

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

Date of Meeting	Thursday 24 November 2022 at 6pm, QEHS Conference Room 1
Present	Veryan Johnston (VJ, Chair), Sarah Kemp (SK, Vice Chair), David Hartland (DH), Kim Cowie (KC), Patrick Ferguson (PF), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher)
Also in attendance	Neil Seaton (NS, HoS QE), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS), Sarah Sparke (SS), Fiona Snook (FS, Clerk), Anne Lloyd (AL, AHT for T&L) – Item 13 only

PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

		Action
1.	Apologies: Barbara Hignett (BH), Tony Brown (TB)	
2.	Declaration of pecuniary, business or personal interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes 	
3.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting Part 1 The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 22 September 2022 – Part 1 <p>Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All either completed or on agenda. • SK noted that she had attended the October INSET day lunch and it was a productive visit. • One trustee is still to undertake the cyber security training– FS to follow up. • Work by LW with first schools related to spelling is ongoing. • FS to send an update of forthcoming events with timings. 	<p>FS</p> <p>FS</p>
4.	<p>Trustee recruitment / governance review GA provided an update. Trustees would recall that a letter went to all HMS and QE parents inviting interest. From this there were 15 expressions of interest and GA also identified 5 possible candidates from the Inspiring Governance website. From this list, GA and VJ met a shortlist of 8 candidates and distributed a governance audit. The focus was on recruiting two trustees: one with safeguarding experience and another with senior level business organisational experience, although given the depth of interest GA and VJ were open to the possibility of recruiting a third. GA advised that, following the meetings, he and VJ could recommend three strong candidates. Each is a parent of a child or children at HMS or QE. GA explained that there were more than three strong candidates but only three vacancies. Some could be revisited should future vacancies arise but this would also be dependent on the skills required by the Board at the time. GA noted that he and VJ felt very positive about the experience and the strength of the field.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that Veryan and Graeme should progress the appointments, with short pen portraits of each new trustee to be circulated to the Board.</p> <p>VJ explained that she will meet the trustees to provide an overview of governance and will ask the Chair of each committee to explain both the terms of reference and what is covered in the committee meetings.</p>	<p>VJ/GA</p> <p>VJ/Chairs</p>
5.	<p>Trustee safeguarding training VJ advised that the majority of trustees attended the annual safeguarding training session in person on 7 November with Carol Leckie from NCC. One trustee was unable to attend but will attend another session run by NCC in December. VJ noted that the session was excellent. Carol Leckie’s advice was that all trustees should be conversant with the types of and patterns of issues being dealt with by the designated safeguarding leads, for example</p>	

