

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

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 30 November 2023 at 6pm, online
<b>Present via Zoom</b>	Veryan Johnston (VJ, Chair), Patrick Ferguson (PF), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), Florrie Darling (FD) James Heath (JH), Kate MacLachlan (KM), Barbara Hignett (BH)
<b>Also in attendance via Zoom</b>	Neil Seaton (NS, HoS QE), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS) Anna Vellinga (AV, clerk)
<b>Apologies</b>	Sarah Kemp (SK, Vice Chair)

**PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)**

	On behalf of the Trust Board VJ noted the sad news of former headteacher Neil Morrison's recent passing. GA would be attending the funeral and has sent condolences to Neil's family.	
		<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies:</b> Apologies were received from Sarah Kemp.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of pecuniary, business or personal interests</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No changes</li> </ul>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of previous meeting Part 1: approval and matters arising</b> <p>The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record including the minor amendments that had already been indicated in the version sent out to the trust board members prior to the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 21 September 2023 – Part 1</li> </ul> <p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p>All actions have been dealt with or are on the agenda. AV is keeping a note of future actions so that these will come up when due.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Trust Board membership</b> <p>Congratulations to FD on achieving her PhD.</p> <p>At the last meeting it was established that Tony Brown was no longer a trustee and VJ confirmed that this has been formalised.</p> <p>VJ reported that GA and she have had discussions with Iain Veitch regarding a possible place on the Board. Iain's CV had been circulated prior to the meeting. VJ highlighted that he is a former head of Park View Academy in Chester-le-Street, his children went through HMS and QEHS and that he is widely experienced and keen to assist the trust. If he were to join, he would be happy to chair the QEHS Monitoring Committee and to join the HMS Monitoring Committee. Trustees unanimously supported the proposal. VJ and AV to take forward.</p> <p>VJ informed the trust board members that, with Tony Brown no longer a parent trustee, and no other parents putting themselves forward for the role following advertising of this, FD and KM have agreed to become parent trustees in addition to PF who was already in this role. The Trust therefore has three trustees formally designated as Parent Trustees.</p>	<b>VJ/AV</b>

<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Annual report and financial statements</b></p> <p>PF noted that the external auditor talked the Finance and Audit Committee through the annual report and financial statements indicating that the committee had reviewed them and were satisfied.</p> <p>To give trustees sufficient time to engage with the content, VJ asked trustees to send their questions/comments or approval via email in the beginning of the week after the trust board meeting, after which VJ and GA would sign off the annual report and financial statements formally on behalf of the trust board. The report would then be presented to the members. The trustees approved this approach.</p>	<p><b>All</b></p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Audit findings report</b></p> <p>PF reported that Chris Beaumont from Clive Owen LLP, the trust’s auditor, had taken the Finance and Audit Committee members through the report. PF noted that there were no unexpected matters or concerns to report. Two very minor recommendations were being addressed by the finance team.</p> <p>PF highlighted one actuarial LGPS adjustment on the pension fund but there were no changes other than in the reserves.</p> <p>The auditor reported very positively on the Trust’s financial processes and was keen to emphasise this was not necessarily typical of the sector, which reflects very well on the management team.</p> <p>VJ noted the Board’s gratitude towards the finance team for maintaining very high standards during the changeover of CFOs.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Appointment of auditor</b></p> <p>PF noted that although it is recognised that it is regarded as good practice to change external auditors on a regular basis, in this case the finance and audit committee believe that better governance is achieved by reappointing the external auditors for the reasons articulated in SS’s paper on the matter, circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>The trustees agree to recommending this position to the members.</p>	<p><b>VJ/GA</b></p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Management Accounts</b></p> <p>Both September and October accounts were available at the time of the meeting, however trustees only received the September accounts due to a miscommunication. AV will send the October accounts to trustees after the meeting and will make a recording of this.</p> <p>GA referred to the accounts’ commentary which explained that variances were largely a matter of phasing and the timing of invoices at this stage of the year. The most significant aspect for September is that the pupil numbers were accurate.</p> <p>PF complimented the finance team on already being able to present the September and October accounts, which has not always been achieved in the past. JH agreed, commenting that securing an audit with a clean bill of health and having management accounts ready in the context of transitioning CFOs is a great job well done.</p>	<p><b>AV</b></p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Strategy workshop – next steps</b></p>	

