

HADRIAN LEARNING TRUST

Trust Board meeting held on 19 March 2026, 6.00pm, Conference room 1

Present: Kate MacLachlan (KM, Chair), Florrie Darling (FD, Vice Chair), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), James Heath (JH), Carey Stuart (CS)

Also in attendance: Neil Seaton (NS, HoS QE), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS), Rachel Forbes (RF, onboarding Trustee), Peter Judge (PJ, onboarding Trustee), Anna Vellinga (AV, Clerk)

Apologies: Iain Veitch (IV)

PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

Agenda Item	Key points/Actions	Who
1. Apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies were received from 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 – 4 February 2026 – Part 1 • Matters arising: GA noted the actions addressed and those featuring on the agenda. A record of future actions is held. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobile phones in school: Trust leaders are working on a response to DfE expectations. ○ A review of governance is due for February 2027. AV will prompt discussion in autumn 2026. 	AV
4. Trust Board membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A warm welcome was extended to Rachel Forbes (RF) and Peter Judge (PJ) who were attending this meeting as observers expecting to be fully onboarded as trustees for the next Trust Board meeting. KM and GA offered support with any trustee-related queries. Ahead of their formal appointment as trustees, it was proposed that RF join the HR & PM Committee and PJ join the F & AC Committee; both RF and PJ agreed to this arrangement. • KM confirmed that arrangements are in place to acknowledge and thank Veryan Johnston (whose term ended after the last meeting) on 9 July, before the Trust Board meeting that evening. VJ has kindly agreed to remain on the HR&PM Committee until the end of the academic year. • KM and GA's proposal to recruit further in order to expand capacity within the Trust Board was welcomed by the Board. 	KM/GA
5. Trust Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees confirmed that they had taken note of the Trust Updates document that was circulated prior to the meeting. • Confidential aspects of this are recorded in Part II of the minutes. • GA informed trustees that QEHS headteacher recruitment shortlisting will take place after this meeting, with selection taking place next Friday. • GA reported that each school was broadly on course to meet its intended year-end position ahead of the next financial year, with staffing targets achieved through natural attrition, progress with voluntary redundancies, and staffing budget planning. • GA reported that the Northumberland school organisation plan highlights risks linked to falling birth rates and developments in neighbouring schools, emphasising the need for both of our schools to continue to have strong 	