	through having sight of the leads' reports, in addition to the minutes of the safeguarding group that are already being circulated. FS to send Carol Leckie's presentation to GA.	FS
6.	<p>Reports and accounts:</p> <p>a. Annual report and accounts SS talked trustees through the key items in the annual report and accounts, which need to be submitted to the ESFA by 31 December. She highlighted that the result shown for the year looks different to that in the management accounts due to changes in fixed assets for the valuation of the elements of the new build completed in 2021/22, and a large reduction in the LGPS deficit. Note 19 shows the position for each school in line with the management accounts (adjusted for the pitch sinking fund). The cash position looks like it has reduced significantly, but £1m invested in a six-month deposit account has been reclassified to debtors.</p> <p>DH asked if the F&AC have spent time reviewing the accounts and SS confirmed that they were reviewed in depth at the November meeting, with some amendments subsequently made.</p> <p>Trustees formally approved the annual report and accounts.</p> <p>PF noted that it was a superb endorsement of the control environment in the finance team to produce such a clean audit. There were no surprises for trustees and this is a fantastic reflection on the work done to keep the trust board up to date.</p> <p>VJ noted that the accounts provide a timely reminder to review key performance indicators for next year – not just for finance but in all areas. This is not to create a huge amount of work but to focus high level considerations for the board. To add as an agenda item for next meeting.</p> <p>b. Audit findings report SS referred to the audit findings report prepared by Clive Owen and noted that this is also sent to the ESFA. SS noted that pages 9 and 10 list financial adjustments proposed by the auditors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3.9m for the LGPS valuation. This is shown as an adjustment because the actuary provided the valuation figures after the audit took place. • £1m reclassification of cash in a six-month investment account to debtors. • £26k of funding for Ukrainian students which was not announced by NCC until after the audit. Because the amount is not material, this is not required to be adjusted. <p>Page 12 highlights control recommendations, but there are none this year. Page 13 has one comment on a control recommendation from last year, which is now fully resolved. SS noted that in the appendices is a link to letters of representation that GA and VJ will sign.</p> <p>c. Internal scrutiny summary SS noted that there are three termly reviews undertaken each year by Armstrong Watson. The ESFA now require a short summary report of the three reviews. In this there are just two recommendations, all of which are now complete or in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be more timely with the management accounts. SS explained that the team is now at full capacity so this should improve and there is a plan in place to catch up. • The whistleblowing policy required some updates to dates and contact names. This has now been amended and published on the school websites. <p>d. Management accounts SS noted that a summary of this was covered in earlier points. Key points are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the outturn was better than forecast; 	GA/FS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water bills look favourable; • not as much as expected has been spent on maintenance owing to the 12-month warranty; • there was a small release of accruals that became more than 6 years old; • there was a £46k deficit for the year after transfer of £39k to the hockey pitch sinking fund; • reserves are £1.7m which is well in line with reserves policy. 	
7.	<p>Risk register</p> <p>VJ reminded the board that this is a live document to be regularly reviewed. VJ drew attention to the two risks rated red – falling income and rising costs – both of which remain current risks. Because these relate to financial pressures the F&AC have reviewed these in detail, but VJ wished for the board as a whole to be aware. VJ also noted that item 14 – governance and strategy – has not been reviewed since December 2021. Given that new trustees are soon to be appointed, it was decided to revisit this risk at a later date when in post. SK referred to the fall in Sixth Form numbers and its effect on income. GA noted that this is an aspect which is considered when reviewing this risk.</p>	
8.	<p>Recommended appointment of auditors</p> <p>SS noted that this is a reserved matter for the full Trust Board to recommend to the Members. SS advised that the F&AC discussed this in full at the November meeting and they are comfortable to remain with Clive Owen for the next year, given Clive Owen’s experience in the sector and limited availability of alternative firms. The F&AC are happy to review the work of the auditors over the next year and to revisit next year. If the decision next year is to remain again with Clive Owen, a consideration at that point would be to ask for a partner rotation. SS will send the paper on reappointment of auditors in advance of December’s AGM for review. DH noted his concern last year that Clive Owen had not been timely but noted that this year this has not been an issue.</p>	
9.	<p>Committee reports:</p> <p>a. Finance & Audit Committee – 12 October 2022</p> <p>SS noted that following this meeting, an announcement of additional funding has been made by the government to support schools in covering increased costs. When there is more information, the F&AC will consider the forecasts and would like to discuss them at a full Trust Board meeting, including consideration of the reserves policy and the board’s view on using some of the reserves. PF noted that he would like the board to be comfortable with the balance between the money spent on the current students’ education and the reserves level, potentially through using a RAG rating for levels of reserves that fall outside an agreed range.</p> <p>DH asked about rising energy costs. PF noted that this is one of many potential risks and money from reserves may need to be used for this purpose. SS explained that there may be a supplemental grant in April 2023 but this is not yet confirmed. GA noted that the Chancellor’s announcement brought some positive news for schools.</p> <p>b. QE Monitoring Committee meeting – 17 October 2022</p> <p>KC advised that having attended both the HMS and QE monitoring meetings, she felt reassured. LW and NS know the detail of what is happening in each school and why, and there are clear plans in place to improve areas identified within each school’s development plan, as outlined in the minutes. No additional comments.</p> <p>c. HMS Monitoring Committee meeting – 9 November 2022</p> <p>VJ noted that the presentation on attendance and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils was very useful, noting these as key performance indicators. KC would also like this to include updates as to pupils’/students’ interests out of school at future meetings. DH noted that pupils’ out of school activities is also an area of interest to the members, as well as demonstration of challenge in the minutes of all committees and the board. VJ</p>	

