⌀ Oak National Academy

Strategy 2022-2025
April 2023 update

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Oak
National
Academy

Welcome to Oak National Academy

We are delighted to introduce you to the second-year update of Oak National Academy's three-year strategy, outlining the scale of our ambition to support schools, teachers and pupils across the country.

Oak was made by teachers, for teachers. It is a fantastic example of the tenacity, resourcefulness and skill within the teaching community, and a testament to what our profession can achieve when we unite for the good of young people.

We are proud of what we have already achieved. Since inception, we have helped pupils across the country access more than 150 million online lessons during one of the most challenging periods in school history. We are grateful to all the teachers and partners who have helped us to continuously deliver, improve and adapt our work.

But we are also aware that our contribution pales in comparison to the challenges teachers across the country have faced in recent years. That is why, over this three-year period, it is crucial that we continue to support and improve our free, accessible, digital support to schools and teachers.

This year marks an important change to who we are: an independent public body with the purpose of improving pupil outcomes and closing the disadvantage gap by supporting teachers to teach, and pupils to access, a high-quality curriculum.

We'll still be Oak National Academy and lots won't change. But to achieve this new purpose, the digital products we build and how we build them will evolve. We'll shift from a focus on independent, remote education spurred by the pandemic, to helping to tackle two major issues. Firstly, alleviating teacher workload within lesson planning, to empower teachers with more time to focus on their pupils. Secondly, building expertise, guiding teachers and school staff towards models and advice that help professionals in the sector to improve their schools' own curriculum. Alongside this, we'll continue to offer a digital, remote-education backstop.

This three-year strategy lays out how we are going to achieve that. At the heart of our approach is the knowledge that it is schools and teachers who know their context and pupils best. So as we share new lesson planning and teaching resources, they will always be entirely optional and fully adaptable. It is our role to support and help build the expertise of teachers, maintaining professional autonomy. It must always be they who choose what and how to teach.

Sir Ian Bauckham
Chair

Matt Hood OBE
Chief Executive

About Oak

We build high-quality, free and optional digital curricula products to share the brilliance of teachers from across the country. We aim to put the best curriculum thinking, the deepest subject expertise and the smartest learning design at teachers' fingertips. All to help build their expertise and lower their workload.

Our purpose

To improve pupil outcomes and close the disadvantage gap by supporting teachers to teach, and pupils to access a high-quality curriculum.

Strategic goals

Over the next three years, we will achieve three strategic goals:

