

Quakers in Yorkshire
Quarterly Meeting held on Saturday 11th October 2025
At the Bootham School, York
M I N U T E S

Representatives

We have been joined by 30 in the room for the morning session. There were 22 in the room for the afternoon session.

1. Meeting for Worship

In our meeting for worship we heard read Quaker faith and practice 20.25.

2. Testimony

We have heard a testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend Margaret (Peggy) Thomas of Pickering and Hull AM. We thank Friends for preparing this testimony.

3. Welcome by the Clerks and the appointment of Elders

The Clerks have welcomed all those present to this meeting.

We have appointed our clerks to act as Elders for the meeting today.

4. Welcome from Bootham School

We have been welcomed to Bootham School by Deneal Smith, Head of the School.

Aspects of housekeeping for this meeting have been given to us.

5. Presentations from the Schools – by pupils, staff and governors

The Students

Ariel and Tait from Bootham have spoken to us from the thought of Let your Lives speak. They reflected on 2024/5 including sporting achievements, music including individual and concert performances with West Side Story to be the next production, charity activities and projects throughout the school, both internal and external, and environmental and sustainability projects. They also made mention of leaving staff as well as new staff. International visits have been made which broaden cultural links and they are grateful to the staff who led these trips.

The boarders create a wider culture in school with the separate life and visits which have been enjoyed throughout the year by so many.

Zara and Marija from the Pupil leadership team at the Mount told us of how belief and experiences are brought into practice, bringing Quaker values into their lives within and outside the school. The meetings during the week and the daily texts help underpin their values. By making small changes these can build to something much larger, that individual strengths are brought together making the whole stronger. They have also discussed issues such as eldership.

Lessons at all levels bring different issues to the fore for students to consider in their daily lives.

We heard of the 'nutcracker' scheme where older students act as peer mentors for younger pupils. Groups such as debating and drama make for a diverse community, topics covering the environment and economic policies.

The school is a large family with a strong and diverse community that is a reflection of the leadership of students as well as staff. The Quaker way supports this life in so many aspects of school life.

Deneal Smith, the head of Bootham, has given his report for the academic year 2024/5.

The community at Bootham, including the parent body, support and appreciate the benefit of Quaker values to the life of the community.

A scheme for some lessons in senior school to take in charity activities moves into its second year for the A level students that may bring benefits to their lives after Bootham.

Let your lives speak now takes the place of the 10th GCSE for Years 10-11.

Academic results were also pleasing.

Sport is a major aspect of school life for both girls and boys.

In music there is much activity available for all.

The ISI inspection brought in inspectors who were very interested in the different community aspects that were new to their normal school lives.

The recent economic changes, VAT on fees, the loss of business rate relief and the increase in pay have caused real issues for the school but measures taken have overcome the loss of pupil numbers to produce only a small deficit.

The closure of Queen Margarets has brought new students and 3 staff.

Whilst some schools are abandoning charity activities, despite their charitable status, Bootham are determined to maintain its programme, supporting the local York schools' ISSP scheme and the bursary grants for children in need, especially through SpringBoard.

Boarding houses will support internal, local and international charities. There has been some change in boarding facilities, reflecting changes in numbers and the challenging conditions in international recruitment.

Deneal told us of Oracy programme, the art of speaking and listening for Years 8 and 12, an equivalent to numeracy and literacy. We also heard of the annual award scheme, the Bootham Challenge, that offers opportunities to all in the school community, to celebrate enrichment

Bootham are in a good place with further potential for the future.

Anna Wilby, the Head, has given her first report to this meeting on behalf of the Mount School. She gave a brief introduction of herself and thanked her deputy head for her support.

The senior school started the year with a focus on peace and a continuing reminder of what is required for attendance in meetings for worship. There has been a discussion on the use of X, and it was agreed to discontinue such online use. The junior years also hold their own meetings.

There was delight at the success of the A level cohort and the results at GCSE were also encouraging. New subjects are being introduced, and the drama production was Roald Dahl's The Witches.

Dance and music were notable for their success in involving so many in the school, including informal performances during the morning break.

There is new director of sport, with a focus on football, but not losing the traditional range of activities.

The school is aware of anxiety related to academic performance, and that data and knowledge can be used to provide a holistic support process for pupil wellbeing.

Fees have risen by 15% and like many schools a decline in Year 7 has been seen. Years 6 and 8 cohorts are much stronger.

A significant legacy has been left to the York schools, which is a driver of change. Both schools are grateful to the legacy in memory of the Stacey sisters.

The changes at senior leadership level present many opportunities for future change.

There are developments on the campus with a new dance studio. The school is currently supporting 3 students from Ukraine.

Times are challenging, with other schools closing or changing their intake, but the school is optimistic for the future.

There were a number of questions to both Heads. Both schools have a similar approach to the use of mobile phones and maintaining safe usage. We also heard that the Bootham junior school meets in silence with a candle lit and the lights dimmed.