	<p>The overview of the strategy day that was held in October was shared with trustees ahead of the meeting with an outline of suggestions on how to take things forward. VJ invited trust board members to share their comments and thoughts on particular areas of priority in scenario planning.</p> <p>KM suggested that it may be useful to do a more targeted SWOT analysis on what a specific scenario might look like during the next strategy meeting. JH indicated that we did not necessarily need detailed financial analysis at this stage.</p> <p>PF agreed that a relatively light touch on scenarios was all that was needed at this point, in order to then decide which scenario to explore more deeply. PF noted that it should not be at the expense of losing focus elsewhere.</p> <p>FD agreed with the above ideas and added that she found it useful that GA is having with conversations with other academy trusts. She advised continuing such engagement with other partners.</p> <p>GA noted that relations with other schools and trusts continue to be in good order and confirmed that he is comfortable with taking the scenario planning to the next stage.</p> <p>AV will to look at potential dates in the diary for a follow up of the strategy meeting.</p>	<b>AV</b>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>School updates</b></p> <p><u>QEHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school update report was sent to trustees prior to the meeting.</li> </ul> <p>NS reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance figures were shared during the meeting. Although the numbers are above national equivalents for each year group (by 1.5% in year 9, 0.7% in year 10 and 2.7% in year 11) they remain below pre-pandemic levels, with persistent absence more pronounced amongst the FSM cohort. Addressing this remains an ongoing focus which will be reflected on further with trustees at the next monitoring committee meeting.</li> <li>• The year 11 mocks have run successfully.</li> <li>• There has been an update on our overall school data via the IDSR showing ‘P8’ progress, overall and for English, maths and the EBacc, and ‘VA’ progress for science and languages, statistically significantly above national.</li> <li>• Our FSM gap is narrower than last year but remains a key focus to close further.</li> <li>• We continue to focus on quality of education across subjects and have a schedule of external scrutiny involving SIP Mark Wilson and consultant Julie McGrane;</li> <li>• The NCC SEND review had gone well with positive reporting back from Mike Finley, NCC SEND lead who led the review. GA advised that a feedback session for trustees would be arranged in the coming weeks.</li> <li>• We continue to invest heavily in our staff regarding the key school development plan priorities with an emphasis on ensuring the knowledge is embedded before moving on. The big push this year has been around SEND and adaptive teaching. We also started an Aspire programme for those who want to be middle or senior leaders and have organised sessions with various heads of schools and attendance at SLT meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PF asked if the Aspire programme is an internal or external programme. NS advised that this is an internal programme; staff were asked to indicate interest in leadership and were then invited to join SLT meetings and talks by heads of schools. PF noted he had recently had the opportunity to hear a talk to business leaders from an experienced head and had found this very inspiring.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sixth form continues to perform well, with sixth form teaching to be a focus of external review in the coming weeks. There was a lot of interest at the sixth form open evening for places next year.</li> <li>• Internal alternative provision continues to develop well, with a student from another school (Prudhoe High School) now accessing the provision, and NCC keen to explore how to take this forward next year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PF asked what agreement QEHS has with Prudhoe High School for taking on their student in our Alternative Provision. GA noted that the student was taken on at a standard alternative provision rate of £75 per day.</li> <li>○ VJ asked NS to report back to the trust board with an evaluation of the alternative provision in late spring/summer of this school year.