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## Minutes of the Omnia Learning Trust Board of Directors

Held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 17 March 2026, 10:00–12:00

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### Invitees and Attendance

Name / Role	Position	Attendance
Russ Massie	Director / Chair (Member Appointed)	Present
Jason Murphy	Director / Vice Chair	Present
Jodie Croft	CEO / Director	Present
Alison Hill	Director	Present ( <i>left at 11:30</i> )
Duncan Millard	Director	Present
Nicola Poole	Director	Present
Jenelle Ross-Mc Intyre	Director	Present ( <i>Joined at 10:12</i> )
Leah Basilone	Deputy CEO	Present
Sarah Bellingham	Head of Operations (HOO)	Present
Carina Cuddington	CFO (Advisor)	Present
Hana Hamilton	Governance and Communications Officer (Clerk / GCO)	Present
<i>Tyler Jeffs</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Apologies Accepted</i>

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#### Disclaimer – Microsoft Teams Meeting Transcript

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### 1. Welcome, Apologies and Approval of Transcript

**Introduced by:** Chair

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Apologies were received from TJ.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

The Clerk confirmed that Microsoft Teams transcription had been activated to support the production of the minutes.

- APPROVED:** Use of Microsoft Teams transcription for this meeting.
  - ACTION:** None required.
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## 2. Declaration of any Conflicts of Interest

**Introduced by:** Chair

The Chair invited declarations of interests relating to agenda items, business interests, or hospitality.

NP informed the Board that she had resigned from Barclays and would shortly commence employment with a new organisation. NP acknowledged that her former role had previously constituted a declared conflict due to the Trust's banking arrangements and sought clarification regarding any further governance requirements.

### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board was advised that the Register of Business Interests would be updated to remove the Barclays-related conflict. NP was asked to provide details of her new employer once confirmed so that governance records could be amended accordingly if required.

It was noted that the change simplified the Trust's governance position and removed the ongoing banking conflict previously recorded.

- APPROVED:** Position Note.
  - ACTION:** Update Register of Business Interests to reflect change in Barclays conflict and publish revised register accordingly.
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## 3. Identify AOB and/or Confidential AOB

**Introduced by:** Chair

The Chair invited Directors to identify any items for AOB or confidential AOB. The Board noted the inclusion of the **OLT Strategy Away Day (19 May 2026)** as an item for discussion.

- APPROVED:** N/A
  - ACTION:** None
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## 4. Review of Trust Board Membership and DBS / s128 Checks

**Introduced by:** Chair

The Chair introduced the item in accordance with the Governance Handbook requirements relating to Board composition, safeguarding checks, and statutory compliance.

It was noted that:

- TJ term of office required Member approval for continuation
- One Director DBS check renewal was currently in progress for 2026
- Three further Director DBS renewals were due by the end of 2027

**APPROVED:** Board membership and safeguarding compliance position noted and accepted

**ACTION:** Ensure TJ term of office is formally renewed by Members.

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## 5. Review Directors' Training Requirements for 2025–2026

**Introduced by:** Chair

The Chair requested an update regarding Director training compliance and CPD completion. The Clerk confirmed that:

- mandatory governance training had been prioritised during the academic year;
- the majority of statutory training requirements had now been completed across the Board;
- approximately half of Directors still had outstanding CPD elements to complete.

Directors were reminded that:

- individual training records could be confirmed directly with the Clerk;
- training materials could be redistributed where required.

The Chair emphasised the importance of completing outstanding CPD activity promptly to ensure continued governance effectiveness.

**APPROVED:** Director training requirements and expectations for 2025–2026 noted.

**ACTION:** Complete all outstanding mandatory and CPD training and confirm completion to Clerk.

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## 6. Approval of Minutes of Previous Board Meeting and Matters Arising

**Report introduced by:** Chair

The minutes of the **25 November 2025** Board meeting were presented for approval. Directors confirmed that they had reviewed the minutes in advance. The Board then reviewed the associated action log and progress against each action.

