

Minutes of the Omnia Learning Trust Board Meeting

Held in person and remotely via Zoom on Tuesday 9th July 2024 at 10am

Invitees	Role	Term of Office Ends	Attendance
Board Members (Voting)			
1. Jodie Croft (JC)	Trustee and OLT CEO	Ex-officio	Present
2. Alison Hill (AH)	Trustee	06/07/2028	Present
3. Silvia Holgado-Gomez (SHG)	Trustee - Chair	31/03/2024	Present
4. Tyler Jeffs (TJ)	Trustee	29/03/2026	Absent
5. Russell Massie (RM)	Trustee	08/11/2025	Present
6. Duncan Millard (DM)	Trustee	15/05/2028	Present
7. Jason Murphy (JM)	Trustee - Vice Chair	19/11/2027	Present
8. Arjun Thiru (AT)	Trustee	08/11/2025	Absent
Other (Non-Voting)			
Leah Basilone (LB)	WPA Principal (to 31.08.2024) & OLT Deputy CEO (from 01.09.2024)	N/A	Present
Sarah Bellingham (SB)	OLT GCO	N/A	Present
Carina Cuddington (CC)	OLT CFO (Edufin)	N/A	Present
Beth Gorsuch (BG)	OLT COO	N/A	Present

Minutes	
1. Welcome and apologies for absence	<p>1.1 SHG welcomed everyone to the meeting. RM would take the Board through the agenda due to volume issues linked with the remote access technology in place, via which SHG was attending.</p> <p>1.2 Apologies had been received from TJ and AT. The meeting was declared quorate (<i>meaning that a minimum of three voting Trustees were present</i>).</p> <p>1.3 It was noted that all documents to be discussed in the meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting via Governor Hub. These were shared on screen during the meeting unless stated otherwise.</p>
2. Declaration of conflicts of interests relating to agenda items & declare any pecuniary or business interests or receipt of hospitality for the OLT Register of Business Interests	



<p>2.1 No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to agenda items and no updates were provided for the register of business and pecuniary interests. There had also been no receipt of hospitality.</p>
<p>3. Identify items for AOB and/or confidential AOB</p> <p>3.1 No AOB or confidential issues were identified.</p>
<p>4. Review of Trust Board Membership and DBS Checks</p> <p>4.1 All DBS checks for the Trustees and local governors were complete or in progress.</p>
<p>5. Review of Trustees' training requirements and induction arrangements</p> <p>5.1 SB had been in touch with all Trustees and governors since the start of term and prior to this meeting to remind about the completion of outstanding training.</p> <p>5.2 Trustees were reminded that annual safeguarding and prevent duty training were mandatory. SB would continue to contact Trustees at the start of each term and before Board meetings to remind about training requirements.</p>
<p>6. Approve minutes of the last Trust Board meeting on 14/05/2024 and confirm matters arising not on the agenda</p> <p>6.1 The Board unanimously approved the minutes of 14th May 2024. SB would upload these and the meeting's attendance record to the Trust website, and ask SHG to sign these minutes via Governor Hub. ACTION - SB</p> <p>6.2 All actions had been confirmed as completed, in progress, or listed within the current agenda.</p>
<p>7. Receive QES Committee Minutes dated 02/07/2024</p> <p>7.1 Trustees were asked if they had any questions, but none were raised.</p> <p>7.2 JC would be updating the Board about the schools' attainment data and related matters in her CEO Report later in the meeting.</p> <p>7.3 The minutes were noted as received.</p>
<p>8. Receive schools' external safeguarding audit reports: DPA, SHPA, TPA, and WPA</p> <p>8.1 Trustees were asked if they had any questions, but none were raised.</p>



