RICHARD HUISH TRUST
AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE MEETING

14th January 2025 at 5:00pm

Via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members present: Dan Maycock (Chair)
Jade Renville
Olivia Salaman
Pat Flaherty

In attendance: John Abbott (CEO)
Paul Lonsdale (CFO)
Richard Anderson (IT & Facilities Director)
Jessica Doyle (Finance Manager)
Mark Braund (Headteacher)

Clerk: Helen Wells (Governance Specialist)

MINUTES

		Action
AUD 24/64	**1. MEETING FORMALITIES** **1.1 Welcome and apologies for absence** The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, there were no apologies.	
AUD 24/65	**1.2 Declaration of interests** None of the committee members present had declarations to make in relation to items on the agenda.	
AUD 24/66	**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 24/67	**1.4 Matters arising** Directors discussed the matters arising report noting all items as complete.	
	2. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
AUD 24/68	**2.1 Overview of risks at North Town Primary School** The Chair welcomed Mark Braund, Headteacher of North Town Primary School. Directors discussed the potential impact and risk of the impact of levels of support staffing within the context of the growing number of students in receipt of an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).	
AUD 24/69	**Are there applicants coming through for support staff vacancies who can meet the complex needs of students?** The quality of applicants for vacancies are not matching the required level of skill and experience to properly support a range of complex needs. It was observed this is not unusual to North Town and is reflective of a national skills shortage. Upskilling new support staff after appointment is currently necessary.	
AUD	Directors discussed the impact of staff changes, particularly where individuals have built a positive and productive relationship with students who require specialist support. The risk of	

24/70 burn-out of staff was discussed as it is necessary to try and balance the needs of the child with the needs of the staff.

AUD 24/71 The headteacher drew attention to the relatively high numbers of EHCP students the school has (when compared to other local schools that are of a similar size locally) and that they are highly like to increase further just from current students who have been/likely to be assessed as needing an EHCP. He highlighted the impact on the budget is significant due to lagged funding model for those eligible for EHCP funding and remains a risk when balancing the finances. He cited a comparable school, noting that whilst they also have high EHCP numbers they also receive significantly more funding due to their socio-economic area enabling them to draw down significantly more Pupil Premium (PP) funding.

AUD 24/72 Directors discussed the potential risks of the school taking on further EHCP students. The headteacher noted that many children do not start at the school with an EHCP but instead are recognised and assessed as needing one during their time on roll. With two very experienced SENCO's he is aware of only one EHCP being turned down during his tenure.

AUD 24/73 **Are we communicating with parents regularly to ensure that the school's records on PP are correct and the school are not missing out on associated funding?**
The headteacher confirmed he is confident the school are constantly checking this and are not missing out on potential funding.

AUD 24/74 Directors discussed how the challenges of managing EHCPs is part of a longer dialogue with the local authority about how the EHCP students are allocated to schools.

AUD 24/75 Directors observed that the high numbers of EHCP students is reflective of how the school has developed the expertise to provide high quality support and education for all students. The school prides itself on its inclusivity. The headteacher noted that the support the school can offer is discussed upfront with parents of EHCP students and this helps greatly to ensure that they understand whether the school is the right place for them from the outset.

AUD 24/76 **What is in the control of the trust and what is not with regards to EHCPs?**
Parental choice remains the deciding factor in where a child with an EHCP is placed. While the school provides high quality support it is a challenge to balance the needs of EHCP students to provide the level and consistency of specialist support each of them deserves.

AUD 24/77 Directors noted opportunities are being explored for improving the support the school can offer and how that could develop in the future.

Directors thanked the headteacher for attending the meeting.

Mark Braund left the meeting.

2.2 Critical Incident Management and Business Recovery/Continuity Plan update

AUD 24/78 Directors agreed that due to the timing of the desk-based activities this item could be carried forward to the next meeting.

ACTION: Carry forward the update about the Critical Incident Management and Business Recover/Continuity Plan to the next meeting. **Clerk**

2.3 Strategic Risk Register 2024/2025

AUD 24/79 The CFO provided an update confirming he had reviewed the 2023/24 register, as a result he has updated the narrative about controls and the level of confidence in the three lines of defence control impact measures, the scores have also been reviewed. The 2024/25 register is based on the updated 2023/24 register and the vast majority of the actions for this year is an amalgam of all the school improvement plan actions where schools are addressing

Signed:……*Dan Maycock*……………………………………….. Date:…04/03/2025…………………………

a specific risk. There are no new risks, but work has been done to update the detail of the register.