1 Contribute to improvements in the curriculum in schools

2 More teachers and pupils choose to use our products, more often

3 Become a high-performing, well-respected part of the sector
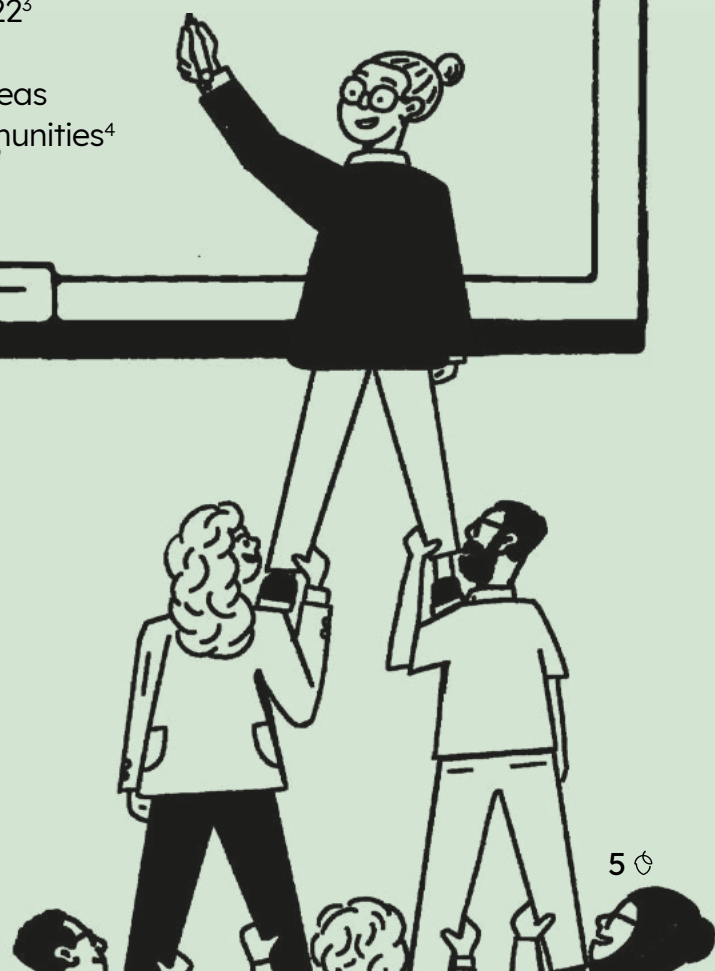
Impact

Over **150 million lessons** taken[1]

Nearly half of Oak's users saved an average **three hours per week**[2]

A third of all teachers used Oak in 2021/22[3]

Supporting those in the most deprived areas
– a third more lessons taken in these communities[4]

[1] Oak data analytics, March 2023
[2] Oak National Academy annual evaluation by ImpactEd, May 2022
[3] Teacher Tapp, October 2022, n=3000
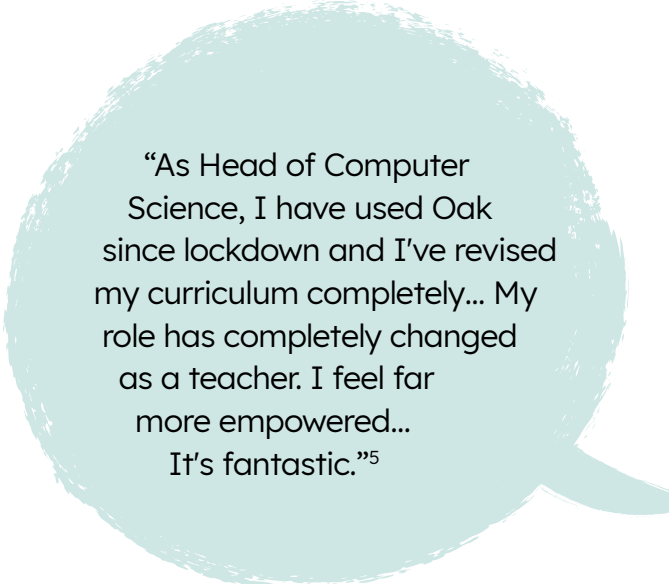[4] Oak data analytics, 2022

Oak's foundations

The story of Oak is one of the tenacity, agility and collaboration of teachers and those dedicated to educating our country's children.

In 2020, when the majority of pupils were unable to attend school at the start of the pandemic, teachers joined forces with schools, technology experts and education organisations. In under two weeks they had built and launched the first version of Oak to provide remote learning support for teachers and pupils nationally.

Across the next two years, we iterated and developed our offer to best support teachers and pupils. A diverse coalition of schools, subject associations, publishers, technology companies, and over 500 teachers created fully-sequenced online curricula. They cover 27 subjects from key stages 1 to 4, and include an offer for pupils that attend the specialist sector. We provide free access to thousands of lessons and teaching resources. Lessons includes quizzes, worksheets and videos to maximise adaptability. The aim has been to give teachers flexible autonomy – allowing them to use and adapt any part of our curricula and resources that works for them.

"As Head of Computer Science, I have used Oak since lockdown and I've revised my curriculum completely... My role has completely changed as a teacher. I feel far more empowered... It's fantastic."[5]

Our spirit of acting with agility and pace, combining technological and educational expertise, and having a constant focus on what's best for teachers and pupils, is ingrained in Oak's DNA.

Our innovative digital products have since delivered more than 150 million lessons[6] to pupils and saw half of teachers in England use our teaching resources[7] in 2020/21.

As the immediate impact of the pandemic started to wane, teachers continued to value Oak. Heads of subject used our carefully-sequenced models as inspiration as they developed their own curriculum. Early career teachers watched our videos for professional development. And teachers of all demographics found the high-quality, evidenced-based, flexible resources a fantastic foundation to support their lesson planning.

