

Omnia Learning Trust – Operations Committee Meeting

Held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 7 October 2025 from 10:00–11:30am

Invitees and Attendance

Name / Role	Position	Attendance
Tyler Jeffs (TJ)	Board Director / Committee Chair	Present
Jodie Croft (JC)	Board Director and OLT CEO	Present
Sarah Bellingham (SB)	OLT Head of Operations	Present
Carina Cuddington (CC)	OLT CFO (Edufin)	Present <i>Joined 10:15am for finance reports; left 10:49am following Item 15</i>
Alison Hill (AH)	Board Director	Present
Nicola Poole (NP)	Board Director	Present
Hana Hamilton (HH)	OLT Governance & Communications Officer (Clerk)	Present

Disclaimer – Microsoft Teams Meeting Transcript

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1. Welcome and Identification of Any Other Business

The Chair opened the meeting at 10:00am, welcomed all attendees, and confirmed the meeting was quorate.

The Clerk reminded attendees that the Teams transcription feature was enabled to support accurate minute-taking. It was agreed that transcription would be paused if the Committee moved into any confidential HR or disciplinary discussions.

The CEO advised that the CFO can rejoin the meeting later for finance reports.

- APPROVED:** Use of Teams transcription for minute accuracy.
- ACTION:** None required.

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

The Chair invited declarations of conflicts of interest relating to the agenda or receipt of hospitality.

No new declarations were made. All entries within the Omnia Learning Trust Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests remain current for 2025–2026.

APPROVED: Register of Interests reviewed and confirmed as accurate.

ACTION: None required.

3. Appointment of Committee Chair and Review of Bank Signatories

Report introduced by: CEO

The CEO invited nominations for the position of **Operations Committee Chair** for the 2025–2026 academic year.

10:05am – NP joined the meeting.

Following brief discussion, Tyler Jeffs expressed willingness to continue in the role. In accordance with governance procedure, Tyler stepped out of the meeting for one minute during voting. The Committee unanimously supported his reappointment. Tyler rejoined the meeting and the CEO confirmed the outcome.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned whether the Trust continued to require multiple authorised bank signatories given digitalisation of transactions and whether this remained compliant with sector financial controls.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that, following staff changes, she was currently the sole active signatory. The Head of Operations noted that while electronic systems streamline approvals, multiple signatories remain necessary for internal control and segregation of duties. It was agreed that three authorised signatories would remain the Trust standard.

Director Question / Challenge:

Further clarity was sought on whether one signatory should be independent of the finance team.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that independence is maintained through role separation. The Head of Operations will be added as an additional authorised signatory due to her oversight role and non-involvement in daily processing.

APPROVED: Appointment of Tyler Jeffs as Operations Committee Chair for 2025–2026 confirmed.

ACTION: CEO and CFO to review and confirm the updated authorised signatory list with Barclays prior to the November 2025 Board meeting.

4. Approval of Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

Report introduced by: Chair

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 June 2025. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

There were no outstanding matters arising not already addressed within the current agenda.

APPROVED: Minutes of 24 June 2025 confirmed as accurate.

ACTION: Upload the approved minutes to OLT website and to Governor Hub, with request sent to Chair to sign these electronically.

5. OLT Scheme of Delegation & Policy Scheme of Delegation

Report introduced by: CEO

The CEO presented the updated **Scheme of Delegation**, developed with the Head of Operations, reflecting the current structure, revised committee remits, and updates within the 2025 Academy Trust Handbook.

The Scheme sets out clear lines of authority from Members to Directors, local governing bodies, and executives, providing transparency, consistency, and clear accountability.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors queried whether the Scheme had been benchmarked against the Confederation of School Trusts' model and whether an external review had been carried out.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed the Scheme had been benchmarked and reviewed internally against national sector bench. The Head of Operations explained that the **Policy Review Schedule** aligns all policies to the correct committee or Board approval pathway and ensures scheduled review cycles are met.

The Committee agreed that the Scheme provides a strong governance framework and clear operational assurance.

APPROVED: OLT Scheme of Delegation & Policy Scheme of Delegation received and adopted for the 2025–2026 academic year.

ACTION: None Required.

6. Pay Recommendations and UPR Applications

Report introduced by: CEO

The CEO introduced the annual pay recommendations for 2025–2026, including leadership and teaching posts across the Trust. These covered DCEO, Head of Operations, and Principals' salaries, OLT central staff pay determinations, and two UPR applications.

