



## Notes of Meeting, East of England and North East London headteacher board

17 December 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

- Sue Baldwin (RSC)

### Headteacher board (HTB) members

- Tom Canning (HTB)
- Caroline Derbyshire (HTB)
- Diane Rochford (HTB)
- Al Kingsley (HTB)
- Karen Kerridge (HTB)
- Duncan Ramsey (HTB)
- Brian Conway (HTB)

### DfE senior civil servants

- ESFA representative

### Apologies

- Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne (HTB)
- Alan Parnum (Deputy Director)

## General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

### RSC update

- The Note of Meeting for the November HTB meeting were discussed and agreed.
- Representations were received for discussion regarding projects on this meeting's agenda.

## 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.

### Trust Changes

**Project:** TBAP Cambridge AP Academy, Cambridge, and TBAP Octavia AP Academy, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, to transfer from TBAP Trust to Olive Academies.

#### HTB discussion:

- The HTB heard about the background of the voluntary transfer including that the original trust will be dissolved, and Olive Academies had specialist expertise to take on the AP academies.
- Representations were also received and considered.
- The Board noted that the trust used a practiced successful model and had a positive reputation of being transparent, open to dialogue, strong track record of collaboration and enthusiasm to work quickly on school improvement.
- HTB expressed no concerns and supported the RSC's decision to approve this application.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

**Project:** TBAP Unity Academy, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, to transfer from TBAP Trust to Spring Common Academy Trust.

**HTB discussion:**

- The HTB heard about the background of the voluntary transfer including that the original trust will be dissolved, and Spring Common having an existing collaborative relationship with the school that allows them to know the needs of the pupils.
- Representations were also received and considered.
- The Board noted that there were challenges with the academy being split site and around the Wisbech site. The Board heard that this was being explored by the trust as part of their due diligence.
- The HTB expressed concerns with there being limited number of members within the trust, the RSC assured that she will have on-going discussions to address this.
- Due to Spring Common's reputation of strong leadership, partnership with other trusts and expertise over SEND and school improvement strategy, the RSC decided to approve the transfer. The HTB fully endorsed the RSC's decision.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** The RSC office will discuss governance with trust. Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

**Project:** Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form, The Ramsey Academy, Richard De Clare Community Academy, and Acorn Academy, Braintree, Essex, to transfer from North Essex Multi Academy Trust to Bridge Academy Trust.

**HTB discussion:**

- The HTB heard about the complex background to the proposed closure of NEMAT following the quick succession of inadequate judgements with two of their schools. This included the warning notices issued to the Trust, and discussions with and challenges to the Trust to ensure the NEMAT Board considered a wide range of options and focused on the issues key to securing positive outcomes for all pupils. The HTB noted that following a detailed assessment and deliberation of multiple options, including a consideration of other proposals made, NEMAT's Board decided that Bridge Academy Trust was the most suitable.
- Representations were also received and considered as part of the discussion. The HTB noted that different parties had proposed different options, and the HTB fully discussed those options.
- The HTB discussed Bridge Academy Trust's offers of financial stability, strong leadership, sharing of good practice and focused school improvement plans. They agreed it is a strong trust on this evidence and would have the capacity to take all of the schools, including the inadequate schools. The RSC agreed that the trust was the best option and approved the transfer. The HTB fully endorsed the RSC's decision.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

**Project:** Cromer Junior School, Cromer, Sheringham High School, Sheringham, Antingham and Southrepps Primary School, Stalham High School, and Gresham Village School, Norwich, Norfolk, to transfer from North Norfolk Multi Academy Trust to Synergy Multi Academy Trust.

**HTB discussion:**

- The HTB heard about the background of the voluntary merger of North Norfolk MAT and Synergy Trust.
- The Board acknowledged that the rationale for the two trusts merging was to create a stronger trust with increased capacity to strengthen secondary and primary provisions, share expertise and bring financial benefits. Synergy also has a school improvement plan for the inadequate school to address the weaknesses identified by Ofsted.
- The HTB agreed with the balanced approach and benefits it will establish, expressed no concerns and supported the RSC's decision to approve the proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

**Project:** Churchill Park Complex Needs School, Highgate Infant School, St Germans Academy, Magdalen Academy, Wimbotsham and Stow Community School, King's Oak Academy, Greyfriars Academy, King's Lynn, Norfolk, to transfer from KWEST Multi Academy Trust to Unity Education Trust.