**Director Question / Challenge:**

Directors challenged whether all actions from the November meeting had been completed within expected timeframes.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

It was confirmed that:

- The majority of actions had been completed
- Remaining actions were in progress, within timeframe and tracked
- Updates had been incorporated into current agenda items where relevant

**APPROVED:** Minutes of the 25 November 2025 Board meeting approved as an accurate record.

**ACTION:** Upload the approved minutes to OLT website and to Governor Hub.

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**7. Receipt of Previous Operations Committee Minutes and Chair's Verbal Update**

**Report introduced by:** CEO

The Chair invited the Board to receive the February 2026 Operations Committee minutes and provided a verbal update on key areas of discussion.

The Board noted that the Operations Committee continues to provide detailed scrutiny across finance, estates, compliance, and risk, with particular focus on financial performance, estates condition, and statutory compliance.

Key areas highlighted included:

- Ongoing monitoring of management accounts and financial sustainability
- Estates-related matters, including condition and maintenance priorities
- Compliance oversight across health and safety, GDPR and statutory requirements

**Director Question / Challenge:**

Directors sought assurance that the key risks identified through the Operations Committee are being escalated appropriately to Board level and are reflected within the Trust Risk Register.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

It was confirmed that all material risks identified at committee level are either escalated directly to the Board or incorporated within the Trust Risk Register, ensuring visibility and appropriate oversight. The committee structure continues to provide a robust filtering and assurance mechanism.

The Board agreed that the Operations Committee continues to provide effective scrutiny and assurance across its areas of responsibility.

**APPROVED:** February Operations Committee minutes received and noted.

**ACTION:** None required.

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**8. Receipt of Previous QES Committee Minutes and Chair's Update**

**Report introduced by:** QES Committee Chair

The Chair presented the Quality of Education and Safeguarding (QES) Committee minutes from **January 2026**, supported by a verbal update.

The Board considered key themes from the Committee, including:

- Safeguarding compliance and assurance
- Quality of education across schools
- SEND provision and increasing complexity of need
- Attendance and behaviour trends

**Director Question / Challenge:**

Directors questioned whether safeguarding remained consistently strong across all schools.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

It was confirmed that:

- Safeguarding remained robust and consistently strong
- Regular audits and monitoring were in place
- No significant concerns had been identified

**Director Question / Challenge:**

Directors challenged the increasing demand on SEND provision and the impact on school capacity.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

It was confirmed that:

- Demand for SEND support had increased significantly
- The Trust was actively reviewing provision, funding, and staffing models
- This remained a key strategic priority

**APPROVED:** Receipt of QES Committee minutes and update noted.

**ACTION:** None required

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## 9. Policies: review and approve policies in line with OLT Policy Scheme of Delegation

**Report introduced by:** CEO

The CEO introduced the policies requiring Board approval in accordance with the Trust Policy Scheme of Delegation.

### Financial Policies and Procedures

The CEO explained proposed amendments to financial delegation arrangements and approval thresholds.

The Board was advised that:

- previous Office Manager approval limits had been removed;
- this had resulted in Headteachers being required to authorise all purchases up to £500;
- operational feedback had indicated that the arrangement created inefficiency.

The Board noted that previous delegated thresholds had therefore been reinstated. The CEO and CFO further confirmed that strong financial controls remained in place through:

- fortnightly payroll reviews;
- transaction monitoring;
- Barclaycard oversight;
- bank reconciliation checks;
- EduFin scrutiny arrangements.

The Board additionally noted updates to procurement threshold references following replacement of former OJEU limits.

### **Sick Pay Policy**

The CEO confirmed that the Sick Pay Policy had been updated to reflect statutory sick pay entitlement from day one of employment.

**APPROVED:** Financial Policies & Procedures and Sick Pay Policy approved.

**ACTION:** Publish approved policies in accordance with Trust policy schedule and governance protocols.

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## **10. Receive Management Accounts and Budgets**

**Report introduced by:** CFO

The CFO presented the November 2025, December 2025 and January 2026 management accounts.

