HADRIAN LEARNING TRUST
Trust Board meeting held on 9 July 2026, 6.30pm, Hexham Abbey

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), Jon Riley (JR, CFO), Katie Innes (KI, incoming QE Headteacher), Anna Vellinga (AV, Clerk)

Apologies: Iain Veitch (IV), Rachel Forbes (RF), Peter Judge (PJ)

PART 1 (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

Agenda Item	Key points/Actions	Who
1. Apologies	• Apologies were received from IV, RF and PJ.	
2. Declarations of pecuniary, business or personal interest	• 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	• The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record: o Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 21 May 2026 – Part 1 o Matters arising: GA noted the actions addressed and those featuring on the agenda. A record of future actions is held.	
4. School updates	• Trustees acknowledged that they had read the circulated papers. <u>HMS</u> • Highlights o LW noted that pupil voice had been excellent this term and reflected the school's ethos of Respect, Engage and Aspire. o LW reported that transition arrangements had gone very well, with the Head of Year 5 leading the process effectively. o LW advised that SATs results had been delayed nationally due to issues with the marking platform and that a full analysis of the results would be presented to trustees in September. o LW informed trustees that staffing arrangements for September are in place after successful recruitment of two Assistant Headteachers. <u>QE</u> • Attendance: o NS reported that shifting headline attendance figures remains a challenge. During the recent trustee visit, the AHT for Student Standards and Support (Years 9–11) provided trustees with a detailed update on severe absence. NS noted some areas of improvement compared with last year, for example better year 11 attendance, particularly in the lead up to exams. o NS advised that the school has focused on understanding the reasons for student absence and intervening more quickly when attendance concerns arise. A range of initiatives are in place, including an opportunity to work with Ashington Academy for tailored support. Improving attendance will remain a key priority for KI when she takes up post in September.	

	○ In response to a question from KM about whether other schools are doing anything differently, NS explained that the school does engage with other schools on their approaches and is now intervening more promptly and working more closely with families. Thresholds for action have been raised to ensure concerns are addressed earlier. Attendance data is now being analysed more rigorously, with a more responsive and creative approach to interventions. These changes may be contributing to the improvements seen towards the end of the year, although NS acknowledged that attendance figures remain disappointing. KM acknowledged that it may take time for the impact of attendance improvement measures to be reflected in more clearly improved outcomes. ○ FD asked whether the removal of the Family Liaison Officer post had negatively affected attendance. NS responded that it is difficult to determine the impact. While the role had been valuable, it was funded at a time when resources allowed. The school moved resources to a more focused Attendance Officer post, and wider pastoral staff and mentors are increasingly supporting family engagement. GA commented that the school now has a more targeted approach to attendance intervention, although this needs to develop further, which involvement with Ashington will support. • Transition: ○ CS asked about transition arrangements for new Year 9 pupils and whether these are consistent across students from all schools. NS explained that enhanced transition support is provided for SEND pupils, including additional visits and support from staff in middle schools. By the time pupils attend transition days, they are generally already familiar with the school. Similar additional support has been introduced for disadvantaged pupils, who now visit the school three times per year. NS noted that it will be important to evaluate the impact of the enhanced transition arrangements over the coming year, for example on FSM attendance. • Trips ○ FD welcomed the wide range of trips taking place and sought assurance that financial support was available and being accessed by families. JR confirmed that hardship funding and PTFA support were available to help enable participation, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. He noted that take-up of support is monitored, although some families choose not to proceed with trips where the funding available does not fully cover the costs. Trustees agreed that support for educational visits should be kept under review, including opportunities for additional fundraising and external sources of funding.	
5a. Trustee visit on 29 June 5b. SIP visit	• Trustee visit report ○ During the recent trustee visit, attendance, particularly persistent and severe absence, was a key area of focus. FD noted that the attendance data had been presented in a way that provided useful context around individual cases. Trustees recognised that school leaders had a strong understanding of the students involved, but agreed that the overall number of cases remained a concern and should remain a high priority for everyone in school. ○ Trustees discussed comparisons with other schools and agreed that further work was needed to understand the reasons behind	

