presented as a success, whilst also noting that additional capacity may be required in the future. He **added** that that the vacancies on the governing body should be escalated to the Trust, as it is the Trust's responsibility to help ensure all tiers of governance are suitably populated, and that this required support from the trust level, not solely the LGB.

The Governing Body **noted** the actions arising from this meeting which include two items within the Confidential Appendix A to these minutes.

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
1	Follow up absence of Secil Ozkan	JA	asap
2	Escalate to the Trust Board the lack of engagement of AfC in the College Hub and signature of the MOU	AM /AT	22/10/25

Number	Extract	Owner	Due Date
3	Add standard item regarding the work of the Family support worker to the termly school newsletter to improve visibility and awareness	DS	ongoing
4	Chair to contact all governors to discuss the allocation of link roles with each in order to reflect their interests and experience outside of the meeting to ensure these are in place by the next meeting	AM /all	25/11/25
5	Pursue Charitable status to gain fund matching and sponsorship benefits - discuss with COO	AM / DS	asap
6	Put Chair in contact with Jane Curzon, Trustee who was involved with PTA at Strathmore School	AW /AM /JC	asap
7	All governors to get to know the school through visits	all	ongoing
8	All governors to approach their networks to assist with recruitment	All	asap

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

## 9. Confidentiality

The Governing Body **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 Items 3.2 and 4.8,) should remain confidential and excluded from the published minutes and papers.

The date of the next meeting is **25 November 2025**

*Asif Mullan*

Asif Mullan (Dec 5, 2025 12:09:29 GMT)

Asif Mullan

Chair of the Capella House LGB

05/12/2025


# CAP-25-1-00 Approved Minutes 300925


Final Audit Report


2025-12-05


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