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>NS thanked those trustees who came along to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Celebration Evening.</p> <p>NS and LW acknowledged FD's suggestion regarding a consistent reporting template for their updates, for use at the next board meeting.</p> <p>GA recorded that regretfully he had made a permanent exclusion decision recently, as communicated to the board at the time, due to be reviewed by a panel of trustees shortly.</p> <p><u>HMS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school update report was sent to trustees prior to the meeting.</li> </ul> <p>LW reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The admissions information came through for September 2024 and 153 first choices came in for Year 5, which is very reassuring, in particular because Sele First school have lower numbers in Year 4 this year.</li> <li>• This half term is busier than ever but it is a positive time to be in school as well;</li> <li>• The orchestra has been busy with performing at the Christmas Light Switch On in Hexham and at Corbridge Middle School.</li> <li>• HMS started with Respect, Engage, Aspire days and the first two of those this half term brought in external visitors with workshops and enrichment opportunities that went really well. The intention is to extend this programme to the summer term.</li> <li>• There is no major update on achievements currently. Year 6 assessments are pending and will be analysed to guide actions to ensure children are well positioned ahead of the SATs in May.</li> <li>• The SIP, Mark Wilson, noted that our academic support provision is worthy of sharing, which we are really pleased about. LW noted that HMS colleague Bridget Toor had done a particularly good job leading this.</li> <li>• As with QE, HMS engages with Mark Wilson and Julie McGrane for an external perspective on various aspects of provision and has a planned schedule for the year ahead.</li> <li>• Six members of staff successfully completed NPQ courses last year with more signed up for NPQs this year. One member of staff is enrolling on a masters study. As with QE, the main focus in CPD is on quality first teaching to meet SEND need with special attention on reading.</li> <li>• LW keen to extend the the QEHS Aspire programme to HMS next year and LW will liaise with NS about this.</li> <li>• The overall HMS attendance rate is 95.5%. Mark Stephenson (MS) is working very hard on attendance systems and strategies to improve this further, particularly with key students on FSM. LW noted excellent connections MS has established with key families.</li> </ul>	<p>NS</p> <p>NS/LW</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMS is waiting for the second SEND review that Mike Finley will be conducting and LW invited trustees to let him know their feedback or any ideas of areas to explore which could be taken up in the review.</li> <li>• Julie McGrane, who is a current Ofsted Inspector, has had a meeting about safeguarding with MS. Julie’s feedback was very reassuring and complimentary about MS on the handling of safeguarding.</li> <li>• Paul Freeman-Myers (PFM) and Hexham Middle School got a ‘shout out’ at a conference in London about our Skills Builder practice which is of a really high standard. This is a reward for all the hard work that PFM has put into the Skills Builder programme with wider staff.</li> <li>• Upcoming events include the Carol Service and trustee visits in January.</li> </ul> <p>VJ asked what strategy NS and LW had in place in order to try and prevent a dip in attendance in the last week of school, as we saw last year. Both NS and LW intend to send out lots of communication about staying in school until the last day. A key message for HMS pupils and parents is not to miss out on enjoyable festive activities in the final week, but also that meaningful learning will take place at both schools throughout the final week. It was noted that it remains unpredictable with regards to illnesses and lots of germs around at that particular period of the year.</p> <p>FD enquired about the plan for the school council as it is great to see that they have been active. LW reported that the school council have a development plan themselves and LW is providing a steer to this. They have two school aims and two community aims. They have a few decisions to make concerning charities they want to support and working with the council on litter picking and working at the park. The aim is to try and make this a whole school decision. NS clarified that AH meets regularly with year group representatives as part of the QE school council, with issues feeding through to himself and the wider SLT.</p> <p>KM asked LW if, given cost of living, he has received lots of requests for assistance? LW noted that at this time of the year the school is particularly conscious about asking for contributions. LW sent messages out about getting in touch for support. The aim is that no one will miss out and for those who need it funds are in place. The voluntary contribution suggestions for trips have been lowered for this period. There has been a rise in requests for uniforms, coats and shoes and LW is working hard to try and meet the requests.</p>	
