

**HADRIAN LEARNING TRUST
MINUTES FOR MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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| Date of Meeting | Thursday 6 July 2023 at 6pm, Hydro Conference Room 1 |
| Present | Veryan Johnston (VJ, Chair), Sarah Kemp (SK, Vice Chair), Patrick Ferguson (PF), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), James Heath (JH), Kate MacLachlan (KM), Barbara Hignett (BH) |
| Also in attendance | Neil Seaton (NS HoS QE), Sarah Sparke (SS, CFO), Anna Vellinga (AV, clerk) |

PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

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| 1. | Apologies: Florrie Darling (FD), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS) Absent: Tony Brown (TB) | |
| 2. | Declaration of pecuniary, business or personal interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No amendments to those already held. | |
| 3. | <p>Minutes of previous meeting Part 1</p> <p>The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 18 May 2023 – Part 1 <p>Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA noted that AV was arranging for access to governance training for Trustees and further information was going to be sent soon. AV • VJ noted that a date was to be found for an informal strategy session in October. AV would send dates. AV • VJ noted a webinar for Trustees on complaints handling is available. A link to the recording would be sent to Trustees. AV • GA noted that forms relating to diversity reporting would be circulated to Trustees for completion. He also advised that the new pension scheme policy had been approved and that a complaint being addressed at stage 2 of the procedure had been resolved. AV | |
| 4. | <p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft budgets 2023/24 to 2027/28 had been distributed in advance of the meeting. • SS explained that it was a requirement to present the first three years of these 5-year budgets to the ESFA. • It was noted that the budgets were looking a lot healthier than they had previously. • One of the changes was that pupil numbers at both schools, including 6th form admission numbers, are now expected to exceed prior forecasts which generates additional funding at low extra cost. • It was advised that the Finance and Audit Committee had reviewed these draft budgets in the F&A Committee meeting held on 30 June. After input of the F&A Committee a placeholder of £100K for potential additional expenditure to support pupils had been added which would be agreed in September subject to finalisation of pay awards. The F&A Committee commented that this would give the Trust the correct level of cover. • It was noted that although the reserves policy (one month's expenditure) is exceeded after the second year, the revenue balance should be sufficient to maintain a cumulative surplus balance over the five-year budget period for the Trust to not go into deficit. • PF noted that he was confident that the budget covered requirements, with the caveat that after the second year it is hard to make valid forecasts. | SS |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Trust Board members then formally approved the 5-year budget for submission to the ESFA. | |
| 5. | <p>Management accounts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The April management accounts had been distributed in advance of the meeting having previously been circulated to the F&A Committee. The Committee noted that the April management accounts showed a similar position to that of March. SS clarified certain points in the explanatory notes. There were no further questions or comments. | |
| 6. | <p>Risk Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risk register had been distributed in advance of the meeting. GA mentioned that the risk register had been reviewed recently by the Monitoring Committees, the HR&PM Committee and the F&A Committee, with the circulated register reflecting the latest position. GA advised Trustees of an exercise undertaken by himself and SS documenting the extensive internal and external assurance activity currently undertaken across the risk categories, which had assisted the F&A Committee in directing next year's external assurance focus. VJ noted that the different types of and extent of external assurance was reassuring. The next risk register review for the Board is scheduled for October 2023. It will remain a standing item at all meetings to reflect any committee updates. The F&A Committee will continue to review the risk register highlighting any potential gaps to the Board and relevant committee. | Clerk |
| 7. | <p>Behaviour policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA noted that the behaviour policy had been reviewed by senior leaders, with amendments proposed. The revised policy is similar to the previous policy, however it better reflects intended practice and there is more emphasis on a relational approach and trauma-informed practice. GA expressed the intention to circulate the new behaviour policy as a draft to the board for comments, after which a draft would go out to parents for their input with the intention to put the policy in place by September. If there was a need for further discussion with the Board, this would be arranged. The Trust Board agreed to this approach. | GA |
| 8. | <p>Trustee recruitment / governance review</p> <p>Trustee recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the departure of Kim Cowie, the Trust Board was looking to recruit a new Trustee. GA and VJ reported that first contact had been made with potential new candidates. GA and VJ will update further at the September meeting. TB's absence was noted. GA and VJ indicated their intention to clarify TB's position ahead of the next meeting in September. Brief discussion followed and VJ thanked Trustees for sharing their thoughts. <p>Governance review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VJ reported on findings from the recent review of governance undertaken via one-to-one meetings with trustees and senior leaders. Overall, trustees are positive about the work of the Board and feel able to ask questions and challenge. Points raised included: | <p>GA & VJ</p> <p>GA & VJ</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It would be helpful for papers to be available a week in advance of meetings. ○ High priority items should be earlier in the agenda to allow more time for dealing with key items. ○ Regular reports could be in writing and circulated in advance. ○ It will be helpful if papers can be clear what is required e.g. for information, discussion, agreement. ○ There is scope for better use of dashboards, for example to show trends. ● VJ noted the intention to hold an informal strategy meeting in October 2023. AV to arrange a date. ● Trustees would welcome additional informal meetings in between regular board meetings. ● It was agreed that AV would send Trustees the weekly parent briefings from the Heads of School to assist them in keeping abreast of life in the schools. ● VJ reminded trustees that the Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually in September. With a view to succession planning VJ proposed having an additional or shadow vice-chair next year. Trustees agreed with the proposal which will be actioned in September. ● GA noted that various Trustee school visits had been arranged. ● The Trustees welcomed regular information about school events such as concerts so that they can attend. AV will continue to circulate details. ● The Trustees expressed their appreciation for the schools' transparency around governance. ● VJ is intending an external review of governance over the course of the forthcoming year, taking into consideration that the auditor needs to have a good knowledge of the sector and that such a review should not create more work for the senior team. | <p>AV</p> <p>AV</p> <p>VJ/AV</p> <p>AV</p> <p>VJ/GA</p> |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>Review of serious incident</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GA reported that after the serious incident that led to the tragic death of Holly, the school had conducted a review of its response to determine if there could be lessons to be learnt. FD had attended the review as had Northumberland County Council's safeguarding lead, Carol Leckie. ● As reflected in the minutes of the review, circulated to Trustees in advance of the meeting, it had been concluded that the event had been beyond the school's control. In the aftermath, the school had benefitted from excellent support from NCC and their guidance around providing support for the school community had proved sound. The review identified some actions to undertake going forward and these would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Safeguarding Group. ● GA advised of the ongoing engagement with Holly's family. On Tuesday 11 July there will be a modest memorial service during which a holly tree will be planted. ● Holly's family kindly offered to donate the surplus of funds raised for the memorial to the school Hardship Fund. GA has expressed his gratitude to Holly's family in a letter on behalf of the school and the Trust Board. ● NS confirmed that external counselling support continue to be in place for Holly's sibling and close friends. ● VJ thanked everyone involved. | <p>GA/FD</p> |
| <p>10.</p> | <p>School updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The latest weekly data report for HMS/QE was distributed in advance of the meeting. VJ commented that it was useful to have the data available in this way and to see patterns over time and in relation to national data. <p>HMS GA reported on LW's behalf:</p> | |

