

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

Date of Meeting	Thursday 21 September 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), Florrie Darling (FD) James Heath (JH) via Teams, Kate MacLachlan (KM), Barbara Hignett (BH)
Also in attendance	Neil Seaton (NS HoS QE), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS) Anna Vellinga (AV, clerk)

PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

		Action
1.	<p>Apologies: none Absent: Tony Brown (TB)</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of pecuniary, business or personal interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declarations of Interest had been circulated to the trustees for an annual review. AV will collect and record the completed forms. 	AV
3.	<p>Election of Chair</p> <p>After establishing that Veryan Johnston (VJ) was content to be re-elected, 1 nomination and 2 seconders were received for VJ to be re-elected in the position of the Chair. VJ kindly accepted and will therefore continue in the role of chairperson for the Trust Board.</p>	
4.	<p>Election of Vice Chair</p> <p>After establishing that Sarah Kemp (SK) was content to be re-elected, 1 nomination and 2 seconders were received for SK to remain in the position of the Vice Chair. SK kindly accepted and will therefore continue in the role of vice chairperson for the Trust Board.</p> <p>Shadow Vice Chair</p> <p>Taking succession planning into consideration VJ suggested a Shadow Vice Chair should be identified, referring to her previously circulated paper. The trust board members supported this idea and Kate McLachlan (KM) kindly agreed to undertaking the role of Shadow Vice Chair with immediate effect. This is an informal role.</p>	
5.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting Part 1</p> <p>The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record with 3 minor amendments to be edited by AV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 6 July 2023 – Part 1 <p>Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who were unable to attend, AV will distribute a link to the recording of the online webinar about complaints handling to the trustees. A diversity questionnaire has been circulated to the trustees for an annual review. AV will collect and record the completed forms. GA thanked the trustees for their input on the behaviour policies and confirmed that the latest QE version is now on the website following consultation with parents. The HMS version is currently out to consultation and will be published shortly. GA advised that progress with the actions that came out of the Trust’s serious incident review were considered at the recent meeting of the Safeguarding group. 	AV AV

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA noted that the staff end-of-year survey results have been passed on to the trustees. 	
6.	<p>Trust Board membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trust board established that Tony Brown had been absent without apologies at trust board and other trust committee meetings for more than 6 months. He was therefore statutorily no longer eligible to continue as a member of the trust board. GA expressed appreciation for Tony's invaluable contributions to the trust over the years and will write to him with thanks. VJ advised that she will write to Tony to formalise his departure from the Board. As a result of TB leaving the Board, there is a need for a formal Parent Trustee alongside PF. Previous governance experience preferably with SEND or safeguarding knowledge or an educational background were identified as requirements of the Board. VJ noted that three of the Board are current parents, each of whom who would be well-placed to be Parent Trustee. However, it was agreed that the position would be advertised in parent/carer communication to start with to determine if any interest from parents outside of the current Board. 	<p>VJ/AV</p> <p>GA/AV</p>
7.	<p>Committee chairs and membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VJ established that trustees agreed with the proposed governance schedule. VJ suggested that, once new trustees were in place, the membership of sub committees could be re-visited. GA noted the discussion at the last Board meeting around the make-up of the Safeguarding Group and indicated he and FD were open to other trustees coming onto this. JH kindly offered to take on the chair for the QEHS monitoring group, until a new education trustee is appointed, who will then take over as Chair. The three statutory link trustees are FD (safeguarding), BH (SEND), and VJ (careers). On appointment, the new education trustee, who will sit on both monitoring committees, will be asked to be the link trustee for pupil premium. VJ reconfirmed that, if possible, only the trustees' qehs accounts would be used for communications and if these are set up to connect to personal accounts then that would be fine. 	
8.	<p>Safeguarding training for Trustees</p> <p>Hattie Curry, designated Safeguarding lead, kindly hosted a Safeguarding Refresher Course for trustees before the trust board meeting and sent the presentation to those who were able to attend. Trustees who could not be present will receive a video of the Safeguarding Refresher Course with accompanying notes.</p> <p>All trustees verbally confirmed that they have read Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education2023.</p>	<p>AV/HC</p>
9.	<p>Summer text examination outcomes</p> <p><u>HMS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LW talked through the 2023 summer data. The overall picture is largely positive although there are aspects to address, including taking the expected standard figure for reading to the next level and increasing the combined reading, writing and maths figure. LW noted that the writing scores had been externally moderated and had emerged well. LW also noted the positive outcomes for disadvantage pupils, acknowledging that each year's cohort has different challenges. SK referred to media commentary at the time of the SATs regarding the degree of difficulty of the reading paper and queried if HMS pupils had been affected by this. LW 	

