



**RICHARD HUISH TRUST
AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE MEETING**

23rd September 2025 at 5:00pm

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members present: Pat Flaherty (Chair)
Jade Renville

In attendance: John Abbott (CEO)
Paul Lonsdale (CFO)
Richard Anderson (IT & Facilities Director)
Jessica Doyle (Finance Manager)
Stuart Hill (Director)
Matt Kerton (Headteacher)

Clerk: Helen Wells (Governance Specialist)

MINUTES

AUD	1. MEETING FORMALITIES	Action
25/01	1.1 Welcome and apologies for absence The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting Stuart Hill attending as an observer. Apologies were received from Olivia Salaman. The meeting was quorate.	
AUD 25/02	1.2 Declaration of interests None of the committee members present had declarations to make in relation to items on the agenda.	
AUD 25/03	1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting Directors agreed the minutes of the previous meetings were accurate and the Chair consented for his electronic signature to be used to formally sign them off.	
AUD 25/04	1.4 Matters arising Directors discussed the matters arising report noting all items as complete or pending with further pending items noted with updates.	
2. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW		
AUD 25/05	2.1 Risk profile at Nerrols Primary School Headteacher, Matt Kerton, attended the committee for this item. Introductions were made.	
AUD 25/06	The school's risk profile was shared, which forms part of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The headteacher gave an overview of the school for context, noting the school opened in 2019 to serve a new growing local community reflected in the growth plan of the school over time to realise its full capacity of 420 pupils as a two-form entry school with a nursery. Its first year 6 cohort will leave at the end of this academic year. As a result, the risks focus mainly on the growth of the school.	
AUD 25/07	Key points from the profile of risk included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial risks associated with not meeting the planned recruitment of 60 in the reception class; this year an intake of 47 was achieved. This may in part be due to a drop in the demographic for this year. Work is underway to publicise the places at the school including	

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more open days and communications with the community. The school has built a healthy reserve to mitigate the move to a lagged funding model from the local authority because of moving to a two-form entry which is not supported by the council upfront.

AUD
25/08

How are the 47 intake being split into classes?

They have been split as evenly as possible across two classes, giving two good size classes as the first two form reception entry. The classes are busy and exciting.

AUD
25/09

Does the demographic look to improve next year or in future years?

The forecast is being monitored, but the data for next year depends on the rate of completion of the local housing development. The overall demographics in Somerset are dropping, but the local context is expected to counteract this.

AUD
25/10

Is this a manageable risk, given the reserves that are in place?

The planning has been taking place over the last couple of years on the basis of an intake of 60, or that there is some growth in KS2 classes, to ensure that the funding model remains sustainable. At present the risk is manageable but is not sustainable at that level of intake in the longer term.

AUD
25/11

- Risks associated with growth and being able to meet specific needs of the children (e.g. SEND, Pupil Premium) and not being able to provide the quality of education that should be in place. This has been planned for over a number of years to ensure that the curriculum delivery and support model is future-proofed and forms part of the QIP.
- Reputational risks linked to the outcomes and achievement of children leaving the school in Year 6, coupled with ensuring that they are prepared for their transition into their next stage of learning. This has also been part of the longer-term planning, but is being closely monitored.

AUD
25/13

Directors noted it is useful to have an insight into the risks and how they sit in the local context of the academy, reflecting that the interdependency of the specific risks (both financial and non-financial) is all about delivering excellent education.

AUD
25/14

Directors discussed the challenges posed in the local authority (LA) not financially supporting a long planned for two-form entry commencing in September 2025, in a school they built, acknowledging that the LA have to fund school places with reference to the broader strategic picture of places in the area. The committee discussed the plans and mitigations for increasing the intake next year.

Directors thanked MK for his input.

Matt Kerton left the meeting.

AUD
25/15

2.2 Strategic risk register – final review 2024/2025

Directors considered the final review of the risk register for last year. The CFO noted that the risk profile will be looking to move into a more positive trajectory with planned changes to the composition of the trust and considering the projected financial position and the recent outcomes across the academies. He added that it would be a useful juncture to reconsider the register in greater depth.