- The Board reflected on the latest attendance data (94.4%) in comparison with the national average (National Primary 93.9%, National Secondary 90.8%), noting the overall positive position but also concerns regarding individuals with persistent absence attendance, particularly in year 8.
- The strike day attendance for year 7 was 85%, which was below expectation.
- The third cycle of Quality of Education reviews had been undertaken as had curriculum review with subject leaders, focusing on assessment and curriculum policies.
- The HMS SEND review with the NCC SEND team was undertaken recently and will be reflected on at the next monitoring committee meeting.
- A review of the school's pupil premium provision is also underway with NCC's pupil premium lead – findings will be reflected upon at the next monitoring committee meeting.
- The school improvement partner met in June with GA and the DSL, Mark Stephenson, to reflect on safeguarding practice. This had been very positive with some helpful guidance received.
- SATS results are expected on Tuesday 11 July. The school has been externally moderated for writing, which went well.
- There have been successful residentials this term, e.g. Whithaugh Park, France, etc.
- The year 3 taster day went well as did the year 5 rounders afternoon, year 4 transition day, year 8 transition day and year 7 tours of QE.
- The HMS summer fair and the music evening were successful events.
- BH asked what liaison had taken place between the schools regarding year 8 pupils with behaviour issues who would be moving to QE in September. NS outlined the communications that had taken place across the schools, including with other feeders.