AUD 24/80 A key risk remains around the size and composition of the trust in the longer term, the trust remains committed to a strategy of growth. Directors observed where there may be perceived high level risk factors but do not pose a significant material risk. Directors noted that a further update may be needed to reflect the changing situation with the leadership at Pyrland School.

Directors agreed that it would be useful to raise with the full board, when they next review the risk register, whether the register is covering everything they would expect to see and, bearing in mind auditors look at potentially high risk areas identified by the register, whether their time is being directed looking at the most risky areas when calibrated against what the board spend the most time discussing.

AUD 24/81 **ACTION: Take forward questions for the full board to discuss in relation to the risk register.** **Clerk**

Directors noted the role of sub-committees in examining the risk register points allocated to them and that the assurance map from the internal auditors will provide additional assurance.

2.4 IT systems/cyber security

AUD 24/82 The Director of IT & Facilities referred to key developments within the accompanying paper, including:

- The monitoring and assuring of all staff completing cyber security training is critical in relation to insurance and the approach to this has been changed to ensure it is easier to manage and report on.
- **AUD 24/83** Changes with the IT team structure were noted with the team being split into two departments for infrastructure and service.
- **AUD 24/84** The intention is to have penetration testing in November/December which was commissioned but has been delayed to February by JISC. The type of penetration testing has been changed to include a wider remit to test specific systems hosted locally on the network.
- **AUD 24/85** The Microsoft security scores have been worked on and improved following suggestions from Microsoft.
- There have been no recent cyber security incidents.

AUD 24/86 **Is gaining the Cyber Essentials standard sufficient?**

It is felt that it is sufficient as in practice there is not a significant amount more than can be done by the trust. Directors identified that the varying levels of cyber security provided by third parties remains a significant risk. Directors agreed it is important to keep under review the potential level of risk to the trust when engaging with third parties and how to ensure their security arrangements are acceptable to minimise the cyber security risk. Directors agreed it would be helpful to have a more detailed look at the risk and mitigations around third party providers and cyber security.

ACTION: Schedule an opportunity for a deep dive into third party cyber security and risk for a future meeting. **Clerk**

AUD 24/87

2.5 Cases of fraud and whistleblowing

There were no cases of fraud or whistleblowing.

3. AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 Audit tracking database

AUD 24/88 The CFO confirmed the database had been updated to include the issues brought forward in the most recent audit reports. Directors noted the challenges with the business modelling for the nurseries and that this is proving more protracted to resolve than first anticipated. The CFO confirmed that there is nothing specific directors can do at this point to support this moving forward more quickly. The Director of Nurseries is scheduled to give a detailed overview to the committee later in the year. Directors discussed the timing of the update and whether this may need to be brought forward, directors agreed that it would be useful to review the related improvement plan in the interim.

ACTION: Send directors the latest iteration of the Nursery improvement plan **Clerk**

AUD 24/89 **3.2 Internal audit plan 2024-2025**

Directors discussed the proposed internal audit plan from the internal auditors (Griffin), noting that the plan needs to include a review of compliance with the Academies Trust Handbook. They observed that there could be the potential for overlap with the external audit and agreed this needs further exploration. The assurance map is being built to give assurance on areas being audited and what is working and what is not; the approach to this and how it will be structured were discussed.

APPROVED: Directors approved the internal audit plan.

AUD 24/90 **3.3 Internal oversight mapping - draft**

The Governance Specialist introduced a draft mapping exercise that she had undertaken in response to requests by directors to have a comprehensive list of all areas they had responsibility to help inform audit activities. The list was compiled from a governance viewpoint and will interrelate to the assurance plan being built by the internal auditors. Directors agreed it was a useful point of reference and should be revisited once the assurance plan activity was completed by the internal auditors.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AUD 24/91 **4.1 Agenda for next meeting**

Directors noted the agenda.

AUD 24/92 **4.2 Confidential items**

Directors agreed there were no confidential items.

AUD 24/93 **4.3 Any other business**

There was no further business in relation to the committee.

AUD 24/94 **4.4 Dates of future meetings**

The dates of future meetings were noted.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.05pm

Signed:……*Dan Maycock*……………………………………….. Date:…04/03/2025…………………………