The CFO shared the Trust-wide financial summary and explained the overall in-year position.

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### **School-by-School Position Valley Park / Central (Pre-opening)**

Movement:

- £31k surplus to £14k surplus.

This reflected:

- increased staffing expenditure;
- Principal Designate costs.

The position remained above the Board-approved £8k surplus budget.

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### **Twickenham**

Movement:

- deficit position to approximately £45k surplus.

This was driven by:

- additional SEND funding;
- approximately £61k of additional allocation received.

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### **Didcot**

Movement:

- £25k surplus to approximately £10k surplus.

This reflected:

- increased staffing costs.

Despite this, the school remained ahead of original budget expectations.

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### **Wantage**

Movement:

- £48k deficit to approximately £67k deficit.

This was attributed to:

- agency staffing;
- SEND provision pressures;
- additional staffing cover requirements.

The Board was assured that expenditure remained:

- pupil-led;
  - approved;
  - manageable within reserves.
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### **Sires Hill**

Movement:

- £11k deficit to approximately £46k deficit.

Primary drivers included:

- increased supply staffing;
  - maternity cover;
  - staffing pressures linked to SEND provision.
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### **Reserves and Pooling Discussion**

A detailed discussion took place regarding reserve structures and pooling arrangements.

#### **Director Question / Challenge:**

Directors questioned whether reserves effectively operated as a single pooled position due to the Trust operating one bank account.

#### **Response / Assurance Provided:**

Clarification was provided that:

- cash is held centrally;
- individual schools remain accountable for their own budget position.

Two models were discussed:

1. GAG pooling;
2. reserve pooling.

The CEO highlighted ethical considerations regarding stronger schools subsidising weaker schools.

It was acknowledged that informal support mechanisms already operate across the Trust.

The CFO confirmed that:

- from a DfE perspective, the Trust is treated as a single entity;
- internal movements do not require formal loan agreements.

**APPROVED:** Management accounts and budget position received and noted.

**ACTION:** Continue review of Sires Hill financial mitigation options ahead of final budget setting.

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## 11. Review benchmarking data: annual spend on electricity, gas and estates. Receive estates conditions data and review strategic priorities.

**Report introduced by:** CFO

The CFO presented the benchmarking report and confirmed that the data had been reviewed against multi-academy trusts with fewer than 3,000 pupils.

### Capital Income

The CFO noted that capital income per pupil was significantly lower than the median.

#### Response / Assurance Provided:

It was explained that this was likely because some comparator trusts had been successful with CIF bids. The CEO added that Omnia's estate is relatively new, except for Twickenham, meaning the Trust has less current capital need than trusts with more dilapidated buildings. It was noted that a CIF bid had been submitted this year, which may alter the position if successful.

### Staffing and Non-Staffing Costs

The CFO explained that staff costs per pupil were approximately **£400 lower than the median**, while non-staffing costs were higher.

#### Response / Assurance Provided:

This was explained by the way costs are categorised. If services such as cleaning, finance, payroll or agency staff were delivered in-house, they would appear under staffing rather than non-staffing. When these outsourced and agency-related costs are adjusted back into the staffing calculation, the Trust sits close to the expected benchmark of approximately **77%**.

### Catering Costs

The CEO asked whether the CFO had any insight into why catering costs appeared high.

#### Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO explained that catering benchmarking depends heavily on whether provision is in-house or outsourced. In schools with in-house catering, only the cost of food may appear under catering, while staffing appears elsewhere. The CFO advised that catering costs are often roughly split between food and staffing, with food accounting for around **50–53%**.

The CEO noted that there was very little scope to reduce the Trust's catering contracts further, unless catering were brought in-house, which would create significant operational risk.

**Director Question / Challenge:**

A Director asked whether the benchmarking was national or based on regional comparators, noting that location could affect cost.

The Chair commented that, if there were areas where the Trust would be prepared to take a cost pressure, good-quality food for children would be a priority.

The CFO advised that a more useful measure would be to examine:

- cost per meal per pupil;
- income received through free school meals;
- whether catering costs are sustainable in real terms.

