

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

Date of Meeting	Thursday 1 February 2024 at 6pm, Hydro Conference Room 1
Present	Veryan Johnston (VJ, Chair), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), Florrie Darling (FD) James Heath (JH), Kate MacLachlan (KM), Barbara Hignett (BH), Iain Veitch (IV)
Also in attendance	Neil Seaton (NS HoS QE), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS) Anna Vellinga (AV, clerk), Phil Crompton (Optimus Education)
Apologies	Sarah Kemp (SK, Vice Chair), Patrick Ferguson (PF)

PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

	Trustees reflected on the one-year anniversary of the Holly's death and the recent passing of Year 13 student Martha and former student Sam. The trust board expressed that their thoughts are with the families.	
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1.	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Apologies were received from SK and PF. VJ welcomed Phil Crompton who was attending as a representative of Optimus Education as part of the commissioned external review of governance.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of pecuniary, business or personal interests</p> <p>No changes.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting Part 1: approval and matters arising</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 – 30 November 2023 – Part 1 <p>Matters arising</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> <p>Minute 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VJ and GA reported that former trustee Tony Brown has been in touch and thanks and farewells were exchanged. <p>Minute 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA noted that the annual report and accounts have been signed off formally. <p>Minute 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members approved the Trust Board's recommendation. <p>Minute 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer term actions such as the review of alternative provision in the summer term are diarised and will come back when due. <p>Minute 11:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA will report back on the impact of the increasing leadership capacity in the SEND area in the summer term. <p>Minute 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of the estate 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. AV will log this on the actions list. <p>Minute 13:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FD and GA attended a conference on attendance. Findings and actions have been minuted in the safeguarding committee meeting of 8 January 2024. 	
4.	<p>School updates</p> <p>Trustees reflected on the previously circulated QEHS and HMS school updates.</p> <p><u>HMS</u></p> <p><u>General</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees visited school in January and spent time visiting lessons and speaking to leaders. This was a positive experience. Further trustee visits have been scheduled. Current attendance is 94.11%. Seaton Valley Federation are due to visit HMS with a focus on KS2 provision. The next cohort of NPQ courses is starting now with several teachers being supported to access a range of courses. World Religion Day themed workshops have taken place to continue our focus on meaningful opportunities to promote diversity. <p><u>Curriculum</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued SIP engagement - visits in languages, PSHE/PD and English have taken place with positive feedback in each as well as clear next steps. Further SIP visits with Mark Wilson booked for March, May and June – the focus of each will be confirmed but will focus on working with leaders in subjects not yet reviewed. Oracy Lead appointed in school with engagement in the North of Tyne Project led by Voice 21 – further training is ongoing. Curriculum/Subject Leader training in careers education – curriculum mapping taking place now. <p><u>Personal development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HMS Great Experiences mapping document has been updated. Next step is to link this to the ‘Behaviour Curriculum’ with a clear focus on the skills and values being developed. HMS Pupil Council have met to establish their fundraising plans for the two selected charities. Each child in the school has had first aid training this week (supported by the PTA) – a vital part of the PD curriculum. Further first aid training will be scheduled, focusing on mental first aid. The trust board thanked the PTA for their contribution to make this happen. Aspire Week (National Careers Week) after half term – employer engagement booked for each year group. <p><u>Achievement</u></p>	

- The mid-year data update will be delivered to the next monitoring committee. Data deadline is this week with moderation across all subjects planned.
- Year 6 'mock SATS' week is scheduled before half term with data updates to follow at the next monitoring committee.
- Struggling reader review meeting took place this week with strong impact being seen across the various categories – children are moving off the 'red' list as a result of phonics and fluency support.
- Academic Support continues across all year groups with a focus on rapid support to address gaps in learning which is impactful.

Pastoral/SEND

- The follow-up NCC SEND review has taken place. A very positive experience with the team highlighting the 'positive relationships between staff and pupils.' Clear areas for further improvement have been identified. These were in line with those identified by HMS leaders.
- Ongoing training being delivered for staff in Emotion Coaching, trauma-informed practices and de-escalation strategies.
- A new SENDCo has been appointed – Harry Morgan. He will work under the strategic direction of Mark Stephenson who has the overall inclusion lead.