<p>8.2 The reports were confirmed as received, noting that TPA's would be uploaded to the folder for viewing once received later in the term. ACTION - SB</p>
<p>9. Receipt confirmation the education and H&S risk assessments had been carried out at each school</p> <p>9.1 BG confirmed that the annual health and safety risk assessment had been carried out at DPA, SHPA, and WPA, with the one for TPA due to take place the following week. All schools were compliant in respect of water and fire safety risk assessments having taken place.</p> <p>9.2 JC added that the health and safety risk assessments for the Oxfordshire schools had been carried out by a local-authority-appointed external health and safety company, which had used a statutory-based checklist and whose checks had been extremely thorough. The fire and water checks had been carried out separately and also by an external company.</p>
<p>10. Receive Operations Committee Minutes dated 25/06/2024</p> <p>10.1 These were noted as received and the Board had no questions.</p>
<p>11. Receive COO Compliance Report dated June 2024</p> <p><i>COO Compliance Report June 2024 (Covering: IT/GDPR, financial audits, HR, H&S (external audits, WRA, FRA), staff absence, premises, safeguarding (SCR audit & LADO audit), & policies review)</i></p> <p>11.1 BG explained that all the standing items in the report had been covered off and checked robustly at this time to include health and safety, safeguarding, and external audits.</p> <p>11.2 BG asked if the Trustees had any questions, but none were raised and the Trustees confirmed receipt.</p>
<p>12. Receive CEO Report dated July 2024</p> <p><i>CEO Report July 2024 (Covering: Progress, Attainment, Performance, Targets, Equality objectives, Management accounts, Health and Safety reports, Operations Committee Recommendations, Trust development plan, Trust strategy, review of risk register, & review of pupil number estimates)</i></p> <p>12.1 JC explained that she was trialling a new style of report for this meeting. It was in line with DfE's Academy Trust quality descriptors, adapted for the Trust. The left-hand column set out the area of focus, the middle column set out the description of what a high-quality output should look like, and to the right was the 'red-amber-green ('RAG') rating of each school's performance against the quality descriptor.</p> <p>12.2 LB and JC were responsible for the assessments against the education descriptors, whilst BG and JC were responsible for those relating to people, finance, and resources. The content of the report was essentially same as the information previously provided in the</p>



pure written format, but more visual and ‘at a glance’ to help Trustees see immediately the areas the Trust had concerns about or were working on.

- 12.3** A green rating meant that there were no major issues, amber that some things were being worked on, and pink meant that there were serious concerns for that school in that area. Behind each line was a lot of data, to include reports, visits, conversations with staff, and comparisons with national and local data.
- 12.4** JC and LB highlighted several of the assessments against the quality descriptors across the four schools, to include numbers on roll, staffing, inclusive teaching and learning, leadership and management, and curriculum.
- 12.5** JC also provided the KS2 SATS outcomes at each school for Maths, Writing, Reading and Combined, provided the schools’ progress scores showing the measure of progress by pupils from KS1 to KS2, and provided data on behaviour and bullying, persistent absence, attendance, pupil voice, line management, and finances and resources. In addition, JC updated Trustees on plans for Surbiton Primary Academy. Trustees were asked if they had any questions on the content of the report or anything linked with it.
- 12.6** **Q:** Was the Trust happy with the pupil numbers at SHPA?
A: Twenty pupils were due to come on to the roll in September 2024, following 17 pupils having joined in September 2024. Despite falling birth rates across Didcot and slow housing estate development, the school had received more first choice applications than many existing primary school in the area.
- 12.7** **Q:** Were staff member contracts of employment specific about the place of work, or was there flexibility to move staff between schools in one geographical area?
A: Staff were always allocated to a specific school site, however the contracts contained wording explaining which location was the ‘primary’ place of work. There was potential flexibility there but this had not yet been exercised, as it would need one school to have a vacancy to fill at the same time as another had a staff member to transfer over. If pupils numbers dropped or remained low at SHPA after the council’s funding guarantee had ended in three years’ time, the first consideration would be to move to merged classes to ensure teacher affordability.
- 12.8** **Q:** Had the lower TPA phonics outcomes been limited to one of the two KS1 classes?
A: They had fallen across the two classes, so there was no evidence of an issue in just one.
- 12.9** **Q:** What was planned for 2024-2025 to enhance the collaboration taking place between the schools?
A: A huge benefit of being part of a Trust was the collaboration aspect. It was interesting to look at the point in a school’s journey it was able to collaborate with other schools. There was a scale of collaboration that was achievable, from low, to medium, to advanced levels. LB would be establishing a set of criteria for the schools to use, to evidence the level of collaboration being achieved. The Trust wanted to ensure that collaboration was genuinely



a two-way or reciprocal process. It was acknowledged that a new school Principal might not be ready to collaborate, given the initial demands of the role and the level of focus required on that one school. LB was also interested in setting up a Trust charter so that collaboration and expectations were clear for all staff, going beyond Ofsted criteria.

