

Notes of Meeting: North

Thursday 6 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 school commissioner (RSC) chair

- Katherine Cowell (RSC)

Headteacher board (HTB) members

- Zoe Carr (HTB)
- George Beveridge (HTB)
- Lesley Powell (HTB)
- Nick Hurn (HTB)
- Elizabeth Horne (HTB)
- Andy Bayston (HTB)
- Chris Clarke (HTB)
- Sir Michael Wilkins (HTB)

Guests

- Deborah Fox, Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle
- Anita Bath - CEO of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
- Brendan Tapping - CEO of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- None

Representations received

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

General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

RSC Update

RSC welcomed board members to the meeting. RSC discussed the Secretary of State's speech regarding the future direction for academies.

Significant Change

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

Project: This is a proposal to lower the age range at The Rydal Academy, Darlington

HTB discussion:

- The Rydal Academy was judged by Ofsted to be Good in May 2016
- The Rydal Academy is a 3-11 mainstream primary school, it currently has nursery provision for 3 and 4 year old children, the board was advised that they wish to extend the provision to accommodate 2 year olds.
- The board was informed that the academy has the physical capacity to meet the increase in numbers.
- The board was advised that formal consultation has been carried out; the responses received were positive and supported the proposal.
- The board was informed that parents have already expressed an interest in the 2 year old places.
- The board discussed the trust finances and agreed that the trust should provide a 5 year financial plan.
- The board supported this proposal with condition pending the request for a 5 year financial plan.

RSC decision: Approve with condition

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Significant Change

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

Project: This is a proposal to change the age range at Hardwick Green Primary Academy, Sunderland.

HTB discussion:

- Hardwick Green Primary Academy is a 3-11 mainstream primary school, it currently has nursery provision for 3 and 4 year old children. The board was advised that due to demand within the area, the trust wish to expand the provision to accommodate 2 year olds.
- Hardwick Green was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in May 2019.
- The academy has the physical capacity to accommodate the increase in numbers.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; the responses received were positive and supported the proposal. The board was informed that the local authority was supportive, and parents have already expressed an interest in using the provision.
- 2019 data showed that performance was below the national average, the board was advised that the trust is confident that improvements have been made.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Significant Change

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

Project: This is a proposal to increase the physical capacity and to include a satellite expansion at Catcote Academy, Hartlepool

HTB discussion:

- The board was advised that this proposal will include a new build which will allow the school to provide for a continued growth in numbers.
- The board was informed that the increase in pupil numbers is partially retrospective to take into account numbers already on roll as well as to accommodate larger numbers from September 2021, taking the overall capacity up to 200.
- In addition, the academy would also like to expand into a nearby vacant premises which will help the delivery of education and training for post 16 students who currently attend the main site.
- The board was informed that this proposal will enable the LA to continue to provide places for local children and should reduce transport costs and out of borough placements.
- Catcote Academy was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in March 2020.
- The board was advised that formal consultation has been carried out; the response received was positive and supported the proposal.
- The academy accepted the offer of a SRMA deployment and will review the recommendations.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Significant Change

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

Project: This is a proposal to increase capacity at St Wilfrid's College, South Tyneside

HTB discussion:

- St.Wilfrid's is a Roman Catholic Specialist College catering for pupils aged 11-19 and is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust.
- St.Wilfrid's was judged by Ofsted to be 'Outstanding' in October 2018.
- The board was advised that St Wilfrid's is already operating over capacity. The forecast suggests that pupil numbers will increase further, resulting in a shortfall of basic teaching space and available dining hall.
- The Diocese and LA are both supportive of the proposal to increase capacity.
- Planning permission has been granted, subject to RSC approval the work is projected to be completed by December 2021.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; the responses received have been addressed by the trust.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Significant Change

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

Project: This is a proposal to support the closure of the sixth form provision and in year admission change at Whitworth Park Academy sixth form, Durham

HTB discussion:

- Whitworth Park has applied to change the age range of the school by permanently removing its sixth form provision effective immediately.
- The board was advised that sixth form admissions have been suspended since 2017.
- The sixth form had suffered from a decline in pupil numbers and in tandem with that they received an 'Inadequate' Ofsted judgement in 2016.
- Following the decline in sixth form numbers and the inadequate judgement a joint decision was reached by Whitworth's governing body and Durham LA to suspend admissions in 2017.
- The school joined Advanced Learning Partnership in September 2018, removing the sixth form has allowed the trust to focus solely on school improvement for 11-16 year olds.
- The board was advised that formal consultation has been carried out; responses received was positive and supported the proposal.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