	<p>noted that the monitoring committee minutes do highlight questioning and challenge. SK advised that at the QE monitoring meeting, trustees provided extensive challenge on personal development.</p> <p>PF noted that although the minutes of monitoring committees are sent to the full board, the associated papers are not always distributed. VJ acknowledged this is a fair point but explained that this is so that the full trust board is not overwhelmed. VJ suggested that perhaps for one meeting a year, there is a focus on the committees. GA and VJ to review an annual calendar for board meetings. FS to add committee papers to the trustee SharePoint site.</p>	<p>GA/VJ FS</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Trustee visits</p> <p>SK and VJ visited both schools on the 4 November. Both expressed gratitude to GA, NS, LW and the whole team who hosted. SK commented that the atmosphere was very focused. VJ noted that the student panels were terrific although SK felt that the QE panel, comprising the school council representatives, could have had a broader range. VJ noted that the visit was very worthwhile for a general overview and for the next visit both SK and VJ would like more specific focus. To schedule another visit for the new year.</p>	<p>GA</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>School updates</p> <p><i>HMS</i></p> <p>LW advised that the school is in a positive position – there are currently 543 pupils on roll, which is the highest it has been. There continue to be regular new applications and LW and Mark Stephenson are conducting regular parent tours. There was a very successful open evening and open day in October, both of which were fantastic events to showcase the school. The school calendar remains busy – recently there have been awareness days, STEM days, pupil leadership days and more.</p> <p>The first full Quality of Education review of the academic year has taken place. This is fulfilling its purpose well. LW has delivered training this evening and there is much subject leader investment. LW noted that Anne Lloyd is doing an excellent job with this and it is appreciated by subject leaders.</p> <p>LW advised that there is now a targeted programme of pupil intervention and an academic mentor is now in post. This means that there is now a full suite of academic support and intervention in place for those needing it. There is a sharp focus on reading and the new reading strategy is being well implemented. There is support for struggling readers to catch up.</p> <p>There are now 47 extracurricular clubs, which are very well attended. The tracking of attendance is more detailed than previously, which enables targeting those who do not engage. The PTA continue to be very active. Next week there is a new PTA Event – the Festive Forest Evening. LW is chairing the Hexham Partnership Heads group again this year. There is much first-middle focus and there are focused groups looking at curriculum development. In HMS and across the partnership there are ever-increasing SEND challenges and need.</p> <p>The HMS breakfast club was launched last year but attendance is very low. LW is to review the reasons for this. DH asked if this could be offered for free and LW said that this is something consider and whether there is funding for this. Residential trips for each year group are planned for this academic year, with financial support for those who otherwise wouldn't be able to access. LW has launched Emotion Coaching support – this is a new whole school approach. There has been initial staff CPD and follow-up CPD. Next week there will be a parent/carer session.</p> <p>KC expressed concern about the relevance of taking the curriculum down to reception-age children in the partnership curriculum work. LW agreed and said this is not the intention –</p>	<p>LW</p>

	<p>the idea is to look at early learning goals and how this maps forward, rather than the specific subject curriculum.</p> <p><i>QE</i></p> <p>NS noted that Anne Lloyd will discuss curriculum in depth in the meeting. Staffing updates – NS noted that one IT teacher is leaving at Christmas and has been replaced with a fixed term post. A new Sixth Form Mentor has been appointed today and a new Behaviour Support Worker will start next week.</p> <p>NS advised that many students are less able to regulate emotions in the same way they could in the past. Hattie Curry, Assistant Headteacher for Standards & Support, is working on this – currently there are small groups of students undertaking Healthy Relationships workshops with other initiatives planned including with Hexham Youth Initiative, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and a student support organisation called The Key.</p> <p>Y11 mocks went well and a new exam officer has been appointed. The Y11 data will be ready to discuss at the next monitoring committee meeting. Y11 intervention is underway – all Y11 students receive targeted intervention for two days each week. This will be reviewed following analysis of the mock data. All Y9 students have been assessed for their reading age to help inform the KS4 curriculum. There is now an academic mentor in the high school although this member of staff is currently absent.</p> <p>NS and the academic/curriculum team are currently reviewing likely EBacc numbers and the undertaking of a full/partial EBacc. NS will report back to the board in due course.</p> <p>The Sixth Form open evening went very well and the Y9 open evening was a success. In recent weeks there was a very successful food bank appeal. There has been much sporting success: Y10 girls had cross-country success and swimmers reached the national championship final – the school are the top state school in the country for senior boys’ swimming. There has been staff netball to raise money for Children in Need. SK asked if these updates are on the website. NS noted that news is typically shared via the school’s social media accounts and the newsletter.</p> <p>NS noted that QE now has a PTA – these volunteers are excellent and have very good ideas, and are currently crowdfunding.</p> <p>SK asked if any difference had been seen this year with Y9 students not taking any options. NS advised of no undue concerns but that he and senior leaders would continue to monitor.</p> <p>GA referred to the email that went to trustees to explain that there has been one permanent exclusion at QE, for which there is a panel review next week. He advised the board of the increased number of students who are presenting challenging behaviour compared with before the pandemic. Senior leaders are working with NCC and others on how to best support these students in school, noting the need in some cases for alternative provision to mainstream schooling, which is lacking in the west of the county.</p>	<p>NS</p> <p>NS</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Trust updates</p> <p>GA advised that he, NS, LW, SS and Eleanor Simpson as Business Manager meet weekly as an executive team. There are standing items relating to staffing issues, health & safety, safeguarding, standards and quality of education, etc. This ensures good ongoing communication to ensure coherence across the trust.</p> <p>GA noted that Anne Lloyd has a cross-trust brief around teaching and learning. In March, Anne will begin one year of maternity leave. GA, NS and LW are liaising on suitable provision in Anne’s absence.</p>	