The CEO confirmed all proposals were performance-linked and benchmarked against national frameworks, with affordability validated by the CFO.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned whether pay parity across schools was being maintained and how affordability was modelled to ensure sustainability.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed moderation across schools was consistent, with each recommendation assessed under uniform criteria. The CFO confirmed affordability within the 2025–2026 budgets and noted that all changes were included within the approved three-year financial plan.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors also queried the clarity of the appeals process for unsuccessful applications.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that updated appeals guidance was issued to Principals, and all decisions had been subject to cross-moderation by the central HR and finance teams.

APPROVED: Pay recommendations and UPR applications for 2025–2026 approved as presented.

ACTION: None Required.

7. Management Accounts – August 2025

Report introduced by: The CFO (CC)

CC rejoined the meeting at 10:15am to present the August 2025 management accounts.

The CFO presented the Trust's August 2025 management accounts and provided an overview of the financial position.

- Omnia Learning Trust
- Twickenham Primary Academy (TPA)
- Didcot Primary Academy (DPA)
- Wantage Primary Academy (WPA)
- Sires Hill Primary Academy (SHPA)

Clarification was given regarding *capital spending*, particularly for TPA. The CFO confirmed that a **revenue contribution to capital** was made, covering projects such as playground equipment and railings, ensuring expenditure aligned to budgeted allocations.

Director Question / Challenge:

Clarification was sought on how SEND income received post year-end was recorded.

Response / Assurance Provided: The CFO explained that only confirmed funds could be recorded at year-end; the delayed SEND payment had arrived during audit, making it a post-year-end adjustment but within compliance.

The CFO further confirmed all capital funds were utilised, with **no capital carry forwards**, and that future devolved formula capital allocations were awaited.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned staffing variances at Didcot and Twickenham and how tighter financial controls would prevent future inaccuracies.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO explained that variances arose from mid-year contract adjustments without timely notification to the central finance team. Edufin has since implemented a Trust-wide staffing tracker and monthly validation checks. The CEO confirmed that all contract changes now require dual verification.

APPROVED: August 2025 management accounts received and accepted.

ACTION: None

8. DfE Capital Funding and Procurement

Report introduced by: CFO

The CFO presented an overview of completed 2024–2025 capital projects and early-stage planning for 2025–2026 works.

All prior-year funding had been fully utilised, and confirmation was received from auditors verifying compliance.

The CFO confirmed no significant procurement concerns for the period. Capital projects across Trust schools were progressing as planned, with Didcot snagging issues nearing completion and Sires Hill improvements continuing. The Committee was assured that procurement controls and DfE capital funding were managed appropriately through the Edufin system and internal oversight.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors queried how early procurement planning addressed inflation and supply-chain risks.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The Head of Operations confirmed that supplier pre-engagement has reduced lead times and improved competitive pricing. Procurement timetables are now aligned to the new financial year cycle.

APPROVED: Capital funding and procurement report noted and accepted.

ACTION: None Required.

9. Spending Linked to Educational Priorities

Report introduced by: CEO

The CEO provided a verbal update linking the financial performance to educational priorities. She emphasised that budget allocations remained strategically aligned to pupil outcomes, noting that end-of-year results demonstrated a strong return on educational investment.

Director Question / Challenge:

The Committee questioned how educational spending is evaluated for value and sustainability.

Response / Assurance Provided: The CEO confirmed that every staffing adjustment and resourcing decision is preceded by a viability and outcomes assessment to ensure value for money and direct pupil impact. She noted that the Trust continues to balance responsive spending with long-term staffing affordability.

The DCEO added that an extensive review of SEND costs had been completed, revealing significant overspend against statutory funding levels. The Trust had now developed a forensic SEND cost-tracking system and was actively pursuing reimbursement from local authorities. One case cited illustrated a £99,000 annual overspend for a single pupil, with 95% expected to be reclaimed following rigorous documentation and legal challenge.

Discussion also covered national policy developments, including the DfE's notional £6,000 SEND contribution, with early warning that this may increase to £8,000 without additional funding support. The Committee expressed concern regarding the financial sustainability of these obligations.

Director Question / Challenge:

Clarification was sought on the new Ofsted framework's implications for SEND and mainstream inclusion.

Response / Assurance Provided: The CEO explained that expectations for mainstream schools are rising significantly, requiring higher levels of SEND provision without proportional funding, placing schools under moral and financial pressure.

The Committee acknowledged the rigorous analysis and welcomed the strategic direction to strengthen SEND cost recovery, while commending the Trust's continued prioritisation of equitable education outcomes.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors queried how SEND overspend recovery was progressing and whether delays in LA reimbursements continued to affect cash flow.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that new legal representation in SEND recovery is in place to support the schools with recovered funds reinvested into classroom provision.

