



Notes of Meeting: South West Headteacher Board

25 February 2021

Attendance

Attendance data is published annually on the GOV.UK website.

HTB members who sent apologies 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

- Hannah Woodhouse (RSC)

Headteacher board (HTB) members

- Brian Hooper (HTB)
- Suzanne Flack (HTB)
- Sally Apps (HTB)
- Steve Savory (HTB)
- Paul Jones (HTB)
- Michael Larsen (HTB)
- Alun Williams (HTB)
- Joy Tubbs (HTB)

Guests

- Colleen Collett (Director for School and Colleges at Clifton Diocese)
- Lyn Murray (CEO of Clifton Diocese)
- Paul Kehoe (Partnerships advisor for Clifton Diocese)

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Lucy Gordon (Deputy Director)
- Matt Stevenson (Deputy Director)

General discussion points

Representations

- 11 representations received for St Catherine's Catholic Primary School (Plymouth CAST), Dorset, to discuss viability options.
- 1 representation for transfer of Trewirgie Infant School (SAT), **Cornwall** to Truro and Penwith Academy Trust
- These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

Clifton Diocese: schools strategy update

- Clifton Diocese provided an update on their schools' strategy and in particular their approach to develop and move their schools into multi-academy trusts. They anticipate that schools will bring three trust applications to HTB during the summer term.
- The discussion covered: work with seven partnerships across the Diocese, the geographical spread of the Clifton schools, the number of schools vulnerable or judged inadequate in the Diocese, a focus on standards and school improvement capacity as well as the sustainability of Catholic education, support and leadership capacity needed to develop the new MATs and joint working between schools, the Diocese and the RDD team.
- HTB members were keen to help support this work.

Colleen, Paul and Lyn left the meeting.

Strategic update from Hannah Woodhouse, RSC SW

- The reopening announcement and guidance is out this week for all schools.
- Lots of discussion around testing and capacity, some movement to bring secondary students in early for testing and flexibility to extend the testing into the second week.
- Announcement around funding for recovery-more to follow.
- Exams announcement expected soon.

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 change

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of Hotwells Primary School (SAT), Bristol to Cathedral Schools Trust

HTB discussion:

- Discussed the transfer of this one form entry school, judged RI in September 2018.
- Noted the declining numbers on roll.
- HTB members were made aware of the strong historical relationship between the trusts and shared ethos and values.

- The proposal is supported by staff, parents, and local communities.
- HTB members noted that the number of members at Cathedral Schools Trust is higher due to VC articles/heritage of the trust.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of St Ives Infant School (SAT), Cornwall to The Rainbow Multi Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

- The school is Ofsted rated Good and has voted to join The Rainbow MAT.
- Rainbow have been supporting the school during the pandemic.
- The trust formed in 2014 and has never subsequently been to HTB. It has reviewed its governance structure and strategy for growth over the last 12-18 months.
- Officials provided HTB members with an update regarding the Cornwall delivery team's joint strategic discussions with the Diocese of Truro about its schools and trusts.
- HTB members discussed the governance structure and the remaining overlap between some tiers of governance, which may need to be addressed as the trust grows.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conditions:

- The MAT to update its funding agreement, and that of all its schools, to the latest model version prior to transfer.
- Rainbow to develop a plan on ensuring maximum separation of its tiers of governance, to ensure clear accountability.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of Trewirgie Infant School (SAT), Cornwall to Truro and Penwith Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

- The school has voted to join Truro & Penwith Academy Trust (TPAT) following a successful period of partnership working.
- HTB members discussed the school sharing a site with Trewirgie Junior School (TJS), following a representation made regarding the schools' working relationship. It was hoped that TPAT could foster good relations with TJS should the school join the MAT.
- HTB members were clear that this was a good choice for Trewirgie Infant School.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of the following schools from Eggbuckland Community College Academy Trust to Westcountry Schools Trust:

- **Eggbuckland Community College, Plymouth**
- **Austin Farm Academy, Plymouth**

HTB discussion:

- Both schools have voted to join the Westcountry Schools Trust.
- The board discussed WeST's recent growth as well as recruitment of additional central school improvement capacity in both the primary and secondary phase.
- HTB members discussed governance and asked about the "hub structure" referred to in documents provided by the MAT. It was explained that this relates to operational hubs rather than hub governance. HTB members suggested the trust should consider whether it should move to a hub model of governance over time
- HTB members discussed the role of Chair of Trustees and Member meetings. The board noted compliance in the separation of tiers of governance.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Converter academy orders

Project: Whether to approve Banwell Primary School, North Somerset converting to academy status and joining Extend Learning Academies Network

HTB discussion:

- HTB members noted that Banwell Primary School is an Ofsted good school with good performance.
- HTB members discussed that Extended Learning Academies Network (ELAN) is a good match with the school and the school have been supported by the trust in the past with school improvement.
- HTB members noted that ELAN's performance data has declined recently. However, the trust is focused on development and have external support to help improve outcomes.
- HTB members noted that they only have four members but ideally they should have five or three.
- HTB members noted that there is much work required to bring about further improvement across the trust and it was felt that Banwell Primary School should bring capacity.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: the trust will need to demonstrate further school improvement impact should it wish to grow in the future. Project lead to inform school and trust.

Sponsor application

Project: Whether to approve a sponsor application for Primary QuEST Multi Academy Trust, Gloucestershire to become an approved sponsor

HTB discussion:

- HTB were made aware that this application comes ahead of any immediate need to support a school and given the limited number of sponsors in Gloucestershire is about building capacity ahead of time.
- It was noted that the Diocese support this application as a mixed MAT and in terms of the numbers of church schools in the immediate vicinity to this MAT, noting that this would provide capacity in the future when needed.
- HTB members noted strength in both leadership and governance in the trust.
- HTB members were made aware that the trust is supporting another school with an Ofsted double Requires Improvement judgement which is progressing well. They are also supporting other schools in the area.
- HTB members discussed that this is an ambitious small trust who have worked hard with some challenging schools.
- HTB members noted that capacity for sponsorship is the key for the future.

