

HADRIAN LEARNING TRUST

Trust Board meeting held on 4 December 2025, 6.00pm, Conference room 1

Present: Kate MacLachlan (KM, Chair), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), Carey Stuart (CS), James Heath (JH) via Zoom

Also in attendance: Neil Seaton (NS, HoS QE), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS), Jon Riley (JR, CFO), Anna Vellinga (AV, Clerk)

Apologies: Florrie Darling (FD, Vice Chair), Veryan Johnston (VJ), Iain Veitch (IV)

PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

Agenda Item	Key points/Actions	Who
1. Apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were apologies from FD, VJ and IV. 	
2. Declarations of pecuniary, business or personal interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees' up-to-date declarations have been published in the HLT area of the schools' websites. 	
3. Minutes of previous meeting Part I: approval and matters arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 9 October 2025 – Part 1 • Matters arising: GA noted the actions addressed and those featuring on the agenda. A record of future actions is held. 	
4. Annual Report and financial statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees confirmed that they had studied the Annual Report and financial statements that were circulated prior to the meeting. • JH noted that the external auditor had talked the Finance and Audit Committee through the annual report and financial statements. The committee had reviewed these and were satisfied. CS and KM commented that the quality of the report was excellent. • GA confirmed that FD, VJ and IV have indicated that they are comfortable with approving the report. 	
5. Audit Findings Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees confirmed that they had taken note of the Audit Findings Report that was circulated prior to the meeting. • JH reported that Leanne Leftley from Clive Owen LLP, the trust's auditor, had taken the Finance and Audit Committee members through the report and noted that there were no unexpected matters or concerns to report. • Trustees expressed their appreciation to JR and the finance team for an excellent report. 	
6. Management accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees confirmed that they had taken note of the September management accounts. • JH thanked JR for the clear accounts and explanation of the variances and asked JR if there are any current areas of concern. • JR mentioned that he is considering adjusting supply costs in the budget, as these have exceeded initial projections. This adjustment is not yet reflected in the September accounts • KM asked whether JR had researched staff sickness insurance. JR responded that a report is in progress, but it is unlikely to recommend taking this out. • CS enquired whether the higher-than-budgeted 'other income' detail is a timing issue. JR confirmed that it is, citing significant costs related to upcoming trips as the reason. 	