Other

- The Hexham Partnership have established a Head's Supervision Group with support from safeguarding leaders at NCC.
- A Hexham Partnership Careers Fair being planned for July. LW noted that any links or contacts would be valued.
- A whole school music project is in the final stages of planning for a March launch. The focus on West African Rhythm across the school. This event will be PTA funded.
- Residential season starting with the skiing trip next week and Year 5 adventure week just after half term.

Trustees Q and A

- FD asked if any themes were coming out the SIP visits or if it is subject specific. LW responded that the main theme was continuing the focus on skilled adaptive practice for SEND students, where leaders are seeking more consistency.
- FD asked if families are accessing the fund for support with residentials, when they are entitled. LW noted that more families are using this as result of a more systematic approach with adjusted pricing so that it is more affordable for a wider group.
- KM asked what trustees can contribute to Aspire week. LW noted that Paul Freeman - Myers is steering this and more information about this will be sent to trustees imminently.

QEHS

General

- School musical 'Grease' took place and was sold out for two of the three nights.
- The school paid tribute to Holly's memory with wearing purple day and an event was held in Hexham Abbey.
- Queens Hall dance troupe performed a flash mob dance event in the LRC.
- Y11 and Y13 parents' evenings moved back to being face to face.
- Winter Concert was held in the Winter Gardens.
- Guy Opperman MP talked to sixth form History & Politics students about life as an MP.

Curriculum/Teaching & Learning

- There has been a visit from Julie McGrane to look at sixth form, which was generally positive with some achievable areas for development.
- Senior Leaders started with a series of lesson drop ins to evaluate SEND provision in the high school.
- Quality of Education taking place in PE and English.
- Y9 option choice process to begin on 7 February.
- Mark Wilson (SIP) doing review of languages on 9 February.

Personal development

- High School students from the student council attended an SLT meeting to share their points from the council meetings. The issues raised were followed up and fed back.
- Curriculum leaders participated in a training session on how to integrate the themes of personal development into their curriculum and lessons.
- Students from the LGBTQIA club ran a staff training session on equality. Police also delivered a session to staff on hate crime.
- All Y11 students will meet the careers advisor for a one-to-one careers interview.

Achievement

- Level 3 BTEC qualifications exams were held for Y13 students in January.
- Y11 tutor time intervention was revised to reflect mock data. All Y11 students receive intervention twice a week.
- PP students in Y11 PP tutor group continue to receive online tutoring in their target subject from Tutor Doctor once a week.
- Y11 drama performance exams have taken place.
- Y11 interviews for sixth form entry are underway.

Pastoral/SEND

- A cross trust session on restorative approaches to managing behaviour was held at the start of term.
- An EHCP co-ordinator has been appointed to support Jill Wood and her team.
- SEND review from NCC was carried out with feedback from Mike Findlay (NCC SEND Lead) to trustees.
- FSM students have been given an additional allowance for break-time snacks with support given on managing their allowance (recommended by Poverty Proofing Report).

Upcoming events

- The PTA are holding a vintage prom dress sale on 4 February.
- The Y9 options process begins with parents' evening on 5 February.
- Y11 Mock Exams begin on 7 February.
- Y13 mock exams begin on 28 February.
- A Trustee visit to QEHS is scheduled for 1 March.
- Y12 students studying German will be doing a work experience in Germany in March.

Trustees Q and A

- VJ asked what points student council made in the SLT meeting. NS responded that they presented mostly operational requests e.g. shorter queues, faster service in the canteen, more bins in toilets, etc. NS will forward the minutes of the SLT meeting which has the points raised and actions taken.
- FD asked if NS could give an example of how pupils' voice has made a change. NS noted that previously students has asked for a longer break to enable all to get through the canteen in a timely manner which has been implemented since.
- FD asked for NS to elaborate on the LGBTQIA club staff training session on equality. NS reported there were about 12 students running this and their message was really

