Minutes

Meeting of the Oldham Learning Board
Thursday 20 March 2025
Lees Suite, Civic Centre
at 1:30pm

Present:	**Chair**	**Jane Acklam**		
	Vice-Chair	**Gillian Kay**		
	Primary Districts	**Zaira Cook** **Vicki Oldham** **Hilary Henderson**	**Council**	**Matt Bulmer** **Julie Daniels**
	Secondary		**Research School**	**Louise Astbury**
	Teaching school	**Katie Dallender**	**MAT**	**Jessica Giraud**
	DFE	**Natasha Pownall** **Daniel Cox**	**Independent**	**Marc Hornby**
In Attendance	**Oldham Council**	**John Gilmore**		
	Advisor	**Tony Shepherd**	**Administrator**	**Chantelle Fraser**
Absent:	**Vice-Chair**	**Gillian Kay**	**Secondary**	**Charlotte Evans**
	Specialist	**Sue Caine**	**Post 16**	**Alan Benvie**
	MAT	**Jayne Clarke**	**Council**	**Cllr Ali**
	Secondary	**Sarah North**		

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Introductions**

JA welcomed Board members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Ali, Gillian Kay, Jayne Clarke, Alan Benvie, Sarah North, Sue Caine and Charlotte Evans. JA welcomed new members to the Board.

2. **Minutes and matters arising**

JA confirmed that all relevant papers had been circulated prior to the meeting and emphasised that the matters discussed are confidential. The minutes from the previous meeting were unanimously agreed upon, with all actions reviewed and all approved.

3. **Priorities**

Priorities 2024/25

SEND

The first monitoring visit following full SEND partnership status is scheduled to place on or around Tuesday, 22nd April 2025. This visit marks almost two years since the full SEND partnership was established. As part of the inspection process, schools will be contacted for feedback.

The purpose of this visit is to review the progress made in SEND. At present, there is no clear framework outlining what a monitoring inspection will involve. However, if the visit does not take place in the next term, it will extend beyond the two-year mark.

Ofsted Thematic Inspection – Children Not in Education

A thematic inspection will take place, focusing on children not in full-time education. The findings will be compiled into a thematic report, which will be brought to the Board for discussion.

Youth Justice Service Inspection – Trafford

Trafford is currently within the inspection window for the Youth Justice Service. Further details on the timeline and focus of this inspection will be provided as they become available.

ILACS & Potential Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)

The last ILACS inspection took place in May 2024, and focused visits will be scheduled accordingly. Additionally, there is a possibility of a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI), which could assess Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) across the partnership.

CSE in Oldham

Survivor groups have provided input on CSE issues in Oldham, leading to a request for a national inquiry. On 12th March 2025, it was confirmed that Tom Crowther will lead the local inquiry.

A three-month rapid audit is currently underway, focusing on grooming gangs and localities. As part of this process, schools will play a role in the JTAI inspection, as they are key safeguarding partners. The specific theme for this inspection is yet to be determined.

*Telford Inquiry reports can be found https://www.iitcse.com/

SEND Nationally – likely that there will be a SEND policy paper being published soon. Council Leader currently at No. 10 regarding SEND Reform.

SEND Locally – Currently, 6.5% of children have an EHCP, which is above the national average of 5%. However, data indicates a decline in the number of EHCP applications and referrals.
MB informed members about the DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) funding and the allocation to the High Needs Block, which will finish this year in balance. However, projections indicate that over the next year or so, the High Needs Block is likely to face a £5 million deficit.
This financial challenge is due to several factors, including schools reaching full capacity, leading to increased placements in independent provisions. While there are ongoing challenges, it is important to avoid promoting the narrative that the SEND system is broken. Significant progress has been made, and we should recognise and celebrate the positive changes achieved for SEND in the Borough.

MB Invites members to discuss the recent experiences within SEND. Members shares views that they see progression MB wants an authentic view the message has been positive

TS and DC (DfE) visited alternative provisions at Kingsland. Extremely positive, young people really engaging, with attendance 90% plus.

HH how are teachers increasing on their SEND experience, especially ECTS. What can they access. KD advised on ECF programme, specific programmes are developed under ECT+. These programmes are all free of charge, link as follows ECT+ Programme - Cranmer Institute

- **Attendance**

JG presented slides to members, highlighting significant improvements in school performance and attendance.
In the secondary sector, the authority has made remarkable progress, now ranking 45th out of 152 authorities, having moved up 55 places—a growth unmatched by any other authority.
In the primary sector, performance remains positive, with the authority now ranked 82nd out of 152 authorities.
JG also emphasised notable improvements in attendance, crediting the success of various projects and interventions implemented this year. For example, 535 calls were made regarding poor nursery attendance transitioning into reception, leading to a 9% increase in attendance.
Additionally, JG shared evidence of effective programs and the success of communications strategies, which have played a crucial role in these positive developments. Plans are in place to further develop and build on these initiatives in the coming year.

TS advised members that work is being carried out with 20-25 primary schools and replicate the work from partnerships, what work can be done, signposting what is available and having a bigger reach in schools from partners such as Early Help, mental health support.

MB – Attendance Fines data there has been a significant decrease in the number of attendance fines issued over the past few years. Schools have been updated on attendance fine policies, with communications sent out to ensure clarity on the latest guidance. This reflects ongoing efforts to improve attendance through engagement and support, rather than enforcement alone
NP – The Department for Education (DfE) has recognised the significant efforts Oldham has made in tackling attendance issues. The DfE is now exploring how these successful strategies can be implemented in other areas.
NP expressed gratitude to Oldham for its hard work and commitment to improving school attendance.