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Trust update</b></p> <p>GA advised that a placeholder of £100K in the budget, reserved as contingency in the event of pay awards for support staff being higher than originally anticipated, was now released for spending elsewhere. Following discussion with heads of school and the F&amp;A committee, the intention is to increase SEND leadership capacity to get leaders into classrooms on a more frequent and systematic basis to ensure that our good policies regarding quality first teaching, the universal offer and adaptive practice are being implemented well and consistently across both schools. GA advised of clear research evidence coming from, amongst others, the Education Endowment Foundation that speaks clearly to the fact that the quality of practice in the classroom is the most significant factor behind success for SEND students at school. Discussion followed regarding this. VJ asked GA, NS and LW to report back to trustees in due course on the impact of this approach.</p> <p>A Hexham Partnership meeting is scheduled for 6 December. GA reported that middle and high school curriculum subject leaders have come together to focus on approaches to personal development in subject curriculum planning. Subsequent sessions will focus on relational behaviour management and metacognition.</p>	<p><b>GA, NS, LW</b></p>

	<p>GA advised of a meeting with Kieran McGrane, CEO of Pele Trust, that had recently taken place. This provided an opportunity to share notes about respective trust practices and developments. HLT leaders have been invited to take part in forthcoming peer reviews at Pele Trust schools.</p> <p>LW has been approached by Jane Kennedy, NCC's lead on disadvantaged pupils, to see if Whytrig Middle School of the Seaton Valley Federation would be able to engage with HMS to learn from our support of disadvantaged pupils, gleaned from her review in the summer. This will take place in January.</p> <p>David Street, NCC Director of Education, SEND &amp; Skills has approached GA to chair a working group around alternative provision in the county. GA to meet DS for further details.</p> <p>Trustees approved a slight change to school day timings to accommodate a more effective running of break time.</p>	
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Estate strategy</b></p> <p>The estate strategy document was shared with trustees prior to the meeting. GA noted recent DfE guidance relating to this area. A review of the strategy is intended for June, with the finance and audit committee due to reflect on the findings thereafter, which will be shared with the full board via the minutes.</p>	
<p><b>13.</b></p>	<p><b>Committee minutes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMS Monitoring Committee meeting – 25 September 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ KM highlighted the main points from the meeting including considerations of the executive headteacher's report, reflections on the summer outcomes, attendance, particularly of those on FSM and with SEND, and quality of education findings. The committee also reviewed relevant policies.</li> <li>○ VJ noted typo of 'KD' in item 5, to be rectified before minute approval at the next meeting.</li> <li>○ At the next meeting, FD will share what she learnt from a recent conference about attendance.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• QE Monitoring Committee meeting – 2 October 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ VJ reported consideration of the executive headteacher's report and a good discussion on issues being faced by disadvantaged learners and actions the school was taking to support.</li> <li>○ NS talked about the high school's priorities, provision for disadvantaged students, approaches to reading and developments in careers guidance.</li> <li>○ VJ noted senior leaders' presentations on the summer outcomes and the subsequent discussion around successes and areas for improvement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Finance &amp; Audit Committee meeting – 17 October 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PF provided an overview of the minutes, noting that much of what had been covered had been a focus for the early part of this meeting.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>AV</b></p> <p><b>FD</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VJ advised that HR &amp; Performance Committee meeting had only recently taken place and that minutes would follow. The main focus had been on the pay policy and appraisal policy, teaching staff appraisal and the performance of the Executive Headteacher, with input from the school improvement partner.</li> <li>• The next Safeguarding meeting will be in January. GA noted that the next review of the Single Central Record will take place this half-term, involving FD as safeguarding trustee. FD and GA attended a conference on MAT safeguarding practice and will reflect on findings at the next safeguarding meeting.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AV</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FD/GA</b></p>
