Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Headteacher Board

16 July 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)
- Sir Mark Grundy (HTB)
- Sinead Smith (HTB)

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Sajid Gulzar (HTB)
- Margaret Yates (HTB)

DfE senior civil servants

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

Points discussed in the meeting.

- Temperature check of region including COVID impact and resilience discussion
- Significant change applications considered 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 Charter Primary, Coventry, to convert and become an academy and join Castle Phoenix Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Charter Primary’s ‘Inadequate’ Ofsted report was published in February 2020. Conversations with a number of local sponsors have been unsuccessful, however, the Local Authority (LA) has recommended Castle Phoenix as a potential sponsor.
- Castle Phoenix provides school improvement through school-to-school support, collaboration with other trusts, and utilisation of their Teaching school resources.
- The trust has a track record in improving schools; Caludon Castle, Hill Farm primary and Kingsbury all achieved ‘Good’ inspections in 2019.
- The LA and potential sponsor are already working together to move this sponsorship forward.
- The trust received School Resource Management Advisers (SRMA) in Autumn 2019.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Tysoe Church of England (CofE) Primary School, Warwickshire, and Wellesbourne Church of England Primary School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and form Fosse Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

HTB discussion:

- Wellesbourne is a larger than average primary school and was judged to be ‘Good’ by Ofsted in 2013, this was reconfirmed in a short inspection in 2018.
- Tysoe is a smaller than average primary school, it was also judged to be ‘Good’ in all areas by Ofsted in 2015 which was reconfirmed in a short inspection in 2019.
- The schools are part of a consortium of 15 rural schools in South Warwickshire, which is chaired by the Headteacher of Wellesbourne. 10 of the schools in the consortium are church schools and the intention is to grow the new MAT by adding at least one additional local school within 6 months of its creation.
- The schools have an existing relationship and have been working closely together in a federation since 2015, with one Executive Headteacher overseeing both schools.
- The proposal is supported by the Diocese, the LA and the local parish council.
- The proposed MAT will provide a local solution in a rural area of the county in which no other MAT currently operates.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Schools and Trust to be informed.
Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Sidemoor First School and Nursery, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join The Black Pear Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Sidemoor First School and Nursery is a slightly larger than average primary school situated in Worcestershire. The school went into special measures in May 2017 after being rated 'Inadequate' in three out of five areas. It was rated 'Inadequate' again in June 2019.
- Black Pear Trust formed in June 2014 and is made up of four schools (one pipeline).
- The trust has shown experience of school to school support and has been providing school improvement and leadership support at Sidemoor since September 2019. This will continue into the September 2020 new term.
- Hollymount School, a school within Black Pear Trust, is a National Support School specialising in school improvement particularly where schools need rapid improvement to raise standards for all.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Greysbrooke Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership.

HTB discussion:

- Greysbrooke is a smaller than average primary school based in the small town of Shenstone, Lichfield. The school is rated ‘Outstanding’ as of December 2011.
- The school wishes to join The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP), a sponsor operating across Birmingham, Staffordshire and Warwickshire.
- ATLP comprises of 14 schools and was established in 2012. The school manages and deploys a range of National Leaders of Education (NLEs), Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) and Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) to provide school improvement to schools in need.
- The school has a pre-existing relationship with the trust, helping to deliver training sessions for the ATLP Teaching School and participating as an active partner in ATLP’s School Centred Initial Teacher Training programme.
- ATLP has structures in place for school improvement, as well as secure organisational structures and central systems that will be beneficial to a smaller school.
- ATLP is focussed on balanced growth, having taken on a number of underperforming schools in recent years. As Greysbrooke is an ‘Outstanding’ school and is situated in an area with a strong ATLP presence, it will add capacity to the trust.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.
Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Utkinton St Paul’s Church of England Primary School, Cheshire East, to convert and become an academy and join Chester Diocesan Academies Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Utkinton St Paul’s is a voluntary controlled primary school located in Tarporley, Cheshire. At its last full Ofsted inspection in January 2019 it was rated ‘Requires Improvement’.
- Utkinton has a long-standing relationship with the Diocese. It works closely with their local church which is part of the Diocese of Chester. In particular the Diocese provides support on admissions, management of the site and buildings, governor and staff training/development, and promotion of the Christian ethos through the curriculum and wider enrichment.
- Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) is made up of eight schools with two in its pipeline.
- CDAT is looking to add three to four schools in each of the next two years, meaning it would reach around 14 schools in total by 2021. So far this year, Bredbury and Little Bollington have joined them.
- When considering the project, the board discussed finances of both the primary and trust, in particular financial forecasts and financial reassurance.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