NS/AV

	<p>powerful. They spoke about identity aspects, different flags and also about what they are looking for from staff. The presentation turned into a dialogue with staff conveying clearly they are supportive of the group. Hattie Curry formally meets with the group each half term to tune into their experience and address any concerns. Both staff and the LGBTQIA club appreciated the positive engagement. LW noted that Ally-zone is the equivalent club at HMS. They had the courage to step up and present to everyone in assembly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BH asked if SLT are looking for particular issues when they do the SEND drop in and if this is done per department. NS noted that it is driven in a way that SLT see as many staff as possible, looking at implementation of specific strategies for individual students as well as the more general quality first teaching strategies that meet SEND needs. If staff are struggling, support is provided. • IV asked if the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils in the Y11 mock exams data has been followed up in the Quality of Education reviews. NS confirmed that a focus on disadvantaged learners is typically part of the quality of education review process and features explicitly as part of department data reviews with senior leaders. • IV asked about the impact of online tutoring. NS reported that engagement with the current provider (Tutor Doctor) by Year 11 PP students is notably better than with previous approaches. Individuals are making progress but it remains to be seen the extent to which this closes the gap on non-disadvantaged peers, which will be reflected on further with trustees in the monitoring committee and reviewed fully following the summer outcomes. <p>GA noted that the updated inspection data summary reports will be sent to trustees and considered by the monitoring committees.</p> <p>VJ thanked NS and LW for producing the overview on attendance. Both schools' attendance is above the national averages although not yet at pre-pandemic levels so lots of work still to do to increase attendance further. In answer to VJ's question about the background of the Y10 attendance NS reported that he is continuously working closely together with the head of year to establish why attendance is lower and how to increase this.</p>	GA
5.	<p>Trust updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA noted the recent letter from QE members of the NEU and NASUWT unions regarding the use of data targets in appraisal and advised that the HR&PM Committee would reflect on this in their forthcoming meeting. GA also noted a request from the NASUWT regionally to contribute to the Northumberland facility time fund. VJ and GA were due to meet with representatives to better understand this, with a view to reflecting further at the HR&PM Committee and then reporting back to the Board in the March meeting. • VJ and GA are continuing to meet with Hexham Partnership counterparts, with the most recent meeting being with St Joseph's Middle which was very positive and they remain committed to working closely with HLT. A meeting with Hexham First School has been organised for 16 February and a meeting with Sele First School is also being arranged. • HMS has provided support recently for middle schools in the Cheviot Trust and Seaton Valley Federation. • Engagement with Pele Trust remains positive. GA took part in a peer review of Duchess's High School in Alnwick and NS will support a similar peer review at Ponteland High School focusing on sixth form. • GA advised of dialogue with NCC regarding the development of alternative provision in the west of the county. A facility at Haydon Bridge might prove suitable. GA intends to write formally to NCC to advise that this be taken off the market to create space for exploratory dialogue amongst NCC, HLT, Haydon Bridge High School and others. 	

	<p>Trustees agreed to continue ‘without prejudice’ exploration but cautioned against any over-commitment at this stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LW is the chair of The Hexham Partnership, which is continuing to flourish with ongoing curriculum development work in certain subject areas and a programme of middle and high school partnership working continues. • GA reported that the schools’ accessibility plans are being reviewed and updated, with final documents to be shared with trustees for comments and publication on the websites. • GA updated on recent DfE advice to schools relating to gender questioning that is currently out for consultation. GA outlined the schools’ current approach which is to be cautious, to look at any cases on an individual basis, to work closely with parents as appropriate and to be guided by KCSIE and equalities legislation. This is predominantly in line with the guidance but GA noted current legal concerns regarding its blanket approach which may not always be appropriate. • GA advised of an intention to incorporate some professional displays in the schools, e.g. in reception and certain communal spaces. Cost proposals are expected and proposals will be shared with trustees in due course. 	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Presentations</p> <p>a. Update on pupil premium strategy</p> <p>NS and LW presented on the PP strategy statements for QEHS and HMS that were circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p><u>QEHS PP strategy key points:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intent: equity and excellent for all, success in school, aspirational for students. • Ambition: Raise the attainment of Pupil Premium (PP) students and narrow the attainment gap between PP students and their non-disadvantaged peers. • Impact: Improve attainment among PP students across the curriculum at the end of KS4, with a focus on the EBacc subjects; improve the ability of all students to know more, remember more and do more across all subjects; to achieve and sustain improved attendance for all students, particularly our PP students; to improve and sustain the level of attendance at academic support sessions by PP students; to increase levels of student participation in extra-curricular activities; To ensure that all PP students behave positively, engage well in lessons and learning is not disrupted. • Overall: PP progress improved and the gap slightly narrowed but it is still our ambition to improve PP progress; our model of academic intervention has changed and the structural changes mean we target PP students and build this into the curriculum; this is more sustainable. We will need to assess the impact on progress/attainment in the Y10 data; attendance remains a concern. We know this is a national problem We constantly review and adapt our interventions and approach based on impact. <p>A full discussion took place including the following questions from trustees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FD noted that it was interesting to look at PP data through a wellbeing lens and asked if the PP strategy has an impact on wellbeing; how much do PP students want to be in school and learn. NS took FD’s point on board and advised that future sessions with student panels could focus further on this. • IV noted that progress is the main focus and therefore the impact of actions on this are key. He noted that the disadvantaged group was a relatively small proportion which presented its own challenges around a sense of belonging, which the school was working hard to address. IV also noted the skewing effect of key individuals on group percentages where the cohort size is much smaller than the whole cohort. 	