QE

NS (HoS QE) reported:

- Attendance at QE (Yrs 9-11, 90.9%) is marginally above national attendance (90.8% for secondaries, slightly less than 90% for national years 9-11). It stood out that attendance was lower at certain times of the year, such as in the lead up to Christmas, on strike days and with year 11 in the lead up to exams, however a rigorous approach to attendance had paid dividends overall.
- The Trust Board discussed y11 attendance around the exam period noting that some students do prefer to work at home but for others being at school was more appropriate.
- NS reported that the school has a clear plan for moving forward with regards to attendance, as discussed the monitoring committee.
- NS reported that there was support in place for non-attendance due to mental health issues, and that the team was in touch with families on case-to-case basis.
- NS reported that there had been a more assertive approach over the past months with regards to managing behaviour, which has addressed some issues around student behaviour.
- NS provided an update to Trustees on the small group of students being supported in the new internal alternative provision since June. A full-time teacher has been recruited for this group, with additional specialist provision provided by senior leaders. The curriculum focuses on core subjects, personal development, team building and bespoke qualification. It is early days and behaviour continues to be challenging but there has been encouraging progress with some. NCC are showing interest in the possibility of extending provision to neighbouring schools. The Board confirmed with NS that there were enough spaces allocated for HMS/QE students. Upon PF's suggestion, the trustees agreed that the programme should be reviewed in late Spring / early Summer 2024.
- NS further reported: the year 11 and year 13 students have now left following the exam period; senior leaders were meeting with curriculum leaders to review planning and department policies, our external curriculum advisor had recently reviewed maths and

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| | <p>English, the year 8 to 9 transfer day had gone well, Y12 students were doing work experience, the Morocco trip for Y10 students was taking place, and the Duke of Edinburgh Expedition was scheduled for 11 July.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS invited the Trust Board members to a Performance Arts Showcase in the Queens Hall on Thursday 13 July. | |
| <p>11.</p> | <p>Trust update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA reported that both schools were preparing for the next academic year. Based on the schools' calendars, GA will produce the governance meeting schedule, which will be circulated during the school holidays. The likely date of the first Trust Board meeting of the new academic year is Thursday 21 September. • GA noted that the schools working on their development plans, which would be considered with Trustees in September. • A stand-alone presentation on SEND for Trustees is intended for the Autumn Term. • An INSET day is scheduled for 4 September 2023. GA invited the Trustees to join the staff for lunch. AV will provide details. • GA advised the Board that the local authority had announced intentions to establish an Education Schools Alliance in Northumberland, seemingly intended for maintained schools with shared values to work together around policy and practice. • The Hexham Partnership continues to function well. It was reported that St Josephs have been mandated within the Diocese that they will have to follow a set curriculum for various subjects, which doesn't necessarily align with the partnership curriculum model, however communications between Headteachers and Heads of Schools are ongoing in order to try to address this. • GA noted continued collaboration with MAT partners, e.g. Assistant Headteacher Jenny Fraser had visited Ponteland recently to learn about their approach. • GA advised on recent amendments to Ofsted's approach, relating to timings, safeguarding and complaints. • GA provided an update on industrial action, with teachers striking on 5 and 7 July; teaching unions are consulting with their members on the possibility of further coordinated action in the Autumn. • GA advised of the intention to adjust the QE school uniform policy to reflect a desire of some to wear shorts and for both schools' policies to effectively be gender neutral. Trustees agreed. • VJ reported that she had met recently with the independent Members regarding a review of the Members' role in overseeing governance. | <p>AV</p> |
| <p>12.</p> | <p>QEHS monitoring committee – 5 June 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The QEHS monitoring committee meeting minutes of 5 June 2023 were distributed for review in advance of the meeting and acknowledged. • NS had presented on progress with school development plan priorities and anticipated summer exam outcomes. Assistant Headteacher Hattie Curry provided a thorough analysis of behaviour and attendance data, and Assistant Headteacher Andy Hedley did similar regarding wider participation, highlighting positive figures for disadvantaged and SEND learners. Assistant Headteacher Paul Freeman-Myers provided a comprehensive presentation on careers education over the past year. <p>HMS monitoring committee – 15 June 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HMS monitoring committee meeting minutes of 15 June 2023 were distributed for review in advance of the meeting and acknowledged. | |