**HTB discussion:**

- The HTB heard the background of the application KWEST to merge with Unity Education Trust.
- The Board discussed KWEST's financial issues and full engagement with the ESFA, which identified merging with a strong trust would ensure financial recovery. Following extensive assessment Unity Education Trust was decided the best fit due to shared ethos, strong financial management and governance.
- The RSC was content with the thorough due diligence and agreed with the approach. The HTB fully supported the RSC's decision to approve this application.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Al Kingsley did not receive papers and did not participate in the discussion.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

## Sponsor Application

**Project:** St Bede's Inter-Church School, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, to become a sponsor.

### **HTB discussion:**

- The HTB heard the background of the application from the single academy trust to gain sponsor status, involving taking on a new free school provision.
- The Board expressed concerns with the trust's governance structure including fewer trustees and uncertainty whether there is a broad range of skills and experience required to fulfil the trust's statutory duties.
- The RSC noted the trust's long-term plans to resolve the governance risks and decided to approve the application in principle but needed further assurances that a review was undertaken, and concerns were resolved prior to sponsorship completion. The HTB supported the RSC's decision.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** The RSC office will have ongoing conversation about governance with trust and monitor pace to get risks resolved. Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

## Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

**Project:** Orwell Multi Academy Trust, Ipswich, to sponsor Chilton Leys Presumption Free School, Stowmarket, Suffolk.

### **HTB discussion:**

- The HTB heard the background to the new free school provision, including that it is due to open in September 2022 and popular competition. Following a robust assessment, the LA chose Orwell as the most suitable candidate due to the strength of their capacity, experienced leadership, focused local research and good track record of primary school improvement.
- The HTB expressed no concerns and fully endorsed the RSC's decision to approve.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

## Significant Changes

**Project:** The Brickfields Trust to expand Barling Magna Primary Academy, Rochford, Essex, school places from 175 to 210 over a period of 7 years.

**HTB discussion:**

- The Board discussed the background to Brickfields Trust's proposal to expand the school's PAN. The HTB acknowledged a new housing development in the school's catchment area would result in an increased demand of pupil places and the school currently being under capacity.
- The HTB had no concerns and supported with the RSC's decision to approve the proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

**Project:** Rayleigh Schools Trust to expand The Sweyne Park School, Rochford, Essex, by 150 school places for September 2021.

**HTB discussion:**

- The Board discussed the background to Rayleigh Schools Trust's proposal to expand the school's PAN. The HTB acknowledged that the expansion was in response to an increasing demand of secondary school places in the area.
- The HTB had no concerns and supported with the RSC's decision to approve the proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.

**Project:** Saffron Academy Trust to expand the age range of Helena Romanes School and Sixth Form Centre, Uttlesford, Essex, to make it an all-through provision.

**HTB discussion:**

- The Board discussed the background to Saffron Academy Trust's proposal to move to a new site and expand its age range. The HTB acknowledged that the expansion was in response to the trust's plan to create an all-through school due to clear local demand for primary places.
- It was noted that there are some outstanding issues, including on land transactions and capital, which the Trust will also need to seek approval for outside of the significant change request before the project can proceed.
- The HTB considered the need for primary places, the educational offer, and the improvement taking place in the school. The HTB had no concerns with regard to the proposed expansion and endorsed the RSC's decision to approve it.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Caroline Derbyshire did not receive papers and did not participate in the discussion.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision and Trust to ensure all relevant consents are acquired.

**Project:** Catalyst Academies Trust to expand the SEN provisions in Quarry Hill Academy, Grays, Thurrock, to include a Personalised Learning Centre.

**HTB discussion:**

- The HTB discussed the retrospective request to add a Personalised Learning Centre to expand the SEN provision in Quarry Hill Academy.
- The Board acknowledged the purpose of the SEN unit was to reintegrate pupils with EHCP or social, emotional mental health needs into mainstream education and full financial support from Thurrock Council.
- The HTB fully endorsed the RSC's decision to approve the retrospective proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.