- KM found it really useful to see data and appreciated that lots more is going on. She noted the importance of re-visiting progress with the strategy in the monitoring committees and wider board.
- BH asked if mock exams outcomes would be reviewed with trustees at the next monitoring committees. NS confirmed that they would.

HMS PP strategy key points:

LW noted that the PP strategy was put together based on the EEF guide to the Pupil Premium.

- Golden Thread: High ambition for learners who face disadvantage runs through all of our decision-making; all staff understand that learners who face disadvantage are our key priority.
- Ambition: equity and excellence for all; great experiences; aspirational for our pupils.
- HMS Curriculum Drivers: Great Ambition; Great Experiences, Great Learning.
- Challenges: reading development; mathematical understanding; vocabulary; social, emotional and mental health needs; emotional regulation; attendance; parental engagement.
- Impact: Improved reading comprehension and fluency; improved mathematics outcomes; improved literacy skills; improved relationships and sense of belonging.
- Further aim: Improve and sustain attendance, and reduce PA; improve engagement in the wider curriculum; Increase levels of parental engagement
- New approach based on SIP feedback: We have mapped the universal experiences (catch all opportunities) against the character values being developed and the Skills Builder priorities.
- Next steps: Year 6 outcomes – prioritising as strong outcomes as possible for this cohort (who have very different needs to last year’s group); transfer – academic – developing further processes to ensure robust academic transfer from first school particularly with regards to progress in lower KS2; attendance – further enhancing the processes around impact on attendance and reducing PA – ensuring a forensic approach and exploring methods to build strong relationships with the hardest to reach families; continued targeting of extra-curricular engagement with form tutors.

A full discussion took place including the following questions from trustees:

- BH noted the pleasing outcomes for PP pupils in Y6 and asked if the progress is seen into year 7? LW answered that it was, citing in-year progress data and lower numbers in intervention.
- VJ noted that she saw examples of this in the recent trustee visit which was really helpful and asked LW to keep trustees updated.

b. Reflections on presentation on governance and inspection.

Trustees attended a presentation on governance and inspection in January. KM noted it was reassuring and trustees found it helpful.

c. Future topics

Trustees established following future topics for presentations:

- Curriculum options – the impact of reforms
- Personal development (next meeting)
- Health and safety
- Estates
- Sixth form