JG shared data on KS2 writing, those in Y5/6 with attendance of 94% or more are more likely to achieve the KS2 threshold for writing opposed to those whose attendance is below. LA to look at publishing a blog and showcasing the work and successes. LA to work with TS/JG on publishing an attendance blog and collaborate with schools. HH asked about pupil voice and JG advised the current work being carried out with year 7 & 8 young people on pupil voice.

MB requested a visit from the school's minister, NP advised she would try and arrange this.

TS discussed a proposal for a common holiday pattern across the borough. Attendance data has been a push for this.

JG is developing a dashboard to analyse attendance using various themes and filters, including ethnicity, as requested at the last board meeting. An update on progress will be shared soon, providing further insights into attendance patterns and helping to inform targeted interventions.

- **Literacy**

TS shared information on update of programmes with literacy, including targeted work with primary schools. Writing programmes are now a broad approach and consider the writing element. HH new to need not to take up the offer.
VO well received from our district and teachers appreciate the professional development.

- **Recruitment and Retention**

MB is in communication with E-ACT to develop the "Choose Oldham for Teaching" programme. This initiative aims to promote teaching careers in Oldham and strengthen recruitment efforts. As part of the programme, colleagues from the trust will visit Oldham to create a documentary and case studies showcasing local success stories. This will highlight Oldham residents who were educated in the borough, now teach in Oldham, and have progressed to senior leadership roles. The proposals are still in development, and MB will provide further updates in due course.

KD and LA are working together to compile a list of teacher development offers for the upcoming year as per documents shared. This document will be accessible to all schools, allowing them to explore job opportunities and available development programs.
Action: Schools are asked to review the teacher development offers document and inform KD of any missing or incorrect information by the end of April. The final version of the document should be completed by the end of May.
JA inquired whether more SEND content could be included in the offer. Draft document will be shared with Heads through briefing.

LA shared slides pilots and programmes offer from the EDF and can be distributed across networks. These are projects and pilots being carried out across the borough. If you are interested and complete the EOI it is not a commitment but once you have completed the webinar you can pull out. The slides provide a brief overview of what you can be involved with. LA would be keen to see if any schools would be interested in being part of the pilot. They might link to pupil premium priorities too.

4. Children Wellbeing in Schools Bill update

NP gave an overview of the bill and the consultation that is launched at the moment. NP discussed the key areas in consultation are:

- Introduction of a new digital service to have a hub for data
- Changes to National Curriculum
- Changes to the approach to interventions and the impact

Consultation deadline is 28 April 2025.

NP will provide feedback following the consultant deadline.

MB inquired about the vision for trusts building on local area plans and whether there are any timescales for communication regarding the vision for the school system. NP stated that all types of structures are being considered, but no specific timeframe has been set.

NP provided feedback on the mandate, citing evidence that smaller trusts are achieving similar economies of scale by grouping schools together.

TS will meet with DfE colleagues soon to discuss faith-based independent schools moving to the maintained sector and will provide feedback. DC to share relevant colleague details.

RISE is currently focused on schools that have been rated below 'Good' for multiple inspections. Structural interventions are being implemented to align with a coherent set of local priorities, with a focus on English and Maths attainment. RISE advisors are working with schools to provide targeted interventions and arrange necessary support.

The RISE Universal Offer is open to all schools, encouraging peer-to-peer support.

NP discussed the launch of RISE and the timeline of future interventions. Regional RISE teams are available to provide support.

Regarding the quality assurance of RISE advisors, it was clarified that the intervention process is not 'done to' schools but is a collaborative effort. Advisors were recruited through a fair and open process and are commissioning support based on school assessments.

MB noted that the wider offer of support will not be universally available, but there is interest in exploring how brokering can happen through collaboration rather than relying solely on departmental resources. The focus will remain on targeted support, acknowledging that fully bespoke approaches may not be feasible due to the number of schools nationwide.

Oldham is open to collaborating with RISE Advisors to develop a personalized approach that meets the specific needs of schools in the borough. NP encouraged MB to share ideas and insights to foster collaboration. NP will take these considerations back to the department.

5. **Board Membership and Remit**

TA and JA attended the Leeds Learning Partnership conference and discussed the initiatives being created. They feel that the work being developed does not create a gap in Oldham but may reflect similarities to existing efforts already in place within the borough.

JA noted the recent attendance to Oldham Learning Board and asked members to consider what 2025/26 will look like and be prepared to discuss at Autumn term 2025/26 meeting.

6. **Safeguarding Partnership and Education**

TS shared the slides with members. Safeguarding partnership has representatives from Chief of Police and Chief of Health office and Julie Daniel, Strategic Director of Children's Services. The government is moving toward recognising education as a strategic partner in safeguarding. Education's role in safeguarding is crucial for the development of children and young people. Oldham is currently exploring how to position itself in this space and is being considered in the discussions.

7. **AOB and Date of next meeting;**

Next OL Board – Thursday 03 July 2025 Spindles Board Room

8.1 Summary of actions

	Action	**Responsibility**
1	Schools are asked to review the teacher development offers document and inform KD of any missing or incorrect information by the end of April.	Districts

Meeting finished: **15:30pm**