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

Project: North Yorkshire local authority's recommendation of the sponsor of the new primary free school at the Manse Farm development, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire

HTB discussion:

- This proposal supports North Yorkshire County Council's (NYCC) strategy to meet the demand for primary places arising in the Manse Farm area of Knaresborough in North Yorkshire.
- The board was advised that the proposed new 3-11 primary school will provide additional school place capacity for the whole of the Knaresborough town and the immediate area.
- The free school is scheduled to open for September 2023, on completion, the school will be transferred to the successful academy trust on a 125-year lease.
- Following an expression of interest exercise and subsequent interview process from a number of strong trusts, the board was advised that the preferred sponsor is Elevate Multi Academy Trust.
- Elevate is a 12 school multi academy trust based in North Yorkshire and Leeds. The CEO has a track record of improving educational outcomes in Knaresborough.
- Elevate already successfully operates 3 schools in Knaresborough, so their local knowledge and experience was an obvious strength. This local capacity places them in a good position to respond flexibly to the challenges of developing new provision in response to housing growth.
- Current trust governance structure is in line with DfE expectations.
- The board agreed this was a good strategic fit and therefore supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Sir Michael Wilkins & Andy Bayston were not present and did not receive papers for this item

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

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

Project: North Yorkshire local authority's recommendation of the sponsor of the new primary free school at the North Northallerton development, Northallerton, North Yorkshire

HTB discussion:

- This proposal supports North Yorkshire County Council's (NYCC) strategy to meet the demand for primary places arising in the North Northallerton Development Area in North Yorkshire.
- The proposed new 4-11 primary school would serve the immediate growth area generated by a significant housing development. It will also support general school place sufficiency in Northallerton.
- The free school is scheduled to open for September 2022, but this will be kept under review to determine what impact the pandemic has had on housing growth.
- On completion, the school will be transferred to the successful academy trust on a 125-year lease.
- Following an expression of interest exercise and subsequent interview process from a number of strong trusts, the board was advised that the preferred sponsor is Dales Academies Trust.
- The board was advised that the Dales is a 14 school multi academy trust based in North Yorkshire and Stockton. The new school would be established as a Church of England school, this proposal will complement and enhance the local offer giving parents opportunity and choice.
- The trust is focused on developing local community relationships and will engage with local schools at an early stage.
- The Dales impressed NYCC by their vision and plans, especially the child centred and inclusive focus they reflected through their submission.
- Current trust governance structure is in line with DfE expectations.
- The board agreed this was a good strategic fit and therefore supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Sir Michael Wilkins & Andy Bayston were not present and did not receive papers for this item

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Decisions escalated to the NSC/Minister

List of decisions that have been escalated to the Minister.

Project: Wolsingham School, Durham

HTB advised on:

- The proposal is to permanently close the Post-16 provision at Wolsingham School and lower the age range from 11-18 to 11-16 from September 2021.
- Wolsingham School is a 11-18 academy.
- The school converted to academy status in 2020, joining Advance Learning Partnership (ALP).
- Wolsingham School was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in January 2015 as a maintained school, in May 2018 a short Ofsted inspection took place and the school remained 'Good'.
- The board was advised that the reduction in pupil numbers led to the suspension of the sixth form in 2017 as the provision became unviable.
- The trust has advised that the sixth form is not financially viable and is highly unlikely to be in the foreseeable future.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; five responses objecting to the proposal were received, all referring to distance and travelling time. The local MP also expressed concern about the proposal.
- Due to the differing views, the issue is deemed to be contentious, therefore the RSC escalated this proposal for decision to the Secretary of State.

RSC decision: Escalated to the Minister

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust that this proposal will be escalated to the Minister for decision.

Decisions escalated to the NSC/Minister

List of decisions that have been escalated to the Minister.

