

Minutes

Extraordinary meeting of OAT Board of Trustees

Date: 21 May 2020

Time: 17:00

Location: Microsoft Teams

Present:

Paul Hann	PH	Chair
Nick Hudson	NH	CEO and Chair
Frances Hall	FH	Trustee
Andrew Jones	AJ	Trustee
Janet Renou	JR	Trustee
Bal Samra	BS	Trustee
Mark Stanyer	MS	Executive Principal and Trustee
Peter Murray	PM	Trustee and Founding Chair
Ian Brookman	IB	Trustee
Kate Rutherford	KR	Executive Principal and Trustee

In attendance:

Sunita Yardley–Patel	SYP	Clerk
James Murray	JM	Ormiston Trust CEO
Diana Murray	DM	Ormiston Trust
Rob Pritchard	RP	National Director of Education
Jane Nolan	JN	Director of Primary and SEND

Minutes:

Part	Discussion	Action
1	Welcome, introductions and apologies	
	PH welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2	Overview of OAT’s response to Covid19	
	The CEO presented the assurances to Trustees regarding the next steps for OAT and outlined the need for Trustees to be satisfied that appropriate measures are in place to make the decision to reopen OAT academies. The CEO further outlined that the liabilities and risk related to reopening are complex in that the identification of all risks is difficult. It was also noted that the liability lies with the Trust as a whole and there is minimal liability for individual Trustees.	

The CEO confirmed that the current pandemic situation does not alter OAT's insurance cover and the eventualities covered by Zurich match those of the government's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) cover.

In response to a question from the Trustees, the CEO responded that the papers presented were grounded in government/DfE advice, however in some it has been supplemented with further guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

The Trustees asked which areas had been enhanced in addition to government recommendations. NH responded that each academy plan is bespoke based on the circumstances of the school site, staff, capacity etc. and, therefore, there have been situations where the plans are more cautious than government recommendations.

NH outlined the timelines for academies to return in terms of year groups. NH further outlined the national context and what Local Authorities (LAs) and other large Trusts are doing in terms of plans to return to school. Trustees asked why some schools and LAs were not planning to reopen. NH responded that there were a number of factors: some organisations have planned a longer timeline for return to school, others are not assured by government recommendations and some do not have staff to facilitate reopening.

RP outlined the risk assessment processes that academies have completed in preparation for reopening, including office working and accepting deliveries etc. There have been weekly meetings since the lockdown began and these sessions have recently been used to share processes, concerns and solutions for the risk assessment process and reopening. RP added that the risk assessment documents are live and will be adapted and reviewed when necessary.

RP advised that the DfE guidance on secondary reopening has not been released and so plans are currently based on the information available. That information has been shared and developed with Principals and the risk assessment documents have then been submitted to Head Office where they have been reviewed by Regional Directors and the Health and Safety Officer. Queries and concerns have then been sent back to academies and final sign-off will be completed next week.

The Trustees asked to what extent Principals have involved staff in the development of risk assessments and whether the trade unions were content with the risk assessments. RP responded that Principals have had discussions with both staff and trade unions in the development of risk assessments. Currently trade unions have not yet responded at either local or national level.

The Trustees asked how ongoing governance and oversight has been arranged for the risk assessment and reopening process. RP responded that currently government guidance is being followed for the level of governance and oversight. Trustees asked what the longer-term plans were for reopening and how changes in guidance will be managed by Head Office. NH responded that specialists in specific areas will continue to develop

