

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

Date of meeting	Thursday 20 March 2025 at 6pm
Present	Kate MacLachlan (KM, Chair), Veryan Johnston (VJ, Vice Chair), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), James Heath (JH), Florrie Darling (FD), Iain Veitch (IV)
Also in attendance	Neil Seaton (NS, HoS QE), Liam Watters (HoS HMS), Anna Vellinga (AV, Clerk)
Apologies	Carey Stuart (CS), Victoria Pugh (VP)

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

		Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from VP and CS.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Declaration of pecuniary, business or personal interest</b></p> <p>There were no changes to the declarations.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Minutes of previous meeting Part I: approval and matters arising</b></p> <p>The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 6 February 2025 – Part 1</li> </ul> <p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p>GA noted the actions addressed and those featuring on the agenda. A record of future actions is held.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Inspection Reform</b></p> <p>GA delivered a presentation on Ofsted’s proposed changes to inspections, which are currently out to consultation. He advised that he will send a response to the consultation on behalf of the Trust. Senior leaders will start to use the toolkits to guide self-evaluation, monitoring and reporting, and improvement planning, given that they are unlikely to change significantly.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Trust Board Membership</b></p> <p>KM reported that the agreed approach to increase capacity on the HR&amp;PM committee had not yet resulted in a successful appointment. Trustees agreed to continue efforts as intended for the time being.</p> <p>JH accepted the role of cyber security link trustee, for which trustees were grateful.</p>	
6.	<p><b>School updates</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed they took note of the content of the update documents that had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p><u>HMS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IV asked LW if predictions for the SATs results were available. LW confirmed that they were, although are subject to updating as the term progresses. Latest predictions will be shared with trustees ahead of the forthcoming monitoring committee meeting.</li> </ul>	<b>LW</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VJ commended the extensive and varied offer of experiences and trips at HMS. She asked how the school helps pupils who may not be able to access these events for financial reasons. LW outlined the ways that the school tries to support pupils through a fair balance of opportunities, including an emphasis on in-school experiences available to all. Participation is monitored. Our pupil support fund policy provides details of the financial support available. FD asked if this is proactively shared and LW confirmed that it was. In addition, support is available for families who are not eligible for free school meals but still may be hard pressed. With a little support, this has given a lot of pupils the opportunity to go to residential where they otherwise might have struggled. Funds come from various sources including the PTA but a recent increase in applications indicates an ongoing need to resource.</li> <li>• IV noted that he was aware of schools taking the perspective of the most disadvantaged pupils as their starting point when planning trips and activities, which would fit in with the shift in emphasis encouraged by Ofsted in their proposed changes to inspection.</li> <li>• LW reported that the peer review initiative within the Hexham Partnership continues to progress well, with visits recently held at HMS and QE.</li> <li>• IV asked LW about 11 Year 8 PP pupils who have an attendance rate of less than 90%. LW advised that staff have been working closely with the families of the pupils concerned and progress has been made. This will be explored further at the next meeting of the HMS Monitoring Committee where attendance will be on the agenda.</li> </ul> <p><u>QEHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VJ commended the various examples of House events that had taken place recently. NS advised that these had been well-received. A reallocation of students into houses linked to form classes had led to a greater sense of ‘buy-in’. Students of Birch House have been rewarded with a non-uniform day for having the most house points this term.</li> <li>• IV commented on year 10 and year 11 PP and FSM students’ attendance, which remained notably lower than non-PP and -FSM, although year 9 data is looking stronger. Attendance will be a focus at the next monitoring committee meeting.</li> <li>• FD asked NS about the internal inclusion panel that has been introduced. NS explained that this is a panel convened within the school comprising staff such as heads of year and achievement leads along with external support agencies such as HINT. The purpose is to review individual cases to determine support strategies and actions required to enable struggling students to succeed. Early meetings have proved positive with the approach intended to be used during middle-to-high school transition to ensure suitable plans in place for students from the start of their time at QE.</li> <li>• In response to a question from FD about emotion coaching training, NS confirmed that it would be extended to more staff.</li> <li>• VJ mentioned that as careers education link trustee she had been impressed by an analysis tool used by Andy Hedley to identify students at greater risk of becoming ‘NEET’ (not in education, employment or training), which was then used to guide targeted support.</li> <li>• KM noted the positive outcome reported by students on the school council relating to canteen provision.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><b>Trust updates</b></p> <p>Trustees noted the content in the update document that had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidential aspects of the trust updates were discussed and minuted in part II of this meeting.</li> <li>• IV asked what the focus of the internal ‘AI group in education’ is. GA responded that a group of enthusiasts is exploring how we might use AI to benefit teaching and learning,</li> </ul>	

	<p>reduce workload and gain efficiencies. IV suggested liaising with others in the field, including abroad where schools may be further ahead in their use of AI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KM noted the very positive verbal feedback from Steve Wilson, our new school improvement partner, following his recent visit to both QE and HMS. GA added that he will share the written report with trustees when this becomes available.</li> <li>• IV noted the very strong IDSR data and asked NS to pass on congratulations to staff.</li> <li>• IV referenced the NCC School-Organisation-Plan-2021-2024 and noted some apparent anomalies in the pupil numbers over time, which may be to do with out-of-catchment movement into Hexham schools in later years.</li> </ul>	
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Committee minutes</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed they took note of the minutes of the following committees that were circulated with the meeting papers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Finance and Audit committee –14 February 2025</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There were no questions arising from these minutes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>HR&amp;PM Committee –7 March 2025</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ VJ reported that a new sickness absence management policy was now being implemented. Staff absence shows a reassuring gradual decline.</li> <li>○ An overall positive audit report is being finalised.</li> <li>○ There were no questions arising from these minutes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>Management accounts</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed they took note of the December management accounts that had been distributed with the meeting papers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GA highlighted that the budget amount allocated to alternative provision had been overspent to date with an overall sizeable overspend projected at the end of the year. Much of this is already committed to but any non-committed expenditure will be reined in, with a tighter system of internal decision-making regarding alternative provision established.</li> <li>• KM added that the new overall budgeting system will ensure better control going forward.</li> </ul>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees agreed to the updated Trustee Payments and Allowances Policy.</li> <li>• GA mentioned that travel expenses can be reimbursed.</li> </ul>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Risk register</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees reviewed the register and agreed no risks were due for review.</li> </ul>	
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Stakeholder engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A further meeting with the Hydro Neighbourhood Group has been scheduled.</li> <li>• KM and GA will be hosting a visit from two officers from the DfE's North East Regions Group on 4<sup>th</sup> April.</li> <li>• GA noted that there has been no further movement on the Gormley project.</li> </ul>	
<b>13.</b>	<p><b>Urgent business with agreement of Chair</b></p>	

	GA referenced the most recent letter from the ESFA to accounting officers that had been sent after the agenda had been shared. Trustees noted the contents which confirmed the imminent transfer of responsibilities of the ESFA to the DfE.	
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**Close and confirm date of next meeting:** The meeting closed at 7.45pm. The date of the next meeting is 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Chair**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**