



Board Assurance Framework Policy

Approved by:	Board of Trustees	Date: 9th July 2026
---------------------	-------------------	----------------------------

Last reviewed on:	26 th June 2026
--------------------------	----------------------------

Next review due by:	8 th July 2027
----------------------------	---------------------------

Contents

1. Statement of intent..... 2

2. Roles and responsibilities 2

3. Board assurance arrangements 3

4. Board assurance..... 3

5. Implementation 4

6. Monitoring and review 5

Appendix 1 – Orchard Community Trust - Strategic Risk Appetite Levels..... 6

Appendix 2 – Risk Scoring Matrix 7

Appendix 3 – Identified Risks..... 8

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 Board Assurance Framework (BAF) lays out the arrangements to manage risk and its reporting arrangements and operates in conjunction with our Risk Management Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, MAT Financial regulations, the MAT Risk Register and school level risk registers.

2. 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 overall implementation of Risk management across the MAT
- Acknowledging, mitigating and preventing risks which endanger the safety of pupils, staff and visitors
- Ensuring risk-taking does not conflict with the Trust's health and safety policy.

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

- The update and upkeep of the MAT strategic risk register (BAF)
- Communicating with school leaders to ensure the school sites are safe to attend in the event of adverse weather
- Ensuring that school level risk registers are adequately informing the BAF
- Supporting the Headteachers in identification of operational risks.

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

- Overseeing the effective use of the Trust's resources and assessing where investment might be required
 - Arranging for mitigation or prevention measures to be put in place where financial investment and business operations create a risk
 - Approving, creating and reporting on all-financial matters including budgets and management accounts
 - Supporting the Headteachers in identification of financial risks.
-

The Trustees through the **Audit, Risk and Resources Committee** are 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 to the AR&R Committee.

3. 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 of areas which they should be monitoring and evaluating more closely. The Centrally employed staff 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.

4. 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.

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 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.

5. Implementation

The BAF has been designed to ensure that:

- Trustees can assess its continued relevance and ability to set the direction of the Trust
- Trustees can enable 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 inputted 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 the cycle resumes.

The BAF is as a '*live document*' and will be continually monitored and updated with the support of the trustees and Executive Leaders. 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.

6. 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).

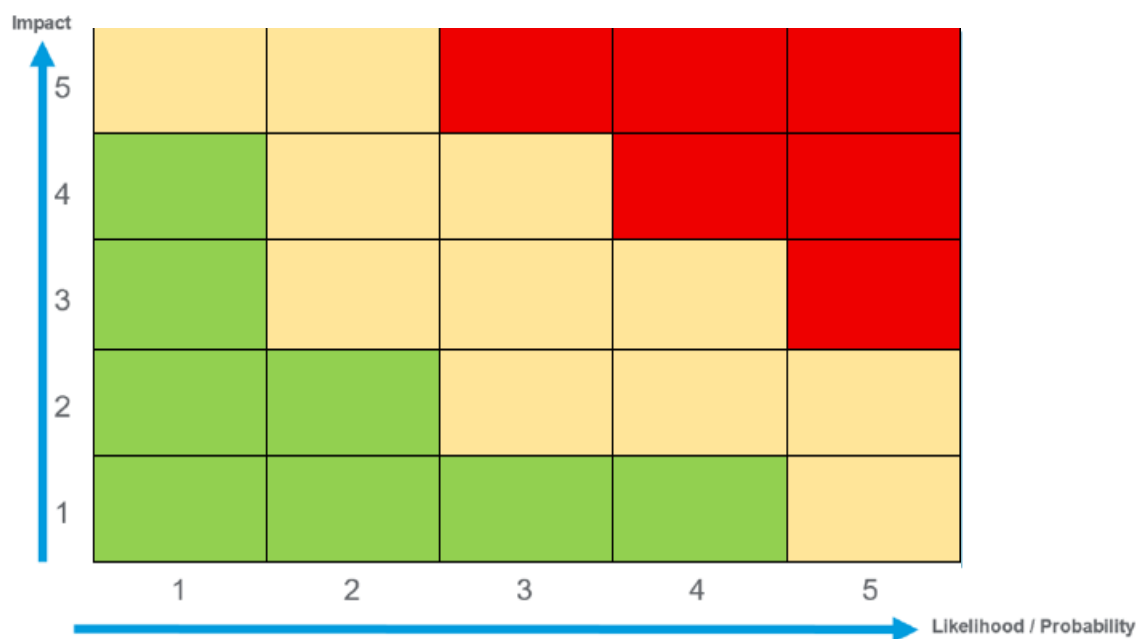
Any changes to this framework document or the wider trust assurance processes will be communicated to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner.