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Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Perryfields High School, Sandwell, to convert and become an academy and join Plantsbrook Learning Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Perryfields High School was judged a ‘Good’ school by Ofsted in January 2018, with KS4 results in line with the national average and above the LA average.
- Plantsbrook Learning Trust in Sutton Coldfield consists of a secondary and a primary school, both rated Ofsted ‘Good’.
- The high school have been looking to operate in a different way for some time. The school want the long term benefits of being part of a wider MAT. They are keen to join Plantsbrook to collaborate, develop and benefit from shared support services, shared governance and shared accountability.
- The trust including the trustees feel that Perryfields share a similar vision and their values are closely aligned, particularly in their focus of putting students at the heart of their organisations. PLT recognises the need to grow in order to develop and it is extremely important for any school joining the Trust to share these values.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.
Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Blackwood School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Central Cooperative Learning Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Blackwood School is an oversubscribed, larger than average primary school located in Sutton Coldfield, on the eastern edge of Walsall Local Authority. The School was rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted in 2011 and following a short inspection in 2016 maintained this standard.
- Central Cooperative Learning Trust formed in November 2017, and consists of six schools across primary, infant and junior phases. Five schools are based in East Staffordshire, close to the Derbyshire border, and one is in Rugeley.
- Blackwood has been considering conversion for some time, and researched extensively to identify the right option. It is an oversubscribed school with a track record of achievement in recent years.
- The school would be the first school to join Central Cooperative Learning Trust from outside of Staffordshire. The proposal is the first step towards the trust developing a hub model.
- Significant joint working is already underway to align systems and processes for future effectiveness. The Headteacher takes part in regular Head’s Executive Board meetings and was involved in the annual Trust strategic planning day.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to St Christopher’s Catholic Primary School, Wolverhampton, to convert and become an academy and join St Francis and St Clare Multi Academy Company.

HTB discussion:

- St Christopher’s is a smaller than average primary school. A short inspection was conducted in September 2018 when the school retained its ‘Good’ Ofsted grade. The last full inspection was held in December 2013.
- St Francis and Clare Multi Academy Company (MAC) formed in 2019 as a result of a merger of two existing MACs, Bishop Cleary MAC and Pope John XXIII MAC.
- There is an existing relationship between all of the primary schools in the MAC. The relationship with St Christopher’s will evolve as it joins the formal MAC model.
- The Archdiocese of Birmingham has requested that all of their school’s work towards becoming academy ready. The Archdiocese sees the long-term future of its schools as forming and being part of a MAC with other Catholic schools in their local area.
- Financially, a transfer of St Christopher’s into SS Francis and Clare MAC will ensure future viability. The school has looked through its financial reports and by joining a MAC, it will secure immediate savings for the new financial year.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Whether to approve CORE Education Trust to merge Central Academy and City Academy, Birmingham, to operate as one school across two sites.

HTB discussion:

- CORE Education Trust became the sponsor of four secondary schools from the former Perry Beeches Academies Trust including the City and Central Academies (formerly known as Perry Beeches 2 and Perry Beeches 3) in March 2018.
- City Academy Birmingham was Ofsted rated ‘Good’ in 2017 with Central Academy being judged in 2019 as ‘Requires Improvement’.
- CORE wishes to consolidate its city centre estate with the LA’s support of the proposal. The LA have been keen to discuss an increase in student numbers in all of CORE Education Trust’s schools.
- The Trust has appointed the headteacher of Central Academy as the interim executive head of City and Central Academies. The Headteacher of City Academy will continue to work with the Executive Head and through this process, a merged leadership structure will be implemented.
- When considering the project, the board members discussed the academies’ curriculum offer and provisions. A School Resource Management Adviser was requested however was delayed due to Covid-19, there will be an additional request made once deemed safe.
- Approval for the change is conditional on the trust not receiving any funding from the Department/ESFA.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sir Mark Grundy

Further actions required: Trust and Schools to be informed.

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Project: Whether to approve an increase of capacity for Kenilworth School and Sixth Form, Warwickshire, and transfer to a new site.

HTB discussion:

- Kenilworth School and Sixth Form is the only secondary school serving Kenilworth town and the surrounding areas and was judged ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted in Feb 2013.
- The school is part of a two school MAT formed in January 2019, consisting of Kenilworth School and Sixth Form College and Westwood Academy.
- The school’s Y7-11 provision is located on one site and the Sixth Form on a different site, moving the school onto one site will reduce the disruption currently caused to staff having to travel between the two sites to teach lessons. The buildings on the Sixth Form site are also beyond their design life and there is a significant risk of structural failure.
- As part of Warwick District Council’s (WDC) local plan, the two sites would be merged onto one new site accommodating all pupils. The location of the new site is approximately 600m from the current main school site.
- The proposal will increase capacity to meet local demand for places arising from new housing developments in the surrounding areas, within the next few years.
- WDC and Warwickshire County Council (WCC) support the proposal. WCC has identified that local primary schools are likely to be over-subscribed in the near future.