<p>processes, policies and advice for schools depending on the recommendations issued by the government and this will be overseen by the Executive Team.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the potential need for extra resource to keep up with continually changing recommendations and associated risk assessment in addition to providing continued support schools as normal. It was agreed that this would be discussed in more detail at the next FOR Committee where a paper would be presented with more detail around issues relating to risk and the staff roles currently operating in this area.</p> <p>RP outlined that there have been specific addendums developed for key demographics including vulnerable students and SEND students and the HR team has produced an FAQ list for staff who may have questions about returning to work. All academies have been sent the checklist that was circulated by the DfE and have filled in the checklist accordingly</p> <p>The Trustees asked what the assurances are for the implementation of plans and day-to-day working procedures. RP responded that although the plans have been quality assured, there is not currently the capability to physically go into each academy to quality assure the implementation of the processes. When the government allows this, processes will be developed to do so. JN added that the plans are likely to be self-sustaining due to the number of staff involved and the nature number of checks and balances that are integral to school systems. NH added that staff will be issued with clear guidance with regard to risk assessment and the revised expectations of staff are now embedded in the staff code of conduct.</p> <p>The Trustees asked how prepared OAT is for reopening and what are confidence levels around risk mitigations. RP responded that the Trust is in a strong position; appropriate risk mitigation has been implemented wherever possible. Although the terminology refers to 'reopening', the numbers of students present will still be small and so, for some schools reopening will only mean a small increase in current capacity. There is an expectation currently that 50% of eligible students will attend. JN added that primary schools currently have high attendance and thus this is an expansion of numbers. The reopening plans will continue to change as the guidance is released.</p> <p>JN further outlined considerations for reopening primaries, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A provision for a maximum of 15 pupils in a group with one adult and the likelihood that not all these places will be filled• Social-distancing measures for parents and carers• Current indications suggest that the highest uptake will be for Year 6 pupils with a lower uptake for younger children• There will be no mixing of children or staff in rotas• The wide acceptance that it will not be possible for very young children to socially-distance• Flowchart process which outlines what to do if a child is ill	
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- Masks will not be allowed in schools except for Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy which is a special school and therefore has very bespoke plans and a specific risk assessment.

Trustees asked how Year 6 will be supported in transition. JN responded that there will be virtual tours of secondary schools for students to get used to the environment and that the transfer of information will be the same.

Trustees asked what the biggest areas of concern for reopening are. JN responded that the unknown factors such as knowing how young children will be able to meaningfully socially-distance. She remains positive but this is currently unknown and difficult to predict.

Trustees asked how staff are feeling about coming back to work and whether there are t sufficient members of staff returning to facilitate school opening. JN responded that the student numbers were not guaranteed and currently the numbers are predictions. Having spoken to principals, staff are content with reopening plans and all plans made have been made on the basis that there are enough staff members returning to work in schools. NH added that the key aspect of ensuring stakeholders are content with reopening is communication.

NH outlined the communication and engagement that has taken place with all OAT staff, head office staff, other large MATs and LAs and praised the collaborative working and shared intelligence. There was a discussion about the plans for staff in particular categories, i.e. clinically vulnerable, extremely clinically vulnerable etc. and plans for staff who are anxious about returning to work and the need to work with those staff members to facilitate a return to work.

The principal trustees praised the work completed by the OAT Executive Team noting that information has been cascaded quickly and staff felt that well supported. Trustees asked, given the recent publicity around school reopening and responses from trade unions, if PLMR is prepared for any media attention that may occur. The CEO responded that PMLR is prepared. The Trustees voiced support for the letter that was signed by MAT CEOs and released to the press earlier this week.

There was a discussion about the next steps and planning phase depending on government advice and student attendance following school reopening.

In line with sector-wide recommendations to approve plans for reopening before the government confirms the final position on 28 May 2020, Trustees agreed that appropriate risk assessments and planning, in line with DfE guidance, have been undertaken to ensure that OAT schools are able to open and operate safely.

A final decision to open will be subject to confirmation of the relevant Government criteria being met and that OAT will be able to comply with

	existing and any future Government guidance. This final decision will be taken by the Trust Board on Friday 29 May 2020.	
3	Next Meetings	
	29 May 2020 – Extraordinary meeting 10 June 2020 – Extraordinary meeting 24 June 2020 – Extraordinary meeting 9 July 2020	