Omnia LEARNING TRUST

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Omnia Learning Trust – Operations Committee Meeting Minutes

Held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 16 June 2026| 10:00–11:30am

Invitees and Attendance

Name	Position	Attendance
Tyler Jeffs	Board Director / Operations Committee Chair	Present
Jodie Croft	Board Director & CEO	Present
Carina Cuddington	CFO (Edufin)	Present *(left after Agenda item 8)*
Sarah Bellingham	Head of Operations (HOO)	Present
Leah Basilone	DCEO	Present
Alison Hill	Board Director	Present
Nicola Poole	Board Director	Present *(left 11:00am)*
Hana Hamilton	Governance & Communications Officer (Clerk & GCO)	Present

Disclaimer – Microsoft Teams Meeting Transcript

The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams. The automatic transcription function was enabled solely to support accurate minute-taking. The transcript is not the formal record of proceedings. Approved minutes, once confirmed by the Board, constitute the only official record. Transcripts are stored securely and deleted following formal approval. By attending, participants acknowledged and consented to the use of transcription for governance purposes.

1. Approval of Teams Transcript, Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting and confirmed it was quorate.

The Committee acknowledged use of Teams transcription for governance accuracy.

Apologies received from NP for joining later and leaving early.

✅ **APPROVED:** Use of Teams transcription for minute accuracy.

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

The Chair invited declarations of pecuniary, business or hospitality interests.

No new declarations were made. The Register of Interests (March 2026) remains accurate.

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✅ **APPROVED: Register of Interests reviewed and confirmed as accurate.**

☐ **ACTION: None required.**

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3. Identify AOB and/or Confidential AOB

The chair asked the committee if there were any AOB's to identify and discuss at the end of the meeting.

The CEO advised that two matters would be raised under Any Other Business.

No additional matters arising were identified.

☐ **ACTION:** None required.

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4. Approval of Minutes of 21 April 2026 Operations Meeting & Matters Arising

Report introduced by: Chair

The Committee reviewed the previous Operations Committee minutes.

The Chair asked whether there were any issues arising from the previous minutes.

The CEO confirmed that all matters arising were covered within the current agenda.

The Committee confirmed the minutes as an accurate record.

✅ **APPROVED:** Minutes of 21 April 2026 received and approved.

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

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5. Recommendation of Approval for Academy and Trust Budgets 2026/27 Including Forecast Pupil Numbers and Spending Priorities

Report introduced by: CEO

The Committee received detailed budget proposals for all academies and the Trust for 2026/27 together with medium-term forecasts and pupil number assumptions.

The CEO explained that the budgets had been fully refreshed using the latest available funding information, staffing assumptions, inflationary pressures, contractual commitments and operational requirements.

The Committee was advised that significant work had been undertaken to ensure that all assumptions were realistic and reflected current educational and financial circumstances.

The discussion focused heavily on sustainability, staffing structures, SEND pressures, demographic trends and the strategic use of reserves.

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5.1 (TPA) Twickenham Primary Academy Budget

The CEO presented the Twickenham budget and explained that the school continued to manage the long-term impact of declining pupil numbers as it transitioned towards a one-form entry model.

5.2 Pay Award Assumptions

The Committee scrutinised assumptions relating to future teacher and support staff pay awards.

The CEO explained that budgets assumed teacher pay awards of approximately 2%, 2% and 2.5% across the planning period, reflecting current national guidance.

The CFO advised that national discussions suggested schools did not possess sufficient financial capacity to fund materially higher awards without additional government funding.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned the risk posed should pay awards exceed assumptions.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO advised that higher-than-forecast awards would create pressure across all budgets; however, historically such awards had been accompanied by additional funding allocations.

The Committee agreed that the assumptions represented the most prudent and realistic position currently available.

5.3 (WPA) Wantage Primary Academy Budget

The CEO presented the Wantage budget and reported that the school remained in a particularly strong position.

The Committee heard that:

- reception admissions continued to be extremely strong;
- housing development growth continued to support pupil recruitment;
- the school was approaching full occupancy across year groups;
- staffing costs remained favourable due to workforce profile;
- leadership capacity had been strengthened through an additional Assistant Headteacher post.

The budget also incorporated provision for future modular accommodation to support SEND provision once the school reached full capacity.

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Director Question / Challenge:

The Chair challenged whether projected surpluses in future years were excessively high and could attract scrutiny from the Department for Education.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO agreed that the projected surplus could be reduced through planned capital investment.

Discussion took place regarding:

- additional SEND accommodation;
- future modular buildings;
- ICT investment;
- estate improvements;
- strategic staffing investment.

The Committee agreed that a future capital contingency should be incorporated into planning assumptions to demonstrate intended reinvestment.

