

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

Date of meeting	5 December 2024
Present	Kate MacLachlan (KM, Chair), Veryan Johnston (VJ, Vice Chair), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), Iain Veitch (IV), James Heath (JH, via Zoom), Florrie Darling (FD), Carey Stuart (CS), Victoria Pugh (VP)
Also in attendance	Neil Seaton (NS, HoS QE), Jon Riley (JR, CFO), Dave Todd (DT, agenda item 1 only), Anna Vellinga (AV, Clerk)
Apologies	Liam Watters (HoS HMS)

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

		Action
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Senior Leader presentation</b></p> <p>DT provided an update on the implementation of the new MIS system, cyber-security and technology in general.</p> <p>a. Bromcom</p> <p>DT reported that the decision to go with our new MIS, Bromcom, was taken after a thorough procurement process. After testing the system in the summer term, fine-tuning took place over the holidays, after which the MIS was implemented successfully at the start of the new academic year. Staff have responded well to what has been a significant change. There were some teething issues, for example with finance and trips, and DT and JR are in the process of resolving these matters. DT then outlined the next phase of implementation with further training intended to ensure the trust is making full use of the relevant capabilities.</p> <p>b. Cyber Security</p> <p>DT reported Secure Schools carried out a Cyber Security Audit for the Trust. This was comprehensive and their guidance was useful. The audit included a gap-analysis, a culture audit and a check on IT infrastructure. Auditors conveyed that the general level of knowledge amongst staff and trustees was good and that the schools are in-line with others nationally. A number of action points have been advised. These are not statutory or regulatory but seen as good practice, with the more immediate recommendations categorised as ‘easy’ in terms of ‘do-ability’ but will have high impact. DT will take these actions forward with a view to obtaining certification.</p> <p>c. Technology in general</p> <p><u>Joint network</u></p> <p>DT noted the intention to implement a joint cross-Trust network whilst maintaining the separate identities of the schools. DT is exploring options focusing on how to maintain security and appropriate data retention.</p>	

	<p><u>AI</u></p> <p>DT reported that he has participated in training delivered by the DfE to explore ways to develop AI within schools, primarily with a view to enhancing learning, reducing workload for staff and improving resource efficiencies. His intention is to establish a working party to look at potential ways forward.</p> <p><u>Equipment replacement strategy</u></p> <p>DT noted that much of the current IT hardware was installed in 2021 and will therefore will reach the end of useful life at a similar time. As a result, DT is liaising with JR to ensure allocations in the budget to support replacement in time. DT advised that he is looking at options for a device lease scheme for students, bearing in mind potential moves by Ofqual and the exam boards to digital examinations in due course.</p> <p>KM asked if DT anticipated the lease scheme being for both schools or QE only. DT explained that lease schemes are typically over 3 years, therefore he would look at Y6-Y8 for HMS and Y9-11 for QE.</p> <p>FD asked if all parents are using Bromcom’s parent portal, MCAS. DT noted generally good take up, with support phone calls made to individuals as necessary and plans in place to promote via parents’ evenings. QE students have engaged well with the app as they were able to use their school email addresses to sign up. At HMS pupils’ engagement with the previous software was typically to access the reward store which is not currently available via Bromcom but it is on their roadmap to develop. Pupils will be able to access via their parents, but personal access will need to be considered alongside intentions regarding smartphone access generally.</p> <p>JH enquired if Secure Schools provided an overall rating with their audit report. DT advised that there was no overall rating, however general feedback was positive. DT reported that identified risks are being checked off. JH asked DT to share the full report with the F&amp;A Committee and to provide a timeline on when the recommended actions will be addressed.</p> <p>Trustees will address any further questions about the implementation of the new MIS system, cyber-security or technology in general to AV who will pass on to DT.</p>	DT
2.	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from LW.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Declaration of pecuniary, business or personal interest</b></p> <p>There were no changes to the declarations.</p>	
4.	<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 – 10 October 2024 – 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>	
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Annual report and financial statements</b></p> <p>JH noted that the external auditor had talked the Finance and Audit Committee through the annual report and financial statements. The committee had reviewed them and were satisfied.</p> <p>IV asked if the overspend was a recurring item which would diminish the reserves. JR confirmed that this was correct and consideration was being given to moving to a balanced in-year position over time utilising reserves as appropriate.</p> <p>IV enquired if there is a breakdown by subject on students’ performance. GA noted this should have been circulated to the monitoring committee which he would follow up.</p> <p>VJ noted a typo on page 1. Reference and administrative details – Trustees is missing the letter ‘t’ in her name. JR will rectify this.</p> <p>IV asked if the authority is setting the employers’ contribution for the LGPS every year. JR explained that the contributions we pay are fixed for 3 years and are based on an actuarial valuation in March 2022: the rate is currently 25.3%. The next actuarial valuation is due in March 2025. The employer contribution rates will be influenced by the size of our deficit, which has decreased in the period, so it is possible that the employer contribution rate will also reduce. IV recommended vigilance and to question the numbers as, in his experience, these may be based on an assumption that proves incorrect.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Audit Findings Report</b></p> <p>JH reported that Chris Beaumont from Clive Owen LLP, the trust’s auditor, had taken the Finance and Audit Committee members through the report. JH noted that there were no unexpected matters or concerns to report.</p>	
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Appointment of Auditor</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed that they had read the paper circulated prior to the meeting which details the suggested process to appoint new external auditors. JR will have the support of CS to short-list and interview bidders to present to the trustees to inform a recommendation to members to approve. The recommended process will be shared with members at their forthcoming meeting.</p>	AV/JR
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Management Accounts</b></p>	