	<p>GA advised that the subject leads of the smaller cross-trust departments have raised concerns about the demands of their role. They see the benefits of cross-trust working but there are practical challenges. SLT have met with them to review the concerns and subsequently gone back with ways forward.</p> <p>GA referred to the latest situation regarding unions balloting members regarding possible strike action and action short of strike action, noting that outcomes were expected to be shared in the new year. GA advised that he was invited to, and did, contribute to a session run by the STRB on the teachers' pay review.</p> <p>New build updates – GA advised that the snagging list remains incomplete with challenges around sub-contractors and accessing the site during the school day cited as the main reasons.</p> <p>GA advised that the road safety audit was completed in October; GA has a meeting with NCC next week regarding this. FS to circulate the report.</p> <p>GA noted that the new buildings and facilities won 'Schools Project of the Year' at the 2022 Education Estates Awards in Manchester in October.</p> <p>GA also provided an update on the ongoing beneficial working with other schools and trusts, including local partnership schools.</p>	FS
13.	<p>Presentation: Developing the Quality of Education at both schools – Anne Lloyd</p> <p>Anne Lloyd (AL) introduced herself as the Assistant Headteacher for Teaching & Learning (T&L) across the Trust. She outlined the journey undertaken since her arrival in September 2021 and the plan for ongoing work. AL noted that although the schools have a shared T&L plan, there are some elements which are more relevant for HMS and some for QEHS. As part of the curriculum work, they have sought curriculum expertise from Julie McGrane, a curriculum consultant and Ofsted inspector. At each school the curriculum has been reviewed at subject level. They have also worked with Mark Wilson, the School Improvement Partner, who is also an Ofsted inspector. The first cycle of Quality of Education (QoE) reviews last year identified the starting point for the year for each subject, from which a development plan was created. Although every subject is not at the same level, much progress has been made. NS informed trustees that changes at KS3 in particular were required to ensure coherent 3-year KS3 progression, particularly in the light of the wider structural curriculum changes. Following the disjointed nature of work to develop each subject curriculum as a result of Covid disruptions leading up to September 2021, all subjects now have a well thought-out and well-mapped curriculum. AL explained that the priority last year had been the KS2 and KS3 curriculum but KS4 has also now been reviewed and improved. The KS5 deadline is the end of this week. One-to-one meetings with curriculum leaders with GA, NS, LW and AL have shown that they typically have very good curriculum understanding that is increasingly extending to their wider teams.</p> <p>AL outlined the QoE process: HMS has three reviews per year, each lasting 2-3 weeks. This was the case at QE last year but was too much in a short timespan so this now follows a rolling process of two reviews in each subject per year. This flexibility means that all classes/year groups could be covered. Each curriculum area has a week in which they can choose which lessons/classes/year groups to focus on.</p> <p>AL explained that the curriculum leaders are now taking more ownership of the Quality of Education review process, where the start of each new review begins with the actions from the previous review. AL provided an overview of where each subject is at and an outline of the support available to continue improvement, including working with curriculum specialists and other schools. Given the wider curriculum changes affecting MFL over the next two years, this is a particular area of focus for support.</p>	