	<p>confirmed that this this would have had some effect but that the grading boundary had been lowered to accommodate in recognition of the more challenging paper. PF commended the strong results, echoed by KM, particularly noting the disadvantaged figures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA noted that a fuller consideration of the summer outcomes would be undertaken with the monitoring committee at the meeting on 25 September. <p><u>QEHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NS referred to the previously circulated summer examination data to outline the QE picture which was broadly in line with 2019 outcomes, reflecting the situation nationally. Post 16 outcomes were largely positive with strong attainment positioning QE ahead of all other secondary and high schools in Northumberland, including those with a similar demographic. NS advised of subjects that had performed particularly strongly and highlighted the average A- grade for the 120 students undertaking the EPQ. Subjects with outcomes lower than expected included PE, drama and psychology. SK queried what the issues were in these subjects which NS addressed. NS went on to outline the key stage 4 outcomes, which were also broadly in line with 2019, including a positive indicative P8 progress measure although formal P8 indications are not anticipated until November. NS talked through key attainment outcomes and highlighted the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers, which remains a problem nationally and continues to be a key area of focus for the school. NS referred to school data that showed that those from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend well typically perform well, however those who attend poorly perform poorly. As such, improving the attendance of those with high absence is a key priority. Discussion followed regarding this and the challenges schools face in light of the pandemic and preceding years of austerity, and the impact that both have had on struggling families and attitudes towards school. GA advised that the KS4 and post-16 summer examination data would be considered in more detail at the forthcoming monitoring committee meeting on 2 October. PF noted that the results have been encouraging given the challenges faced by the respective year groups. 	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Executive headteacher reports</p> <p>GA referred to the circulated documents and explained that they provided an informative overview of where each school is at, along with key performance data for the previous academic year, which trustees could refer to in triangulation visits this year. a</p> <p>These reports are circulated to the trustees, members (at the December meeting) and the senior leadership teams. Some discussion followed with trustees noting that the reports will be considered more fully at the monitoring committee meetings, scheduled for 25 September (HMS) and 2 October (QE).</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Self-evaluation school development plans</p> <p>GA outlined the approaches taken in each school around self-evaluation, as shared with monitoring committees last year. The associated school development plans priorities for the year ahead were featured in the report and would be reviewed in due course in the committee meetings and with the wider Board.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>Return to school updates</p>	

	<p><u>HMS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LWA reported that 151 new Y5 children settled in really well and that the welcome evenings have been well attended and positively received. LWA further noted that there was an opportunity for parents to meet their children’s form tutor on the 28th of September. • Other than the ongoing recruitment for a LSA there were no major staff issues. • Positive routines had been established and 53 clubs have been launched. <p><u>QEHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS reported a good start for 313 new Y9 students. It was recognised that there was an increased SEN demand in Y9 (double the number of EHCPs than previous years). PF noted that he had observed the effective implementation of the behaviour policy during a recent visit. • NS noted that also in QE lots of lunchtime and after-school clubs had launched, promoted in freshers’ fairs to the lower school and sixth form. A Duke of Edinburgh Award expedition had taken place and a number of subject-specific educational visits were pending. 	
13.	<p>Trust updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA announced that Jon Riley has been recruited into the role of CFO, starting December. Until then Sahreen Safdar has taken on the role of interim CFO. • Replacing the HR manager is proving challenging. GA indicated that the trust is looking at alternatives, including outsourcing. In the interim, Eleanor Simpson has subsumed the responsibilities within her role, with the appointment of an HR admin assistant expected soon. • GA advised that the NASUWT had embarked upon action short of strike action. NS and LW have had constructive meetings with school representatives and are not anticipating problems. GMB is currently balloting members for strike actions in relation to pay. • Cheviot Learning Trust was created from a merger of Tyne Community Learning Trust and Three Rivers Learning Trust. • The bid by Pele Trust to establish a languages hub in which HLT would be a partner had not been successful although further bidding rounds are anticipated. • GA noted that the annual report has been sent to auditors for review. When this comes back from the auditors, it will go to the Finance and Audit committee before being presented to Trustees and then Members. • The Hexham Partnership continues to function well. Middle and high partnership working continues this year with three areas of focus: personal development in the subject curriculum, relational behaviour management and metacognition. A careers initiative will follow later in the year. • GA mentioned that an estate management plan is being prepared and will be shared with the trust board for review at the next meeting. • GA referred to the most recent letter to the accounting officer, circulated to trustees in advance of the meeting, that the advised of changes to the academy trust hand book, previously noted by trustees in July. 	
14.	<p>Safeguarding minutes</p> <p>FD reported on the recent meeting, highlighting the key points from the minutes that had been circulated to trustees. FD noted that GA and MS had valued a positive review of safeguarding arrangements with the school improvement partner. . As previously</p>	

