



Department
for Education

Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Headteacher Board

Date of meeting – 20 May 2021

Attendance

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

HTB members who sent their apologies for the meeting have, where possible, been consulted on all projects before the meeting. Their views are reflected in the discussion at the meeting (where appropriate). This excludes items where that member declared a conflict of interest.

Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) chair

- Andrew Warren

Headteacher Board (HTB) members

- Kate Brunt.
- Mike Donoghue.
- Dame Mo Brennan.
- Sir Mark Grundy.
- Sinead Smith.
- Sajid Gulzar.
- Margaret Yates.

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- None.

DfE senior civil servants

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

Representations received

- No representations were made for any items discussed at this meeting.

General Discussion Points

Local Update

- The RSC and HTB members discussed the current climate in schools across the West Midlands Region.

HTB member reflections

- HTB members reflected on their experiences in schools including the summer school and transition days.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: St Chad's Church of England (VC) Primary School, Staffordshire and St Michael's Church of England (C) Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership trust.

HTB discussion:

- St Michael's CofE (C) Primary School and St Chad's Church of England (VC) Primary School are both primaries located in Staffordshire, both schools currently hold an Ofsted rating of 'Good' from 2017.
- ATLP is made up of 14 schools (11 converter academies and 3 sponsored academies), plus a School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) programme and a teaching school.
- St Michael's have benefited from a long-standing relationship with ATLP for many years as a strategic partner in their teaching school alliance.
- Trust capacity was discussed by the board, noting their improvement support with other schools as the trust has grown considerably over the last 2 years.
- ATLP's governance and accountability framework has recently been revised, following departmental recommendations and they are aware of their need for a trustee; a new member will be appointed in the next few months.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Kate Brunt

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of decision.

Sponsored Route:

Points discussed in relation to a school's sponsor status.

Project: Birches Green Junior School, Birmingham to be sponsored by Robin Hood Multi Academy Trust.

Reason for Academy Order: Ofsted Category 4.

HTB discussion:

- Birches Green Junior School is a small junior school based in Birmingham with a current Ofsted judgement of 'Inadequate' from July 2019.
- Birmingham LA submitted a business case to allow the school to merge with the infant school on the school's site. This was discussed at a meeting between the RSC and the Minister in November 2020. The Minister's preference was to progress with seeking a sponsor.
- Robin Hood MAT currently consists of four schools, situated across Birmingham and Solihull. The MAT have already started introductions with both the junior and infant school.
- The board discussed the capacity at Robin Hood including the school improvement capacity planned for Birches Green.
- Governance was reviewed by the board, with discussions on the updated trustee boards and safeguarding inspections.
- The board members supported the recommendation, with the RSC recommending a School Management Resource Advisor (SMRA) once the project is finalised.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school and trust.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes application(s).

Project: Solihull Alternative Provision Academy, Solihull, to increase capacity.

HTB discussion:

- Solihull Academy is an alternative provision free school supporting pupils aged 13-16, with a wide range of complex additional needs, situated within Solihull LA.
- The academy have applied to increase its overall capacity through an age range change and also to open a short-stay assessment and intervention satellite site.
- Solihull Academy have good working relationships with the LA.
- The LA wholly supportive of the change, due to growing demand for secondary alternative provision.
- The quality of the offsite provision was considered by the board as well as the capacity in the local area.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform school of decision.

Project: Mill View Primary, Cheshire and Chester, to increase their age range.

HTB discussion:

- Mill View Primary School is 1 of 5 primaries in the Cheshire Academies Trust, situated within the Chester West and Chester Local Authority. At their last Ofsted inspection in 2013 they were rated 'Outstanding'.
- The primary would like to lower their age range to enable them to open a nursery class as demand in the area is high.
- The nursery have a current building project with planning permission granted by the LA for a purpose built cabin to be built on separate land. Upon approval, work will commence in September 2021, ready to use by September 2022.
- The board discussed the school's capacity, expertise and governance and highlighted the primaries' trustee and member numbers.
- The board members supported the recommendation, with the RSC recommending that the trust include a long-term strategy within their estate's management plan for the replacement of the purpose built cabin. There is also a recommendation for the trust to consider whether a land consent application is required.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform school of decision.

Project: Studley High School, Warwickshire, a physical expansion.