"Due to a recent department restructure, all teachers are now expected to teach biology, chemistry and physics at KS3 regardless of their specialism. Being able to quickly and easily access the Oak resources, with specialist teachers modelling minimised the additional time spent on planning".[8]

[5] P.36 Oak National Academy annual evaluation by ImpactEd, May 2022
[6] Oak data analytics, 2022 [7] Teacher Tapp, October 2022, n=3000
[7] Teacher Tapp, June 2021, n=3,000
[8] P.27 Oak National Academy annual evaluation by ImpactEd, May 2022

Across 2021/22 an average of 32,000 teachers and 170,000 pupils continued to use Oak each week[9], with one in three of all teachers using it across six months[10]. It was particularly valuable to those in the most deprived areas, where 32% more lessons were taken[11].

Teachers value Oak because of the difference it makes. Our independent evaluation[12] found around half (42%) of users are saving an average of three hours a week on workload. The access to our models and examples was also building teachers' expertise: half of users said it increased their confidence in curriculum design (50%) and improved the quality of their school's curriculum (47%).

"I've been using Oak lessons to improve my own. Borrowing snippets, questions, quizzes, explanations. It's great CPD...I wish I had them as an NQT."[13]

Oak today

Given Oak's status as a trusted national resource, in September 2022 we moved into public ownership, becoming an independent Arm's Length Body of the Department for Education.

Our new role is focused on providing teachers with support in two areas: lowering workload from lesson planning, and increasing curriculum expertise.

On average, teachers continue to spend between 1-5 hours per week searching[14] for lesson resources and curricula online, and they struggle to find free and affordable resources that are high quality, carefully sequenced, and easily adaptable[15].

"I could have spent hours trying to find and create relevant resources for *An Inspector Calls* but thankfully they were available through Oak. I have been able to download and adapt the resources to suit my top-set class and it has saved me hours of work.

I have also...shared with my whole department based on all the units we cover so that it is available as an assessment tool. Again, the amount of time this has saved has really impacted our practice and we can quickly identify where the gaps are for pupils and act accordingly."[16]

Likewise, teachers list curriculum design as the area they most want support with[17], specifically asking to see examples of high-quality curricula models, so they could learn from, compare and develop their own.

[12] Oak National Academy annual evaluation by ImpactEd, May 2022
[13] https://twitter.com/MrShawePhysics/status/1346933094935367685
[14] Teacher Tapp, March 2022, n=5,782
[15] Teacher Tapp, June 2022, n=5,140 (within Oak's Workload and Curriculum Report, Oct 2022)
[16] P.28, Oak National Academy annual evaluation by ImpactEd, May 2022
[17] Teacher Tapp, October 2022, n=5,108 (within Oak's Workload and Curriculum Report, Oct 2022)

[9] Oak data analytics, 2022
[10] Teacher Tapp, October 2022, n=3,000
[11] Oak data analytics, 2022

We're proud of our current curricula and teaching resources, with 95% of teachers satisfied with their quality[18]. Yet we know they were initially created for remote teaching. Therefore, over the next three years, we're going to develop new, entirely optional, curricula, with thousands of brand new and improved teaching resources for the classroom. These will all be designed to better support teachers' planning and in-class teaching, and to develop curriculum expertise.

"To have this knowledge broken down allows them time to go back and focus on how to answer questions properly is really impacting their learning and helps me work with individuals more closely."[19]

Oak has always been a community of teachers and educational professionals, and this approach will continue at the heart of our work. We will work with a wide range of teachers, schools, subject associations, publishers and other experts to co-create these new curricula packages.

Our aim is to invest in and utilise the expertise that exists across the country, so that every teacher has the highest-quality support available to them on tap, for free.

[18] Survey of Oak users: March 2022, n=310
[19] P.27, Oak National Academy annual evaluation by ImpactEd, May 2022

Oak on a page

What we do

Our purpose is to improve pupil outcomes and close the disadvantage gap by supporting teachers to teach, and pupils to access a high-quality curriculum. We achieve this by working with schools, teachers and the wider education sector to create and support the use of world-class digital education products built around rigorous, high-quality curricula, alongside providing a remote-education contingency.