	<p>AL went on to discuss the focus of teachers' professional development training this year, building on the programme implemented last year. At QE, the emphasis this year is on better supporting students with recall and retrieval, and in enabling all students to have the required reading skills to access the curriculum. Reading is a significant focus at HMS this year, with the spring term CPD programme to pay particular attention to this. The current autumn term is focused on assessment and feedback.</p> <p>VJ asked how AL knows if the developments to curriculum planning is having an impact. AL said the students may not be aware that there is a difference in their curriculum per se but indications coming through to AL are they have started to think more about the skills of being e.g. a geographer or historian. Students are able to convey more clearly why they are learning what they do.</p> <p>SK asked how senior staff were ensuring the curriculum plans were well-understood by wider staff and would have continuity despite changes in personnel. AL explained the expectations on CLs to involve others in their departments and the evidence that curriculum planning was typically done as a team under the CL's leadership. She also referred to the training that has taken place and noted that wider staff as well as TLR holders or seconds in departments were party to this. Going forward, curriculum planning is an ongoing, developmental activity based on department reflections on what is and isn't working well.</p> <p>VJ asked if there can be a follow-up to this with the full board in one year's time, over and above the consideration at the monitoring committees</p> <p>FS to distribute AL's presentation.</p>	FS
14.	<p>Admissions</p> <p>GA referred to the note that was sent out in advance of the meeting and explained that as had been mentioned at the last trust board meeting, the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator had been unable to locate the Admissions Policy on the website, although this related to a technical glitch rather than the policy itself not being available. The adjudicator requested subsequently that additional clarification be added to the policy, which did not represent any material change to the substance of the policy. The revised policy, with tracked changes, was sent out in advance of the meeting. VJ confirmed with the board that all were happy to accept the revised policy.</p>	
15.	<p>Rowing</p> <p>GA made the board aware that the QEHS Rowing Club are represented along with Hexham Rowing Club and the Canoe Club on the Tyne Green Water Sports Association (TGWA). The two representatives at the TGWA for QE Rowing were Pauline and Geoff Higgins. Now that Pauline and Geoff are no longer leading the QE club, the proposal is to replace them with Paul Gaines and Pamela Walton as the nominated directors. Trustees agreed. GA will write to all parties to this effect.</p>	GA
16.	<p>Policy review: Complaints policy and procedure</p> <p>GA referred to the paper sent out in advance of the meeting. All trustees were happy with the recommended amendments, which are now to be incorporated.</p>	FS
17.	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <p>GA provided an update on stakeholder engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School Improvement Partner has been working with staff. • GA has a meeting with the local lead flood authority, the NCC footpaths specialist, the land agent and neighbourhood representatives on the 7 December relating to the culvert and flooding. • Both schools have signed up to the 'North of Tyne' project on poverty proofing. • GA and the two Designated Safeguarding Leads at each school met with local police to gain an understanding of the picture in the community. GA noted that the police indicated they have no major concerns around young people in Hexham. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each school continues to have a number of guest speakers and providers coming in to support aspects of the personal development and subject curricula. • The weekly newsletters continue to be sent to all parents and carers. • Harry Pearson, journalist and author, visited the school this week – he will be the guest speaker at the QE Celebration Evening in December • The schools are working with the DfE and Newcastle University on student perspectives on new school buildings. • The school councils have met representatives from NCC to provide pupil voice on the new school buildings. • GA represented the Trust at the funeral of former governor, Sally Peel. 	
18.	<p>AGM / lunch GA reminded the board of the AGM at 11.30am on Friday 16 December, followed by lunch with members. All are encouraged to attend. Please let FS know if you can attend for catering numbers.</p>	
19.	<p>Urgent business with agreement of Chair None.</p>	

Close and confirm date of next meeting: The meeting closed at 8.20pm. The date of the next meeting is the AGM, which takes place at 11.30am on Thursday 16 December 2022.

_____ **Chair**

_____ **Date**