The CEO agreed that this would be a more reliable measure than headline benchmarking data alone.

**Teaching Staff Salary Measures**

The CFO explained that teaching staff salary per pupil was higher than the median.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

This was attributed to the Trust's small and growing schools. Leadership salaries are included within teaching staff costs, and where pupil numbers are low, the cost per pupil appears higher. The CFO noted that this should reduce as schools grow.

**Estates and Premises Costs**

The CEO highlighted that premises costs and estates management costs were higher than average and median figures.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

The CEO advised that this was not necessarily negative, as it indicated that the Trust is investing in and maintaining its estate rather than allowing buildings to deteriorate. It was acknowledged that if difficult budgetary choices were required, estates expenditure would need to be reviewed carefully against staffing and educational priorities.

The CEO reported that the DfE had recently launched a requirement for trusts to review their whole estate strategy and develop a longer-term strategic view. The Trust already holds detailed estate condition data and cost information and is therefore in a good position to complete this work. A revised estate strategy, including a longer-term ten-year plan, will return to the Operations Committee.

**Director Question / Challenge:**

The Chair asked whether, when comparing the Oxfordshire schools, there were any significant differences in cost per pupil, excluding Twickenham due to its different context.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

The CEO explained that Twickenham has higher premises expenditure because it is an older building, not a purpose-built primary school, and has inherited issues including wall condition, a large glass atrium, roof leaks, a flat roof and London cost pressures. The Oxfordshire schools were confirmed as broadly comparable.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

The CFO concluded that the benchmarking did not reveal anything unexpected. It confirmed that the Trust has strong reserves, strong cash balances and known pupil-number-related issues.

- APPROVED:** Benchmarking report received and noted.
  - ACTION:** Review detailed estates condition information and longer-term strategic estates prioritisation t April 2026 Ops Committee
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**12. Review and Approve Expenditure over £50k**

**Report introduced by:** Chair

The Board was advised that there had been **no expenditure over £50,000** requiring Board approval since the previous meeting.

- APPROVED:** No expenditure over £50,000 requiring approval.
  - ACTION:** None required.
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**13. Review and Approve Expenditure on Recruitment Needs over £50k**

**Report introduced by:** Chair

The Board was informed that there were **no recruitment-related expenditures over £50k** requiring approval.

- APPROVED:** No recruitment expenditure over £50k noted.
  - ACTION:** None required.
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**14. Receive Academy Trust Self-Assessment (SRMSA) 2025**

**Report introduced by:** CFO

The CFO presented the findings of the School Resource Management Self-Assessment. It was confirmed that:

- the Trust remains **compliant across all key areas**
- the self-assessment reflects:
  - strong financial governance
  - effective oversight structures
  - appropriate internal controls

The Board was advised the assessment has been completed in line with **DfE requirements**

**Director Question / Challenge:**

Directors questioned whether any areas had been identified that:

- require improvement
- or present potential future risk

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

The CFO confirmed that:

- no significant weaknesses were identified
- any minor areas for development are:
  - already known
  - being addressed through ongoing improvement work

The Board was assured that:

- financial governance arrangements remain robust

**APPROVED:** SRMSA report received.

**ACTION:** Submit completed SRMSA return in line with DfE requirements and deadline.

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## 15. Receive Compliance Report

**Report introduced by:** HOO

It was confirmed that the report had already been presented to and scrutinised by the February Operations Committee, and that the version before the Board reflected that discussion.

The report covered the following key areas:

- IT and GDPR
- Internal and external audit activity
- Financial compliance
- Estates
- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety

It was also confirmed that the report remained largely positive, with a high proportion of areas rated green.

### Fire Safety – Wantage

HOO referred to a previously raised action relating to fire door works at Wantage.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

- All fire door works have now been completed
- A subsequent fire risk assessment has taken place
- All actions from that assessment have been closed

This item was confirmed as fully resolved.