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations from senior leaders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections on SEND presentation</li> </ul> <p>VJ noted that this was a very detailed presentation, with clear emphasis being given to the fact that SEND is everyone’s responsibility and not just of the SENDCo or SEND team.</p> <p>BH complimented staff for keeping continuity up in light of LSA recruitment challenges.</p> <p>Other trustees also signalled appreciation of the session. FD noted the important link between SEND, vulnerability and safeguarding.</p> <p>GA thanked those trustees able to attend and noted that AV would send out handouts to those unable to.</p> <p>As advised earlier in the meeting, GA reiterated that NCC’s SEND lead, Mike Finley, had reported positively on SEND provision at each school following recent reviews. MF was willing to feedback directly to trustees so GA would arrange this, with the date and time to be circulated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next presentation: governance and inspection</li> </ul> <p>GA advised of the intention to run a session for trustees covering the following: content of the initial conversation between heads and the lead inspector, involvement of trustees during inspection and expectations of trustees. GA will organise a date for this in the new year.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GA</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GA/AV</b></p>
<p><b>15.</b></p>	<p><b>Trustee visits</b></p> <p>VJ invited trustees to identify any potential gaps in topics to focus on during the trustee visit scheduled for 11 January at HMS, apart from those already intended, which are SEND, reading and lesson visits.</p> <p>FD suggested looking for evidence of adaptive teaching in practice. FD advised if her intention to undertake a specific safeguarding visit which will involve pupil panels and discussions with teachers about their knowledge of and confidence in key safeguarding processes.</p> <p>GA confirmed that he would liaise with VJ, AV and the heads of school on a schedule for the coming term.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GA/VJ/AV</b></p>
<p><b>16.</b></p>	<p><b>Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)</b></p>	

	Trustees reflected on the previously circulated documents regarding the above, including the DfE guidance and the Trust's obligations in light of this. Trustees reflected on the content of the PSED statements published on the websites and the ongoing need to have due regard to equalities and the protected characteristics when significant decisions are being made and policies developed. Trustees also considered the published equality objectives noting the review of these at the end of the first year.	
<b>17.</b>	<b>Scheme of delegation</b>  There have been a few minor changes in the scheme of delegation, which were sent out to trustees prior to the meeting. The trustees acknowledged receipt of the updated document and signalled approval of the amendments. AV to ensure the updated scheme is published on the websites.	<b>AV</b>
<b>18.</b>	<b>Policies</b>  GA thanked the committees who have been reviewing policies and making sure that they remain up-to-date.  GA noted that the member of support staff responsible for communication administration is going through a process of renewing links in policy documents and asked trustees to advise accordingly if they notice out-of-date links.	
<b>19.</b>	<b>Risk register</b>  The risk register was shared with the trustees prior to the meeting. VJ noted that committees review the risks on the register as a standing item at each meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GA noted that risk 14, governance and strategy, has been amended in November 2023 and can be revised further following the appointment of Iain Veitch. Trustees agreed with this and the likelihood will move to 1 from the start of January.</li> <li>GA noted that risk 15 may need re-visiting in light of developments in strategic thinking in the Spring.</li> </ul>	<b>GA/AV</b>
<b>20.</b>	<b>Stakeholder engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GA thanked VJ and KM for attending the Duke of Edinburgh Award celebration evening and KM for representing the trust at the Hexham Christmas Lights Switch on.</li> <li>GA thanked FD for attending a safeguarding webinar alongside GA.</li> <li>GA thanked VJ for attending the regional schools commissioner's round table event which was updating on DfE policy and intentions.</li> <li>GA reported a meeting with the Hydro neighbourhood group.</li> <li>GA also met with immediate neighbours regarding hockey lettings, lighting and concerns regarding drainage.</li> <li>GA shared that the Hexham Climate Action group had been in touch with community stakeholders including the schools regarding a net zero strategy for Hexham. GA responded to this on behalf of the trust signalling a willingness to engage.</li> </ul>	
<b>21.</b>	<b>AOB / Urgent business with agreement of Chair</b>  VJ noted we have been offered a portrait of His Majesty King Charles III through a national scheme. The trust board welcomed the offer and arrangements will be made.	<b>AV</b>