RSC decision: approve.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: Project lead to inform trust.

Significant Change

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Knowle DGE Academy, Bristol (Learn@ MAT) to increase post-16 SEND capacity

HTB discussion:

- HTB members were made aware that the trust is applying to increase from 20-40 places.
- HTB members noted that no concerns raised during the consultation process and it has the support of the Local Authority.

RSC decision: Approved by internal meeting on 23 February 2021.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Warning termination notices or termination notices

Project: To seek an in-principle decision to terminate the Funding Agreement for Severn View Academy, Gloucestershire

HTB discussion:

- HTB members were made aware that this is a very small primary school in Stroud, that is part of Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), the school is currently judged Ofsted Requires Improvement.
- The school has a capacity of 210 but there are only 30 pupils currently on role and numbers are falling.
- HTB members noted the availability for local schools to accommodate these pupils.
- Department officials have spoken with the MP and she understands the rationale to explore closure.
- HTB members were made aware that AET have met with most of the parents and whilst they are saddened about the proposed the majority have accepted that the trust is looking to explore closure.
- HTB members were advised that this is an in-principle decision, as the Minister will take the final decision. This will include receipt of a costed closure plan, and a listening period before a final decision is taken.
- HTB members expressed concerns about standards in some AET schools in the South West.
- HTB members discussed the proposition of transferring the school to another trust. This was not considered a viable option, given its size, location and falling pupil numbers.
- HTB members noted there is concern about the practicality of moving pupils to new setting but were assured that appropriate planning was in place and most parents were already in the process of securing new places.

RSC decision: Approved in principle.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust and take this forward.

Discussion on academy, free school, UTC and studio performance (not for decision)

Project: St Catherine's Catholic Primary School (Plymouth CAST), Dorset, to discuss viability options

- 11 representations received by the Department which opposed to the option of terminating the funding agreement.

HTB discussion:

- St Catherine's Catholic Primary School was placed in Special Measures in March 2019. Pupil numbers have declined significantly from 134 in September 2019 reducing to 48 now (against a capacity of 209).

- HTB members considered the accountability of the trust for the trajectory of the school. Officials explained the ongoing challenge and support provided to the school.
- HTB members also discussed pupil numbers and sufficiency in Wimborne and it was noted there is capacity in the area should it be needed.
- Department officials reported that the school is forecasting a deficit, even if staffing restructures were made. This means changing the school's phase from primary to first school would not support viability.
- HTB members noted that transfer to a financially resilient trust could be an alternative. Transfer to MATs within the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth was explored by the Diocese, but those trusts were not deemed to have capacity to support the school at this time.
- Alternative transfer options would mean a change/loss of faith designation, which the Diocese strongly opposes as they own the land and buildings. HTB members questioned this, noting that there are examples where Church of England Dioceses own the land and buildings, but the schools are within mixed/non-faith trusts.
- The RSC decided to request further detail from the Diocese on the legal position of the school's land to reconsider transfer alternatives.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform trust and Diocese of the discussion and to seek further information.

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve a retrospective significant change application for Cheltenham Bournside School and Sixth Form Centre, Gloucestershire to increase capacity

Discussion:

- The school has a low progress score.
- Failure to seek approval for this change was an oversight by the previous headteacher. The new headteachers has an action plan to work on raising progress.

RSC decision: Approved by internal meeting on 23 February 2021.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a retrospective significant change application for Churchill Academy and Sixth form, North Somerset to increase capacity

Discussion:

- Attendees discussed that this proposal was in two parts, the first was for retrospective approval to increase capacity. The second is a prospective request to increase capacity at the sixth form.
- The second proposal will need to be escalated to the National Schools Commissioner and Minister for final approval. It was noted that the sixth form does not impact on other providers and there are no objections locally.
- HTB members considered that it makes sense for the school to join a local trust.

- Attendees noted the below average performance for disadvantaged pupils and an historic Ofsted outstanding judgement.

RSC decision: Approve retrospective decision and approve in principle the prospective elements of the proposals, pending approval from the National Schools Commissioner and the Minister

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Queen's Crescent School (Pickwick Academy Trust), Wiltshire to increase capacity

HTB discussion:

- Attendees discussed this retrospective significant change; the proposal underwent a consultation last year.
- HTB members considered trust educational and financial performance.

RSC decision: approve.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: Project lead to inform school and trust.

Academy opening approved in principle.

Academy Openers

Project: Dartington CoE Primary School, Devon (Learning Academy Partnership (South West))

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Orchard Manor School, Devon (Special Partnership Trust)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Tuffley Primary School, Gloucestershire (SAND Academies Trust)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Tor Bridge Primary School, Plymouth (The Inspire Multi Academy Trust (South West))

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: St Peter's CofE Primary School, Plymouth (St Christopher's CofE (Primary Multi-Academy Trust))

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Sky College, Somerset (Learn@ MAT)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: East Huntspill School, Somerset (The Priory Learning Trust)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: West Huntspill Community Primary School, Somerset (The Priory Learning Trust)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Chipping Sodbury School, South Gloucestershire, (The Athelstan Trust)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Academy Transfers

Project: Sexey's School, Somerset (Quantock Education Trust)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Hayesfield Girls School, BANES (Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Nansloe Academy, Cornwall (ASPIRE Academy Trust)

RSC discussion:

- Opening date 1 April
- No issues raised.

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No action required.