Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Headteacher Board

18 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

- Andrew Warren (RSC)

Headteacher board (HTB) members

- Kate Brunt (HTB)
- Mike Donoghue (HTB)
- Dame Mo Brennan (HTB)
- Sajid Gulzar (HTB)
- Sir Mark Grundy (HTB)
- Margaret Yates (HTB)
- Sinead Smith (HTB)

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Bhupinder Bhoday (Deputy Director)
- Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)
General discussion points

• Temperature check of region including COVID-19 impact and resilience discussion
• Significant changes approved 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 St John Fisher, Birmingham, to convert and become an academy and join Lumen Christi Multi Academy Company

HTB discussion:

- St John Fisher (SJF) is a Roman Catholic Primary School in the Northfield constituency; the school was Ofsted Rated ‘Good’ in 2013 and received a further ‘Good’ in 2018; recent results have shown pupils are meeting expected standards in reading, writing and maths at above national and local averages each year.
- Lumen Christi is a Catholic Multi Academy Company in South Birmingham consisting of six Primaries and one Secondary, the most recent intake, St Thomas More Catholic Primary, joined the MAC in September 2019.
- An in-year deficit for building works at SJF approved by the Local Governing Body (LGB) has been identified; this is due to be paid before conversion.
- Lumen Christi MAC is supportive of the Diocese strategy for all their schools to become “academy ready” and has an established a relationship with SJF in preparation for their conversion.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: School and Mutli Academy Company to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Clarice Cliff Primary School, Stoke, to convert and become an academy and join The Co-operative Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Clarice Cliff Primary School is situated in Stoke; the school was judged ‘Requires Improvement’ by Ofsted at their last three inspections (2014, 2016 and 2019). The school has applied to convert on two previous occasions but elected to halt these applications following due diligence.
- The Co-operative Academy Trust are comprised of twenty-five schools: thirteen primaries, eleven secondaries and a college (two schools are special schools). They have already been working with the school to form a school improvement plan that incorporates the support that the trust is able to offer, such as enhanced CPD and external evaluation.
- The primary wishes to join the trust due to their experience in working with families facing similar circumstances to those in their catchment area; by joining the Co-op, they hope that they will be able to centralise several services to ensure that they can continue to sustain high quality staff and buildings in the long-term.
- A recent School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) report highlighted that the speed of growth at the Trust through 18/19 has meant budgeting for some of its newest academies has been a challenge.
- The board discussed how school improvement is being developed at the school as well as how the trust would benefit from this addition.
RSC decision: Approve
Conflicts: None
Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Birches Head Academy, Stoke, to convert and become an academy and join Frank Field Education Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Birches Head Academy, a smaller than average-sized secondary school is located in Hanley, Stoke-On-Trent. The Academy was judged ‘Requires Improvement’ in June 2018.
- This is the fourth attempt for Birches Head to convert to academy status. They previously applied to join St Josephs’ College in 2015, and Alpha Academies Trust in 2017, but numerous factors such as a breakdown of relationships affected the conversion. As the school or associated trusts have already received a converter grant and sponsor grant, there will be no DfE funding to support this proposal.
- Frank Field Education Trust (FFET) is a MAT originally established in June 2016 with two schools currently within the trust both in the West Midlands region. The aim of FFET is to provide first-class education especially to the most disadvantaged students, children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- The Trust are to receive SRMA support in advance of and following Birches Head Academy joining the trust. This will help to analyse how covid-19 has affected the trust. The SRMA will also provide the trust with advice on how to strengthen their reserves before further growth.
- Geographical locations were reviewed along with FFET’s finances and the trust’s sustainability.

RSC decision: Approve
Conflicts: Margaret Yates (HTB)
Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.
Sponsored route

Project: Whether to approve an appropriate sponsor for Witton Middle School, Worcestershire

HTB discussion:

- Witton Middle School was judged ‘Inadequate’ by Ofsted in January 2020 therefore requiring a match with a sponsor trust. The school was previously rated ‘Good’ in June 2016.
- The Spire Church of England Learning Trust is made up of three schools, one middle school and two primaries. The lead school for the trust is Ofsted rated ‘Outstanding’ middle school, St John’s CoE Middle School Academy.
- The trust and the school have an existing relationship through the trust offering post-Ofsted school improvement and subject specific support, with the school Head expressing a preference for The Spire as their sponsor match.
- There were initial financial concerns around The Spire’s capacity to take on another inadequate school, especially as St Matthias (Inadequate) only joined the trust in March, but following discussions and support by an SRMA visit, there is now confidence in The Spire’s capacity to take on Witton Middle School.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: School and Sponsor to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an appropriate sponsor for Lightwoods Primary School, Sandwell

HTB discussion:

- Lightwoods Primary School has a three-year trend of achieving in line with the national average for reading and writing however received a directive Academy Order after they were judged ‘Inadequate’ by Ofsted in January 2020.
- Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust (SCAT) is a six school (four pipeline) MAT formed in August 2007; the trust is made up of three Primaries, three secondaries and one sixth form.
- SCAT’s vision is to support Black Country schools either by adding schools to the trust or providing support with technology. The Trust has grown at a gradual pace adding both free schools and sponsored schools
- The board discussed capacity and growth at the trust, there has also been an SMRA working with the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) at the trust.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Sir Mark Grundy (HTB)

Further actions required: School and Sponsor to be informed.
Significant change

Project: Whether to approve the merger of Summer Park Multi Academy Trust and Rivers Church of England (CofE) Multi Academy Trust, Sandwell.

HTB discussion:

- Summer Park MAT is a two school trust based in Sandwell. The MAT is a result of two early Single Academy Trust (SAT) converters coming together, fulfilling their initial intention (in 2013) to form a trust between the two schools.
- They had previously submitted an application to become a DfE approved sponsor however as a small two school trust in an area of expanding and growing trusts, Summer Park were encouraged to look at growth through merger rather than adding sponsored schools.
- There is an existing relationship between both trusts with the CEO of Summer Park working with Rivers on developing the trust and improving their existing schools; The two boards have also met to discuss how the link between the trusts could become more formal.
- After seeing the mutual benefits in the merger both boards voted to proceed to the application stage
- Rivers CofE MAT is a ten school trust based in Worcestershire, it has a strong reputation and a track record for improving schools in Special Measures.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Kate Brunt (HTB)

Further actions required: Both Trust’s to be informed.
Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve an increase to age range and include nursery provision for The Quinta Primary School, Cheshire East

HTB discussion:

- The Quinta Primary School is a larger than average primary located in Cheshire. It has been an academy within The Quinta Trust (SAT) since January 2014. It was rated Ofsted Good in December 2009. This rating was upheld after a Short Inspection in January 2017.
- Somerford Kindergarten, which is based in a room leased from The Quinta Primary School, is closing in July 2020. As a result, the school is looking to take over the nursery in order to continue the provision, which serves 48 pre-school children.
- The consultation is currently in process – began 12/05/20, scheduled to end 4/06/20. This is taking place following advice from the Department, as the original consultation did not last the full four weeks.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: School to be informed.