AUD
25/16

Is it possible to reflect the future profile of the trust in the register moving forwards for 2025-2026?

Directors discussed that Huish remains fully responsible for the whole of the trust until such time as there are any legal changes confirmed, and therefore that it is still fully accounted for in all the governance systems. Directors discussed that a separate risk register may be operationally useful to understand the future risk profile, noting that they are mindful of the workload this may produce.

AUD
25/17

Directors discussed whether there is scope for the Academic Performance & Quality Committee (AP&Q) to take a deep dive, with all academies, in relation to the risks relating to academic performance and outcomes. The CEO highlighted that this has risen in prominence as a risk specifically because of the challenges experienced at Pyrland but that it may be useful to consider

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how AP&Q could take an oversight of this for other academies in determining whether, for example, attendance is actually a strategic risk or not.

AUD 25/18 Directors reflected on how risks are described in the register and whether it is useful to describe risks more tightly and to have direct consequences that are explicit as a result.

ACTION: Ensure the risk register is maintained to reflect the current composition of the trust but to initiate a register that also reflects the planned composition of the trust moving forwards. **CFO**

AUD 25/19 **2.3 Digital Technology Standards (ATH 2025) and third-party cyber security and risk**

The Director of IT and Facilities presented an update for directors about how Huish is working towards meeting the Digital Technology Standards introduced in the Academy Trust Handbook as of 1st September 2025, with the expectation that academies are working towards meeting the six core standards by 2030. This included a profile of how well the trust is meeting the standards across its provision and how this is being monitored and planned for internally. He detailed how decisions are going to be made about the extent to which it is possible to become compliant over the next five years, within the constraints discussed. He assured directors that all aspects of the standards have been captured on the tracking document and will be monitored closely. He noted that he intends to use the DfE's technology plan for each of the academies once it is available.

AUD 25/20 **When does this need to be completed by?**

Trusts should be working towards this by 2030; there does not seem to be any move for us to be directly accountable to an external body. Directors discussed how this is different in other sectors where there are requirements to be accountable externally. The content of the guidance seems to be aimed more at schools than at post-16.

AUD 25/21 **Are there any areas that are not yet or able to be met and need to be mitigated for?**

Directors discussed whether this could be used to explore the trust's maturity around cyber security and give a profile for an internal assessment of risk in this area. It was agreed that it would be a useful starting point for an activity of this nature.

AUD 25/22 Directors reflected on the level of expectation from the DfE about the expectation of having such a high level of security in place and the reasons for it, with the high-profile level of cyber breaches and the rapidly growing and shifting challenges in the cyber security world.

AUD 25/23 The Director of IT and Facilities then updated directors on actions that have been taken to address third party cyber security risks, this included:

- Revisions made to the Acceptable Use Policy to include more information, including a definition, about third party providers and detailing that they would pose an increased level of risk.
- There are more controls specified around third parties accessing our network with increased security put in place to address the increased level of risk.
- He shared a tracking spreadsheet which detailed the systems that are being used and how controls and checks are in place to ensure that the risks of engaging in third party systems are covered.

AUD 25/24

He summarised that the approaches to managing this are now much tighter than previously.

AUD 25/25 **Within the list of third-party suppliers has it also been factored in for those who might not have a direct link, but might hold some of our data?**

There are checks already accounted for in the tracking document to ensure that there are questions in place to address these providers.