	JR advised that the most recent management accounts will be circulated shortly after Trust Board meeting.	AV/JR
9.	<p><b>Trust Updates</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed that they had read the paper that was circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Trustees approved the proposal to move to a different school improvement partner (SIP) after having worked with Mark Wilson over the past 4 years. GA reported that Steve Wilson, current Headteacher of Whitley Bay High School which secured an outstanding judgement in its recent inspection, has indicated his willingness work with HLT. GA will firm up Steve Wilson’s appointment and will send thanks to Mark Wilson for his excellent support of the Trust.</p> <p>GA let trustees know that the proposed consultation letter regarding use of smart phones has been approved by members of the Hexham partnership and will go out to parents in the new year, GA will report back to the Trust Board at a future meeting.</p>	GA  GA
10.	<p><b>Trust Board membership</b></p> <p>VJ and KM suggested that, given the current demands on existing trustees and the desire to bring in further HR expertise to the HR&amp;PM Committee, an option may be to co-opt an external professional with HR experience as an advisor. FD asked if they could still be part of a hearing panel. GA to check legalities around this with Browne Jacobson.</p>	GA
11.	<p><b>Trustees training</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed that they had read the paper on training that had been circulated prior to the meeting. JR was then asked to organise training on fraud awareness with internal auditor Wylie Bissett who offer such training as part of their overall engagement.</p> <p>CS and FD expressed their interest in risk management training. A ‘Back-to-Basics Risk Management for Academies’ course is available with The National College. GA invited trustees to have a look at the training options of The National College that were circulated by AV in advance of the meeting and to sign up to those that appealed.</p>	JR
12.	<p><b>School Updates</b></p> <p>Trustees confirmed that they had read the school updates that were circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p><u>HMS</u></p> <p>GA reported that HMS has had a challenging term with staff absence. Adjustments have been made, with some staff acting up and agency staff</p>	