	different attendance patterns and identify any effective practice that could be adopted. It was noted that a better understanding of the local context and underlying causes of absence would be important in determining the most appropriate next steps. o Trustees also considered feedback from the recent Alternative Provision (AP) visit. The visit was described as balanced and informative, with evidence of positive impact on attendance and engagement for some pupils but it was less so for others. Discussion highlighted both the benefits of the provision and the challenges around staffing, funding and sustainability. Trustees noted the importance of pupil voice and agreed that some feedback raised questions about pupils' previous mainstream experiences. GA advised that a review of the AP was intended in the new term. • School Improvement Partner (SIP) visit report o Trustees discussed the recent SIP report, which was viewed positively, and considered emerging themes from pupil feedback, including links between attendance and engagement. A dip in engagement among some Year 9 girls was noted, with relationships and wider personal factors identified as more significant than curriculum issues. o Trustees thanked Steve Wilson for his support and the valuable feedback provided during his time as SIP. o Trustees noted that planning for next year's SIP programme was underway and welcomed the report's positive findings while acknowledging the areas identified for further development.	
6. Trust updates	• GA thanked FD and JR for their support with the recent audits. Trustees noted the strong outcomes from both the risk and safeguarding audits and agreed to revisit key reflections at future meetings of the Finance & Audit Committee and the Safeguarding Group. • GA conveyed that relationships with trade union representatives remained constructive and positive, resulting in effective dialogue across the schools. • GA shared an update on the Hexham Partnership and collaborative work taking place between schools, particularly around assessment. • Other matters were discussed under Part 2.	
7. Staff survey	• Trustees welcomed the positive staff survey results, which reflected strong relationships between staff and senior leaders and an understanding of the challenges facing the sector. Trustees agreed that the survey provided encouraging evidence of staff engagement. GA noted that, while the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, some areas for improvement remained and the comments had been shared with senior leaders for consideration and action.	
8. Developments in education	• Trustees noted the pace of change across the education sector and were assured that leaders remained engaged with developments and their potential implications for the Trust.	
9. Committee Minutes: a. HR&PM Committee – 12 June 2026	• Trustees confirmed that they had taken note of the circulated committee meeting minutes referenced below: • **HR&PM Committee meeting –12 June 2026** o Trustees noted the previously circulated minutes.	

b. F&A Committee – 3 July 2026	○ GA shared that the meeting had taken place at the Lord Crewe Arms in Blanchland in order to show support of students on work experience there. The students involved had greatly enjoyed the experience and had benefitted significantly from the opportunity. Thanks were extended to the Lord Crewe Arms for their support. ○ GA reported that two recent reports from ECT leaders had been positive. • **Finance and Audit Committee –8 May 2026** ○ Trustees noted the previously circulated minutes. ○ An update was provided on the budget position. ○ There were no questions.	
10. Scheme of delegation	• The Committee discussed the Scheme of Delegation. GA noted proposed amendments to the allocation of Executive Headteacher responsibilities across CEO and headteacher. Trustees approved the changes and noted that the arrangements would be kept under review to assess how they operate in practice. • GA outlined arrangements for informing staff, students and parents of the changes to roles and responsibilities. • The revised Scheme of Delegation will be included in the wider governance framework and scheme of delegation document ahead of its annual review in October. has not yet been shared with staff.	**GA**
11. Management Accounts	• JR reported that the year-to-date financial position is performing better than expected, with a lower deficit than budgeted. This is mainly due to reduced staffing and operational costs. Recent forecasts have been consistent and indicate that financial performance is broadly in line with expectations, with the final position slightly better than forecast.	
12. Budget	• JR reported that recent government announcements included changes to pension and school funding which should help the Trust achieve a break-even position. • The budget for next year remains uncertain due to further funding announcements still to come, particularly around sixth form funding and pay awards. However, the Trust's financial position has improved significantly, moving from a deficit in previous years towards a break-even forecast. • Trustees noted that the full impact of the latest announcements is not yet known. As budget return deadlines have been delayed until September, it was agreed that the position should be reviewed again then, with an ad hoc meeting arranged if required. • GA noted that the budget assumes a further small reduction in the Trusts FTE, which it is hoped will be achieved through natural turnover. The position will be reviewed with the F&A Committee in future meetings. • The Board approved the 2026/27 budget based on the information currently available, recognising that it will be revised in September. The draft budgets for the following two years were also noted.	
13. Risk Register	• GA confirmed that relevant risk register items were updated in recent committee meetings. • No risks were due to be reviewed by the Trust Board. • CS raised workforce risks relating to recruitment, retention and succession planning, suggesting that these should continue to be reflected within the	

	Trust's risk register. Trustees discussed the importance of developing leadership capacity and ensuring a strong pipeline of future talent.	
14. Governance schedule 2026-27	• Trustees confirmed that they had taken note of the circulated governance schedule for 2026-27.	
15. Stakeholder engagement	• GA noted those included in the school and trust updates.	
16. Urgent business with agreement of Chair	• There was no urgent business. • GA thanked the trustees for their time, ongoing support, and commitment to providing effective governance for the Trust. Their contribution is greatly appreciated. • The trustees thanked the Trust's Senior Leadership Team for their dedication, hard work and the effective leadership they continue to provide.	

Close and confirm date of next meeting: The meeting closed at 8.00pm. The date of the next meeting is Thursday 8 October 2026.

_____ ***Chair***

_____ ***Date***