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Provision • Careers – future guidance. 	
7.	<p>Trustee review and recruitment</p> <p>VJ welcomed IV to the Trust Board and expressed her gratitude that IV has taken on the role of Chair of the QEHS Monitoring Committee as well as member of the HMS Monitoring Committee. IV's school back ground and experience is much welcomed in these committees.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that further recruitment will be coming up with SK and BH's terms due to come to an end this summer. It was identified that a trustee with SEND experience would be particularly welcomed. BH indicated her intention to hand over the SEND Trustee role now which KM offered to undertake, at least for the time being. GA will liaise with KM regarding next steps.</p>	GA
8.	<p>Admission arrangements for September 2025</p> <p>GA circulated a briefing note on admissions arrangements for September 2025 prior to the board meeting. Admission authorities must determine their arrangements annually, by 28 February of the school year before the arrangements are to apply. These arrangements must be sent to the Local Authority by 15 March and published on our websites from that date for the entire school year in which offers are made.</p> <p>Trustees determined the Admissions Arrangements for Years 5, 9 and 12 for September 2025 to be as per the existing policy. GA/AV to send and publish the arrangements accordingly.</p>	GA/AV
9.	<p>Committee reports</p> <p>a. HR&PM Committee – 24 November 2023 – confidential VJ advised of the main points as reflected in the circulated minutes.</p> <p>b. Safeguarding Group – 8 January 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees noted the previously circulated minutes. • GA and FD reflected on the Ofsted Safeguarding webinar they attended. Follow up and actions have been logged in the minutes of the Safeguarding Group meeting. • FD invited trustees to attend a safeguarding trustee visit scheduled for Friday 9 February. <p>c. HMS Monitoring Committee – 15 January 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KM referred to the previously circulated minutes and reported there had been lots of discussion on attendance and thanked Mark Stephenson for the work that is being done to improve attendance further, particularly for disadvantaged poorer attenders. • There is lots of extra-curricular which is welcomed, with good levels of participation. • Focus is on priorities in the school development plan in order to ensure consistency. <p>d. QE Monitoring Committee – 22 January 2024 IV referred to the previously circulated minutes and reported that a lot of work is in train to address school priorities. IV noted the importance of presenting the impact of actions to create a narrative.</p> <p>e. F&AC Committee – 17 November 2023</p>	

	<p>JH noted that this committee meeting had focused mostly on the annual report and accounts which have now been signed off. The next F&AC committee meeting is due mid-February.</p>	
10.	<p>Management Accounts</p> <p>JH referred to the circulated accounts for November and December accounts noting they are looking good.</p> <p>GA reported that JR is working on tendering for new internal auditors.</p>	
11.	<p>Strategy session</p> <p>A follow up strategy session is scheduled for Monday 12 February. VJ apologised to those trustees who are unable to make it and noted she will keep them updated. The format of the session will be similar to the previous strategy meeting.</p>	
12.	<p>Risk register</p> <p>A review was due for Item 12: operational continuity – natural/other disaster occurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees agreed the likelihood with mitigations should be 1 (low) with potential impact remaining at 4. <p>A review was due for item 13: operational continuity – further school closures e.g. due to a pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees agreed to lower the likelihood with mitigations in place to 1. The revised impact remains at 3. <p>VJ noted that staff absence insurance was no longer in place but the staff well-being service had been retained. GA/VJ to amend the risk register and associated assurances accordingly.</p>	GA/VJ
13.	<p>Trustee visits</p> <p>VJ noted a trustee visit to QEHS has been scheduled for Friday 1 March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A trustee visit report template was circulated prior to the meeting; visiting trustees are asked to complete the visit report after a visit to the school in order to record their findings, to be shared with AV for filing. VJ invited trustees to advise of preferred areas of focus, which will be helpful to NS to create a programme for the day. Focus areas suggested included EBacc, SEND, teacher panels, sixth form, progress with school priorities, adaptive teaching, professional services. NS and trustees to liaise via email to finalise a programme. 	NS/all
14.	<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>Thank you to trustees for visiting the Winter Concert, the musical production of ‘Grease’, the HMS Carol Service and the Celebration Evening.</p> <p>GA attended former headteacher Neil Morrison’s funeral.</p> <p>GA will be attending a Hexham net zero event on Saturday 3 February.</p> <p>Trustees are invited to attend a Festival Eucharist at Hexham Abbey on Sunday 4 February to mark the beginning of their 1350th anniversary celebrations following the abbey’s founding by St Wilfrid in 674 A.D.</p>	

	Trustees are invited to enjoy lunch with staff on the INSET day on Friday 16 February.	
15.	Urgent business with agreement of Chair There was no further business.	