RSC decision: Approve.
Project: Whether to approve a removal of Sixth form provision at Dyson Perrins Church of England Academy, Worcestershire.

HTB discussion:

- Dyson Perrins Church of England Academy is a single-academy trust which converted in August 2011, and is based in Malvern, Worcestershire. It is Ofsted-rated ‘Good’ as of March 2018.
- The academy has capacity for 208 pupils in its post-16 provision, but currently only has 12 Year 12 pupils and only an anticipated 25-30 maximum applicants for its September 2020 Year 12 intake if it were to continue.
- In January 2020, the governing board decided to consult on closing the post-16 provision as these declining pupil numbers are impacting detrimentally on the school’s finances. They voted in favour of the proposal in April 2020 after the consultation had run for six weeks in line with the School Admission Code guidance.
- Worcestershire LA and the Diocese of Worcester support the request to close the post-16 provision, and analysis by Worcestershire LA shows that there is sufficient capacity within alternative post-16 providers within the area.
- The academy have confirmed that all pupils who applied to Dyson Perrins for a Year 12 place have a confirmed alternative destination, with bursaries and other financial support available to assist with transport costs.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an increase of Capacity and Pupil Admission Numbers through the construction of a new block of classrooms for Pershore High School, Worcestershire.

HTB discussion:

- Pershore High School is part of the Avonreach Academy Trust. It serves a large, mostly rural area between Worcester and Evesham and was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in 2013 and 2017.
- The school teaches pupils aged 12 to 18 and has a capacity of 1,300 with 1,079 on roll.
- The expansion has been LA driven due to increasing local demand for extra school places as a result of new and planned housing developments in the area. A significant increase in primary age children over the last few years will increase demand for secondary school places in the near future.
- A new additional teaching block will be built at the school’s site consisting of eight classrooms, a library, toilets, a staff workroom and storage space. Work commenced in July 2019. Planned completion was May 2020 although construction halted due to Covid-19 with a new completion date of September 2020. The extra capacity is required for September 2020.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.
Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a capacity increase at Discovery Academy, Stoke.

HTB discussion:

- Discovery Academy, located in Stoke-on-Trent, was Ofsted-rated ‘Good’ in January 2019.
- The school currently operates a Published Admission Number of 240 and is looking to increase to 300 from September 2020. It has been oversubscribed for the past 2 years.
- The LA have identified that there is a need for additional secondary places in the area with a forecasted shortfall of Y7 places in 2020.
- The expansion is being funded by the LA to ensure there is sufficient provision of secondary places. The funding allocated will cover the capital cost of the project.
- The LA has confirmed it will organise the procurement and management of the capital project. Temporary accommodation is being supplied by the LA for the 60 places required for September 2020, whilst the permanent expansion is being completed.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a change in the age range at All Saints Church of England Primary School, Staffordshire.

HTB discussion:

- All Saints Church of England Primary School joined the Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT) in September 2019 following an ‘Inadequate’ report rating from Ofsted in February 2018.
- SUAT is requesting permission for the primary to change the age range at their academy and admit children from the age of 3 through a nursery provision to be provided by the school.
- As there is currently no other local nursery provision available for the community, the school regularly receive enquiries from parents regarding nursery provision.
- Local data indicates that there is a shortfall in places for 3 and 4 year olds within the area. The nearest Early Years nursery provider is approximately 4.5km away from All Saints CofE Primary School.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an expansion of provision and add a designation at Aldersley High School, Wolverhampton.
HTB discussion:

- Aldersley High School is the founding trust school (converted Jan 2013) of Amethyst Academies Trust based in Wolverhampton. The school was last judged as ‘Good’ by Ofsted in March 2018.
- The high school would like to amend its existing Funding Agreement to reflect the changes from September 2020.
- The LA fully endorse and support this project.
- Aldersley already have teaching expertise and governance to support Special Educational Needs based pupils.
- It is proposed that the designation and capacity of Aldersley High School’s existing special resource base is extended. This will enable up to 20 students with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to be catered for.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.
**Trust change**

Project: Whether to approve a transfer of Advance Trust, Worcestershire, to join Central Learning Partnership (CLPT).

HTB discussion:

- Advance Trust is a four academy trust based in Evesham, Worcestershire, with three Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools, two judged as ‘Good’, one ‘Inadequate’ and one Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) also judged as ‘Inadequate’.
- All of Advance’s schools have particular expertise in working with children and young people who have learning difficulties, autism and social/emotional difficulties within Worcestershire.
- CLPT are an eleven school MAT based in Wolverhampton and Rotherham, led by Heath Park High School who were rated ‘Outstanding’ in February 2014 by Ofsted. The trust has experience of SEN provision through four of their academies.
- Although no prior relationship between the trusts, they have now effectively engaged and CLPT has been on site visits which has provided assurances around the condition of the two schools.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Both Trusts to be informed.