How we do it

There are six cornerstones to our approach:
1 Independent, optional, adaptable, free
2 Education evidence and expertise combined with user-centred design
3 Alignment to the national curriculum
4 Working alongside teachers, schools, school trusts and the wider education sector
5 Agile planning and delivery
6 Our culture of freedom, responsibility, and continuous improvement

Our governance

1 **Oak is an Arm's Length Body of the Department for Education.**
   The Secretary of State is accountable to parliament for Oak's performance, and annually agrees Oak's strategic framework.

2 **Oak's Board is appointed in line with the public appointments principles.**
   The Board is independent of the Department, and safeguards our independence, as well as providing leadership, strategic direction and scrutiny of the executive team.

3 **Oak's executive directors are appointed by the Board.**
   The executive team is responsible for Oak's day-to-day operations, and the delivery of the strategic goals agreed by the Board.

Oak's teams

Oak hires, manages and develops high-calibre individuals in fully remote teams:

Education:
Responsible for the design, procurement, creation and continuous improvement of curricula, lessons and resources with experts from across the sector

School Support:
Responsible for ensuring people know about and understand how to get the most from Oak

Operations:
Responsible for our operations, including finance, our people, risk and compliance
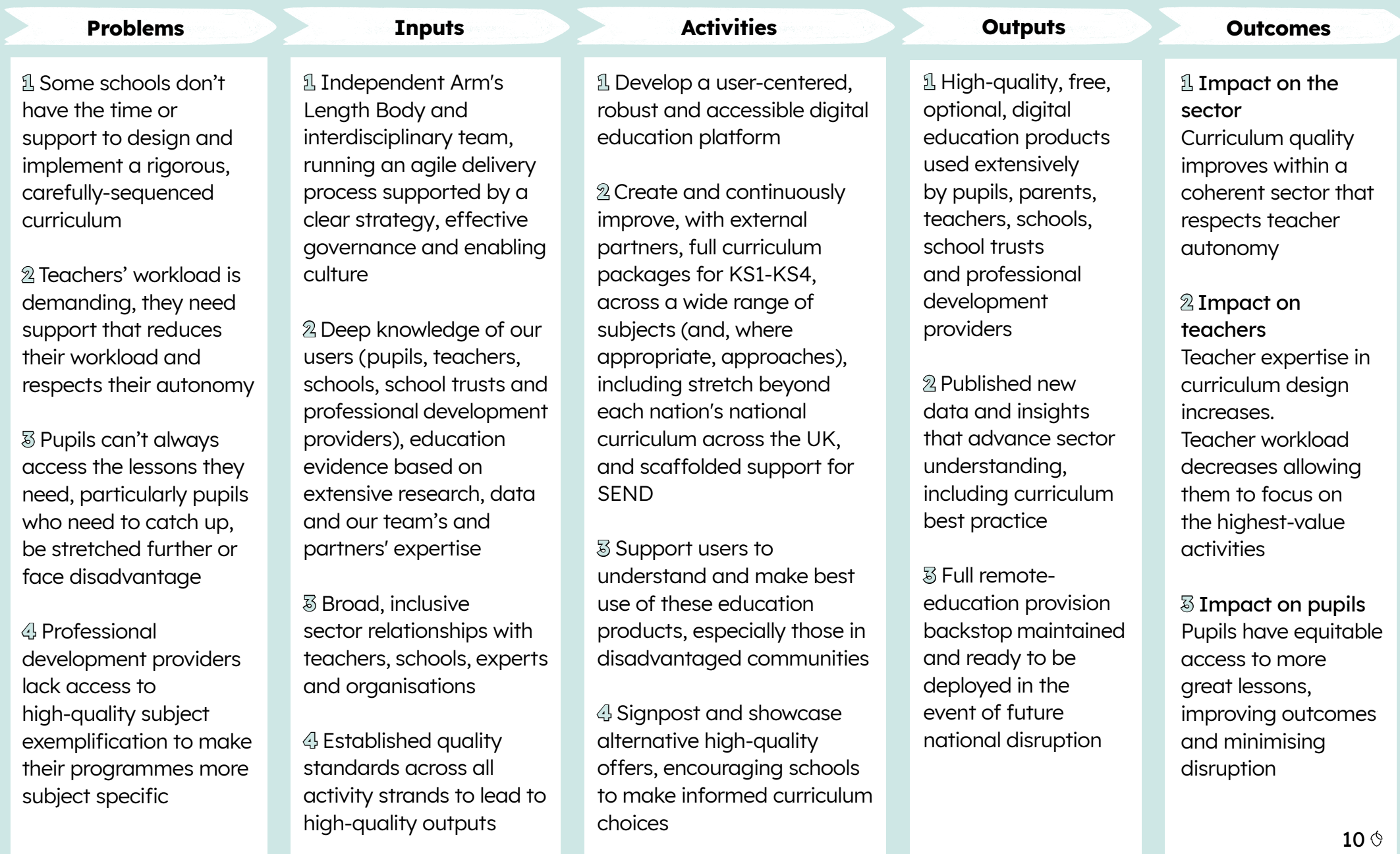
Engineering:
Responsible for the development and stability of our platform