12.10Q: Was there any concern here if this type of discussion was required on formalising expectations for school collaboration?

A: Having clarity in this respect could only be a helpful thing. Having the documentation with protocols in place meant that difficult conversations might be more easily avoided in future, and meant that it would be easier to set the tone at and between each school for kind and welcoming conversations.

12.11Q: Had LB reviewed the curriculum in place at each of the four schools?

A: Yes, she had looked at every subject in every school. SHPA's was heavily based on DPA's curriculum but this would progress to having more attention place on the immediate local context. LB would be keeping a close eye on subject, such as science, art, DT, and geography to ensure that there were no dips. This would be helped via the proper use of the new style 'non-negotiables' documents at each school, showing clearly what each subject needed to look like.

12.12Q: Were aggregated Combined outcomes produced across the Trust?

A: That was possible this academic year as there was the software in place to do it for the Trust. Not every school had every year group populated yet, however, so that would need to be accounted for.

12.13Q: Did the Trust use FFT for target setting at its schools?

A: Some of the schools did. It was acknowledged that it made use of progress measures and relied on previous scores. No-one yet knew the impact of a Labour government. LB was hoping for FFT still, and noted it was aligned with the Insight software.

12.14Q: What was TPA's maths score this year for 'at expected'?

A: That was 83% at Year 6. However, the progress measure depended on what outcomes there had been at Year 2.

12.15Q: Were Trustees seeing the value-added scores here?

A: No, as these had not yet been published.

12.16Q: How did the Trust plan to celebrate these scores?

A: The Trust needed to publish its scores with national comparators, to give the data some context together with as much narrative as possible.

12.17Q: Was there anything specific for the Trust to focus on to improve the scores for disadvantaged pupils?

A: It was difficult to tell how well disadvantaged children were progressing against other Pupil Premium children. The Trust's current year 5 RWM data compared favourably against



national outcomes for disadvantaged children, published last year. What was also relevant was how many children had special education needs in addition to Pupil Premium status. No data was available showing outcomes for Pupil Premium pupils without SEND. However the schools were in the process of finalising plans as to how Pupil Premium funding would support these children to continue to make good progress.

12.18Q: Did the Trust know how TPA had been achieving this with their disadvantaged pupils?

A: There were only three pupils in the cohort in question. At DPA, two of the pupils premium category had an EHCP and were working many years below.

12.19Q: Linked with the pupil voice survey, there had been discussion at the QES Committee about ensuring pupils understood the difference between bullying and poor behaviour. Was that work still taking place?

A: Yes, it was. It was important that pupils understood what was bullying versus bad behaviour experienced from another child on a particular day at school.

12.20 The Trustees thanked JC for her comprehensive report and agreed that the new visuals were helpful for spotting and understanding more quickly the areas requiring challenge and support.

13. Management accounts

13.1 CC joined the meeting at 11.21.

13.2 The following documents dated March 2024 had been circulated in advance of the meeting for receipt by the Board:

- Executive Summary
- Balance Sheet Summary
- Cashflow
- DPA Management Report
- SHPA Management Report
- TPA Management Report
- WPA Management Report
- Omnia Management Report

Executive Summary

13.3 CC shared the Executive Summary on screen and highlighted key information in respect of the Trust and each of its schools.

13.4 This included reference to the Trust's and each school's position in relation to in year surplus or deficit positions, reserves, carry forward balances, outgoings such as staffing and energy costs, capital budgets and projects underway or planned, receipt of government grants and other income, and the extent of returns from the Trust's investment strategy for the year to date. Trustees were asked if they had any questions.



13.5 Q: Was the TPA figure in the Executive Summary correct?

A: Yes, the figure of £156k was correct in the summary document.

13.6 The Trustees had no further questions.

14. Approve proposed budgets for 2024-2025 and pay recommendations for 2024-2025 (OLT, DPA, SHPA, TPA, and WPA)

14.1 BG explained that the proposed budgets for 2024-2025 and staff pay recommendations for 2024-2025 had been tested at the Operations Committee in June 2024. The Committee had requested that BG review the in-year surplus and carry forward figures for TPA and WPA. The additional support staff resources had been added in as discussed, and the Board were now looking at the updated documents.