### Internal Audit Update

The HOO reported that the Trust had recently received the outcome of its first internal audit of the year.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

- Audit focus: **procurement, value for money, and tendering**
- Overall outcome: **Substantial Assurance (green)**

- Findings:
  - One medium recommendation
  - One low recommendation
  - One advisory point

It was confirmed that:

- Management responses were still being finalised
- The completed report would be presented to the April Operations Committee

#### Next Internal Audit

HOO confirmed that the next audit would focus on:

- **Estates management**
- **Health and safety**

The CEO noted that this was well timed given the Trust's current focus on estate strategy and compliance.

#### Overall Compliance Position

##### Director Question / Challenge:

The Board asked whether there were any areas of concern or red flags.

##### Response / Assurance Provided:

HOO confirmed that:

- There were no significant concerns
- Any areas not yet green were clearly understood
- All actions were being closely monitored and progressed

The overall position was described as strong, with clear oversight and effective tracking of compliance actions.

**APPROVED:** Compliance report received and noted.

**ACTION:** Present completed internal audit report and management responses to Operations Committee.

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## 16. Review of Trust Risk Register (ATH 2025 2.35)

**Report introduced by:** CEO

The Board reviewed the March 2026 Trust Risk Register.

It was noted that several strategic and operational risks would be explored in greater detail within the subsequent CEO and DCEO reports, including:

- financial pressures at Sires Hill;
- behaviour and safeguarding concerns at Twickenham;
- SEND capacity pressures;
- staffing and leadership capacity;
- parental complaints and communication risk.

The Board confirmed that:

- mitigation activity remained ongoing;
- risk oversight continued through both QES and Operations structures.

**APPROVED:** Trust Risk Register reviewed and noted.

**ACTION:** Continue monitoring strategic and operational risks through Board and committee oversight arrangements.

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## 17. Receive CEO report: RAG Report DCEO Update // RAG Report CEO Update

**Report introduced by:** CEO & DCEO

The CEO invited the DCEO to present the Trust-wide school improvement overview, with reference made to both autumn and spring monitoring data in order to demonstrate progress, emerging concerns and comparative trends across schools.

The DCEO explained that the report provided a current position statement across:

- safeguarding;
- quality of education;
- leadership and management;
- SEND;
- behaviour;
- attendance;
- staffing;
- curriculum development;
- pupil outcomes.

The Board noted that the discussion focused primarily on the current spring position whilst also identifying movement since the previous reporting cycle.

### **Pupil Numbers and Staffing**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board was advised that:

- pupil numbers at Sires Hill continue to increase as additional year groups open;
- staffing structures remain fluid due to the current reliance on agency and fixed-term staffing arrangements;
- there are currently no permanent vacancies across the Trust, although this is expected to change approaching the summer term recruitment period.

The DCEO explained that workforce flexibility remains necessary given the growth profile of several schools and wider affordability considerations.

### **Safeguarding**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board received assurance that:

- all statutory safeguarding requirements continue to be met across all Trust schools;
- internal safeguarding reviews and external safeguarding audits remain current;
- statutory safeguarding returns have been completed;
- no significant compliance concerns have been identified.

The Board noted that safeguarding oversight remains embedded within both operational and governance structures.

### **Quality of Teaching and Learning**

A detailed school-by-school update was provided regarding teaching standards, monitoring arrangements and areas requiring further improvement.

### **SEND Provision**

#### **Director Question / Challenge**

Directors sought clarification regarding the affordability and sustainability of additional SEND staffing provision.

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The DCEO confirmed that:

- three pupils with particularly high levels of need are currently being supported;
- one pupil is fully EHCP funded;
- one pupil is partially funded;
- one pupil remains awaiting formal assessment.

The Board noted that:

- current provision exceeds available funding levels;
- staffing efficiencies have been achieved where possible through grouped provision;
- some pupils are receiving substantial support without equivalent funding.

It was acknowledged that:

- national SEND funding continues to fall below operational need;
- the overspend position has nevertheless narrowed over time.

### **Leadership and Management**

The DCEO provided a detailed update regarding leadership effectiveness and improvement priorities across schools.