☐ **ACTION:** Review future capital investment assumptions within Wantage budget forecasts before submission to Board.

5.4 (DPA) Didcot Primary Academy Budget

The CEO presented the Didcot budget and explained that forecast deficits reflected a conscious decision to invest reserves in staffing and educational provision.

The Committee heard that:

- staffing levels reflected operational need;
- fixed-term contracts continued to provide flexibility;
- deficits remained manageable through reserve utilisation;
- permanent staffing structures remained affordable.

A detailed discussion followed regarding SEND pressures and the growing challenge of balancing provision for children with complex needs whilst maintaining intervention support for mainstream pupils.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned whether support staff deployment remained consistent across schools and how future SEND reforms could affect affordability.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO explained that support staffing requirements varied significantly according to pupil need and statutory requirements.

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The Committee heard that:

- EHCP funding rarely covered full staffing costs;
- schools routinely subsidised support provision;
- nursery ratios remained legally fixed;
- future SEND reforms could place additional pressure on intervention provision.

The Director of Education highlighted increasing national concerns that children requiring moderate additional support were receiving less intervention due to the growing complexity of needs across the sector.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the importance of protecting intervention support wherever possible.

The Committee strongly endorsed continued investment in provision supporting vulnerable learners and those at risk of falling behind academically.

5.5 OLT Central Budget

The CEO presented the Trust Central budget.

The Committee heard that the budget included proposed investment in additional central capacity, including:

- expansion of the Governance and Communications Officer role into a Trust Business Manager function;
- recruitment of additional Trust administrative and clerking support;
- increased operational capacity in preparation for Valley Park Academy opening.

The CEO explained that these additions were necessary to support continued Trust growth and increasing operational complexity.

The Committee agreed that additional capacity represented a prudent investment and would strengthen organisational resilience.

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6. Summer Internal Audit Report

Report introduced by: Head of Operations

Following completion of the budget discussion and the departure of the CFO from the meeting, the Committee received the Summer Internal Audit reports.

The Head of Operations advised that the audit had focused on:

- Estates Management;
- Health and Safety Compliance.

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The Committee was reminded that the internal scrutiny programme forms a key element of the Trust's assurance framework and provides independent verification of the effectiveness of internal controls.

The Committee heard that the outcomes were particularly positive and reflected the maturity of systems and processes now operating across the Trust.

It was explained that the auditors had examined:

- site management arrangements;
- maintenance planning;
- compliance monitoring;
- statutory testing;
- condition survey planning;
- record keeping.
- statutory testing compliance;
- risk assessments;
- accident reporting;
- fire safety procedures;
- training records;
- contractor management.

The Committee heard that auditors had provided strong assurance regarding the effectiveness of estates management systems.

The report recognised the significant improvements that had been implemented since the Trust centralised elements of estates oversight.

It was commented that particular recognition had been given to:

- central monitoring arrangements;
- compliance tracking systems;
- health and safety reporting structures.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned whether any emerging themes had been identified across Trust schools.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The Head of Operations advised that the recommendations identified were minor and largely reflected opportunities to further strengthen documentation and evidence trails rather than addressing significant risks.

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The Committee noted that health and safety compliance remained a significant strength of the Trust.

✅ **APPROVED:** Summer Internal Audit findings received and noted.

☐ **ACTION:** Present full audit reports and management responses to the July Board meeting.

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7. Review and Approve Appointment of Internal Auditors (ATH 2025 Paragraph 2.35)

The Committee considered arrangements for the appointment of internal auditors for the forthcoming audit cycle.

The Head of Operations reminded members that the Academy Trust Handbook requires Trusts to maintain an appropriate programme of internal scrutiny and to periodically review arrangements for delivering this function.

The Committee reviewed the performance of the current provider and considered whether alternative providers should be sought.

It was confirmed that:

- audit quality had been consistently high;
- reporting had been timely and professional;
- recommendations had been proportionate and constructive;
- auditors demonstrated a strong understanding of the academy sector.

Director Question / Challenge:

The Chair questioned whether sufficient market testing had been undertaken to ensure continued value for money.

Response / Assurance Provided:

It was confirmed that benchmarking had been undertaken and that current costs remained competitive.

The Committee heard that continuity of provider also provided benefits through the auditor's existing understanding of Trust systems and controls.

Members agreed that the current arrangements continued to represent good value for money and provided effective independent assurance.

✅ **APPROVED:** Recommendation to continue with the current internal audit provider.

☐ **ACTION:** Present recommendation to the Board for formal approval.

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8. Receive March, April and May 2026 Management Accounts, Cashflow and Balance Sheet

Report introduced by: CFO

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Note: This item was taken earlier in the meeting to accommodate the CFO's attendance but is recorded here in agenda order.

