



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Headteacher Board

17 September 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)
- Sajid Gulzar (HTB)
- Margaret Yates (HTB)
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Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)
- Bhupinder Bhoday (Deputy Director)

General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

- Temperature check of region including COVID impact and the reopening of schools.
- Significant change applications considered between HTB meetings
- Conflicts of Interest
- Update on future project being presented at October HTB.

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 Crudgington Primary School, Telford and Wrekin, to convert and become an academy and join Learning Community Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Crudgington Primary was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in 2017 with the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths remaining above average in 2018 and 2019.
- Learning Community Trust (LCT) formed in November 2017, consists of six schools across primary, secondary, and special phases. All the schools are based in close proximity in Telford.
- LCT is keen to expand its primary portfolio and capacity further. It has already developed a close working relationship with Crudgington. In addition, Crudgington is a key feeder to the trust's secondary provision.
- Crudgington Primary believes that its vision, ethos and values are in line with LCT's. Like LCT, Crudgington Primary School has a strong ethos of support and inclusion.
- Crudgington is a small school which would benefit from the advantages of being in a larger MAT. This would include opportunities and access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as well as training, finance, school improvement and curriculum support.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Significant change

Project: Whether to approve the closure of Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Academy Sixth form provision.

HTB discussion:

- Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Voluntary Academy (BRS) is located in East Burton, Staffordshire and is seeking permission to remove its sixth form provision due to financial viability concerns.
- It is a retrospective request due to the original consultation not being for the correct length of time as per DfE guidelines and a further consultation was needed.
- A six week consultation to remove the sixth form provision and to amend admission arrangements accordingly has now been completed from February to March 2020; the new application shows nil responses to the consultation.
- In April 2020, the governing body voted in favour of the proposal after the consultation had concluded in line with School Admission Code guidance.

- Staffordshire Local Authority and the Diocese of Nottingham support the request to close the post-16 provision, and analysis shows that there is sufficient capacity within alternative post-16 providers within the area.
- The academy confirmed there are no year 12 students in 2019/20 and the remaining year 13 students would be able to complete their courses of study before the sixth form closed at the end of August 2020. Year 11 pupils have already been supported to make suitable choices that meet their needs elsewhere.
- A condition has been set in place on the approval of the project for the deployment of a School Resource Management Adviser (SRMA).

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Mike Donoghue

Further actions required: School to be informed and SRMA to be deployed.

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion and capacity increase for Sir Graham Balfour High School.

HTB discussion:

- Sir Graham Balfour High School (SGBH), based in North Stafford, Staffordshire, converted to academy status in September 2016. The school has been judged 'Good' by Ofsted since May 2014 and recently maintained this judgement after a Section 8 inspection in May 2019.
- As the demand for places in Stafford is driven by the large housing developments in the area, the school wishes to physically expand and increase capacity from 925 to 1042.
- At the request of the Local Authority (LA), the school has agreed to exceed its PAN in 2018-19 and 2019-20 to provide additional capacity for students living within the catchment area. The school have again agreed to accept a small number of additional students into Year 7 in September 2020. The school is now at capacity and unable to accommodate additional students in future years without an expansion of its teaching space capacity.
- No objections have been received during the consultation period and Staffordshire County Council (SCC) are in favour of the proposal.
- The local housing development have contributed funds to the project, as well as securing funds from the SCC Basic Need Capital Programme to cover any shortfall.
- As a condition to the approval an SRMA visit will be deployed to look further into the finances of the school.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed and SRMA to be deployed.

Sponsored

Project: Whether to approve an appropriate sponsor for Turves Green Boys School.

HTB discussion:

- Turves Green Boys School is a smaller than average secondary school with an Ofsted rating of 'Inadequate' following an inspection on the 4 June 2019. Attainment outcomes and progress scores have been below the LA and national averages for the past three years.
- One of the sponsors, Matrix Academy Trust, is comprised of 4 schools based in Walsall, Birmingham and Warwickshire, 2 schools are Ofsted 'Good' with 1 'Outstanding' and 1 'Requires improvement'. The Trust attributes its 2019 improvement to moving towards greater collaboration and the sharing and standardisation of its curriculum.
- Another sponsor considered for the boys school was King Edward VI Multi Academy Trust (KEVI), made up of 9 schools, including 3 Ofsted 'Outstanding' schools, all based within the Birmingham LA. Following a number of discussions with the trust, the timelines set in place were not sufficient for the sponsorship to progress.
- The board discussed varying factors of the two sponsors presented including school improvement strategies the separation of the girls and boys schools and managing the local community.

RSC decision: Deferred.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Sponsors and School to be informed.

Sponsorship Application

Project: Whether to approve Thrive Education Partnership as the sponsor for a Free School project in Bedworth, Warwickshire.