### **Curriculum**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board was advised that:

- curriculum structures remain well established across all schools;
- ongoing refinements continue through normal school improvement processes;
- future curriculum reform developments nationally are being monitored closely.

### **Pupil Outcomes**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The DCEO advised that:

- there has been no significant movement in outcomes since autumn reporting;
- end-of-year outcomes and projections will be presented during the summer reporting cycle.

### **Pastoral Support and SEMH Provision**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board noted differing pastoral priorities across schools.

#### **Twickenham**

- Greater strategic pastoral oversight remains necessary.

#### **Wantage**

- Pastoral provision remains strong overall;
- further work continues regarding SEND timetabling and pupil engagement.

#### **Sires Hill**

- additional SEMH provision development remains necessary.

### **Governance Safeguarding Note**

A governance point was raised regarding neutrality and future HR processes.

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board acknowledged that:

- Directors may later be required to participate in formal HR processes;
- governance discussions must therefore remain strategic and appropriately neutral.

#### **Attendance**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board noted that:

- overall attendance remains strong across the Trust;
- Wantage attendance continues to improve towards national averages;
- Sires Hill attendance fluctuates more significantly due to small cohort sizes.

The DCEO explained that:

- small pupil numbers mean that individual absences disproportionately affect percentage measures;
- recent fluctuations have been linked largely to seasonal illness.

The Board was further advised that:

- persistent absence levels are reducing;
- attendance remains above national averages in several schools;
- Didcot continues to demonstrate particularly strong attendance systems and outcomes.

The CEO confirmed that the overall attendance picture has improved since the previous reporting cycle.

#### **Workforce and Staff Management**

The CEO provided a detailed update regarding workforce oversight and performance management structures.

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board was advised that:

- a structured Trust-wide performance management approach is now embedded;
- leadership teams maintain visibility of staff performance across schools;
- support plans, action plans and early intervention strategies are being used proactively.

The CEO explained that:

- this is the first full year of operating the revised workforce oversight model;
- the intention is to identify concerns at an earlier stage to prevent wider impact on pupil outcomes.

The Board acknowledged that:

- staff workload perceptions may not always align with leadership assessment;
- however, no significant systemic workforce concerns are currently identified.

#### **Workforce Stability and Fixed-Term Contract Strategy**

The CEO provided further detail regarding staffing structures and financial risk management.

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board was advised that:

- a proportion of staff remain employed on fixed-term contracts;
- this provides flexibility in managing future affordability pressures;
- permanent staffing growth is being controlled cautiously.

It was confirmed that:

- fixed-term arrangements are being used strategically to manage financial sustainability;
- some staff have remained on fixed-term contracts for extended periods;
- employment law requirements mean that staff approaching four years' service must either be made permanent or released.

### **Director Question / Challenge**

Directors raised concern regarding the potential impact of prolonged fixed-term arrangements on:

- workforce morale;
- staff retention;
- organisational culture;
- behavioural consistency.

### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The CEO acknowledged the risk and advised that:

- premature permanent appointments would create additional financial exposure;
- many fixed-term staff are successfully retained and renewed;
- workforce turnover is not necessarily linked to school performance.

The School Improvement Lead confirmed that:

- workforce movement analysis is undertaken routinely;
- departures to competing local schools would generate greater concern;
- this is not currently the predominant pattern.

The CEO concluded that:

- workforce sustainability and financial sustainability must be balanced carefully;
- the Trust continues to manage this position actively.

### **Growth and Strategic Development**

The CEO presented the Trust Growth and Strategic Development update.

### **National Trust Performance Ranking**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board was advised that:

- Omnia Learning Trust has been ranked 84th nationally out of 1,153 multi-academy trusts;
- this places the Trust within the top 7% nationally.

The CEO confirmed that:

- the ranking reflects combined outcomes across all schools;
- Trust-wide outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics remain above national averages.

The Board noted particularly strong performance relating to disadvantaged pupils.