The CFO presented the March, April and May Management Accounts together with the latest cashflow forecasts and balance sheet position.

The Committee undertook detailed scrutiny of the Trust's financial position.

The CFO reported that the overall position remained stable despite continuing pressures associated with staffing, inflation and SEND expenditure.

The Committee reviewed:

- Trust-wide reserves;
- school-level budget performance;
- cashflow forecasts;
- staffing expenditure;
- investment income;
- forecast year-end position.

The CFO advised that cash balances remained healthy and that the Trust continued to generate positive investment returns on surplus funds.

Director Question / Challenge:

The Chair questioned whether current reserve levels remained appropriate in light of future capital requirements and Valley Park Academy opening costs.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO advised that reserve levels remained strong and continued to provide appropriate protection against future risks.

The Committee heard that future forecasts incorporated planned investment activity whilst maintaining prudent levels of financial resilience.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors sought assurance that the Trust's financial position remained sustainable despite forecast deficits within some individual schools.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CFO explained that several forecast deficits reflected planned reserve utilisation rather than structural financial weakness.

The Committee heard that schools continued to hold sufficient reserves and that corrective measures had already been incorporated into future planning assumptions.

The CFO confirmed that there were no concerns regarding the Trust's overall financial sustainability.

The Committee expressed confidence in the financial position presented.

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✅ **APPROVED:** Management Accounts, Cashflow and Balance Sheet received and noted.

☐ **ACTION:** Continue monitoring reserve utilisation and staffing expenditure through monthly reporting.

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9. June 2026 Compliance Report

Report introduced by: Head of Operations

The Committee received the June Compliance Report.

The Head of Operations presented a comprehensive overview of compliance activity across the Trust.

The report covered:

- GDPR;
- safeguarding compliance;
- estates compliance;
- health and safety;
- HR compliance;
- policy compliance;
- Valley Park project compliance;
- ICT and cyber security.

The Committee noted that the majority of compliance indicators remained rated green.

Staff Absence

The Committee reviewed staff absence data and trends.

The Head of Operations reported that the short term sickness absence levels remained significantly lower than during the previous reporting year.

Members welcomed the continued improvement and noted the positive impact on operational stability.

GDPR and Data Protection

The Committee reviewed GDPR compliance activity.

The Head of Operations confirmed that:

- no significant breaches had occurred;
- data protection procedures remained effective;
- mandatory training compliance remained strong.

The Committee welcomed the assurance provided.

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Valley Park ICT Procurement

The Committee received an update regarding ICT procurement for Valley Park Academy.

The CEO advised that procurement activity was progressing in accordance with planned timescales and governance arrangements.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors sought assurance that procurement decisions continued to represent value for money while supporting future growth.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that procurement decisions continued to follow Trust procedures and that options were assessed against both affordability and operational requirements.

The Committee agreed that compliance arrangements remained robust.

✅ **APPROVED:** June Compliance Report received and noted.

☐ **ACTION:** Continue monitoring Valley Park procurement and compliance activity through regular reporting.

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10. Review and Approve Policies in Accordance with the OLT Policy Scheme of Delegation

Report introduced by: Head of Operations

The Committee received a suite of policies for review prior to recommendation to the Board.

The following documents were considered:

- Staff Finder Reward Scheme;
- Freedom of Information and Charging Policy;
- ICT Continuity and Recovery Policy;
- Digital Strategy;
- Data Protection Policy.

The rationale was outlined for each policy review and highlighted amendments made following legislative changes, operational developments and Trust growth.

The Committee was advised that all policies had undergone management review and had been benchmarked against current sector expectations.

Staff Finder Reward Scheme

The Committee reviewed an update to the Staff Finder Reward Scheme.

The Committee heard that the proposal sought to:

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- support recruitment activity;
- reduce agency expenditure;
- improve candidate quality;
- reward existing employees for successful referrals.

Payments would only be made following successful completion of probationary periods and would remain subject to normal payroll and governance controls.

The Committee agreed that the proposal represented a proportionate and cost-effective recruitment initiative.

✅ **APPROVED:** Staff Finder Reward Scheme

Freedom of Information and Charging Policy

The Committee reviewed the updated Freedom of Information and Charging Policy.

Several minor amendments were highlighted to reflect current guidance and operational practice.

It was discussed re. the increasing volume and complexity of information requests received by schools nationally and the importance of maintaining clear procedures.

The Committee was satisfied that the policy remained appropriate.

✅ **APPROVED:** Freedom of Information and Charging Policy.

ICT Continuity and Recovery Policy

The Committee reviewed the ICT Continuity and Recovery Policy.

It was explained that the policy formed part of the Trust's wider cyber-security and resilience framework following an external review with IT Consultants123ICT.