Director Question / Challenge:

Further clarification was sought on how spending decisions were evaluated for value for money.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO explained that impact analysis is now linked to outcome measures through the Education Dashboard, which tracks progress, attainment, and attendance metrics Trust-wide.

APPROVED: Educational spending priorities and investment strategy endorsed for ongoing monitoring through 2025–2026.

ACTION: None Required.

10. Academies Trust Handbook (ATH) & Accounts Direction

Report introduced by: CEO and Chair

The Committee received the 2025 Academies Trust Handbook (ATH) and 2024–2025 Accounts Direction compliance update.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors queried whether sustainability and carbon reporting requirements had been implemented at Trust level.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that each school now has a sustainability lead under DCEO oversight, and a central environmental action plan is being developed for Board presentation later in the year.

APPROVED: 2025 ATH and Accounts Direction compliance position received and approved.

ACTION: None Required.

12. OLT Compliance Report

Report introduced by: HOO

The Head of Operations (HOO) presented the October 2025 Compliance Report providing a comprehensive overview of operational compliance across all Trust schools. The report incorporated updates and assurance evidence in the following key areas:

- a) **Health and Safety Compliance** – All schools maintained full statutory compliance with termly site checks and contractor certifications up to date. Estates audits had identified minor remedial actions relating to site access control signage and playground surfacing, all of which were logged and scheduled for completion by end of term.



- b) **Safeguarding and Single Central Record (SCR) Monitoring** – All schools' SCRs were verified as compliant. Routine spot-checks had been completed by the Governance and Communications Officer (Clerk), with no exceptions raised. Termly HOO checks occur as routine.
- c) **Data Protection and GDPR** – The report confirmed the Trust maintained strong compliance under GDPR regulations. The Data Protection Policy 2025 and linked Explicit Consent Form had been updated and circulated for approval under Agenda Item 13. Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests remained within statutory response times. HOO flagged a low risk data-breach notified per requirements to the ICO.
- d) **Estates and Premises** – Site maintenance records were up to date, and the Trust was working with local contractors to finalise the Sires Hill car park and fencing project. Playground repairs at Twickenham Primary Academy (TPA) had been completed, and Wantage roof and heating works were progressing to plan. Energy-saving measures had been implemented across all sites, including the installation of automatic LED systems and enhanced insulation funded through DfE energy grants.
- e) **ICT and Cyber Security** – The OLT Staff E-Security Policy was due for committee approval under Item 13. It was confirmed multi-factor authentication (MFA) was now live across all user accounts, and phishing awareness testing would commence in November 2025.
- f) **Insurance and Risk Management** – All insurance policies were renewed, including public liability, employer's liability, and building cover. Claims were reviewed and found to be low-risk, with no current open cases. The HOO confirmed that the Trust Risk Register (Item 14) reflected current operational and compliance risks.
- g) **Policy Compliance** – Policy review tracking continued in accordance with the Governance Handbook review cycle. All statutory and non-statutory policies due for review in the autumn term had been submitted either to this committee or the forthcoming Audit & Risk meeting for ratification.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors queried how the Trust monitors assurance between operational compliance (e.g., site safety) and strategic risk (as captured in the Risk Register).

Response / Assurance Provided:

It was confirmed that all compliance metrics feed directly into the Risk Register dashboard, which is reviewed monthly by the CEO and the Operations Committee Chair. Issues identified at site level are logged into the central assurance matrix, creating a clear escalation trail and providing full audit visibility.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors asked whether the Trust's approach to GDPR and cyber resilience meets the latest DfE Digital Standards for Schools (2025).

Response / Assurance Provided:

The HOO confirmed that the Trust exceeds current DfE expectations, having implemented enhanced encryption, cloud-based storage segregation, and ongoing penetration testing through the Edufin IT compliance service. The forthcoming staff e-security refresher training will further strengthen Trust-wide awareness and readiness.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors also questioned staff absence rates and whether they remained within sector norms.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that staff absence rates were below national averages and that the new attendance-tracking software implemented in September had improved monitoring.

APPROVED: HOO Compliance Report received and assurance noted.

ACTION: None Required.

13. Policies for Approval

Report introduced by: HOO

The following updated policies were presented for approval:

- **OLT Data Protection Policy 2025** (including linked explicit consent form).
- **OLT Staff E-Security Policy 2025**.

Both policies were updated in consultation with the Trust's IT provider (123ICT) to reflect evolving data protection and cybersecurity requirements.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors queried how staff will be trained on the cybersecurity provisions.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The Head of Operations confirmed that all staff would receive annual mandatory refresher training, focusing on password management, phishing awareness, and secure data storage practices.