### **Director Question / Challenge**

Directors challenged whether these positive outcomes are communicated sufficiently to parents and the wider community.

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The CEO acknowledged that:

- communication of success remains an area requiring improvement;
- work is underway to strengthen communications and external messaging.

The Clerk confirmed that this work is actively progressing.

### **Valley Park Development**

### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board noted that:

- the new Valley Park website has now launched;
- applications have opened;
- approximately 30 applications have already been received for Year 1/2 intake.

The CEO advised that:

- early demand appears positive;
- consideration is being given to opening a Year 1 class;
- conversion from applications to confirmed places remains uncertain at this stage.

The Board noted that project timelines remain on track.

### **Statutory Consultation**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board noted that:

- the Section 10 consultation has formally launched;
- the consultation period will run for eight weeks;
- public events, leaflet distribution and social media engagement form part of the consultation strategy.

### **Capital Build Progress**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The CEO confirmed that:

- the building frame is now in place;
- construction continues to progress positively;
- handover is currently anticipated during April–May, subject to change.

### **Central Capacity and Operational Infrastructure**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The Board noted that:

- central Trust capacity remains under pressure;
- additional hours have temporarily been allocated to the Clerk role;
- a wider structural review of central capacity will be required.

The CEO also confirmed:

- ongoing issues with the current payroll provider;
- notice has been issued, although contractual release has not yet been agreed;
- payroll provision is intended to transfer to EduFin.

The Board further noted that:

- a new HR provider has now been appointed;
- transition arrangements are scheduled for Easter.

### **DfE White Paper and SEND Reform**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided**

The CEO advised that:

- significant national reform is anticipated in relation to SEND and inclusion;
- schools are likely to face increased operational and accountability pressures;
- implementation may significantly increase workload and parental challenge.

The Board noted that:

- schools may be expected to take greater ownership of SEND planning and delivery;
- concerns regarding implementation are widespread across the sector.

**APPROVED:** CEO Report Received.

**ACTION:** Monitor progress and impact of Twickenham behaviour and leadership action plan and escalate further action if required.

**ACTION:** Continue review of staffing structures, fixed-term contract strategy and future affordability risks across schools.

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## 18. Receive Principals' Termly Dashboards

**Report introduced by:** DCEO

The Board received the termly dashboards for:

- Didcot Primary Academy
- Sires Hill Primary Academy
- Twickenham Primary Academy
- Wantage Primary Academy

The dashboards covered:

- demographics
- fire drills
- exclusions
- attendance
- racist incidents
- bullying incidents
- safeguarding
- child protection
- complaints
- CPD
- staffing updates

The Board noted that attendance trends, staffing updates, behaviour indicators and safeguarding metrics had already been discussed extensively within the preceding CEO and DCEO reports.

Specific dashboard references discussed included:

- attendance fluctuations at Sires Hill due to small cohort size
- persistent absence reductions across schools
- behaviour and safeguarding incident trends at Twickenham
- staffing monitoring and support plan activity across schools
- SEND and pastoral provision developments across multiple settings

**The Board received assurance that:**

- dashboard monitoring remained embedded within Trust oversight processes
- schools continued to provide regular operational and safeguarding data returns
- areas of concern identified through dashboards were escalated into Trust improvement and risk processes where required

**APPROVED:** The Board received the Principals' Termly Dashboards for scrutiny and assurance purposes.

**ACTION:** None required

## 19. Receive Parent Survey Results and draft OLT Parent Communications Policy

### Report introduced by: CEO

The CEO introduced the parent survey findings, noting that this year's data presented a more realistic and nuanced picture than in previous years.

