



*'Working together, we enable everyone to flourish through high quality education'*

# Trust Board Assurance Framework Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Board of Trustees	<b>Date:</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2025	
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## 1. Statement of intent

At Orchard Community Trust, we recognise the importance of maintaining strategic oversight of our schools, and the importance of remaining assured and confident that all controls applied across the Trust for the mitigation of risk are operating effectively.

It is for assurances to be provided to the Board of Trustees to ensure adequate and appropriate consideration has been given to potential risks to the functions of the MAT to fulfil its strategic objectives.

The BAF (Board Assurance Framework) lays out the arrangements to manage risk and its reporting arrangements.

## 2. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Academy Trust Handbook 2025 (DFE)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and documents:

- Risk Management Policy
- Financial regulations
- Risk Register

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

The **Board of Trustees** is responsible for:

- The direction, management, and control of the academy trust
- Ensuring oversight for use of the Trust's resources
- Ensuring that the identification and mitigation of risk is in line with the Trust's vision and strategic goals
- Ensuring that the Board Assurance Framework facilitates assurance arrangements
- Ensuring that risk management is ongoing and embedded throughout Trust operations and reported effectively.

The **Chief Executive Officer** is responsible for:

- The update and upkeep of the MAT strategic risk register.
- Coordination of the assurances across the MAT functions in effective reporting to the Trust Board and its associated committees.

The **Chief Finance and Operations Officer** is responsible for:

- Arranging for mitigation or prevention measures to be put in place where financial investment and operational business function creates a risk.

The **Audit, Risk and Resources Committee** is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing the risk register and providing information/advice to the full Trust Board on current risk, controls and sources of assurance
- Managing and reviewing this policy
- Overseeing the MAT risk register.

The **Headteacher and Senior Leaders** in each school of the Trust are responsible for:

- Maintaining the school risk register in alignment with that of the Trust

- Coordinating risk management activity across their school
- Ensuring the implementation of this policy at a school level
- Liaising with the Board of Trustees and Central Leadership Team in matters of risk management
- Ensuring that risks are being correctly identified and evaluated, and that they are being managed effectively at school level
- Creating a risk-aware environment in their school
- Reviewing and implementing mechanisms that will provide assurance through the AR&R Committee.

#### **4. Board assurance arrangements**

The board assurance arrangements refer to the wider mechanism of risk management across the Trust, primarily comprised of school-to-board communication, risk rating, maintaining a risk register, and the adherence to the Board Assurance Framework (BAF).

The arrangements underpin the operations of the Trust across all MAT functions/departments, ensuring that mechanisms are in place to identify, measure, manage, and monitor risk.

The board assurance arrangements have been set within the scope of the Trust's strategic objectives and the key control processes that ensure operations can effectively continue. The Trust measures risk through these arrangements based on an accurate and detailed risk ratings framework. **(Appendix 1)**

Risk ratings will be used to prioritise risks in order of how urgent interventions to mitigate them are, to show evidence that risk has been reduced following these mitigating interventions, and to inform AR&R committee about areas which they should be monitoring and evaluating more closely. The Central Team and trustees will be responsible for categorising risks and updating these categories once mitigating actions have been implemented. These risk ratings will also help to inform next steps of control and shared with the Full Trust Board.

The AR&R committee (Trustees) will ensure that it has agreed a risk appetite, i.e. the level of risk that the Trust can or is willing to accept in pursuit of its strategic aims. The upkeep of the risk register and provided assurances will inform this.

#### **5. Board assurance**

The BAF allows for the delivery of assurances to be clearly considered, analysed and actioned if required. The BAF is to operate alongside the Trust's strategic objectives as detailed in the Trust Strategic Development Plan.

The BAF considers the areas that may impact on the achievement of these aims, alongside the Trust's compliance obligations.

The Chief Executive Officer will detail assurances along with risk owners allowing trustees and senior leaders to effectively monitor and evaluate MAT risk across all functions appropriately.

Assurance will come in numerous forms, including, but not limited to:

- Internal reviews and checks
- Pupil performance and progress
- Pupil applications, admissions, attendance and exclusions
- Staff deployment, absence, retention, morale and performance
- Quality of teaching
- Performance management, staff appraisals, training and development records
- Financial management information
- Educational performance, e.g. performance tables

- Complaints and incidents
- Policies and reported breaches
- Staff, pupil, supplier and stakeholder feedback
- Internal audit reports
- External audits including management letters
- Benchmarking
- External reviews of governance
- Regulatory inspections, e.g. reports from Ofsted.

For the BAF to be effective in joining identified risk, assurance reports and management of risk it will:

- Demonstrate clear links between the Trust's charitable purposes and strategic aims
- Display a list of the risks that could hinder the achievement of each strategic goal, e.g. risks in relevant areas
- Display a list of the data collection and performance monitoring processes
- Use a clear format and a combination of verbal, written and visual data
- Show a long-term view of performance trends
- Include a rationale for the risk score attributed to each strategic aim.

## 6. Implementation

The BAF has been designed to ensure that:

- Trustees can assess their continued relevance and ability to set the direction of the Trust
- Trustees can enable the Trust's staff to deliver its strategic aims and charitable objectives to an appropriate standard
- It is clear to see where mitigating actions are proportionate to the level of risk and assurance required, and that it can inform actions for the Trust's overarching board assurance and risk management arrangements.