14.2 The budgets were all extremely conservative. There had been careful consideration of every single line, the cost of each staff member, and the cost of every contract type. All expenditure had been assessed and had only been kept in if valuable. Contracts had been re-tendered where appropriate, and where there would be no impact on quality. Where there were deficit in-year budgets, plans were in place to address those.

14.3 Q: What was the picture in 2028-2029?

A: That 'dip' represented the fact that pupil EHCP funding could not be predicted so far ahead. That was the standard approach in use across all the schools, which Edufin had advised about.

14.4 Q: Was the Trust confident it was submitting good budgets for 2024-2025?

A: It was critical to submit realistic budgets, and that was what the Trust was doing. The team was confident it had looked at everything, with Edufin's assistance.

14.5 The Trustees unanimously approved the Trust and schools' budgets together with the pay recommendations presented for 2024-2025.

14.6 CC left the meeting at 11.30.

15. Review and approve expenditure over £50k

15.1 There was none to review.

16. Receive 'Dear Accounting Officer' letter from EFSA

16.1 There was no letter to review at this time.



17. Review and Approve Policies in line with OLT Policy Scheme of Delegation

OLT Pay Policy

17.1 JC explained that she had added clarity into the policy on how school Principals moved teacher from the main pay scale to the upper pay scale. Previously this had not been clear enough. The wording now explained what teachers had to demonstrate to reach the upper scale and the emphasis was on the Principal proving the teacher had met that threshold based on due diligence.

17.2 The updates had been checked with the Trust's external HR provider.

17.3 **Q:** Was the Trust anticipating any ill-feeling about this from staff?

A: Possibly. However, any staff member who had already been put onto the upper pay scale would not be put back to the main one.

17.4 **Q:** Would the updated policy and approach apply to decisions on pay made in November 2024, given that staff or the Principals may have based their views or expectations of pay confirmed in November on the policy's previous wording? Were the Principals aware of this update?

A: The Principals had been informed and made fully aware.

OLT LGPS Discretions Policy and OLT TPS Discretions Policy

17.5 BG confirmed that both policies had received external review by the Trust's external HR provider. They contained tighter language in relation to the application of discretion.

OLT Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

17.6 This policy had been updated with minor changes to align with other policy updates, such as the Probation Policy, and included wording on the consequence of arriving late at work.

OLT Probation Policy

17.7 This now included wording on arriving late to work in the context of extending or not passing the period of probation. A requirement of passing probation had been updated as including evidence of satisfactory attendance at work.

17.8 **Q:** Had these updated been triggered by issues occurring at the schools?

A: An example was one member of support staff who was revealed as having been late to work in the mornings. The sign-in system showed that she had not been in on time on any day since starting employment, and several months had passed at the time of discovery. That staff member had been on a fixed-term contract and was no longer at the school in question.

17.9 **Q:** What had been agreed about paid leave for staff to deal with childcare or other emergencies?



A: The relevant policy continued to provide for up to one paid day of leave per term to deal with emergencies, with no option to accumulate an entitlement over school terms.

17.10 Q: Were staff taking this paid day for emergency leave?

A: So far, where needed. Also, some staff were still electing to take an unpaid leave day in those circumstances. BG would keep oversight of that. If a staff member was on a performance management plan, the provision was for up to a half day's paid leave for emergencies.

17.11 Q: Did the Trust analyse staff performance and absence by school?

A: Yes, absence and performance management were linked. BG sent each Principal the details of staff who had met the trigger points for absence within the Trust's policy.

17.12 Q: Did that data go to the Operations Committee?

A: A detailed summary was included within the COO Report brought to the Committee each meeting and the management accounts showed the financial implications clearly as well. The Principals were also fully informed of all absence trigger points, data, and pay implications.

17.13 Q: Did the Trust keep a close eye on all staff going through those stages of performance or absence management?

A: Yes, this was reviewed carefully on an ongoing basis annually.