	<p>deployed. Trustees noted the content in the update document, including the improvement in the attendance figures, and there were no further questions.</p> <p><u>QEHS</u></p> <p>NS reported that assemblies on healthy/unhealthy relationships, delivered by Holly Newton’s parents, had been well received by students. One of the assemblies had been filmed by the BBC to raise awareness of Holly’s parents’ wider campaign to support young people. GA noted that other schools had expressed interest in the assemblies and had been put in touch with Micaela and Lee.</p> <p>IV noted the relatively high number of students in Y11 with attendance below 90%. NS acknowledged this noting this was 6 or more days absence in the first term to date. Some of this is genuine illness but a number are due to part-time, EOTAS and alternative provision. Overall Y11 attendance is slightly down on last year’s Y11, but up for the cohort compared with when they were in Y10.</p> <p>NS noted that this is the first year with the majority of Y11 students undertaking EBacc subjects. Given a likely shift away from this being mandated by the new Government, NS may propose a slight adjustment to option for Y9. If so, he may ask the trustees for a separate online meeting in January to review any proposed changes before they go out to parents and students. GA noted the Government’s consultation on curriculum reform to which a submission was made indicating the need for reform to accountability measures to enable the curriculum flexibility that is needed for students struggling with the mainstream.</p> <p>KM asked NS to elaborate on the bursary fund mentioned in the QE Head of School update. NS explained that alumnus, Charles Race, very kindly offered a bursary fund to support disadvantaged learners to go into university. Our role is to identify students who meet the criteria and to encourage them to apply to the fund which could then help them in a number of ways.</p> <p>NS confirmed that reporting on the cycle of Quality of Education reviews will be on the agenda of the next QE monitoring committee meeting in January.</p>	
<p><b>13.</b></p>	<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> <p><b>a) Finance &amp; Audit Committee meeting – 15 November 2024</b></p> <p>JH noted that the main topic was to discuss audits. Compliments are due to the finance team for another really positive outcome. The other discussion point was around cost management with the committee clear that robust budgeting processes are in place to avoid potential future overspends.</p>	

	<p><b>b) HR&amp;PM Committee – 22 November 2024</b></p> <p>KM reported that main topics were appraisal and pay progression, recruitment, staffing challenges and absence management.</p>	
<b>14.</b>	<p><b>Trustee visits</b></p> <p>GA reported that the trustee visit to both schools had been a very positive experience. The subsequent written reports have been very helpful and actions will be taken in response, with updates shared with the respective monitoring committees. More trustee visit dates are in the diary.</p> <p>FD mentioned some adjustments to the visit report may be useful and will liaise with senior leaders on this.</p> <p>VJ reported that she and KM met recently with newly appointed curriculum leaders. They had been very positive and it had been beneficial to hear their thoughts.</p> <p>Trustees were invited to let NS and LW know their thoughts on potential areas of focus for the next visit on 20 January 2025. IV noted his interest in looking at curriculum approaches across HMS and QEHS, following some consideration of this in maths, English and history on the recent visit. NS suggested that PE and DT would be worth visiting next time to explore this further. NS and LW will draft a schedule for consideration.</p>	<b>NS/LW</b>
<b>15.</b>	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>GA informed trustees that there is a process to update policies through a central document which is kept and monitored by admin and GA. GA thanked committee chairs for the policy considerations at their meetings.</p>	
<b>16.</b>	<p><b>Risk register</b></p> <p>GA confirmed that relevant risk register items were updated in recent committee meetings. No risk items were due a review until the next Trust Board meeting when item 13. 'Risk of school closure' will be considered.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that the F&amp;A committee will reflect on the cyber security audit.</p>	<b>GA</b>
<b>17.</b>	<p><b>Stakeholder engagement</b></p> <p>GA noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with peer schools as per the trust updates.</li> <li>• Trustees will visit the schools on 20 January 2025.</li> <li>• Highways have proposed some changes to vehicle movement around school to support student safety on arrival, in consultation with senior leaders. These proposals are being finalised and are expected to be implemented in the spring.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees are invited to the AGM which includes lunch on 13 December 2024.</li> <li>Trustees are invited to the following school events: HMS's Festive Forest evening; the QE Winter Concert; the HMS Carol Service; the school production of Oliver in January; lunch with staff at the INSET day on 21 February 2025.</li> </ul>	
<b>18.</b>	<p><b>Urgent business with agreement of Chair</b></p> <p>There was no urgent business.</p>	

**Close and confirm date of next meeting:** The meeting closed at 7.45pm. The date of the next meeting is 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

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

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