✅ **APPROVED:** ICT Continuity and Recovery Policy.

Digital Strategy

The Committee received the Trust's revised Digital Strategy.

It was explained that the strategy had been developed to provide a clearer long-term framework for digital development across the Trust.

The Committee discussed:

- DfE Digital Standards;
- cyber security;
- infrastructure investment;

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- digital teaching and learning;
- staff capability;
- digital governance;
- Valley Park Academy requirements.

The Committee heard that the strategy sought to ensure consistency across all schools whilst allowing flexibility for local priorities.

The Committee welcomed the strategic approach and recognised the importance of digital resilience and future planning.

✅ **APPROVED:** Digital Strategy Policy.

Data Protection Policy

The Committee reviewed the Data Protection Policy.

It was reported reported that only minor amendments had been required to reflect current guidance and organisational changes.

✅ **APPROVED:** Data Protection Policy.

☐ **ACTION:**

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11. Review Trust Risk Register

Report introduced by: CEO

The Committee reviewed the latest Trust Risk Register.

The CEO explained that the register continued to evolve in response to emerging operational, financial and strategic risks.

The Committee reviewed the principal risks facing the Trust, including:

- financial sustainability;
- SEND pressures;
- workforce recruitment and retention;
- safeguarding;
- Valley Park Academy delivery;
- cyber security;
- compliance obligations;
- future educational reform.

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11.1 SEND and Inclusion Pressures

A substantial discussion took place regarding the increasing complexity of pupil need across all schools.

The CEO advised that schools were continuing to experience:

- increasing EHCP demand;
- rising SEMH need;
- greater safeguarding complexity;
- increasing external agency involvement.

The Committee heard that funding arrangements continued to lag behind the level of need being experienced by schools.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned whether SEND should be elevated further within the Risk Register.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that SEND remained one of the most closely monitored risks within the Trust.

Existing mitigations included:

- regular QES scrutiny;
- workforce planning;
- SEND leadership development;
- budget monitoring;
- early intervention strategies.

The Committee agreed that continued monitoring remained essential.

11.2 Valley Park Academy

The Committee reviewed risks associated with Valley Park Academy.

The CEO reported positively on project progress and advised that:

- construction remained on track;
- admissions activity continued;
- staffing planning was progressing;
- project governance remained robust.

Director Question / Challenge:

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The Chair questioned whether contingency arrangements remained sufficient should construction timelines alter.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO confirmed that contingency planning remained active and that regular monitoring continued through project governance structures.

The Committee was satisfied that risks remained appropriately managed.

11.3 Workforce and Leadership Capacity

The Committee considered workforce capacity across the Trust.

The CEO explained that continued growth and increasing complexity created ongoing pressures on leadership teams and central functions.

The Committee discussed succession planning, recruitment challenges and the importance of maintaining organisational resilience.

Director Question / Challenge:

Directors questioned whether central capacity remained sufficient to support future growth.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The CEO advised that proposed staffing additions within the central budget had been designed specifically to address future capacity requirements.

The Committee agreed that proactive workforce planning remained a strategic priority.

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

☐ **ACTION:** Continue monitoring SEND, workforce and growth-related risks through regular reporting.

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12. Any Other Business

None.

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13. Agreement of Confidential Status of Meeting Documents

Directors agreed that all papers — excluding the agenda and approved policies — should remain confidential in accordance with **ATH 2025 (paras 1.50–1.51)**.

✅ **APPROVED: Confidential status of meeting documents confirmed.**

☐ **ACTION: None required.**

Meeting Closed

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11:31am

Appendix A – Summary of Operations Committee Action Points

Action Point Number	Owner	Minute Item	Action	Deadline
1	Governance & Communications Officer	Item 4	Upload approved Operations Committee minutes to the OLT website and GovernorHub and arrange electronic signature by the Chair.	Immediate
2	CEO / CFO	Item 5	Review future capital investment assumptions within Wantage budget forecasts before submission to Board.	Prior to July Board
3	Head of Operations	Item 6	Present full Summer Internal Audit reports and management responses to the Board.	July 2026 Board
4	Head of Operations	Item 7	Present recommendation regarding internal audit provider appointment to the Board for formal approval.	July 2026 Board
5	CEO / CFO	Item 8	Continue monitoring reserve utilisation, staffing expenditure and financial sustainability through monthly management reporting.	Ongoing
6	CEO	Item 9	Continue monitoring Valley Park ICT procurement and compliance activity through regular reporting.	Ongoing
7	HOO	Item 10	Publish policies	July 2026 Board
8	CEO / Head of Operations	Item 11	Continue monitoring SEND pressures, workforce capacity and Trust growth risks through the Risk Register and Committee reporting.	Ongoing

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.