7. Admissions policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees acknowledged that they had read the circulated paper. GA presented the proposal to conduct a consultation on the admission arrangements for both schools. He explained that the admissions policy is determined annually 18-months ahead of implementation. Consultations are required at least every seven years but, as changes are proposed in the suggested arrangements, there is a need to consult now. GA indicated that our legal advisors have made us aware that rather than having a single policy for the trust, each school should have its own distinct policy. They also highlighted a few areas where greater clarity and conciseness would be beneficial. GA noted that the proposal also involves adding St Joseph’s Middle School (SJMS) alongside Hexham Middle and Corbridge Middle in one of the oversubscription criteria, following a request from the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust. He expressed the view that it is reasonable to consider this naming of SJMS as an equivalent feeder to QE, as this is essentially the case in practice. CS enquired whether continuous education would be maintained in this scenario. GA replied that the SJMS curriculum is reasonably aligned with the other middle schools in the Hexham Partnership, so continuous education is to be expected. CS asked if there will be a priority order to the feeder schools. GA responded that the oversubscription criteria prioritise individuals’ proximity to the school rather than school attended. KM asked whether QEHS typically accepts many pupils from SJMS. NS replied that, historically, QEHS has taken on the vast majority of SJMS pupils, although numbers in recent years have been relatively low. The trustees approved the proposal to hold a consultation on admission arrangements as presented. GA to organise the consultation, which will run from Monday 8 December to Friday 30 January. 	GA
8. Internal Alternative Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees confirmed that the paper that was circulated prior to the meeting provides valuable background, outlines the current approach, and explains the rationale behind proposed changes. Aspects relating to the proposed changes were discussed confidentially and recorded under part II of this meeting. Trustees supported the proposal to appoint an inclusion manager, which Neil will take forward with ES, the Business & HR Manager, consulting with the relevant staff. 	NS
9. Trust Board Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA, KM and FD are currently in communication with BH, Chair of the Members, regarding trust board membership and will update the board further after the forthcoming Members’ meeting. 	GA
10. Trust Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees acknowledged that they have read the detail of the trust updates paper that was circulated prior to the meeting. KM noted and welcomed the update on staff wellbeing initiatives which are being positively received by staff. Staff wellbeing is an important consideration for the Trust. Other aspects of this agenda item were discussed confidentially and recorded under part II of this meeting. 	
11. School updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees confirmed they had taken note of the content of the update documents that had been circulated prior to the meeting. <p><u>HMS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LW reported that a new Assistant SENDCo had been appointed and there is a vacancy for an LSA. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LW stated that HMS is working hard secure supply cover for certain ongoing long-term absences and to minimise any impact on students. • It has been a fantastic term at HMS with some amazing trips, participation in the Christmas light switch-on and lots of positive things happening. • LW noted that overall attendance remains consistent with last year. Whilst Year 8 attendance has shown significant improvement, Year 7 is slightly lower. Attendance is a recurring item on the agenda of the HMS Monitoring Committee, and the overall narrative is reassuring. There is only a relatively small number of students with poor attendance. Ms Karn is confident that ongoing collaborative work with the new Attendance Officer, Education Welfare and Heads of Year will continue to have a positive impact on HMS attendance. • KM noted that the next monitoring committee meeting would be taking place on 28 January where trustees will be able to reflect on the attendance and behaviour data for term 1 in more detail. <p><u>QEHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS updated trustees on QE attendance. NS noted that messaging parents directly about attendance had been effective, with more students consistently remaining in bands 1 (>95%) and 2 (>90%) compared to previous periods. He explained that the main challenge is having impact with students who, for various reasons, have severe absence, i.e. <50% attendance, who have a significant adverse skewing effect on the overall data, particularly in key sub-groups such as FSM. However, increasingly strong systems, the newly appointed attendance officer, greater involvement of form tutors, greater accountability with heads of year and various incentive approaches are having better impact on the wider student population. • KM noted that the next monitoring committee meeting would be taking place on 21 January where trustees will be able to reflect on the attendance and behaviour data for term 1 in more detail. 	
<p>12. Committee Minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance and Audit Committee – 10 October 2025 • HMS Monitoring Committee – 16 October 2025 • Finance and Audit Committee 14 November 2025 • HR & PM Committee –21 November 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees confirmed they took note of the minutes of the following committees that were circulated with the meeting papers: • Finance and Audit Committee – 10 October 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There were no questions arising from these minutes. • HMS Monitoring Committee – 16 October 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There were no questions arising from these minutes. • Finance and Audit Committee – 14 November 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There were no questions arising from these minutes. • HR & PM Committee – 21 November 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There were no questions arising from these minutes. 	
<p>13. Trustee visit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees confirmed that they had taken note of the trustee visit report that was shared prior to the meeting. • KM asked heads of school if the approach adopted (where trustees had spent the day speaking to a range of students about their experiences in relation to belonging, attendance, behaviour, personal development and careers) 	

	<p>and the feedback given had been useful. LW said that they were and he would be going through the findings with his senior leadership team in a coming meeting. NS reported positive feedback from students about the process itself which had reinforced the importance of student voice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KM noted that the overarching sense throughout the day was very positive. GA commented that this reflected findings from panels with school leaders and inspectors' experience in 2024, which was all pleasing, particularly in the context of more muted positivity amongst older students in the aftermath of the pandemic. It was also encouraging to see specific initiatives such as the heightened work around attendance landing well. School leaders would continue to engage with student voice, through regular panels and the respective student councils. • KM advised that the next trustee visit day was scheduled for 12 March, with the approach and areas of focus to be discussed at the forthcoming monitoring meetings. 	GA
14. Risk register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA confirmed that relevant risk register items were updated in recent committee meetings. <p><u>Risk item 10. Breach of legislative requirements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee considered and agreed to maintain the likelihood with mitigations at 1. and impact at 3. <p><u>Risk item 12. Operational continuity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee considered and agreed to maintain the likelihood with mitigations at 1. and impact at 4. <p><u>Risk item 14. Governance and strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee considered and agreed to adjust the likelihood with mitigations to 2. and the impact to 3. CS suggested to update the wording of the risk to reflect that it is about capacity of trustees. <p><u>Risk 15 – Strategic projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee considered and agreed to maintain the likelihood with mitigations at 2. and impact at 3. 	GA
25. Stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA noted those included in the school and trust updates. 	
16. Urgent business with agreement of Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no urgent business. 	

Close and confirm date of next meeting: The meeting closed at 7.30pm. The date of the next meeting is Thursday 5 February 2026.

_____ **Chair**

_____ **Date**