



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Minister for Schools

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Sir Ian Bauckham CBE
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2 May 2024

OAK NATIONAL ACADEMY: PRIORITIES FOR 2024-25

I am grateful for your leadership of Oak National Academy (Oak) since its inception as an arm's length body (ALB) in September 2022, and for your ongoing commitment to ensuring its success now that you have been appointed as permanent Chair of the Board.

This letter sets out my thoughts on the priority areas of focus for the coming year and the outputs to be delivered, and Annex A sets out the key performance indicators that we have agreed will be included in your annual plan. This letter should be read in conjunction with the Framework Document which sets out the strategic aims that underpin Oak's work. It should also be read alongside the terms of engagement as set out in your appointment letter.

As Oak is becoming increasingly established, I would expect your primary focus this year to be on continued growth, both in terms of the development of new high-quality curriculum resources, and in delivering the intended benefits for an increasing number of teachers, as set out below.

i. Development of high-quality curriculum resources

Oak shares with DfE a common objective of improving pupil outcomes and closing the disadvantage gap by supporting teachers to teach, and enabling pupils to access, a high-quality curriculum whilst also reducing teacher workload. Since September 2022, Oak has made significant progress in meeting this objective by bringing together the expertise of teachers, publishers, subject associations and other education organisations to successfully deliver the first of its high-quality, evidence-based curriculum resources. I know this work will continue at pace over the course of this year as Oak looks to complete the rollout of curriculum packages in its first curriculum subjects and begin the release of materials in its second cycle from the autumn.

I know that Oak is looking to further enhance the support available to schools by signposting users to other high-quality curricular offers from the market, and constructive dialogue is underway with interested stakeholders about the best approach to this. I would like to see suitable curricula in at least one subject signposted on the Oak website by early 2025.

Alongside this work, Oak should continue to explore options for providing content

that provides pupils across the UK with the opportunity for learning above and beyond their school's curriculum, working collaboratively with the devolved governments in doing so.

ii. Supporting teachers to use Oak's curriculum resources

To fulfil its aim of reducing workload and improving curriculum expertise, it is critical that Oak achieves buy-in from across the education sector. Following the release of the first of Oak's new curriculum resources, it is promising to see that the number of regular users accessing the platform is increasing. As more resources come on-stream, I would like to see an enhanced focus on raising awareness of what Oak has to offer and growing the number of users whilst retaining the core principle that Oak will always be optional for teachers to use.

I know that a key pillar of Oak's plans to grow users and to help teachers reduce time spent developing resources is by using AI. In October 2023, Oak was given additional investment to integrate AI within its production processes, driving internal efficiencies and value for money; create new AI tools to help teachers plan, generate and customise lesson resources; support high quality tools in the wider market by smoothing integration through public APIs for the content Oak already makes available; and to share and communicate learning with the sector. I will look for Oak to work closely with the department's overarching strategic approaches to both AI in education, and stewardship of the value of our national intellectual property, as this programme of work develops and delivers benefits for teachers and pupils.

As for the past two years, I will be looking for Oak to evidence its impact through independent evaluation. I know Oak has plans once again to publish an independent report in the autumn.

iii. 24-month independent review of Oak

As part of the conditions of establishing Oak as an ALB, Ministers committed to conducting a review of Oak within 24 months of its launch. I am pleased that Lara Newman, CEO of LocatEd, will be leading the review and expect that the review team will begin its work in earnest from April, reporting to me with their findings in September. I will be looking to you as Chair to ensure full cooperation and transparency with the review process, and in the implementation of its recommendations.

As Chair of Oak, I am looking to you to provide support and challenge to the Chief Executive and executive team in the delivery of these priorities over the coming year. This includes ensuring that appropriate and robust governance processes are in place for investigating and challenging budgetary control, ensuring Oak stays within its 2024-25 budget through rigorous reporting, forecasting and control of its costs so that by year-end Oak is within 2% of its P6 forecast.

I am grateful to you for your support over the past year in appointing a high-quality and experienced permanent board. I am pleased with the outcome of this process and am confident in the board's ability to deliver Oak's strategic priorities. In recognition that the permanent board is now in place, I am now looking to you to focus on the following additional areas to ensure that Oak is in the best place to deliver on behalf of Government:

- Building capacity and capability at the executive level, to ensure Oak has the appropriate experience and expertise to fulfil its mission and corporate objectives.
- Ensuring succession plans are in place for the board and senior leadership, sharing this insight with the department.
- Ensuring the appropriate induction and annual appraisal of all non-executive members of the board.
- Exploring the opportunity to diversify the board through the remaining co-opted vacancy.
- Delivering the first effectiveness review of the board to ensure it is operating at maximum strength.
- Encouraging full board involvement in supporting the organisation to deliver Oak's 2024-25 business plan, ensuring a business continuity plan is incorporated within it.

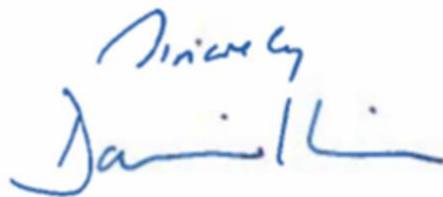
Lastly, as this is the final year of the current spending review settlement, I will look to you as Chair to lead the discussions with the department on the future strategic direction of Oak, considering how to drive continuous improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of the ALB, and its alignment with wider Government objectives.

I hope that we can continue with the clear and transparent dialogue between Oak and the department that we have enjoyed to date. I know that officials within the department value the relationship they have with you, your Chief Executive and the wider Oak team. Maintaining this approach will be key to Oak's ongoing success, and I am grateful for your constructive approach to such engagement.

We should meet formally in accordance with the cycle set out in the Framework Document, as well as continuing to have a regular informal dialogue.

Should you have concerns regarding the performance of Oak and/or its executive team, please raise these with officials or with me. Similarly, the Chief Executive in his role as Accounting Officer should feel free to raise any concerns about the board's decisions with the Permanent Secretary or with me.

Thank you once again for your contribution as Chair. I look forward to working closely with you and learning of your progress on the areas set out in this letter throughout the coming year.



Damian Hinds
Minister for Schools

Annex A – Oak National Academy: Key Performance Indicators for 2024-2025

- Launch 100% of cycle 1 full curriculum packages for English, maths, science, primary geography and history by Autumn 2024
- 30% of cycle 2 full curriculum packages launched by 31 March 2025
- Alternative curricula in at least one subject signposted on the Oak website by early 2025
- 80% of teachers in England are aware of Oak
- 140,000 weekly active users
- Launch the AI Teaching Assistant tool
- All users successfully migrated to and using Oak's new digital products
- Net Promoter Score (NPS) is at least 'great' (30-70) [Note: this is a measure of customer satisfaction]
- Publish an annual independent evaluation
- End of year budget within 2% variance from period 6 forecast
- 99.9% uptime on Oak's main application platform
- Peer review of Oak's new digital products against GDS Service Standards completed