	mentioned, the meeting reflected on progress with actions that emerged from the serious incident review.	
15.	<p>Sixth form offer</p> <p>A report on the year 12 options offer for 2024 had been circulated to trustees in advance of the meeting. Trustees confirmed that they approved the recommendations therein.</p> <p>NS updated trustees on current government thinking regarding BTEC courses, a number of which are due for withdrawal which will have implications for the QE offer and retention from year 11. KM noted that the intended approach is to have different progression routes similar to Singapore focussing employment, academic and technical. NS will prepare an in-depth report on the situation for a Trust Board meeting later in the year which will look at implications and potential ways forward.</p>	NS (March '24)
16.	<p>School visits/topic presentations</p> <p>VJ proposed a continuation of the school visits that had been a feature of the previous year and noted the intention to supplement these and the work of the committees with topic presentations throughout the year. Trustees should reflect on key points coming out of committee meetings, the executive headteacher's reports and other papers to guide their thinking on aspects to focus on, so that visits/sessions can then be organised.</p> <p>VJ advised of her forthcoming visit to see history and geography.</p> <p>Trustees welcomed the intended forthcoming session on SEND which GA will organise with the SENDCos.</p> <p>VJ indicated that a session on the expected Ofsted inspection would be helpful. GA agreed and advised that, in the interim, trustees may wish to view the recent webinar on inspections circulated by AV.</p>	All GA
17.	<p>Strategy workshop</p> <p>VJ mentioned that the suggested approach for the strategy workshop had been sent out and asked trustees for their initial thoughts on this approach and to indicate if they felt that there were any particular topics to cover other than those in the proposal.</p> <p>SKe sought clarification that the reference to quality expectations reflected Ofsted grading criteria, which they do.</p> <p>PF noted the importance of clarifying agreed purpose as central to strategy deliberations and indicated a willingness to input on this aspect in the session, which trustees welcomed.</p> <p>Trustees indicated they agreed with the intended approach and looked forward to the session on 9 October.</p> <p>It was clarified that all trustees would be in attendance along with NS and LW. Linz Charlton, chair of the Members, was also able to attend.</p>	PF
18.	<p>School dog proposal</p>	

	<p>Assistant Headteacher Hattie Curry (HC) introduced Arlo, whom she was proposing for the position of school dog HC referred to a draft school dog policy that had been circulated to trustees and confirmed that research has shown many benefits to therapy and reading dogs in school settings. School dogs have been proven to help develop students' reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and confidence, as well as increasing student empathy and nurturing skills and their understanding of responsibility. HC went through key aspects of the policy which was due to be shared with parents, as well as details of Arlo and the training he would receive.</p> <p>FD noted that not everyone would necessarily be comfortable with a dog in school and asked how this would be accommodated. HC explained that parent and student feedback would be engaged with and arrangements put in place to ensure no-one was put in a position where they would be uncomfortable.</p> <p>The dog proposal and policy were accepted by the trustees.</p>	
19.	<p>Scheme of delegation</p> <p>GA circulated the scheme of delegation for 2023 which reflects a few small changes as opposed to 2022. The trustees confirmed they accepted these changes.</p>	
20.	<p>Policies</p> <p>GA had circulated the below policies to trustees prior to the meeting for their approval. He noted that these had been reviewed by senior leaders. Trustees approved below policies, which will be updated on the websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding and child protection • SEND • complaints • whistleblowing 	
21.	<p>Website compliance</p> <p>Trustees acknowledged the circulated checklist relating to what academies must or should publish online, noting that the websites were compliant pending some minor final amendments.</p>	
22.	<p>Trustees preparedness for Ofsted</p> <p>Trustees acknowledged the papers sent to trustees containing key details from the inspection handbook.</p>	
23.	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>The risk register was circulated with the trust board meeting papers for information only and as a reminder to committee chairs of the need for regular review of relevant risks. The risks due for review this Autumn will be considered by the relevant committees and at the November trust board meeting</p>	GA
24.	<p>Management accounts</p> <p>The May, June and July management accounts were circulated for information to the trustees.</p>	

<p>25.</p>	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <p>GA thanked KM and VJ for their presence at the INSET day lunch on 4 September. He advised there was another INSET day lunch on Friday 27 October to which trustees will be invited.</p> <p>Other events of interest are the forthcoming open evenings, the HMS carol service and the QE winter concert. Dates for these are in the staff and parent bulletins and will be circulated by AV.</p> <p>VJ enquired about the situation with the neighbours. GA noted that relations with neighbours continue to be in a good order, with his next meeting with neighbours adjacent to the hockey pitch scheduled for the following day.</p> <p>SK asked if the building could now be considered finished. GA clarified that low level snagging works were still being undertaken but these were not adversely affecting day-to-day activity.</p>	<p>AV</p> <p>AV</p>
<p>26.</p>	<p>Urgent business with agreement of Chair</p> <p>No urgent business was reported.</p>	