HTB discussion:

- Studley High School is a secondary academy located in the village of Studley, Warwickshire; the school is currently rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.
- As the High School is oversubscribed, they have applied for a physical expansion to increase capacity.
- Neither Warwickshire nor Worcestershire Local Authority see a need for the extra capacity in the areas.
- Although the school has shown strong outcomes, the board discussed the impact of the change on the local community and surrounding schools, leading to a negative impact on sustainability, pupil numbers and financial health.
- The board members did not recommend the proposal at this time and the RSC declined the project.

RSC decision: Decline.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform school of decision.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to a new trust.

Project: West Coventry Academy to The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, Warwickshire.

HTB discussion:

- West Coventry Academy (WCA) is a large secondary school, which is currently a Single Academy Trust situated in Coventry. It was rated 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in October 2019.
- WCA has been working with ATLP since the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year and have established a strong working relationship.
- WCA was established following the merger between a local girls' school and a boys' school to form one co-educational establishment.
- Sustainability, viability and financial management were all discussed by the board, considering the plans on supporting growth and capacity for the trust.
- The board members supported the recommendation, with the RSC recommending a SMRA post transfer due to financial challenges managing a new build.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Kate Brunt.

Further actions required: To inform the trusts.

Project: The Holy Family Multi Academy Company, Warwickshire, to Our Lady of Lourdes Multi Academy Company, Worcestershire.

HTB discussion:

- The Holy Family MAC is a 6 school trust (1 secondary and 5 primaries). 4 of its schools are located in Warwickshire and 2 in Worcestershire.
- Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi Academy Company (OLOL MAC) was formed in July 2014 when 4 schools in Worcestershire converted to form the MAC.
- The Holy Family MAC and Our Lady of Lourdes MAC are seeking to merge, creating the Our Lady of the Magnificat MAC which will comprise of 12 schools. This will formalise links and add capacity for school improvement across the schools.
- School improvement capacity was discussed as there will be 3 schools judged as 'Requires Improvement' within the MAC, requiring school improvement support.
- The board also considered the MAC's governance as an interim improvement board had been established with the local governing board being suspended.
- The board highlighted the significant challenges that this project presented to the new trust, and in the light of this discussion the RSC set in place a list of conditions as follows;
 - the trust will submit minutes of trust board meetings for both MACs, (the shadow board, and the merged MAC), from February 2021 up to and including November 2021.
 - A full breakdown of the MAC's assessment of the challenges facing the following schools and the trust's plans to meet these challenges to be

submitted by June 2021 for: St Thomas More Catholic First School, Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, St Benedict's Catholic High School and Trinity Catholic School.

- An external Governance Review of the merged MAC is to be completed in the first quarter of 2022 and the final report and action plan are to be shared with the DfE no later than April 2022.
- There will be a period of consolidation for the new MAC of 9 months from the date of transfer of the 6 Holy Family academies, during which the RSC will not support further growth.
- A three-year financial plan for the new MAC will be submitted by July 2021.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the trusts.

Project: South Warwickshire Academy Trust of Welcombe Hills School to join Unity Multi Academy Trust, Warwickshire.

HTB discussion:

- Welcombe Hills is a broad-spectrum special school in Warwickshire, the only remaining member school of South Warwickshire Academy Trust (SWAT). The school was rated 'Good' upon a full inspection by Ofsted in June 2013, and again at a short inspection in December 2017.
- Unity MAT consists of two schools in Warwickshire: Brooke School and Woodlands. Both schools are broad-spectrum special schools, with Ofsted 'Good' ratings.
- Both trusts have established a working relationship with the school's headteachers, working closely sharing resources and best practice.
- The board discussed finances at both trusts, and the viability and sustainability this transfer would lead to.
- The board members supported the recommendation, with the RSC recommending a School Management Resource Advisor (SMRA) post transfer.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the trusts.

Project: Waseley Hills High School to Central RSA Academies Trust, Worcestershire.

HTB discussion:

- Waseley Hills High School is a secondary school in Worcestershire, the school was rated 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in June 2018.
- Central RSA has worked intensively with the trust since February 2020, to mitigate high risks, including financial systems, estates, and compliance. Support has been provided to revise the curriculum offer to one that can be staffed sustainably.
- Governance, finances and the local area were discussed by the board, including a conversation with a focus on educational performance and the effectiveness of governances following reviews of safeguarding practices.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school and trust.

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

List of decisions taken by the RSC outside of HTB meetings.

Project: Barr's Hill School and Community College, Coventry.

Decision type: Significant Change to increase Pupil Admission Numbers.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

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

Project: St Austin's Catholic Primary School, Staffordshire

Type of decision: Significant Change.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Approved outside of the meeting.