Product: Responsible for the coordination across directorates and the overall quality and continuous improvement and evaluation of our products

Theory of change

Problems	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes

Problems

1️⃣ Some schools don't have the time or support to design and implement a rigorous, carefully-sequenced curriculum

2️⃣ Teachers' workload is demanding, they need support that reduces their workload and respects their autonomy

3️⃣ Pupils can't always access the lessons they need, particularly pupils who need to catch up, be stretched further or face disadvantage

4️⃣ Professional development providers lack access to high-quality subject exemplification to make their programmes more subject specific

Inputs

1️⃣ Independent Arm's Length Body and interdisciplinary team, running an agile delivery process supported by a clear strategy, effective governance and enabling culture

2️⃣ Deep knowledge of our users (pupils, teachers, schools, school trusts and professional development providers), education evidence based on extensive research, data and our team's and partners' expertise

3️⃣ Broad, inclusive sector relationships with teachers, schools, experts and organisations

4️⃣ Established quality standards across all activity strands to lead to high-quality outputs

Activities

1️⃣ Develop a user-centered, robust and accessible digital education platform

2️⃣ Create and continuously improve, with external partners, full curriculum packages for KS1-KS4, across a wide range of subjects (and, where appropriate, approaches), including stretch beyond each nation's national curriculum across the UK, and scaffolded support for SEND

3️⃣ Support users to understand and make best use of these education products, especially those in disadvantaged communities

4️⃣ Signpost and showcase alternative high-quality offers, encouraging schools to make informed curriculum choices

Outputs

1️⃣ High-quality, free, optional, digital education products used extensively by pupils, parents, teachers, schools, school trusts and professional development providers

2️⃣ Published new data and insights that advance sector understanding, including curriculum best practice

3️⃣ Full remote-education provision backstop maintained and ready to be deployed in the event of future national disruption

Outcomes

1️⃣ **Impact on the sector**
Curriculum quality improves within a coherent sector that respects teacher autonomy

2️⃣ **Impact on teachers**
Teacher expertise in curriculum design increases. Teacher workload decreases allowing them to focus on the highest-value activities

3️⃣ **Impact on pupils**
Pupils have equitable access to more great lessons, improving outcomes and minimising disruption

"I have been able to help my students become more successful… when they are coming back from isolation, illness or something similar the materials are so accessible that they feel like they haven't missed anything and are still making progress.

Our students have really low self-esteem and sometimes I don't know where to start, but with Oak I am able to signpost them to resources which are so organised and cleverly sequenced it allows them to feel successful."[20]
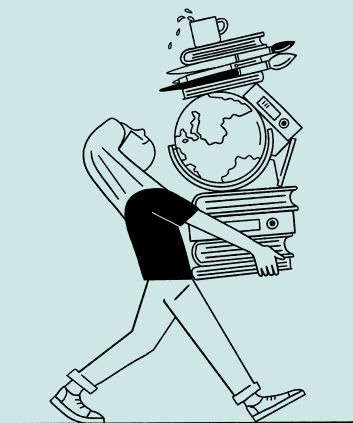
Strategic goals

Over the next three years, in line with our Framework Agreement, we will achieve three strategic goals:

1   **Contribute to improvements in the curriculum in schools**

2   **More teachers and pupils choose to use our products, more often**

3   **Become a high-performing, well-respected part of the sector**

1   Contribute to improvements in the curriculum in schools

In 2021/22, half of Oak users reported that our curriculum and resources had increased their own confidence in curriculum design (50%), whilst 47% reported that it improved their school's overall curriculum[21].

We want to increase this impact further. This should not be through schools simply adopting Oak's curriculum, but by improving expertise, empowering schools to design what's right for them.

We'll do this by:

- redeveloping a high-quality, broad curricula across key stages 1-4 linked to the English national curriculum, by bringing together expertise from teachers, schools and other education organisations;

- including content that provides pupils across the UK with the opportunity for learning above and beyond their school's curriculum, and content that supports pupils with SEND;

- working with the sector to create a new set of carefully-sequenced lesson planning and teaching resources for these curricula;

- engaging teachers from across the sector in the testing of our curricula and materials;

- supporting the development of teacher creators and reviewers who take part in our processes so that they become advocates and experts in curriculum design;

- creating and sharing expertise on curriculum design within the sector, with teachers and schools through public speaking, knowledge articles and webinars;

- integrating our work into other parts of the education sector, including Initial Teacher Training and professional development providers and hubs, to create consistency in support and training;

- building product features that support teachers to understand and practise good curriculum design;

- promoting choices from other quality providers, to emphasise the plurality of approaches to curriculum.

2 More teachers and pupils choose to use our products, more often

On average 32,000 teachers and 170,000 pupils used Oak each week last year. By any domestic benchmark that is significant. Our products must always be entirely optional, but we know from our evaluations they have a positive impact, so we want to create an offer so good that more teachers and pupils trust and value our support.

We know that teachers and pupils value Oak for different reasons. We want to maximise our reach by responding to their feedback and needs, and by supporting them proactively in how to best use our curricula and resources.

We'll do this by:

- continually improving existing products, or, if required, building new products that make Oak even more useful to teachers and pupils, and bring a wider audience to our platform;

- attracting new users by investing in cross-sector partnerships, building our products in an open way, and developing our brand;

- gathering feedback and data to continuously improve curricula resources, building on expertise in the sector, specifically the knowledge of current curriculum design leaders.

"I really like that I can skip part of the lesson, I can repeat it, I can go back to things I need to learn and pick and choose – not just go over everything again."

(Pupil, aged 15-16)[22]

[22] P.21, Oak National Academy annual evaluation by ImpactEd, May 2022

3   Become a high-performing, well-respected part of the sector

Part of our success is down to the internal and external conditions we've created for ourselves. We've established a great culture and excellent ways of working and we collaborate within the sector and its leading organisations.

Although we're not going from a standing start, we've got to recreate these internal and external conditions in a more complex organisational structure which will rightly need to be even more transparent.

We'll do this by:

- making informed choices about the set up and growth of Oak as an independent Arm's Length Body, taking much of our current approach, and the ingredients for our products, with us;

- moving Oak from providing a remote-education pandemic response, to a national, independent body supporting curriculum and teaching resources;

- forming new partnerships and strengthening our relationships with the sector and its leading organisations;

- being as transparent about our activities and learning as possible, e.g. by publicly releasing suitable datasets or by engaging in joint research projects with trusted organisations;

- running a rigorous evaluation process;

- continuously improving our culture and ways of working to ensure that Oak is a place where our team can do their life's best work.

How we deliver on our purpose

The pillars of Oak's offer

Through all our work, we commit to an approach based on four pillars:

→ Independent

Oak's curricula are created independently from the Department for Education, with advice from subject expert groups. Our board is publicly appointed, and our partners are selected through an open process.

→ Optional

Teachers know their pupils best. Oak's lesson planning and teaching resources will always be optional and we'll encourage them to think deeply about what curriculum choices are best for their school. This often won't be Oak.

→ Adaptable

Oak's teaching resources and curricula will always be fully adaptable because no model can suit every teacher or pupil in every context. We'll provide free, expert advice regarding how to adapt and scaffold our offer.