APPROVED: OLT Data Protection Policy 2025 approved.

APPROVED: OLT Staff E-Security Policy 2025 approved.

14. Review of the Trust Risk Register

Report introduced by: CEO

The Committee reviewed the updated October 2025 **Risk Register**, noting that all major risks remain under active monitoring. The CEO highlighted three areas currently categorised as high:

- Issues with payroll provider
- Retention of staff at TPA with longer hours
- Delays in local authority SEND reimbursements.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned how effectively the revised risk matrix tracked residual risk and mitigation progress over time.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO explained that mitigation status now updates automatically through the Edufin system, linking to financial and HR dashboards. The CFO will begin presenting graphical risk trends from the next Operations Committee meeting onward.

APPROVED: October 2025 Risk Register reviewed and noted.

ACTION: CEO to present updated graphical risk trends at the next Operations Committee meeting.

15. Review and Approval of the OLT Going Concern Assessment

Report introduced by: CEO and CFO

The CEO and CFO jointly presented the **Going Concern Assessment** for the year ended 31 August 2025.

The CFO confirmed that the Trust's financial position remains stable with sufficient reserves to meet obligations for the next 12 months. Key forecasts reflect strong liquidity and sustainable in-year surpluses.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors requested assurance that forward cashflow modelling had accounted for the planned estate investments and pay uplifts approved earlier in the meeting.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO confirmed all such commitments had been included in the forecast, with contingency margins built in. No indicators suggest any material risk to the Trust's ability to operate as a going concern.

APPROVED: OLT Going Concern Assessment for the year ended 31 August 2025 approved for submission to auditors.

ACTION: None Required.

16. OLT Responses to the Fraud Questionnaire

Report introduced by: The CFO (verbal summary delivered by the CEO)

The CEO presented the summary of fraud questionnaire responses submitted by the finance team across all OLT schools.

The Committee noted that no incidents of fraud, attempted fraud, or financial irregularity had been identified during the reporting period.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors asked what additional measures had been taken to ensure continued staff awareness of fraud reporting obligations.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that annual fraud awareness training forms part of induction for all finance and administrative staff and that the Whistleblowing Policy is reissued to all employees each September.

APPROVED: Fraud Questionnaire responses received and noted.

ACTION: None Required.

17. Agreement of Confidential Status of Meeting Documents

Report introduced by: The Chair

The Committee agreed that, in line with paragraphs 1.50–1.51 of the 2025 Academy Trust Handbook, all meeting documents other than the agenda and approved policies would remain confidential.

APPROVED: Confidential status of meeting documents confirmed.

Meeting Closed: 11:30am

Appendix A – Summary of Action Points

Action Point Number	Owner	Minute Item	Action	Deadline
1	CEO / CFO	3 – (Appointment of Committee Chair) Review of Bank Signatories	Review and confirm updated authorised bank signatory list with Barclays.	Before November 2025 Board Meeting
2	Clerk (GCO)	4 – Approval of Previous Minutes (24 June 2025)	Upload the approved minutes to OLT website and to Governor Hub, with	Oct 2025

Action Point Number	Owner	Minute Item	Action	Deadline
			request sent to Chair to sign these electronically.	
3	CEO	6 – Pay Recommendations	CEO to confirm that all pay recommendations are implemented in line with OLT Pay Policy and confirm outcome to the Operations Committee.	Nov 2025
4	CFO	7 – Management Accounts	CFO to include SEND funding reconciliation update and cashflow variance summary in the next management accounts report.	Nov 2025
5	HOO	13 – Policy Approvals	HOO to upload approved OLT Data Protection Policy 2025 and OLT Staff E-Security Policy to the OLT website and GovernorHub.	Oct 2025
6	CEO	14 – Risk Register	CEO to include updated operational risks relating to SEND funding pressures and capital maintenance in the next iteration of the OLT Risk Register.	Nov 2025
7	CEO	15 – Going Concern Assessment	CEO to submit the approved Going Concern Assessment to the Board for final sign-off and inclusion in the year-end financial statements.	Nov 2025
8	CEO	16 – Fraud Questionnaire	CEO to ensure findings from the Fraud Questionnaire are reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee at its next meeting.	Nov 2025

Document Reference Disclaimer

All documents and reports referred to within these minutes were circulated to members via GovernorHub in line with the corresponding agenda and published in advance of the meeting. Each minute item recorded herein directly corresponds to the relevant numbered agenda item for that meeting. Supporting papers are retained on GovernorHub as part of the official governance record in accordance with Omnia Learning Trust protocols.