Notes of meeting: West Midlands headteacher board
23 April 2020

Attendance
Attendance data is published annually on the GOV.UK website.

Regional school commissioner (RSC) chair
• Andrew Warren (RSC)

Headteacher board (HTB) members
• Kate Brunt (HTB)
• Sinead Smith (HTB)
• Mike Donohue (HTB)
• Dame Mo Brenan (HTB)
• Sajid Gulzar (HTB)
• Sir Mark Grundy (HTB)
• Margaret Yates (HTB)

Guests
• Sue Baldwin (RSC)

Apologies
• None

DfE senior civil servants
• Bhupinder Bhoday (Deputy Director)
• Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)
• ESFA Representatives
General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

RSC Update

- Temperature check of region
- Significant changes made between HTB meetings
- Conflicts of Interest

Discussion of projects, including decisions made by RSC with advice from HTB

All decisions are made in reference to relevant legislation and the published criteria.

Converter academy orders

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Primary School, Our Lady of the Wayside Catholic Primary School, St Andrew’s Catholic Primary School, St Anne’s Catholic Primary School, St Anthony’s Catholic Primary School, St Augustine’s Catholic Primary School, St George and St Teresa Catholic Primary School, St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School, St Peter’s Catholic School, Solihull, Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School, Our Lady’s Catholic Primary School, St Wilfrid’s Catholic Junior Infant School and St Edward’s Catholic Primary School to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady and All Saints MAC.

HTB discussion:

- The 13 schools are situated across 3 regions, with twelve primaries and one secondary seeking to convert and form a new trust titled Our Lady and All Saints Catholic Multi Academy Company.
- School improvement planning for the new MAC evidences robust oversight with a proposed opening date of 2021.
- 10 of the schools are rated Ofsted ‘Good’ with two ‘Outstanding’ and one rated as ‘Requires Improvement’.
- All schools have been collaborating for several years prior to this proposal being presented.
- The school’s leadership models were discussed by the board as well as geographical locations and educational performance.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Schools to be informed.
Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Feckenham CofE First School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join The Shires MAT

HTB discussion:

- Feckenham CofE First School was rated as ‘Good’ by Ofsted following a short inspection in February 2017.
- Joining a trust will provide longer term security and sustainability for the school.
- Consultation and engagement in the area has been positive which has been followed by a letter of support from the Local Authority. There have been no objections in the system for this proposal.
- The formation of the Shires MAT provides families in the local area with a clear route through the two-tier system in Redditch.
- Geographical position was discussed as the MAT currently has a school located in Redditch; and in addition, the board also considered the MAT’s support system including HR, Finance and increased efficiency through shared procurement as well as the opportunities for staff development.

RSC decision: Approved
Conflicts: None
Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Sponsored route

Project: Whether to approve Alsager Multi Academy Trust as an appropriate sponsor of Alsager Highfields Community Primary School, Cheshire East.

HTB discussion:

- Project was previously deferred at March’s HTB meeting due to attainment and financial concerns.
- The Primary school is currently undersubscribed and has seen little progress made across all levels after being judged ‘Requires Improvement’ in 2017 by Ofsted.
- The Trust is in very close proximity to the school, with the suggested sponsor already familiar with the school’s staff; they have also proposed plans for future support within the school such as curriculum progression.
- Since the project was deferred, DfE have been able to gain insight on future financial forecasts and analysis on staff attainment, staffing costs and primary education performance. All were considered throughout the project’s presentation.

RSC decision: Approved
Conflicts: None
Further actions required: School and Sponsor to be informed.
**Sponsor application**

Project: Whether to approve Central England Academies Trust, Warwickshire, to become a sponsor

HTB discussion:

- Central England Academy Trust was established in April 2013 and consists of two special provision academies, one primary and one secondary, located in Nuneaton, Warwickshire.
- Both schools have been judged by Ofsted as ‘Good’ in 2013 and 2018.
- CEAT is seeking sponsorship approval, in order to submit a proposal for a Presumption Free School in Warwickshire.
- The trust has capacity and have previously supported other SEN and mainstream schools, at the request of the LA.
- Governance of the trust is in line with RSC recommendations, with the trust restructuring its governing board following advice from RDD project leads. They now have 5 members and 11 trustees with varying skills and experience.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Trust to be informed

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Project: Whether to approve Youth Engagement School Trust, Cheshire East, to become a sponsor.

HTB discussion:

- Youth Engagement School Trust was formed in September 2015 and is led by The Fermain Academy, an Ofsted rated ‘Outstanding’ special school.
- The CEO has experience of school improvement as well as working with SEN and vulnerable students.
- YES has evidenced improvement in both schools currently in the trust and in a wider context as part of a school to school support offer. A School Improvement offer is in place for new schools joining the trust.
- There is a need in the Cheshire area for further SEN capacity so it would be beneficial for the region to have a SEN sponsor.
- The trust are also hoping to open a special Free School that caters for pupils aged 13-16 in January 2021.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Trust to be informed

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**Decisions taken by another RSC**

Project: Whether to approve an appropriate sponsor for Hateley Heath Primary School, Sandwell.
HTB discussion:

- Hateley Heath was judged Ofsted ‘Inadequate’ in January 2020.
- Manor MAT has been supporting Hateley in the current COVID 19 situation.
- Manor MAT is a seven school primary MAT formed in November 2014 with all Schools rated ‘Good’ or better (except St Alban’s that has not yet been inspected).
- The trust currently have one pipeline school.
- Finances and reserves were considered with board members as well as sustainability and governance.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: Sponsor being previous MAT of current WM RSC.

Further actions required: School and Sponsor to be informed

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve Barrs Court Trust and Herefordshire Council to increase the capacity of their pipeline school, Beacon College Special School from 50 to 60 places.

HTB discussion:

- A capacity increase on a soon to be built school titled Beacon College, the LA and Trust requested an increase in places from 50-60.
- The college is a pipeline project that will be a special school for students aged 16-19 with severe autism.
- The project is part of the Council SEND capital strategy; the LA are in ongoing discussions with Barrs Court to ensure sufficient places in high quality accommodation are secure.
- The building would be opening from May 2021.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve Stretton Sugwas CofE Academy’s retrospective significant change application to change the school’s age range from 4-11 to 2-11 from September 2018 to accommodate nursery provision.

HTB discussion:
• A retrospective change due to the limited understanding on process and further delay caused by purdah.
• The change requests an expansion of the academy's premises to accommodate nursery provision as there are currently none within the school's catchment areas of Stretton Sugwas and Breinton, however demand is high within the areas.
• The LA has approved this proposal as part of their pupil planning arrangements.

RSC decision: Approved
Conflicts: None
Further actions required: School to be informed.