

Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Headteacher Board

25 February 2021

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)

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Claire Trewartha (Deputy Director)
- Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)

General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

RSC update:

- Temperature check of region including COVID update
- 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 The Richard Heathcote Community Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Societas Trust.

HTB discussion:

- The Richard Heathcote Community Primary School, Staffordshire Local Authority (LA), is a smaller than average primary school, who at its last Ofsted inspection in 2012 was judged as 'Good'.
- The Societas Trust is a 5 school primary trust with schools located across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
- The school have been looking to join a Trust and after completing due diligence, they are confident that The Societas Trust is the correct match due to geographical location of the other schools in the trust and their shared ethos.
- The addition of Richard Heathcote to Societas would help the trust's aim of continuing a process of growth through collaboration.
- The board considered all factors presented by the lead including both governance and trustee boards and also the trust's financial forecasting.
- Whilst discussing this project, the Regional Schools Commissioner has put in place a number of conditions. These conditions include a restructure of the Trustee board prior to the conversion of the school, an assurance that payments continue to be made in line with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) repayment plan. Additionally, to progress towards a balanced budget and set out a plan for how this will be achieved and finally, a visit from a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) to be completed.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: Sajid Gulzar was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Middlewich High School, Cheshire East, to convert and become an academy and join Sir John Brunner Foundation.

HTB discussion:

- Project was not initially published on the draft agenda however was sufficiently progressed to be considered at the meeting.
- Middlewich High School, Cheshire East LA, is a smaller than average community secondary school serving around 700 pupils, The school was last rated 'Good' by Ofsted in 2013 and 2019.
- The School have considered that the Trust can support with improving leadership and learning which will aid the education provided at Middlewich. Furthermore, the Trust's ethos and values align with the school.

- Sir John Bruner Foundation is a two school Trust based in Northwich, Cheshire. It was formed in 2018, with both schools receiving an 'Outstanding' judgement from Ofsted.
- Additionally, as well as having pre-existing established links within the trust, the school sees many Middlewich students accessing the post 16 provision available at Sir John Deane.
- The board discussed Governance and Leadership capacity whilst also considering the trust's school improvement offer. The Regional Schools Commissioner recommended an SRMA visit.

RSC decision: Approve with recommendation.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Significant change

Project: Whether to approve the de-amalgamation of Brays School, Birmingham, to create a new school for Special Educational Needs and Disability provision.

HTB discussion:

- Brays School is a special school, Birmingham LA, with a current Ofsted rating of 'Outstanding' as of February 2020.
- The special school serves children with physical disabilities, profound and multiple learning difficulty, Severe Learning Difficulty, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and complex medical needs.
- They currently operate across two sites known as Brays (Sheldon) and Brays (Tile Cross); the proposal is for each site to become separate schools operating independently within the Trust.
- Whilst Brays (Sheldon) will remain the same, Brays (Tile Cross) will become Leycroft Academy, specialising in and having a SEND need type of Autistic spectrum condition.
- The board discussed the staffing and school resource, including the use of time management for the headteacher across the two sites.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Schools to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a retrospective application to remove a sixth form at Bridgnorth Endowed School, Shropshire.

HTB discussion:

- Bridgnorth Endowed School, Shropshire LA, is a secondary school that is smaller than average; whilst they have received an Ofsted rating of 'Good' in 2018, the 16-19 provision has been classified as 'Requires Improvement'.
- The proposal is retrospective as the closure happened in July 2020, this was due to a lack of demand making the provision unviable to the school.
- There were further delays due to the Trust's governance structure being outside of guidance at the time of application, which was not resolved until the pre-election period began in December 2019 and the case then being put on hold further due to Covid-19.
- The board were informed that the school aspires to become an 'Outstanding' school for 11-16-year-olds. Removal of the sixth-form provision will enable the school to concentrate its resources on its 11-16 provision.
- The board discussed finances including any implications of removing the sixth form and also discussed the governance of the trust.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an increase in Published Admission Number and the addition of an expansion at Moreton School, Wolverhampton.

HTB discussion:

- Moreton School, Wolverhampton LA, is an Ofsted rated 'Good' secondary school seeking an increase to their Published Admission Numbers (PAN), resulting in an increase to their capacity.
- They are also requesting a physical expansion of the premises in order to accommodate an additional 1 form entry as of September 2021.
- The expansion will include the conversion of the existing double height gymnasium into multiple classrooms, extension of the existing dining hall, conversion of two classrooms to science classrooms, conversion of existing office space/meeting rooms to changing room spaces and repurposing lecture space to become a fitness suite.
- This expansion is at the request of the LA due to basic need and a high demand for places.
- The School joined the Amethyst Academies Trust in 2017 and are keen to grow, the LA are supportive of this and at their request, they will work further to mirror the pupil place demand shown in the local area.
- The board discussed the governance of the school and advised on a 9th trustee being added.
- The approval of the proposal is subject to the physical expansion securing planning permission. The Regional Schools Commissioner has also recommended an SRMA visit.

RSC decision: Approve in principle with recommendation.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve the addition of a resource base for up to 20 pupils at St Martin's Church of England Primary School, Wolverhampton.

HTB discussion:

- St Martin's Church of England Primary School, Wolverhampton LA, was judged to be 'Good' in January 2018.
- The Trust has been approached by the City Council as the proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability and Education and Health Care Plans has increased significantly and is forecast to increase further.
- Following the request regarding the development of resource base provision across the city, the Trust decided to express an interest and submit an application for the resource base.
- A consultation was held across four weeks, the Trust received five responses, with all in favour of the change.
- Planning permission is not required as no major works are required. Existing classrooms can be utilised.
- The board discussed the governance arrangements and finances.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Decisions taken by another RSC

Project: Whether to approve the physical expansion of capacity at Hill Avenue Academy, Wolverhampton.

HTB discussion:

- The Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West acted as decision maker for this project.
- Hill Avenue Academy, Wolverhampton LA, would like to expand their physical capacity through internal remodelling and creating additional accommodation.
- A four-week consultation took place, responses were received however some objections were received regarding traffic and transport. The Trust is working with the Highways Department to resolve this.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner, Andrew Warren

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve an application from St Dominic's Catholic Primary School, Staffordshire, for a physical expansion and an increase in age range.

HTB discussion:

- St. Dominic's is a Catholic primary school, Staffordshire LA, with 203 pupils and a current capacity of 210.
- St Dominic's was rated 'Good' by Ofsted during a short inspection in 2019 and rated 'Good' at its last full inspection in 2012.
- The proposed nursery will enable St Dominic's to meet the needs of the local community and the wider Catholic Parish boundary.
- A six-week consultation has taken place with no objections raised.
- 26 nursery places are to be provided and the LA have reviewed and supported the plans and all safety aspects have been satisfied.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an application from The Bishops' Blue Coat Church of England High School, Cheshire West and Chester, for a physical expansion and an increase in age range.

HTB discussion:

- The Bishops' Blue Coat CE High School Academy Trust formed in April 2011 with one school: The Bishop's Blue Coat Church of England High School, Cheshire West and Chester LA.
- This is an LA led request to expand capacity by 150, on a phased basis beginning September 2021 by increasing Published Admission Numbers.
- Planning permission has been received; LA and Diocesan consent gained; consultation completed with no objections.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.