HTB discussion:

- Warwickshire Local Authority conducted a presumption competition in March 2020 and requested DfE involvement in assessment, shortlisting and interview panels. The DfE also provided trust overviews to inform the LAs decision.
- Demand for specialist provision is rising in Warwickshire, with a forecasted 259 additional places required by 2023.
- This school is a key part of the LAs strategy to supply provision that differs from the other generic special schools in the region, as it will meet the long-term needs of children with significant, complex and pervasive Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) / Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) conditions.
- The school will grow to capacity incrementally and flexibly to respond to the demand for places and the age profile of those placed.
- Thrive Education Partnership's bid as the trust has shown specialist experience to support this particular cohort. Thrive demonstrated that it understood the needs of the cohort with a clear evidence-based approach to educating learners with SEMH/ASD, which included drawing upon a range of disciplines and expertise.
- The LA are recommending Thrive as the project sponsor based on its experience with this cohort, following an open competition and interviews.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Free School to be informed.

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve an increase in capacity from 210 to 420 with a physical expansion at Heathcote primary school, Warwickshire.

Background:

- Heathcote primary school opened in September 2017 as a free school responding to basic need generated by housing development on the outskirts of Leamington and Warwick. It was opened as a 1 form entry school plus private nursery provision, capacity 210.
- The expansion would be from 210 capacity to 420 with a physical expansion of the school.
- PAN will increase from 30 (1FE) to 60 (2FE). An expected increase from 1 to 2 form entry was part of the original planning for this Free School as it is built in the middle of an expanding housing estate.
- The PAN has already been increased at request of the LA from 30 to 60 for Reception in September 2019 showing to a shortfall of places.
- This is fully funded through LA basic need capital programme and the capital expenditure was approved at the Council meeting in December 2019.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an increase in age range of The Littletons Church of England Academy, Worcestershire, to include a nursery (age 2-4)

Background:

- Littletons Church of England Academy located in Worcestershire opened in 2017.
- The current capacity of the academy is 171 (133 children on role), when comprising the nursery, the proposed additional new capacity includes 24 FTE nursery places.
- The Headteacher and Local Academy Board support the proposed change and recognise the benefits. The change will also assist in the financial health of the Academy moving forward. The Trust Auditors are of the opinion that the merger will ensure clarity within the Trust accounts and assist in the prevention of any discrepancies.
- The last Ofsted Inspection was on the 8 Jan 2020 and resulted in a 'Good' rating.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an increase in age range of 4-11 to 2-11 and include a nursery class at Stockton Primary School, Warwickshire.

Background:

- Stockton primary, based in Warwickshire, was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in November 2016.

- The class will be comprised of children on roll at a private nursery provider on the school site and this private provision would cease to operate if the project is approved.
- This proposal is supported by the trust, the LA, and the Chair of the Committee of the private nursery provider, whose setting would be incorporated into the school if this project is approved.
- There is no other school nursery provision within a 5.5 mile radius of the school. This development will serve the local community and secure the quality of nursery provision for the local area.
- Consultation has been conducted between 30 March and 24 April 2020. Only positive feedback from 5 responses received.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve the request to open an onsite nursery at St John Fisher Primary school, Coventry, lowering the age range from 5-11 to 3-11.

Background:

- St John Fisher primary school wish to lower their age limit to include Nursery Provision for students from the age of 3 years onwards. They have an onsite playgroup which will be closing to allow room for the Nursery to open
- There is demand in the area for this nursery. All 39 Nursery places have been filled from September 2020.
- The LA supports the School's proposal to open a Nursery.
- The trust have strong expertise in nursery provision, as they run five nurseries at present. Should this request be approved, the trust will look to recruit a manager and support staff to work at the Nursery.
- The trust has set aside £80,000 from the School Condition Grant to spend on refurbishments to the Nursery building.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a PAN increase from 210 to 240 at Bishop Perowne Church of England (CofE) College, Worcestershire.

Background:

- The college was rated 'Good' in February 2018 by Ofsted.
- To accommodate the increase there will be a classroom expansion of up to six classrooms, some additional communal areas giving increased dining and toilet capacity; taking the form of a single block extension with a potential additional smaller block being added to the main building for a science classroom.
- This increase is to meet the request of Worcestershire LA who forecast that the population growth requires this additional capacity by Sep 2021.

- Bishop Perowne College has an age range of 11 -16 years, with a population of 832 having converted to an academy in May 2012.
- Financial costs are to be borne by the LA with funding for the provision of an extra form of entry.
- Planning permission has not yet been received due to the application for the significant change being submitted so early.

RSC decision: Approved.

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.

The Rosary Catholic Primary School, Birmingham – additional time required to consider further information provided.