#### Response / Assurance Provided:

- There has been a **40% increase in parent responses**
- Approximately **one-third of parents responded overall**
- This represents a significantly larger and more representative sample

It was acknowledged that:

- Previous years may have reflected more favourable responses due to lower participation
- The current dataset provides a more balanced view

### Headline Outcomes

#### Response / Assurance Provided:

- Overall satisfaction remains high, with many responses still in the **90% range**
- However, there has been a noticeable reduction from previous years (previously mid-90%)

It was confirmed that:

- This reduction is not a shift to negative responses
- Many responses have moved into:
  - neutral categories
  - "don't know" responses

The CEO noted that:

- Neutral responses provide limited insight
- It is unclear whether this reflects:
  - lack of communication
  - lack of understanding
  - or disengagement

### Director Challenge – Interpretation of Results

#### Director Question / Challenge:

Clarification was sought on whether the data represents a decline in performance or simply a broader sample.

#### Response / Assurance Provided:

- The change is likely due to increased participation
- The overall picture remains positive
- Results are considered more representative rather than worse

### Key Theme: Communication

The CEO highlighted that the most consistent area of concern across responses was communication between school and parents.

#### Response / Assurance Provided:

- This aligns with increased complaints and parental challenge
- A Trust-wide communication strategy has been developed

Key elements include:

- A single Trust communication policy replacing individual school policies
- Clear expectations for:
  - response times
  - communication channels
  - escalation routes

It was confirmed that:

- The policy addresses common areas of complaint directly
- It clarifies what schools can and cannot provide

### **Managing Expectations**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided:**

- A key issue identified is **unrealistic parental expectations**
- Parents often expect levels of support beyond what schools can reasonably deliver

The CEO explained that:

- Increased SEND expectations and personalised provision contribute to this
- Differences in provision between pupils are visible to parents
- This can lead to dissatisfaction where expectations are not met

### **Director Reflection – Expectations vs Reality**

#### **Director Comment:**

It was noted that parents may believe schools can provide more than is realistically possible, particularly in SEND and behavioural contexts.

#### **Response / Assurance Provided:**

- This was agreed as a core issue
- There is a need to clearly define:
  - what schools are responsible for
  - what they are able to provide

### **Future Communication Approach**

#### **Response / Assurance Provided:**

The Trust intends to:

- Provide clearer guidance to parents
- Set consistent boundaries across all schools
- Use standardised responses aligned to policy

It was noted that:

- This may not reduce complaints
- However, it will:
  - ensure consistency
  - protect school leaders
  - maintain professional boundaries

### **Director Challenge – Supporting Parents**

**Director Question / Challenge:**

It was suggested that parents may benefit from clearer guidance on:

- how schools support SEND
- how to talk to children about behaviour and inclusion

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

- This was recognised as a useful approach
- Consideration will be given to providing:
  - simple guidance materials
  - “what schools can do” frameworks

**Conclusion on Parent Survey**

The Board noted that:

- Results remain strong overall
- Increased participation provides better insight
- Communication is the primary area for improvement

**APPROVED:** Parent survey received and noted.

**ACTION:** Implement Trust-wide communications strategy and revised communications expectations across all schools.

**ACTION:** Develop parent guidance materials and “what schools can do” framework relating to SEND, behaviour and school support expectations.

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**20. Any Other Business (AOB)**

**Introduced by:** Chair

The Chair reminded the Board of the upcoming Strategy Away Day.

**Response / Assurance Provided:**

- Date confirmed: **19 May**
- External governance expert will attend to support discussion
- Agenda to include:
  - governance structure
  - growth strategy
  - future planning

It was confirmed that:

- Some Directors may not be able to attend
- Pre-meeting input will be gathered to ensure all views are captured

**APPROVED:** N/A

**ACTION:** Gather pre-meeting input from Directors unable to attend the Strategy Away Day.

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**21. Agree Confidential Status of OLT Documents**

**Report introduced by:** Chair

The Chair reminded Directors of the requirement under **ATH 2025 (paras 1.50–1.51)** to agree the confidential status of Board documents.

The Board confirmed that:

- The **agenda**, approved minutes and **final versions of policies** may be published and shared in accordance with Trust protocols.
- All other board papers and draft documents considered at this meeting are to remain **confidential**.

**APPROVED:** Confidential status of Board documents confirmed.

**ACTION:** None required.

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**Meeting closed at approximately 11:55**

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**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.*