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Project: Whether to approve a merger of St Nicholas Owen MAC, Worcestershire, and St Catherine of SIENA MAC, Sandwell.

HTB discussion:

- St Catherine of SIENA MAC is a 4 school primary trust based in Sandwell.
- Saint Nicholas Owen MAC is a 6 school trust based in Worcestershire, Birmingham and Dudley.
- All schools in the two MACs are Ofsted rated “Good” or better.
- The long term ambition, held by both MACs, is to add eight more Voluntary Aided schools in Worcestershire and Dudley Local Authorities (including a further secondary school).
- The merger would support the long term strategy to create more financially and educationally sustainable schools.
- Whilst discussing the project, the members considered the future strategy for the local areas along with educational performance and both MAC’s finances.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Both MACs to be informed.
Project: Whether to approve the merge of Adelaide Academy Trust, Cheshire East, with Manor Hall Academy Trust; and to approve a significant change application for Adelaide Heath Academy to change the age range of their academy from 11-16 to 8-16.

HTB discussion:

- Adelaide Academy Trust formed in 2013 when Adelaide School, a long established special school in Crewe, converted to academy status. The trust is built up of three schools with Ofsted judgements varying from ‘Outstanding’ to ‘Inadequate’.
- Manor Hall Academy Trust (MHAT), a specialist provision Trust in Staffordshire, was founded in August 2015. MHAT consists of seven academies with three further schools in the pipeline.
- The MHAT and the Adelaide Academy Trust are both Special School MAT’s with both trust’s supporting the sector of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Alternative provision.
- Both trusts have a shared ethos in terms of collaborative school improvement, the empowerment of leaders and the development of staff to provide the best provision and service for the children, young people and families, that form their communities.
- The merger of these two trusts would reinforce the trusts’ school improvement strategy and help to continue to align school improvement, with a sustainable growth strategy and an efficient finance and business function.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Both Trusts to be informed.

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Project: Whether to approve the merger of Knutsford MAT, Cheshire East, to transfer to Congleton MAT, who will then form one MAT with 8 schools.

HTB discussion:

- Congleton High School converted in April 2011 and established Congleton MAT in February 2014. The trust consists of one secondary and two primary schools. Congleton MAT schools cover two LA’s within the West Midlands RSC region: Cheshire East and Staffordshire.
- Knutsford MAT formed in April 2012 when Knutsford High School converted to academy status. The schools cover Cheshire East, but also welcomes students from within Knutsford and the wider local area including Northwich and south west Manchester.
- In December 2019 Congleton MAT’s CEO, David Hermitt, announced their intention to retire in December 2020. The trust board went on to consider succession planning options, and a report was commissioned to explore potential options to support the trust’s growth, which has been a key strategic ambition of the trust.
- Cheshire East are supportive of the merger as the proposal looks to strengthen the capability within Knutsford, especially to build capacity for future growth.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Both Trusts to be informed.
Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve an increase in age range at Burley Gate Church of England Primary School.

Background:

- Burley Gate Church of England Primary is located in Herefordshire with a current age range of 4-11, they were rated Ofsted ‘Good’ in December 2018.
- The proposal was to extend the age-range from 4 - 11 years to 2 - 11 years in order to accommodate a nursery class. This would replace private nursery provision on the school site which has closed.
- The nursery class will use a building on the school site, owned by the school, which was previously used by a charity-run nursery.
- The proposal is supported by the LA and the Diocese of Hereford MAT. The trust have put a financial plan in place for the nursery for the next two years as numbers grow.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a proposed expansion of The Excel Academy, increasing its capacity.

Background:

- The Excel Academy is located in Stoke-on-Trent and was one of only 4 schools in Stoke-on-Trent with a positive P8 score in 2019.
- The school currently operates a Pupil Admission Number of 210 and is looking to increase to 240 from September 2020.
- There is a need for additional secondary places in Stoke-on-Trent. Data forecasts a shortfall of Y7 places in 2020, without the additional places proposed at 3 schools, including Excel Academy. The increased capacity at Excel will reduce pressure on the LA in its statutory duties to provide places for its students.
- In 2019/20, the academy received 310 first choice applications against a PAN of 210.
- The expansion is being funded by the LA to ensure there is sufficient provision of secondary places. The funding allocated will cover the capital cost of the project.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.
Projects listed on the published draft agenda but were removed before the meeting

List of projects that were on the published agenda but not discussed at the meeting.

Barrs Court Academy Trust, Herefordshire – additional time required to consider consultation responses.

The Brookfield School, Herefordshire – additional time required to consider consultation responses.