The BAF works for all departments and functions across the Trust, with trustees and leaders engaging with the framework regularly to ensure that governance arrangements are appropriately embedded. School leaders and central staff who are designated risk owners will maintain oversight of their strategic priorities, KPIs and actions and how they align to the perceived risks to mitigate accordingly.

The BAF itself will be evaluated and updated through a 'board assurance cycle':

- Trustees agree or review strategic aims
- Trustees agree or review risk appetite and the Risk Register
- Trustees agree on the level of assurance required for relevant risks
- Central Leadership Team ensures that internal controls are in place for identified risks and monitors the continuing effectiveness of these where they are already in place
- Trustees receive evidence to display assurance for relevant risks
- Information input into the BAF template informs decisions and supports statutory requirements
- Trustees use this information and the resulting decisions to review and update strategic aims, where necessary, and cycle resumes.

The BAF is as a *'live document'* and will be continually monitored and updated by the CEO with the support of the trustees and the CFOO. Reviews of the BAF are critical to ensure that the framework is fit for purpose, remains useful and that staff are providing appropriate levels of assurance.

If it is discovered that assurance is not sufficient using current forms of evidence, the CEO and department leads will work with the AR&R committee members to ensure that the evidence matches the level of assurance being sought.

The BAF will enable the Trust to investigate the sources of information available and identify where further assurances and control measures can be sought.

## **7. Monitoring and review**

This document will be reviewed annually by the AR & R committee, and in response to any reviews of the BAF that have prompted changes to the mechanisms of board assurance arrangements (i.e. policy update).

Any changes to this framework document or the wider trust assurance processes will be communicated to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner.

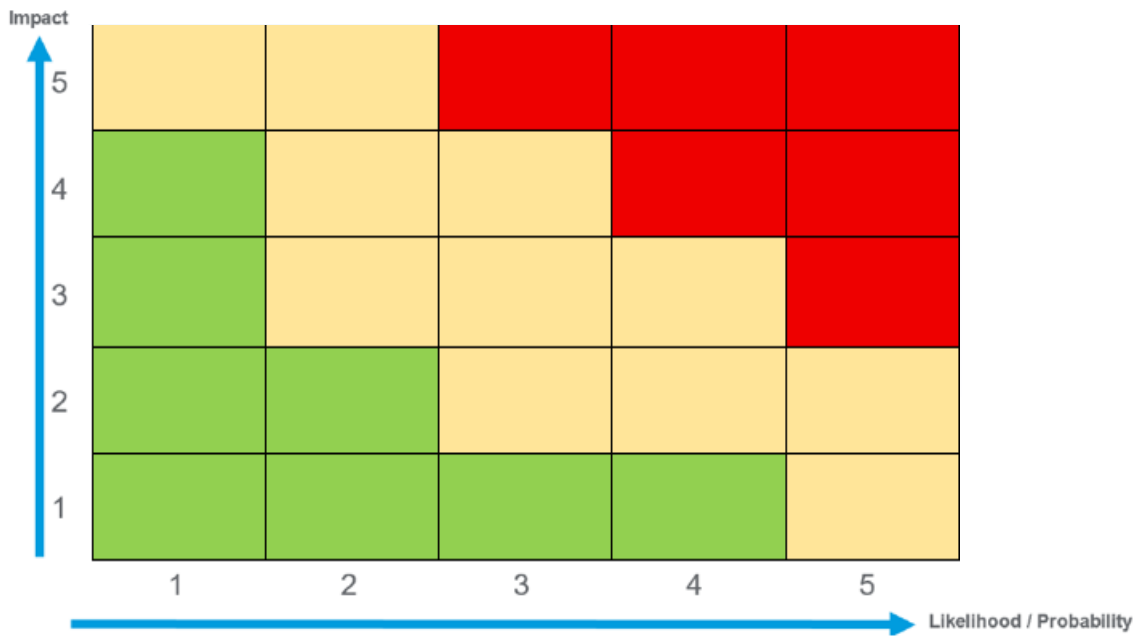
## Appendix 1 – Orchard Community Trust - Strategic Risk Appetite Levels

Risk appetite level	Risk appetite level description
<b>Averse (A)</b>	We shall seek to reduce the residual risk as far as practically and reasonably possible within the constraints of resources available.
<b>Minimal (M)</b>	We shall accept a low degree of residual risk. Benefit will not be the driver.
<b>Cautious (C)</b>	We are willing to accept some degree of residual risk where we have identified scope to achieve significant benefit or realise an opportunity.
<b>Open (O)</b>	We are willing to consider a range of options where we are able to demonstrate a balance between a high level of residual risk and a high likelihood of successful and beneficial outcomes.
<b>Hungry (H)</b>	We are eager to be innovative and choose a range of options based on maximising opportunities and beneficial outcomes even if those activities carry a very high level of residual risk.

## Appendix 2 - Appendix 3 – Orchard Community Trust - Risk Scoring Matrix

Red High Level of Risk  
 Orange Moderate to high level of Risk  
 Green Lower Level of Risk

### New For 2025



### Replaces

