



Notes of Meeting: South East and South London

23 June 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

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

DfE senior civil servants

- Anna Barker

General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

RSC update

- Discussion on RSC office's work over the past month. Large proportion of work over the last few months has been dominated by Covid response, working with LAs and trusts and supporting schools through the Covid school-to-school support offer.
- Over the next few weeks, RSC to do some round-table discussions with MATs to discuss Covid-19 challenges and future plans for academies in SESL.
- Discussion on schools that we haven't identified through the school-to-school support offer and how we are picking those up. Referenced working much more closely with Public Health England and local forums.
- Discussion on Ministers' views of academies and whether any messaging will be forthcoming.
- Discussion about Ofsted's approach from September.

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.

Academy Orders and MAT Approvals

Project: Halterworth Primary, Wellow Primary & Awbridge Primary, Hampshire, to join The University of Winchester Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

- Financial capacity, particularly at operational and governance level and whether this is fit for purpose for a potentially growing trust.
- Questions in particular about capacity to meet significant financial management challenges of a growing trust.

RSC decision: Approve with condition

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Explore how trust can increase their financial management capacity, with potential support from a financially strong MAT

Project: Holy Trinity Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Kent, to join Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust

HTB discussion:

- Discussion about phonics

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Stephen Carey- dialled out of meeting

Further actions required: Follow up on phonics outcomes

Project: Kingfield Primary School, Surrey, to join The Swan Trust

HTB discussion:

- Subject to managing a consultation, the decision is sensible.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Beddington Park Primary, Sutton - Trust transfer sponsor options

HTB discussion:

- The transfer to STEP is a good match in the circumstances.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Mark Ducker- dialled out of meeting

Further actions required: None

Sponsor approvals

Project: Stafford Junior School, East Sussex - Sponsor options

HTB discussion:

- Capability and capacity, particularly in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the board as it transitions from SAT - MAT

RSC decision: Approve the Cavendish School as sponsor with condition.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Trust moves to 5 member model and complies with AFH guidance regarding staff trustees.
- Trust confirms its revised composition of trustee board and members with the RSC office in advance of any school joining the trust.
- Trust board receives input from NLG to inform their revisions to the trustee board and governance.
- CEO to attend upcoming CEO induction event and to be matched for informal peer mentoring.

Project: The Cavendish School (Eastbourne), East Sussex, Sponsor application

HTB discussion:

- Decision connected to Stafford Junior School discussion.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Significant change

Project: Danecourt School, Medway - Physical expansion

HTB discussion:

- RSC would like to have a conversation about strategy, sufficiency and improvement with Medway LA.
- Wider picture across the country of MLD provision schools moving towards ASD provision. This is consistent with plans for school.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Hoo St Werburgh, Medway - Age range change

HTB discussion:

- Financial capability and capacity of the trust. New CFO in position in January 2020

RSC decision: Approve with condition

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: SRMA to review their current financial capability and their plans to improve their financial position in the future.

Project: Amalgamation of Dorset Road Infant School and Castlecombe Primary School, Bromley

HTB discussion:

- Amalgamation makes sense educationally and financially.
- Circumstances and the history of the school in the community, specifically local context and the future of Dorset Road.
- Financial capacity of the trust and the position of the current CIF bid.

RSC decision: Approve in principle

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Trust agrees a plan with DfE for financing and funding the amalgamation. To follow up at trust review later in the year.

Decisions escalated to the systems minister

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

Ministerial decision: Minister has decided to issue a dAO and approved Bishop Luffa School as a sponsor.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Clapham and Patching CofE Primary School, West Sussex to join South Downs Education Trust

HTB discussion:

- Novel and contentious decision, as approving the application to convert would overrule the Local Authority's decision to issue a closure notice.
- The trust has provided a proposal in good faith that would secure the viability of the school.
- It is always a significant and carefully considered move for the local authority to take to decide to close a school.
- Acknowledgement of the surplus places in the Worthing area
- Very difficult circumstances in this case and HTB views were split on the future of the school.
- Decision was made by RSC to escalate to the minister. Ministerial Decision was made by correspondence, following the May HTB meeting, due to timeframes involved.

Ministerial decision: Minister has approved the application to convert.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Folkestone Academy, Kent- De-amalgamation

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Extension to the IEB at Holmesdale School, Kent

RSC decision: Approve extension to 23 July 2021

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None

Project: Hartley Primary Academy- Age range change

RSC decision: Approve age range change from 2-11 to 3-11

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: None