Melissa Askew, reporting at her first QiY meeting, has told us of the governance changes at Bootham, having recently commenced service as clerk of governors. She is a school parent and proud of the family connection.

Within a strong governing body there are changes being made.

Andrew Fisher has become treasurer from September 2025; Juliette Healey having requested release from service from July 2026.

There are three new governors: 2 have been previously appointed, one of whom will be appointed at this meeting.

Like all schools Bootham are always looking for suitable governors.

Governors are pleased with the outcome of the ISI inspection in February.

Thanks for the efforts of Deneal Smith were expressed.

Greg Willmott is also reporting for the first time as Clerk of the committee at the Mount. He started by thanking Margaret Bryan for her long service to the school, and then introducing Anna Wilby as Head.

ISI inspected the Mount in January 2025 and are pleased that they have resolved all matters outstanding from the previous inspection.

There have been changes throughout the year.

Governors are aware of the need to continue the work of the school professionals in the most effective way. Small groups of staff and governors will work on key issues.

We thank all those who have presented to us this morning, informative and with opportunities through questions to build on the detail of the reports. It is clear that, in their different roles within the school community, all are faced with challenges. The pupils are facing a future in the outside world which we hope will be rewarding and fulfilling. The schools are facing issues that are also opportunities. We wish them all success in their endeavours.

6. Appointments

(i) From Quakers in Yorkshire Nominations Committee:

There were no nominations this time

(ii) From Area Meetings:

There were no nominations this time

(iii) From the Schools

For Bootham, Marcus Hirst as governor to serve from 1st January 2026 until 31st December 2029.

This nomination being acceptable, the person named is appointed accordingly.

7. Quaker Approaches to Mental Health

We have been joined by members of the board of the Retreat to consider Quaker approaches to mental health, at a time when there is significant concern for the health of people of all ages. Whilst the Retreat now has only a small physical presence in York there is still a need for caring for those with mental health issues.

Ruth McTighe has led the session and was joined by Martin Ford and David Robson, together with Rosie Roberts from Quaker Voices on Mental Health.

Ruth spoke to a presentation from the Retreat, including an early history of the Retreat and the improvements that resulted from a Quaker intervention in the treatment of patients coping with mental health issues. The Retreat was at the forefront of establishing standards for the modern treatment of patients.

Changes to the work of the Retreat were completed with the sale of the York site in 2025, a bit of a tortuous process as the Retreat moved to outpatient only. Innovations in consultation have been realised and a full service is offered in diagnostics and medicinal supervision. There are long waiting lists for NHS patients and the Retreat could do more. Education is the main issue and is key to the future of the Retreat online, for patients and their families as well as providing training for professionals. TEND is a new strategy of cooperation.

There are some questions for the Retreat trustees and staff:

Are we Quaker? What are our values? How do we move forwards?

The staff agreed with the values based on the Quaker testimonies, in particular treating each person as an individual of value, whilst reaching for fairness and truth.

A mission statement from 1813, quoted in the presentation, works so well today and there are aspects of this that are reflected in the work of the Retreat today.

How can the Retreat provide a better service to more people? Fund raising will be needed to support future initiatives. The continuing use of reserves is not realistic.

Rosie Roberts of Quaker Voices on Mental Health told us how QVoMH arose out of a wish by the Friends of the Retreat to continue the Tuke legacy in the treatment of mental health, now and in the future. They consider how meetings can support each other and follow Quaker values with kindness to each other.

This is a QRB [Quaker Recognised Body] with a national network of membership established to support for mental health provision that reflects Quaker testimonies, with around 200 members.

New members are needed as the organisation is spread rather thinly. A new clerk is required by the end of the year as Rosie will end of her term in 2025. She would like to hear of suitable names for QVoMH to consider for clerk.

A diagram of the organisation will be placed on the QiY website, along with the presentation about the Retreat.

We moved into breakout groups to consider the following questions:

What could the Retreat Clinics be doing better, and how?

What else should the Retreat Clinics be doing?

How can Quaker bodies involved in mental health work more closely together?

The meeting closed with a period of open worship where contributions arising from the break out session were welcome. These might form suggestions for the Retreat board to consider.

We thank the members of the board of the Retreat for their contributions to this session of our meeting.

8. Dates and Locations for Meetings in 2026

Saturday 17th January - Leeds Carlton Hill LM

Saturday 18th April - Ilkley LM

Saturday 18th July - Beverley LM

Saturday 10th October - Date and location to be agreed with the schools.

9. Concluding Minute

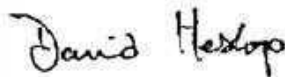
We thank all those who have contributed to the holding of this meeting and especially thank the staff at Bootham School for the preparatory work and for their hospitality. Luke Gilliver has provided invaluable technical support.

We hope to next meet on Saturday 17th January 2026 at Leeds Carlton Hill LM, if nothing occur to prevent.



David Bunney

Clerk



David Heslop

Assistant Clerk