Project: North East Futures UTC, Newcastle

HTB advised on:

- North East Futures UTC proposes to launch a Key Stage 3 (KS3) cohort in September 2022 with a single form entry of up to 30 Year 7 students. This case has been presented to the board to provide comments prior to escalating to the minister for decision.
- The board was advised that the North East Futures UTC (NEF) is a technical school and 6th form specialising in Digital Technology and Healthcare Science.
- The board was informed that North East Futures has not yet been inspected by Ofsted, however, in absence of an inspection report an External Expert (EE) reviewed the UTC's business case.
- The board was advised that there is no performance data available because the UTC only opened in 2018.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; responses were largely supportive with one opposing response from another academy trust.
- The board discussed the proposal and had concerns due to the size of the cohort, and the impact this would have on students accessing a wider curriculum and a full secondary experience.
- The board expressed concerns at the large gap in age between the initial Year 7 students and those in year 10. The board was informed that the EE report suggested that the UTC's pastoral care seemed strong and confirmed the UTC had plans to ensure both cohorts of students would work together with other schools within the trust.
- The board accepted whilst there is a need for additional Year 7 places in Newcastle, it is not clear how many places would be taken given the UTC recruits from a wider catchment area.
- The board was not supportive of this proposal and suggested that North East Futures should work with schools in its trust and surrounding area to increase pupil numbers at Year 10.

RSC decision: Escalate for Ministerial decision

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust that this proposal will be escalated to the Minister for decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Our Lady of Lourdes RC VA Primary School, Durham, St Joseph's RC VA Primary School, Blackhall, Durham, St John Bosco RC Primary, Sunderland, St Bede's RC Primary, Jarrow, South Tyneside & St James RC Primary School, South Tyneside to convert and join Bishop Chadwick Catholic Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

- The board was advised that this proposal is in line with the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese's vision on Catholic education.
- Four schools have been rated 'Good' by Ofsted with St John Bosco being deemed 'Outstanding'.
- Educational performance varies across all schools, 2019 data suggests they are largely in line with the national average, however, there are some concerns with Our Lady of Lourdes. The board agreed that Our Lady of Lourdes would benefit from joining a strong trust with school improvement capacity.
- The board was advised that the schools feed into secondary schools who are already part of the trust, supporting transition.
- The board was advised that due to the deficits in some schools the trust will be asked to provide updated financial plans prior to any further schools joining the trust.
- The board was informed that as a result of a previous RSC decision a formal condition was approved to deploy a SRMA into the trust. DfE will continue to monitor trust progress to anticipate any possible risks as more schools join Bishop Chadwick CET.
- Trust governance structure is in line with DfE guidelines and includes a good mix of skills.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for St Joseph's RC VA Primary School & St Thomas More RC VA Primary School, Durham to convert and join Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Academy Trust (BWCET)

HTB discussion:

- The board was advised that this proposal is in line with the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese's vision on Catholic education.
- St Thomas More RC VA Primary School is part of the Federation of St Thomas More and St Joseph's RC VA Primary Schools.
- St Thomas More was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in October 2019 and St Joseph's retained its 'Good' in July 2018 following a short inspection.
- The board was advised that both schools feed into St Leonards Catholic School which is already part of the trust supporting transition.
- Both schools are below capacity, however, they are forecasting some small growth in the coming years.
- The board was advised that Bishop Wilkinson CET is a high performing trust with a strong trustee board and financial expertise.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Nick Hurn was not present and did not receive papers for this item

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Malton Community Primary School, North Yorkshire to convert and join Hull Collaborative Academy Trust (HCAT)

HTB discussion:

- The board was advised Malton Community Primary School does not meet our usual requirements for voluntary conversion. However, the school would greatly benefit from joining a strong trust and wishes to convert to academy status and join HCAT.
- Malton Community Primary was judged by Ofsted to be 'Requires Improvement' in March 2018.
- Following the Ofsted inspection in 2018 the school's outcomes declined, performance in 2019 was just below national average.
- HCAT trust believes it can offer quality support to the school to secure rapid and sustainable improvement.
- The board discussed the current governance structure as there are currently two trustee vacancies. HCAT has confirmed they will be appointing some additional financial expertise to the board.
- The board considered the geographic location as the nearest trust school is an hour away. The board was informed that the trust and school have considered how they will work together and neither see distance as a barrier. The board agreed the distance was not too far to work effectively together.
- The board supported this proposal with a condition that HCAT provides an updated trust level and school level financial plan detailing their projections for the next 3 years in advance of signing a funding agreement.

RSC decision: Approve with condition

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, North Yorkshire to convert and join Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

- The board was advised that this proposal is in line with the RC Diocese of Leeds vision on Catholic education.
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in September 2012, and remained 'Good' following a short inspection in January 2017.
- St Joseph's are keen to secure sustainable improvement by joining a MAT, along with other Catholic schools in the Diocese.
- Educational performance of the trust is relatively strong.
- The board discussed the current leadership and trust governance structure and was advised that the trust plan to appoint a substantive CEO.
- The trust has received support from an SRMA, which has enabled them to strengthen their fiscal management and governance.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision