

# Board Minutes

19 June 2025

Legally privileged and confidential and subject to litigation privilege

## Time and venue

3.00pm, Coram Campus

## Date

19 June 2025

### Board/committee member

Sir Ian Bauckham CBE	IB	Chair
Hardip Begol CBE	HB	
Cassie Buchanan OBE	CB	
Henry de Zoete OBE	HdZ	
Annie Gardner	AG	
Sean Harford	SH	
Diana Lee	DL	
Conor Ryan	CR	
John Roberts	JR	Interim CEO
Emma Beatty	EB	Operations Director

### Oak National Academy

Jonathan Dando-Laing	JDL	School Support and External Relations Director
Tom Rose	TR	Education Director
Ian Kynnersley	IK	Head of Engineering
Ellie Ball	EIB	Board Secretary
Beth Thomas	BT	Executive Assistant

### Observers

Jacque Spatcher	JS	Department for Education
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### Apologies

Will Gayne	WG	Director of Product Strategy & Impact
Jenny Oldroyd	JO	Department for Education

## 1. Welcome, apologies and declarations

- 1.1. Attendees were welcomed to the meeting by the Board Chair, and introductions were made to Oak's newest Board member.
- 1.2. TR shared apologies for needing to leave this meeting early to attend a partner event.
- 1.3. There were no declarations of interest to declare beyond those already recorded in the register.

[CB joined virtually at 15:05]

## 2. Minutes, matters arising and electronic decisions taken between meetings

- 2.1. Minutes from the previous Board meeting held on 27 February 2025 and 18 March 2025 were reviewed with agreement from the Board to approve.

**DECISION:** Minutes from the Board meeting on 27/02/2025 were approved.

**DECISION:** Minutes from the Board meeting on 18/03/2025 were approved.

- 2.2. Electronic decisions taken between 27 February 2025 and 19 June 2025 were reviewed, and it was agreed that they should be ratified.

**DECISION:** Electronic decisions taken between meetings were ratified.

## 3. CEO update

- 3.1. JR introduced the CEO Report by focusing on progress made on the 2025-2026 strategy and shared that an update on planning for the 2026-2030 strategy would be shared during the Paper 2 discussion.
- 3.2. JR summarised that product growth is good, usage continues to increase, production targets are on track in this OKR period, and in our latest survey, teachers are scoring our resource quality much higher than post-pandemic.
- 3.3. JR shared that there has been a focus on getting other organisations to trial our content, and noted the success we've had through integration with the DfE's content store project and the MoJ's Launchpad project, where content is being shared with 13,000 prisoners through our open licence.
- 3.4. JR outlined the input into the Curriculum Assessment Review (CAR) in Autumn, and the team's work to explore innovations around AI.
- 3.5. JR shared that there is more to be done on our KR for the growth of regular Oak users (defined as a user who returns to the Oak website within a 30-day period), as this is a shift in focus from our previous top-line growth target. Experiments have allowed us to learn what we need to do to grow our regular

users. The new “My Library” feature launched late in this OKR period should support this KR, as it provides more value to teachers. There is also work to bring in AI features for users who log in. TR shared that Oak will be reaching ~1000 new teachers at Teach First’s Summer Institute, following success in embedding our content into their training materials.

- 3.6. The Board questioned whether it is possible to broaden the range of metrics on third-party usage of our content to track how it’s growing and how users use our content from third parties. JR noted the difficulty in tracking once the data has been downloaded from the API, but we know who has API keys and can see what their usage looks like (for example, whole downloads or part downloads).
- 3.7. The Board discussed whether logins could support regular pupil users, and JR noted that it could be considered, but that they’d previously avoided it due to potential issues around data protection and safeguarding.
- 3.8. The Board noted they were pleased to see growing numbers of third parties using our content through the open licence. JR shared that this has been a primary focus for the organisation, but there have been limited resources. Oak will continue to focus on it, but it won’t be an organisational-wide priority in the next OKR period, with technology to manage those relationships.
- 3.9. AG noted that in the Product Committee, it was raised about where the ownership of growth should sit.

**ACTION:** JR to determine which Committee should oversee growth.

- 3.10. JDL noted Oak is trying new techniques to see what works to increase regular user growth. It’s been noted that the number of downloads per session has been increasing, which may reduce the frequency of users returning, which is positive. TR noted that Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) rolling out Oak curricula could form a new category of regular user, but as these partnerships develop, we’ll understand their usage better.
- 3.11. The Board and attendees discussed tracking usage, Oak’s user personas and the type of product we’re offering. JR noted the improvements and developments in the last year, and the maturity in this due to suggestions by the Product Committee and our improved data architecture. HB suggested we consider what sort of user behaviour we want and then set a metric. It was noted that user metrics are reported within Oak’s health metrics.
- 3.12. The Board reviewed the health metrics and noted that they were generally strong. EB clarified a question relating to the cybersecurity tool HutSix.
- 3.13. JR opened a discussion about the upcoming OKR period and noted that these are still drafts but will be shared with the Board outside of the Board cycle.

**ACTION:** Oak team to review the draft OKRs in light of Board feedback.

#### 4. Independent review recommendations

- 4.1. JDL introduced the Independent Review recommendations and noted the positive portrait it provided of Oak. The Review was agreed to when Oak became an ALB and goes to the Secretary of State, who uses it in considering Oak's future remit.
- 4.2. The Board agreed this was a positive outcome from the Review, and noted the importance of ensuring that Oak maintains focus on priorities should Oak's remit be widened in the future.

#### 5. 3-year strategy

- 5.1. JDL introduced the strategic areas being explored with DfE, as outlined in Paper 2, and noted that many of these are contingent on ministerial decisions, as noted in 4.1. It is hoped that there will be a clearer sense of the budget by October 2025.

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***This minute is legally privileged and confidential and is subject to litigation privilege. It reflects a discussion which was undertaken for the dominant purpose of sharing information in connection with the conduct of the judicial review claim brought by BESA and others, which is proceeding in the High Court (claim no. AC-2022-LON-003401) (the "Judicial Review"). The paper and this minute (point 5.2) are not to be shared or discussed outside of this Board.***

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- 5.2. The Board discussed the costing tables, and JDL sought feedback on the additional strategic options.
- 5.3. The Board was supportive of the proposed strategic options but noted that option 1, although desirable, shouldn't be the top priority.

**DECISION:** The Board supported options 1-3 but proposed that option 1 should not be the top priority.

- 5.4. The Board discussed some of the challenges associated with options 4-6 and gave conditional support, but noted these would be dependent on a change to Oak's remit.

**DECISION:** The Board showed conditional support for options 4-6, depending on steer from the Secretary of State.

**ACTION:** Board members are invited to email JDL with any further thoughts on options.

## 6. Re-positioning Oak

- 6.1. JDL introduced Paper 3 and noted that the Board's views were to be sought on the proposed options for repositioning Oak. It was noted that all of the options would occur over a prolonged period, and the risk of changing Oak's domain was flagged.
- 6.2. The Board discussed perceptions and risks associated with change, and noted the impact of the Secretary of State's decision on this, but were supportive of Option 1.
- 6.3. The Board recognised that any option requiring rebranding would require significant resources, which would impact Oak's core delivery. The cost of a rebrand is not currently budgeted for, and this should be considered when drafting advice.

**DECISION:** The Board gave support for Option 1.

## 7. Curriculum Assessment Review update

- 7.1. TR introduced the scope and timeline of the Curriculum Assessment Review (CAR) and noted the feedback Oak had given through their response to the Call for Evidence prior to the interim report in March. The final report is due this Autumn, after which it is expected DfE will then complete the process of updating statutory guidance in each subject's Programme of Study. It is expected that 2028-2029 will be the earliest that schools will be expected to begin implementation of the new curriculum guidance. TR outlined potential options for Oak to support the implementation.
- 7.2. The Board had a brief discussion about the knowledge graph presented at the Curriculum Committee meeting, and how it could support reviewing a whole curriculum. JR noted it's dependent on the quality of information it draws upon (such as Oak's lesson resources as opposed to National Curriculum guidance).
- 7.3. The Board discussed how releasing content at set time periods could drive more regular users.

**ACTION:** JR to share the Loom video of the knowledge graph with all Board members.

## 8. FARC report

- 8.1. EB highlighted a positive end to the Financial Year, noted we had welcomed new internal auditors (Beever and Struthers) and external auditors (new NAO members) to FARC, and that we had achieved the external Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation. The external audit has been brought forward to the summer to reduce the impact later in the year. We have brought on a new payroll provider, and FARC discussed a paper on intangible assets, which has been

signed off, and gave their agreement to the Amortisation Policy. The internal auditors shared their plans, and we had the GIAA annual opinion.

## **9. RemCo report**

- 9.1. EB highlighted recent successes, including the non-consolidated pay award for staff. It was noted that all KPIs were hit, or there were good reasons for not being hit. The In-Year Reward scheme is going well and has been well received, and the CEO's bonus was agreed. RemCo approved the launch of Oak's apprenticeship programme, and we have just recently appointed our first Level 4 apprentice in the Commercial area. RemCo approved various HR policies, including the Overseas Working Policy, and the Pay & Rewards Framework has been updated for transparency.

## **10. Curriculum report**

- 10.1. TR highlighted the positive Cycle 2 production figures, with 95% of new content released by the start of the Autumn term, and plans in place to support more challenging subjects where video production is necessary to support 100% released by the end of October 2025. There is a greater focus on production and partners this OKR period, but by aligning with School Support, Oak will be present at larger outreach events, such as the Festival of Education. It was noted that RSHE guidance is going through final government sign off, so 75 RSHE lessons are dependent on that guidance (not counted in the KPI). Some new online safety resources will be released soon, too, so it's expected that this will generate some interest.
- 10.2. CB added the two new members to the Curriculum Committee, who bring a wealth of experience, noted some of the more positive discussions being held with employee associations, and provided a brief overview of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Review.

[TR left the meeting at 17:10]

## **11. Product report**

- 11.1. IK highlighted the great contributions from the Product Committee's newest member. IK gave an overview of continued growth with the regular release of Cycle 2 lessons and the team making targeted improvements in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). The team has been growing the number of partner organisations using Oak content, which is broadly split into schools/education organisations wanting bulk content rather than the API, and edtech organisations who are more interested in the API. There was a request from the Committee to set up a mechanism to more regularly update on those partnerships.
- 11.2. IK noted that the Product Strategy was shared, which outlined changes to team structures and prioritisation. The Committee was comfortable with some of the

AI features being brought into our core platform, but were keen to understand risks and ensure the group were focused on keeping that forward-facing. The Committee was in agreement to shift focus to prioritising bringing AI features into the core product, over the growth of Aila, which enables the team to create a plan for this.

- 11.3. The Board discussed the opportunities available with AI features embedded into the core product that can reduce teacher workload or large-scale adoption for schools. It was noted that government officials and Ministers have shown considerable interest and praise in Aila, which supports this development.

## **12. AOB**

- 12.1. There were no other items of business raised.

[The meeting ended at 17.24]