	<p>reputations in the local area and beyond. JH noted that it may be timely to revisit the earlier strategic sessions, which KM acknowledged and agreed to take forward in the new academic year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GA highlighted significant national changes are underway in education, including curriculum reform, post-16 developments, accountability frameworks, Ofsted and SEND. Once school leaders have had time to digest the implications, the Board will take forward strategic discussions on how to best position the organisation in relation to these developments. FD asked GA to elaborate on SEND leadership plans. GA reported that in response to rising complex needs and national SEND reforms emphasising mainstream inclusion, both QE and HMS are strengthening SEND leadership. At QE, the appointment of an Inclusion Manager to lead internal alternative provision will allow the Assistant Headteacher SEND to focus more fully on strategic SEND leadership. At HMS, trustees approved moving the SENDCo role onto the senior leadership team as an Assistant Headteacher. Recruitment to this post will help strengthen SEND provision. FD asked GA to share initial reflections on the SEND white paper. GA reported that he viewed the proposals as broadly sensible and that they were being generally well received by the sector, although funding will be critical. The focus on universal classroom provision and effective adaptations for all learners is positive, alongside stronger targeted and external agency support. Key challenges remain around specialist provision, particularly for complex needs in rural settings. GA noted that inclusion will only succeed if schools can respond more creatively to pupils who struggle in mainstream, without the limiting curriculum and punitive accountability system that currently exists. Overall, he welcomed the recognition that the current system is not working and does need reform. CS noted the NEU national ballot around pay and workload, questioning whether this posed a risk for the Trust. GA explained that unions are challenging the government’s proposal of a 6.5% pay rise over three years and are also focusing on terms and conditions. An indicative ballot is expected, with the possibility of national action, as seen previously. 	KM/AV
6. School updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees acknowledged that they had read the circulated papers. <p><u>HMS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FD referred to the peak in pupil illness in November, and asked whether enhanced sanitation and hand-washing measures could help. LW confirmed that reminders are already in place but said he will look to strengthen this through a more strategic approach. LW reported that a renewed focus on foundational knowledge aligns with the updated Ofsted framework, with ongoing discussions focused on evidencing impact from Year 5 across core strands, including reading, numeracy and spelling. LW clarified that for Ofsted, foundational knowledge remains a key focus, although the emphasis has evolved. It centres on securing core fundamentals, beginning for us in Year 5, with progress closely tracked and provision adapted until pupils feel confident. This has highlighted the need to further strengthen tracking, particularly for pupils with identified gaps, and to ensure clear plans are in place based on what is known. LW reported that work is also underway with regards to reviewing our approach for SEND and disadvantaged pupils within the new Ofsted framework. The Assistant Headteacher for Personal Development, Paul FM, has been asked to review careers provision, with more targeted support for pupils who need it most, taking a more strategic approach. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LW thanked the more than 30 parents and carers whose support helped make the whole-school Career Insights programme, alongside whole-school NERAP engagement and additional careers presentations, a success. <p><u>QE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NS reported that while overall attendance is improving, FSM attendance remains a concern, particularly due to the impact on the overall FSM figure of students who are categorized as severely absence, i.e. attending less than 50% of the time. Individual circumstances can be complex and staff were working hard with partners on strategies to overcome barriers in order to have greater impact. NS noted that the Year 13 mock examinations had been successful and that the main exam period is approaching. NS shared that the options evening was well attended and that feedback was positive, particularly on moving EBacc subjects out of compulsory options. While there were initial concerns about potential drop-off in EBacc subjects, there is the sense that students who have selected these subjects have done so for good reason and with the right commitment. NS mentioned the PE department hosted another successful Scotty's Day for the Sixth Form, bringing students together through sport in memory of our former Curriculum Leader of PE, Chris Scott. Trustees asked about the rules for mobile phone use in the Sixth Form. NS confirmed that the expectation in the revised policy is expected to be that phones may only be used by sixth formers in designated social spaces. 	
<p>7. Committee Minutes:</p> <p>a. Finance and Audit Committee – 13 February 2026</p> <p>b. HR&PM Committee – 6 March 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees confirmed that they took note of the circulated committee meeting minutes referenced below: Finance and Audit Committee – 13 February 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no questions arising from these minutes. KM commented that the budget developed by the CFO and approved by the Finance & Audit Committee is reassuring. KM also flagged the Energy for Schools project. Schools can be placed on the DfE's V30 energy contract, where the Government Commercial Agency purchases energy over the long term to reduce exposure to price volatility. JR is going to investigate further and report back to the next F&A Committee. HR&PM Committee – 6 March 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KM provided an overview of the main points discussed. Regarding absence management, the new absence policy is beginning to reduce short-term absence, longer-term absence and associated agency costs remain a concern and insurance options are currently being explored. There were no questions arising from these minutes. 	
<p>8. Management Accounts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees confirmed receipt of the December management accounts which were circulated prior to the meeting. GA commented that reporting is slightly behind schedule due to challenges with the software. The January figures are due next week. December's position is more favourable than budgeted, largely due to timing differences, with unfilled posts offset by additional supply costs. CFO, Jon R, expects the 	

	year-end position to balance, although this will depend on how things develop with absence and agency costs.	
9. Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following policy was approved by trustees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trustees payment and allowance policy 	
10. Risk Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA confirmed that relevant risk register items were updated in recent committee meetings. • No risks were due to be reviewed by the Trust Board. 	
11. Stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA noted those included in the school and trust updates. • GA reported that parent/carer surveys have been issued to the HMS and QEHS parent communities. Pupil panels will take place and the staff survey will be circulated after half term. Initial findings will be reviewed through the schools' monitoring committees. 	
12. Urgent business with agreement of Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KM asked for the board to reschedule the May Trust Board meeting due to the unavailability of both the Chair and Vice Chair. AV to liaise about a new date. 	AV

Close and confirm date of next meeting: The meeting closed at 7.30pm. The date of the next meeting is Thursday 21 May 2026.

_____ **Chair**

_____ **Date**