



Notes of Meeting: South East and South London

21 May 2020

Attendance

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

HTB members who apologised have been consulted on all projects, where available, before the meeting. This excludes items where there were conflicts. Their views are reflected in the discussion at the meeting (where appropriate).

Regional school commissioner (RSC) chair

- Claire Burton

Headteacher board (HTB) members

- Sir Andrew Carter
- Paula Farrow
- Alison Beane
- Mark Ducker
- Jon Chaloner
- Stephen Carey
- David Boyle

Guests

- none

Apologies

- none

DfE senior civil servants

- Anna Barker

General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

- Covid-19 period
 - Daily communication with the schools sector (LAs and Trusts) to support and also to help the department shape direction of policy.
 - Focussing on welcoming more children back into schools from 1 June.
 - Secondary guidance in draft form and is due for release shortly.
 - HTB views:
 - Helpful for future planning to have important decisions and timescales communicated: particularly plans for 2021 exams, role of Ofsted and will key worker support run through the summer holidays or not. Otherwise, conjecture will fill the vacuum.
 - Funding bids (such as CIF): no communication on this and important that the sector knows what's going to happen to funding bids in the future. RSC noted that these bids will be delayed rather than cancelled and communications will go out to the sector shortly.
 - Need to underline the importance of MAT structure in coping with crises and the fact that capacity really helps with this. Strength of a cluster of schools working together has been apparent during this period.
- Ofsted inspection
 - We need to learn from transfer/sponsor decision-making and continue to take account of the wealth of local knowledge available to us as well as outgoing trust choice.

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: Eastchurch Church of England Primary School, Kent, to join Aquila Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

HTB discussion:

- Question about governance and scheduled changes to this but reassured that changes will be made by July.
- Still reliant on outside school improvement consultants rather than developing their own team.
- Trust has the capacity to develop their own SI team and has been asked to review previously.

RSC decision: Approve with condition

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: Discussion between RSC and the trust about what their school improvement model is going forward and how they will move away from reliance on consultants.

Project: Oaklands School, Kent, to join The Westbrook Trust

HTB discussion:

- Another school in the trust, Byron, recently received an R.I judgment which calls into question capacity of the trust although judgment detail is overall positive about the trust's leadership.
- Supportive of the match as it will be a capacity-giver joining the trust.
- Issues around governance which need to be resolved.
- Encourage to distribute the school improvement capacity so that it is not all sitting with the CEO.

RSC decision: Minded to approve with condition

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Clarity on when the trust will appoint 5th member and trust board independence.

Project: Marden Primary School, Kent, to join Leigh Academies Trust

HTB discussion:

- The trust is a good match in this case.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Steyning Grammar School, West Sussex, to join Bohunt Education Trust

HTB discussion:

- Growth in Norwich - questioned how this will impact capacity to take on Steyning Grammar.
- Need to seek clarity from trust on dual role of accounting officer as both CEO and Executive Headteacher of a school within the trust. Governance concern, specifically independence of members and trustees – this was raised at autumn trust review and an approach agreed with the RSC.

RSC decision: Approve with condition

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: See and agree the transition plan of the trust particularly on the points above.

Sponsored route

Project: Kingsley Primary School, Croydon - Sponsor match

HTB discussion:

- Supportive of Harris as the sponsor as being able to provide immediate school improvement and financial support with the aid of a negotiated financial package with the department.
- Important that there is a clear back-up however if the transfer does not take place.
- Noted that performance at Primary not as strong as performance at Secondary but nonetheless felt this was a good match.

RSC decision: Approve Harris as sponsor.

Conflicts: Jon Chaloner, GLF, left the room.

Further actions required: None

Project: Rumboldswyke CofE Infant School, West Sussex - Sponsor Match

HTB discussion:

- Novel and contentious decision, which should be escalated to the Minister. Quick decision needed by 5 June.
- Always a shame to close a school and it's a massive step for the community to do this.
- Bishop Luffa proposed to take on the school as an all-through primary. However, question whether the school could be taken on by the trust and remain as an infant school.
- Very difficult circumstances in this case and HTB views were split on the future of the school.

RSC decision: Escalate to Schools Minister

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: North West Kent Alternative Provision Service, Kent - Request from Kent County Council to revoke the Academy Order

HTB discussion:

- There have been dramatic improvements within the AP largely down to the leadership of the school. Revocation would be a backwards step for the performance/capability of the school.

RSC decision: Reject request from KCC

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Significant change

Project: Wishmore Cross, Surrey - Removal of Residential Provision

HTB discussion:

- Concern about taking decision, which can't be reversed if residential provision is needed in the future. However, decision to remove makes sense in this case.
- National issue: Important question is whether provision is actually needed vs cost of running it. Just because it's expensive doesn't mean it's not needed.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Flag wider national point to SEND policy team.

Project: Temple Hill Primary Academy, Kent - Addition of a Specialist Resource Provision for Speech and Language Needs

HTB discussion:

- Sensible to maintain provision in this case.
- However, need to make the point that the trust should adhere to the application process.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Feedback point about retrospective decision-making to HTB policy team.

Project: Barnsole Primary Trust to merge with Maritime Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

- Good move, which strengthens both trusts.

RSC decision: Approve – with conditions

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Trust strengthen its governance in consultation with the RSC office.

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Woodcote Primary School, Croydon to join the Pioneer Academy Trust

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Jon Chaloner, GLF, did not receive paper

Further actions required: None

Project: Valley Invicta Primary School at Leybourne Chase – Change of SPR from SEMH to ASD

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Valley Invicta Primary School at Holborough lakes – Change of SPR from SEMH to ASD

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Dartford Grammar School for Girls, Kent, The Areté Trust – Physical expansion

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Blackwell Primary School, West Sussex – Sponsorship funding route

RSC decision: Approve Intermediate Sponsorship funding.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Weyford Nursery and Primary School to join University of Chichester Academy Trust

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Chichester Free School, West Sussex - Closure of sixth form

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Hartley Primary Academy, Kent- Age range change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None