- KM noted a special thank you to Assistant Headteacher Paul Freeman-Myers, who did a very comprehensive presentation on careers education which demonstrated that this aspect is in a good position with clear plans for further enhancement.
- Assistant Headteacher Mark Stephenson gave a comprehensive report on attendance and behaviour, noting concerns about high recent levels of holiday absence. The Committee were reassured that absence continues to be closely monitored with concerted effort going into improving the attendance of particular pupils at risk of persistent absence.
- KM advised that Paul Freeman-Myers would welcome further trustee involvement in careers education, for example talking to pupils about their own career journeys. Trustees able to offer support should let PFM know via AV.

All/AV

HR&PM Committee – 28 June 2023

- The HR&PM committee meeting minutes of 28 June 2023 were distributed for review in advance of the meeting and acknowledged.
- VJ noted that HR Manager Rachael Stokes will be leaving in September. The HR assistant has also left recently. A recruitment process is underway.
- VJ referred to the results of the June 2023 staff survey results which had been circulated. The outcome was broadly positive and reflected a similar position to last year. Senior leaders will report back to staff in September on actions intended in light of the survey, with the survey to be repeated each year.
- VJ reported that the HR&PM Committee has had a separate meeting with GA about objectives and that the notes of that meeting will be shared discretely.

Safeguarding group – 28 June 2023

- The Safeguarding group meeting minutes of 28 June 2023 were distributed for review in advance of the meeting and acknowledged. GA provided a brief overview noting the content of the DSL reports.

Finance and Audit Committee – 30 June 2023

- The Finance and Audit Committee meeting took place on 30 June 2023. The minutes have not yet been circulated.
- PF provided a verbal report, noting that the meeting had primarily focused on the assurance map and the budget.
- A special word of thanks was given to Sarah in light of her moving on from the Trust in September. Her excellent contribution over the past several years have had a very positive impact on the financial position of the Trust.
- VJ thanked KM, JH and FD for stepping into the sub committees.
- PF noted only one non-executive trustee along with GA on the Safeguarding Group, as opposed to three on the committees, which seems at odds with the importance of this area. GA explained that the group, which comprises several senior leaders with specific safeguarding responsibilities along with himself and FD, was established as a means of enabling the designated safeguarding trustee to be informed about all aspects of safeguarding provision to enable them to meet their responsibilities to the Board, for the Board to then have reassurance that the schools are adhering to the statutory requirements. When the schools academised in 2016, it was consciously brought into the Board structure as that group rather than a committee, as reflected in the Governance Framework and Scheme of Delegation.
- It was agreed that, as the Governance Framework and Scheme of Delegation document is due to be reviewed in September, the composition of the Safeguarding Group can be considered then.

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| 13. | Trustee visits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustee visits have been arranged for small groups or for individuals. Trustees should liaise with AV if any queries regarding this. | |
| 14. | Stakeholder engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA thanked Trustees who had been able to attend recent events. GA noted that information evenings for new parents had been arranged. Family and friends and a small group of students and staff would be attending the memorial for Holly along with a BBC reporter. Positive engagement with the Hydro Neighbourhood Group continues. | |
| 15. | Urgent business with agreement of Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA advised that the Academy Trust Handbook had been updated. The main changes are to do with related party transactions, annual reporting and budget forecast returns, salary incentive schemes and electric vehicles. VJ confirmed with the Trustee members that there was no further business and thanked the Trustees for their presence and input. VJ also thanked the senior team and asked that thanks be passed onto staff for their ongoing hard work. GA expressed his thanks to the Board for their support over the past year. | GA |

Close and confirm date of next meeting: The meeting closed at 8.00pm. The date of the next meeting is _____TBC_____ at 6pm.

_____ **Chair**

_____ **Date**