→ Free

Oak will always be free – because access to a great education shouldn't be based on who can afford to pay.

Empowering teachers' expertise

Oak will never know the context of every classroom. Nor can we know the best approach to motivate and educate a particular cohort. It is only teachers who have this expertise. So we will empower teachers, building their trust in how we can support them.

Teachers will have full autonomy in whether to use Oak's optional teaching resources. Our aim is to build products they choose and are confident in.

Using only if it meets their needs, and adapting using their professional judgement, are central to our stance. Teachers too will always decide how lessons are delivered. Oak's new in-class teaching resources will not be a finished lesson; only teachers can plan how to use them, how to design and how deliver their lessons. We'll actively encourage teachers to consider different methods.

Likewise, there are many different ways to design curricula, so we'll share a variety of approaches, allowing teachers to compare high-quality sequences from different providers in each subject.

Throughout all our work, we'll actively empower teachers' professional expertise. Sharing our curricula sequences and teaching resources will act as a model to inspire and inform teachers. From heads of department considering developing their own curriculum to early career teachers seeking ideas for new lessons.

A diverse, collaborative community

Oak was built by a wide range of partners, and we'll continue to be shaped by a diverse community.

The greatest expertise in curriculum design and resource development exists across our brilliant community of schools, subject associations, publishers and other experts. We will work with and support them to share their work, so every teacher has the highest-quality support available, whenever they need it, free of charge.

Alongside our partners, teachers and experts from across the country will be invited to help shape our work through our subject expert groups. And at every step, we'll test our products with teachers and schools – listening and acting on their feedback.

The UK benefits from a range of providers offering teaching resources. This variety means teachers can select what's best for their pupils, and the organisations creating them are incentivised to innovate and improve quality. We'll support this market, from investing in those creating content, to openly sharing our data and insights to inform their future products.

An agile culture and approach

Oak's roots are in taking an agile approach. We combine educational and technological expertise to build, test, iterate and develop what we do, constantly listening to our users and focusing on what's best for teachers and pupils.

As we become a new independent public body, this approach will remain vital. We want to be at the forefront of an innovative approach to public service delivery.

Our way of working requires the right culture. Oak has achieved its success to date in large part through our culture of freedom, responsibility and continuous improvement. We believe these are the ingredients that create and sustain exceptional teams and will continue to be central to our work.

For Oak, freedom means creating the conditions in which colleagues can take the initiative, be creative, make decisions and solve problems. With responsibility, colleagues own their role and the decisions they make, whilst making sure decisions are in service of our collective, not

individual, objectives. Under continuous improvement, individually and collectively we have a relentless focus on getting better.

For Oak, freedom means creating the conditions in which colleagues can take the initiative, be creative, make decisions and solve problems. With responsibility, colleagues own their role and the decisions they make, whilst making sure decisions are in service of our collective, not individual, objectives. Under continuous improvement, individually and collectively we have a relentless focus on getting better.

"If you're considering working with Oak's new curriculum partners to create teaching resources, I can promise you it will be an enlightening and incredible experience. It will no doubt make you a better teacher full of new knowledge and confidence."[23]