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AUD 25/26	<p>In the event of a cyber incident is this linked into the business continuity plan?</p> <p>There is a plan in place to respond to cyber incidents which dovetails into the business continuity plan.</p>
AUD 25/27	<p>The committee discussed where how the trust is approaching working to become as compliant as possible with the digital technology standards over time and what mitigations are in place in the meantime. Directors agreed it would be helpful to ensure that the rationale for how areas are being met or not is captured.</p> <p>ACTION: Ensure that the rationale for how the digital technology standards are being met or not is captured within the monitoring/tracking as appropriate. RIA</p>
AUD 25/28	<p>2.4 Health & Safety risk profile</p> <p>The Director of IT & Facilities presented an overview of how H&S is managed and how risks are identified and monitored. Each academy has an audit from which a risk profile is then drawn for H&S as a trust; enabling recurring themes to be identified and addressed. Educating Safely carry out the audits and monitoring at the academies and provide advice and compliance information. Directors agreed it is reassuring to see the degree of detail.</p>
AUD 25/29	<p>Are the outcomes of the reports being tracked and mitigated for across the trust and how this will be returned periodically to keep this in view?</p> <p>It was confirmed this is the case and that directors will be regularly updated about this.</p>
AUD 25/30	<p>2.5 Complaints summary overview 2024/2025</p> <p>Directors noted the summary overview of complaints. They agreed the data provided assurance that complaints are being handled with care and skill at an early stage given that only handful escalated to the formal stages and that none progressed beyond stage 2 last year. The Governance Specialist highlighted that the total number of complaints are comparable to the previous year and that there does not seem to be any particular type of complaint that is prevalent across Huish. Directors reflected that it is helpful to understand the profile of complaints in the context of strategic risk monitoring.</p>
AUD 25/31	<p>2.6 Insurance plans and risks facing the trust</p> <p>The CFO provided assurances that the academy schools remain in the DfE's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) cover and still represents adequate cover and value for money. RPA does not represent value for money for the college and insurance is therefore secured through alternative means.</p> <p>2.7 Cases of fraud and whistleblowing</p> <p>The CFO confirmed there were no cases to report.</p>
AUD 25/32	<p>3. AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS</p> <p>3.1 Audit tracking database</p> <p>The CFO confirmed that the database has been updated with the latest internal audit outcomes. As a result a significant number of actions were removed. There were a few subsequent actions which will continue to be monitored. Directors noted it was helpful to see the progress of actions being addressed.</p>
AUD 25/33	<p>3.2 Internal audit report 2024/2025</p> <p>The report was noted by directors.</p>
AUD 25/34	<p>3.3 Internal audit plan 2025/2026</p> <p>The CFO gave an overview of the plan and discussed the level of overlap between the external and internal audit approaches and how this is planned for. The internal audit approach is based on themes rather than specific traditional audit areas as these are already comprehensively</p>

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covered via the external audit. The themes for the next audit plan were opened to the committee for discussion.

AUD 25/35 Directors discussed possible themes, reflecting on areas that had been tested over recent years, agreeing that a re-think on this is timely. They agreed that any areas that have not been audited over the last couple of year should be a priority with the business continuity and cyber security linked into this. They considered whether there may be other providers who are better placed to perform this testing. They discussed the need for testing around disaster management.

AUD 25/36 **Do we assess the quality of school risk assessments for example, of school trips in the context of recent tragic events locally?**
The Director of IT & Facilities confirmed that the Educational Visits Coordinator is the headteacher. They put trips onto EEC live and Educating Safely acts as the competent person providing feedback/guidance and determining the overall quality of the risk assessment proposed. This way experts rather than headteachers are being relied on to assess risk. The committee discussed that this works well as long as headteachers are using the system as intended.

ACTION: Bring back the revised audit plan to the committee to include the areas to be covered and how this will be achieved. **CFO**

ACTION: Bring back to the committee further assurance about how trips are risk assured for external travel and assurance that there is no deviation from the system for establishing this. **RIA**

4. POLICIES AND KEY DOCUMENTS

AUD 25/37 **4.1 Compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook 2024**
Directors noted the compliance tracker and agreed it is assuring to note there is full compliance assessed across all of the 'musts'. The CFO confirmed that he works with the Governance Specialist to ensure checks are made through the year.

5. COMMITTEE MATTERS

5.1 Committee membership

AUD 25/38 Directors noted Olivia Salaman is stepping down from the committee and as a director. They thanked her for her input. They noted that Stuart Hill will hopefully join the committee as a member pending board approval and thanked him for observing the meeting.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Agenda for next meeting

AUD 25/39 Directors noted the agenda.

6.2 Confidential items

AUD 25/40 There were no confidential items.

6.3 Any other business

AUD 25/41 There was no further business.

6.4 Dates of future meetings

AUD 25/42 The dates were noted.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.00pm

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