

Board Strategy Day Minutes

18 March 2025

Time and venue

3pm, Zoom

Date

18 March 2025

Attendees

Board/committee member

Ian Bauckham CBE	IB	Chair
Hardip Begol	HB	
Cassie Buchanan	CB	
Henry de Zoete	HdZ	
Annie Gardner	AG	
Sean Harford	SH	
Matt Hood	MH	Chief Executive
Emma Beatty	EB	Operations Director

Oak National Academy

Jonathan Dando-Laing	JDL	School Support and External Relations Director
Will Gayne	WG	Director of Product Strategy and Impact
Tom Rose	TR	Education Director
John Roberts	JR	Product and Engineering Director
Ellie Ball	EIB	Board Secretary

Observers

Jenny Oldroyd	JO	Department for Education
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Apologies

Conor Ryan	CR	
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1. Welcome, apologies and declarations

- 1.1. Attendees were welcomed to the meeting by the Board Chair, noting apologies from Conor Ryan
- 1.2. There were no declarations of interest to declare beyond those already recorded in the register.

2. 2025-26 Strategy

- 2.1. MH introduced the item, providing context and outlining the ongoing strategic work from the previous period and the new pillars for 2025/26. This included a focus on growth, supporting disadvantaged pupils, and the integration of AI.
- 2.2. The Board discussed the strategy document, noting some minor amends

DECISION: The Board approved the strategy for final sign-off by DfE

3. 2025-26 Annual Plan

- 3.1. The Board discussed the proposed annual plan for 2025-26, noting that the DfE had fed into the proposed KPIs.

JO entered the meeting at 15.19

- 3.2. MH explained the different role played by KPIs and OKRs to help provide accountability and stretching targets, noting the restrictions on being agile with yearly targets
- 3.3. The Board recommended adding context to the plan to note the reduction in budget for the 2025-25 year compared to previous years
- 3.4. The Board discussed the project work not explicitly mentioned in the plan, including signposting, support for the content store and curriculum assessment review and the judicial review.

DECISION: The Board approved the annual plan for final sign-off by DfE

4. 2025-26 Budget

- 4.1. EB introduced the budget, highlighting the organisation's strong financial position and the key savings areas:
 - 4.1.1. Media library
 - 4.1.2. Non-committed staff expenditure
 - 4.1.3. Hosting and streaming
 - 4.1.4. Error correction
- 4.2. The Board discussed the proposed budget. CB queried whether the hosting and streaming budget could be topped up in the event of extended national strike action. EB confirmed this could be discussed at P6.

- 4.3. HdZ raised concern about cutting hosting costs while aiming for user growth. Suggested seeking upfront agreement with the DfE on additional funding if growth occurs.
- 4.4. JO noted an upfront agreement is not possible but confirmed DfE support in principle.
- 4.5. Risks relating to capital spend at P6 were acknowledged.
- 4.6. It was noted that the budget was constructed from different scenarios, which affected its intended approach.

DECISION: The Board approved the budget for 2025-26

5. Future policy

- 5.1. JD introduced the future policy paper, outlining various strategic scenarios.
- 5.2. JO stressed the importance of engaging the Minister early to help narrow the strategic options.
- 5.3. CB suggested articulating how Oak could fill gaps left by subject hubs (option 5).
- 5.4. HB noted the importance of ensuring Oak's direction aligns with the government's overall education strategy, cautioned against becoming a government contractor. IB: Noted the opportunity to support schools with curriculum changes resulting from CAR.
- 5.5. HdZ asked what teachers are most requesting
- 5.6. MH highlighted the importance of evidence-building for high-quality curriculum models and incremental tweaks (KS1-3) in line with CAR.
- 5.7. AG asked for clarification on lead times and the impact on staff morale.
- 5.8. JO underscored the need to manage this dialogue carefully with Ministers.

[The meeting ended at 16.22]