Appendix 1 – Orchard Community Trust - Strategic Risk Appetite Levels

Risk appetite level	Risk appetite level description
Averse (A)	We shall seek to reduce the residual risk as far as practically and reasonably possible within the constraints of resources available.
Minimal (M)	We shall accept a low degree of residual risk. Benefit will not be the driver.
Cautious (C)	We are willing to accept some degree of residual risk where we have identified scope to achieve significant benefit or realise an opportunity.
Open (O)	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.
Hungry (H)	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 – Risk Scoring Matrix

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



Appendix 3 – Identified Risks

Section	Risk ID	Risk Name	Risk overview	Risk Description
Governance	R1	Effective Governance	Weak governance oversight	Ineffective governance structures, skills or behaviours leading to weak oversight, insufficient challenge and poor decision making across the Trust.
Governance	R2	Compliance	Regulatory failure	Failure to comply with statutory, regulatory and legislative requirements resulting in legal, financial or reputational consequences.
Governance	R3	Integrity	Ethical breach	Failure to maintain high standards of governance integrity, including conflicts of interest, transparency and ethical conduct.
Governance	R4	Strategy	Poor direction	Lack of clear strategic direction, alignment and stakeholder engagement leading to ineffective Trust development and outcomes.
Governance	R5	Risk Mgmt	Weak risk controls	Failure to identify, manage and respond to risks effectively, resulting in unmitigated threats to Trust operations and outcomes.
Governance	R6	Reputation	Reputation damage	Damage to the Trust's reputation resulting in loss of stakeholder confidence, reduced growth opportunities and negative media or public perception.
Operations	R7	Financial Sustainability	Funding pressure	Failure to maintain financial stability due to funding pressures, cost increases or ineffective financial planning, impacting the delivery of strategic priorities.
Operations	R8	Fraud	Fraud risk	Failure of financial controls leading to fraud, irregularity or misuse of public funds.
Operations	R9	Estates	Safety risk	Failure to maintain safe, compliant and fit-for-purpose estates and infrastructure, resulting in risk of harm, disruption or regulatory breach.
Operations	R10	IT/Cyber	Cyber risk	Failure of IT systems, cyber security or data protection arrangements leading to data loss, operational disruption or regulatory breach.
Operations	R11	Continuity	Disruption risk	Failure to effectively plan for or respond to major incidents or disruptions, leading to sustained interruption to education and operations.
Education	R12	Safeguarding	Harm risk	Failure of safeguarding systems, culture or practice leading to harm or risk of harm to pupils and increased safeguarding risks.
Education	R13	Quality Outcomes	Poor outcomes	Failure to deliver consistently high-quality education across the Trust, leading to poor outcomes and adverse inspection judgements.
Education	R14	Attendance	Low attendance	Failure to secure strong attendance and inclusive practice, resulting in reduced pupil outcomes.
Education	R15	SEND	SEND demand pressure	Failure to meet increasing SEND demand and complexity, leading to unmet need, financial pressure and reduced quality of provision.
Growth	R16	School Improvement	Inconsistent SI	Failure to deliver consistent and sustained school improvement across the Trust, leading to variability in performance and outcomes.
Growth	R17	Growth/Partnerships	Over-expansion / no-expansion	Failure to manage growth, partnerships and outreach activity effectively, resulting in reduced quality, overextension of capacity or reputational impact.
Workforce	R18	Capacity	Staff shortages	Failure to recruit, retain and deploy a skilled workforce, leading to reduced organisational effectiveness and impact on pupil outcomes.
Workforce	R19	Wellbeing	Staff burnout	Failure to maintain staff wellbeing and sustainable workload, resulting in reduced performance, increased absence and staff turnover.