17.14 The Board had no further questions and the updates to the policies were unanimously approved. SB would update the Trust records and website as needed. **ACTION – SB**

18. Receive Pupil Voice Survey Report to the Board 2024

18.1 The Board acknowledged receipt of the Pupil Voice Survey Report 2024. This had been discussed as part of the CEO Report item earlier in the meeting, and the Trustees had no further questions.

19. Agree schedule of Trust Board and Committee Business for 2024-2025

19.1 The proposed meeting dates and times were at the base of the agenda. The Trustees had no comments to make about these.

20. Review Trustee and Committee business for 2024-2025

20.1 JC explained the proposed format for the Board and Committee meetings for 2024-2025, and explained that an updated OLT Governance Handbook for the new academic year would provide streamlined expectations of Trustees and local governors. The Handbook would be reviewed by the Trust Board in September, before being brought to the QES Committee at the October meeting.



21. Agree the confidential status of OLT documents, excluding the agenda, approved minutes of meetings, and approved final version policies, brought to each Board meeting (Ref: 1.45 ATH 2023)

21.1 The Board agreed that all documents brought to this meeting were confidential to the Trust, other than the meeting agenda, any final version approved policies and final version minutes of meetings approved by the Board or Committee as required.

22. AOB

Governance Survey 2024 Outcomes & Analysis

22.1 The Board discussed the outcomes of the governance survey, which the Trustees had completed before the Board meeting. Areas to reflect on for the following academic year included the offer of more tailored and high quality training for Trustees and local governors, making best use of Trustees' skills and experience in Committee and specialist role allocation, and enhancing the information provided to potential new Trustees at the recruitment stage to ensure that candidates could commit both the time and specific skills required to have impact.

22.2 Q: Why had the parent or local governors not been invited to the Trust Away Day?

A: The local governor role was a school-focussed role one, and local governors attended the local governing body (LGB) on behalf of their school. That LGB was labelled the Quality of Education and Safeguarding (QES) Committee. JC would reflect on whether it would be appropriate to invite local governors to one or more of the afternoon sessions of the 2025 Away Day, after the morning Board meeting had ended. It was important to note that the matters which the local governors needed training and information on was different overall to what the Trustees needed in their role on the Board.

22.3 Q: Why was the Trust's LGB format different to the standard model at other multi-academy trusts?

A: The Trust was still small and in a period of growth. As more growth occurred, JC expected to see the staff and parent governors adding more value and representing their body in a more consistent way. The focus for 2024-2025 was to ensure that the parent and staff governors were offering meaningful support and challenge both between and at QES Committee meetings. The goal was for them to be holding the school Principals to account, as overseen by the Trustees on the Board. There had already been a lot of progress with this during the current academic year and the Trust would continue to offer its support to the local governors and the Trustees in this respect.

22.4 Q: How did the Board obtain an oversight of the local governors' work?

A: The minutes of each QES Committee meeting were brought to the subsequent Board meeting and Trustees were given the opportunity to ask questions. In 2024-2025, the Trustee in the role of Chair of the QES Committee would also be asked to provide a verbal summary of matters covered at the QES Committee meeting.

Meeting Closed: 11.56

Dates of Board meetings for the 2024-2025 academic year:

*17th September 2024: 10.00 - 10.30 (*Virtual*)

*26th November 2024: 11.00 - 13.00 (*Virtual*)

*11th March 2025: 10.00 - 12.00 (*Virtual*)

*13th May 2025: 10.00 – 12.00 (*Virtual*)

*15 July 2025: 10.00 – 12.00 (*In person followed by Away Day lunch & afternoon strategy session*)

Actions from the Omnia Trust Board meeting of 9th July 2024

Action 1	Minute 6.1	SB to ask SHG to sign the approved May 2024 Board meeting minutes, and to upload these, the current meeting's agenda, and the meeting's attendance information to the Trust website. DONE
Action 2	Minute 8.2	SB to obtain TPA's external safeguarding report once available and upload to the Board meeting folder for Trustee's to view. DONE
Action 3	Minute 17.14	SB to upload the approved policies to the Trust website and to Parago as needed DONE



Omnia
LEARNING TRUST

☎ 07742 499439

✉ admin@omnialearningtrust.org

📍 57 Colne Road, Twickenham, TWQ 6QF