[23] Sarah Barrett, February 2023
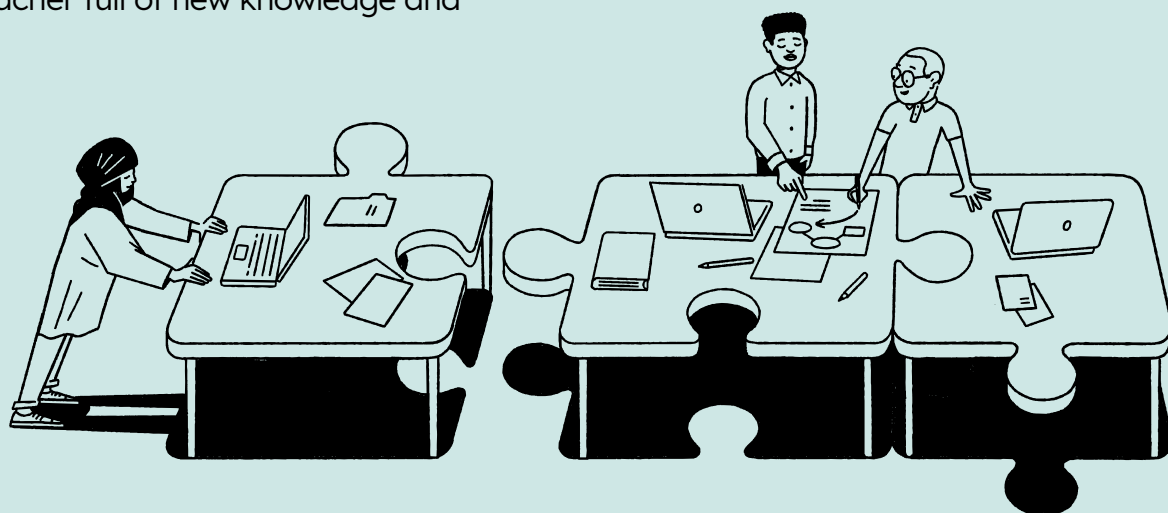
Our governance

Oak is an operationally-independent Arm's Length Body of the Department for Education. Our [Framework Agreement](#) sets out our overall aims as an organisation.

Our Board oversees our work. They provide strategic direction, enable us to deliver on our plans, scrutinise our work and appoint our executive team.
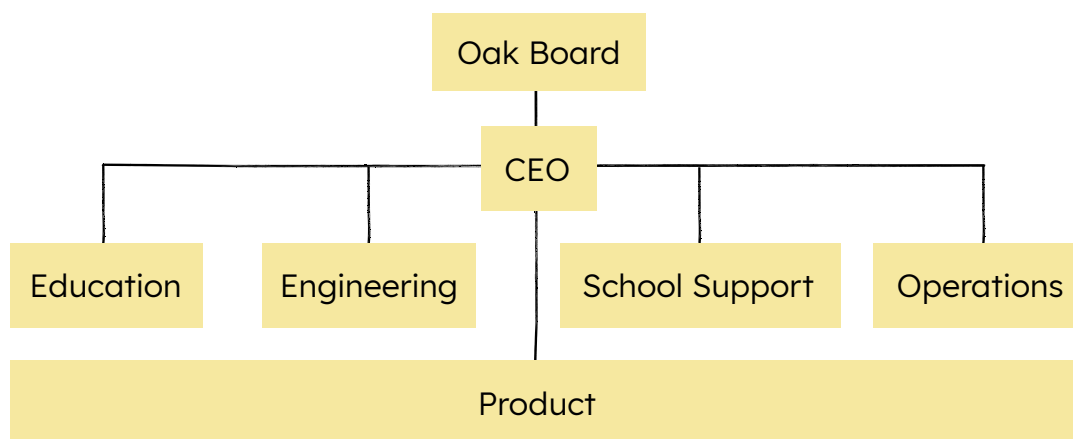
We currently have an interim board in place whilst a permanent board is chosen in line with the public appointments principles.

Interim Board 2022/23

Sir Ian Bauckham
Chair

Cassie Buchanan
Board Member

Ramender Crompton
Board Member

Sean Harford
Board Member

Louise Kirby
Board Member

Henry de Zoete
Board Member

Matt Hood
Chief Executive

Emma Beatty
Operations Director

Oak's team

Our leadership team is responsible for Oak's day-to-day operations, and the delivery of the strategic goals agreed by the Board.

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                    Oak Board
                        |
                       CEO
        _____|_____
       |        |               |        |
  Education  Engineering   School Support  Operations
                        |
                     Product
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Oak has five teams, overseen by four directors, who each report to the CEO:
- **Education**: Responsible for the design, procurement, creation and continuous improvement of curricula, lessons and resources with experts from across the sector.
- **Product**: Responsible for the coordination across directorates and the overall quality and continuous improvement and evaluation of our products.
- **Engineering**: Responsible for the development and stability of our platform.
- **School Support**: Responsible for ensuring people know about and understand how to get the most from Oak.
- **Operations**: Responsible for our operations, including finance, our people, risk and compliance.

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