# Minutes

**Meeting of the Oldham Learning Board**
**Tuesday 27 November 2025**
**Royton Town Hall**
**at 1:30pm**

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| **Present:** | **Chair** | **Jane Acklam** | | |
| | **Vice-Chair** | **Gillian Kay** | | |
| | **Primary Districts** | **Zaira Cook**<br>**Vicki Oldham**<br>**Helen Woodward** | **Council** | **Matt Bulmer**<br>**Katie Charlton** |
| | **Secondary** | **Tariq Mahmood** | **MAT** | **Sarah North** |
| | **DFE** | **Daniel Cox** | **Independent** | **Marc Hornby** |
| | **EY Family Hubs** | **Bruce Penhale** | **PVI Rep** | **Kimberley Woodward** |
| | **Teaching School** | **Katie Dallender** | | |

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| **In Attendance** | **Oldham Council** | **Ailsa Burton**<br>**Jennie Davies** | **Ryan Rothery**<br>**Victoria Harold** | **Julie Stevens** |
| | **Advisor** | **Tony Shepherd** | **Administrator** | **Chantelle Fraser** |

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| **Not Present:** | **Primary Districts** | **Hilary Henderson**<br>**Zaira Cook** | **Specialist** | **Sue Caine** |
| | **Research School** | **Louise Astbury** | **Post 16** | **Alan Benvie** |

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Introductions**

JA welcomed Board members to the meeting. Apologies were received Hilary Henderson, Sue Caine, Alan Benvie, and Louise Astbury. JA welcomed new members to the Board.

**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 confirmed as accurate.

## 2. Priorities

The group revisited the priorities agreed at the last meeting, focusing again on school readiness, attendance, SEND improvement and the need to uphold fundamental standards across all settings. It was noted that these priorities had remained consistent due to continuing challenges such as early language gaps, persistent absenteeism and pressures on the SEND system.

- **School readiness** (speech, language, attendance, early development).
- **Attendance** (improving persistent absence, early identification).
- **SEND** (timely assessment, pathways, integrating data).
- **Fundamental standards** across education settings.

All members agreed.

**ACTION**: Members to review and provide comments before next meeting.

## 3. School Ready: Best Start in Life

Best Start for Life event attended by over 100 stakeholders highlighted both strengths and ongoing challenges. Oldham faces a substantial uplift target for Good Level of Development, and concerns remain regarding the number of young children who do not access early education before starting school. Data sharing between health and education continues to be a barrier, and partners stressed the importance of earlier identification through checks such as the two-and-a-half-year assessment. The Early Years Improvement Plan is currently being updated, with publication expected in March.

The Board agreed that early years data from both health and the local authority should be brought together to allow more consistent tracking of children from birth to age five. In addition, work will be undertaken to identify children who are not accessing early education, with targeted outreach focusing particularly on communities in the lowest decile areas. Partners also highlighted the need for strengthened workforce training across sectors to deepen understanding of early childhood development.

**ACTION**: BP will review the current communication processes between Family Hubs and primary schools and explore ways to strengthen these links.

## 4. Good Attendance: Term Time absence/GMLAA

The attendance update showed positive progress, including the notable achievement of Oldham now ranking positively among statistical neighbours for secondary attendance. Primary attendance has also improved, although persistent absence remains a concern, especially in relation to vulnerable pupils. A clear pattern of decline from Year 8 onwards was discussed, prompting ongoing work to strengthen transition processes from nursery to reception and from Year 6 to Year 7. Partners agreed to continue sharing the positive trends with wider school networks.

The Board expressed its gratitude to schools, acknowledging their hard work and sustained efforts in improving attendance.

## 5. Literate and Numerate

JS presented this item and highlighted positive developments, with improvements in writing, phonics and other areas. Oldham has closed gaps with national outcomes, and training delivered through the English and Maths Hubs has contributed to this. However, not all schools are engaging consistently. The group agreed that additional local authority-led training and targeted interventions should target schools needing further support.

## 6. LISO Update

The SEND update focused on the LISO pilot, through which Oldham is mapping all inclusion and SEND support services into a single accessible tool for schools. The first version of LISO had been released in September, this is still a working document, and a revised version is planned for January, and services will continue to verify their entries. Navigator

roles are being developed to guide schools through the system more effectively, with ongoing monitoring through a dedicated navigator group.

**ACTION**: The Districts will share the information with schools to gather their feedback using the provided QR code, enabling staff to comment on what is working well and what may require further improvement.

7. **Skills Strategy**

JB presented slides and reported that Oldham continues to lag behind Greater Manchester averages in productivity and high-skilled employment. The borough faces challenges in aligning educational outcomes with emerging labour market needs, particularly in sectors such as construction, STEM and health/social care. To address this, the emerging Skills Strategy emphasises clearer pathways for young people, stronger employer engagement, and improved access to information about local opportunities.

MH highlighted current opportunities at Hulme and expressed support for broader collaboration, including sharing ideas and linking initiatives with Hulme. The comments suggest a desire to enhance engagement between Hulme Grammar and the wider Oldham education partnership.

**ACTION:** MH and JB to connect and explore collaborative opportunities.

8. **Teacher Development in Oldham**

Link to the Teacher Development Brochure:

**Teacher Development In Oldham - Oldham Learning**

**ACTION:** All members to share the link with their sector and feedback any omissions.

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

Oldham Learning Boards meeting dates 2025/26

- Thursday 26th March 2026 – Royton Town Hall
- Thursday 25th June 2026 – Royton Town Hall

**8.1 Summary of actions**

| | Action | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | Members to review priorities and provide comments before next meeting. | **All** |
| **2.** | BP will review the current communication processes between Family Hubs and primary schools and explore ways to strengthen these links. | **BP** |
| **3.** | The Districts will share the information with schools to gather their feedback using the provided QR code, enabling staff to comment on what is working well and what may require further improvement. | **Districts** |
| **4.** | MH and JB to connect and explore collaborative opportunities. | **MH/JB** |
| **5.** | Members to share the link with their sector and feedback any omissions. | **All** |

Meeting finished: **15:30pm**