



## Notes of Meeting: West Midlands 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

- Andrew Warren (RSC)

### Headteacher board (HTB) members

- Kate Brunt (HTB)
- Mike Donoghue (HTB)
- Dame Mo Brennan (HTB)
- Sir Mark Grundy (HTB)
- Sajid Gulzar (HTB)
- Margaret Yates (HTB)

### Guests

- None

### Apologies

- Sinead Smith (HTB)

### DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)
- Bhupinder Bhoday (Deputy Director)

## General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

- 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 Alderman's Green Community Primary School, **Coventry**, to convert and become an academy and join Triumph Multi Academy Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Alderman's Green Community Primary School is situated in Coventry; the primary was judged 'Requires Improvement' in December 2018.
- Triumph Trust is a one school Multi Academy Trust (MAT) consisting of Courthouse Green Primary School, which is currently rated 'Good' by Ofsted after a short inspection in Feb 2020.
- There is already an established relationship between Alderman's Green and Triumph Trust, with staff from Triumph supporting the development of leadership, curriculum and finances within Alderman's Green. There is also good locality, with Triumph Trust being located 1.3 miles away from Alderman's Green. Coventry Local Authority (LA) are also supportive of the proposal.
- Triumph Trust have been working with Courthouse Green to expand and strengthen its Governing Body, with 3 new governors being recruited. On joining the trust, the Alderman's Green Governing Body would report to the main Trust Board.
- The trust has shown they have experience turning around their lead school, the school was inspected by Ofsted in 2020 and judged to be providing a high-quality education for its children.
- The board considered all factors presented by the lead including the school's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision and the growth of the Trust.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Studley Community Infants' School, Wootton Wawen Church of England Primary School, The Ferncumbe Church of England Primary School, **Warwickshire**, to convert and become an academy and join Arden Forest Church of England Multi Academy Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Arden Forest MAT formed in April 2018, and consists of 4 Church of England (CofE) primary schools. All the schools are in South Warwickshire, in the area around Alcester.
- The Ferncumbe CofE Primary is an Ofsted 'Good' rated school that increase capacity to the trust. The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths has been significantly above local and national averages for the last 3 years.
- Wootton Wawen and Studley Infants are both 'Good' rated small, rural primary schools.
- Significant joint working with Studley Infants has already taken place and links exist between the parties.
- The academisation of Wootton Wawen and The Ferncumbe School is in line with the Diocese of Coventry's Strategic Organisation Plan. The Diocese is pro-academisation and is

keen to support their remaining LA-maintained schools joining strong church school-led MATs.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Schools and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to The Richard Clark First School, **Staffordshire**, to convert and become an academy and join Uttoxeter Learning Trust.

HTB discussion:

- The Richard Clarke First School is a smaller than average sized rural community school, located in the Abbots Bromley area of Rugeley, Staffordshire. With 124 pupils currently on roll, the single form entry school provides primary education to pupils from reception until Year 4.
- The Uttoxeter Learning Trust was formed in April 2017, it now contains 7 schools, (3 first, 3 middle and 1 high school). Six schools are Ofsted rated 'Good' and one is 'Outstanding'.
- In April 2019, the trust offered the school an associate membership for 12 months. This allowed them to evaluate whether joining the trust would be the right decision.
- Joining as an associate member has let the school work closely with the three First Schools within the Trust, whilst also benefitting from the Trust's central IT and Finance teams. Alongside this, The Richard Clarke First School feeds into both Thomas Alleyne's High School and Oldfields Hall Middle School within the Trust.
- The Uttoxeter Learning Trust currently has three primary phased first schools within their Trust and are keen for The Richard Clarke First School to join them as it is a like-minded locally geographical school which will support the development of their educational offer and capacity to improve further.
- The board reviewed the information presented and discussed a recommendation of an update from a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

RSC decision: Approved with recommendation.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Schools and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Langdale Primary School, **Staffordshire**, to convert and become an academy and join The Creative Learning Partnership Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Langdale Primary School is an average sized primary school with an age range of 3 to 11. The school has a current Ofsted grade of 'Good' after being previously ranked as 'Requires Improvement' in December 2014.
- The Creative Learning Partnership (CLP) was established in September 2016 by two Staffordshire primary schools, Hempstalls Primary and Parkside Primary. The MAT has grown to five schools over the course of three years.
- The governing body of the school believes that The Creative Learning Partnership Trust shares the same values and ethos as theirs, along with similar styles of planning and

delivery. The teaching school attached to this CLPT is also of great importance to their CPD programme.

- The trust includes a teaching school, Hempstalls Primary School, which is the lead school for the Hempstalls Teaching School Alliance (TSA). The TSA provides a range of support including school to school support, CPD and Initial Teacher Training. As part of the TSA, a range of National Leaders of Education (NLE), Specialist Leaders of Education (SLE) and Local Leaders of Education (LLE) are available to be deployed to support the Multi Academy Trust if needed.
- The trust is keen to expand in Staffordshire and Cheshire East following the successful improvement at one of their Primary Schools.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Audlem St James Church of England Primary School, **Cheshire East**, to convert and become an academy and join Brine Multi Academy Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Audlem St James is a smaller than average sized primary school situated in Crewe, Cheshire. It is an Ofsted 'Good' school and its Progress scores in Reading, Writing and Maths have been in line with the national average for the last three years. Brine Multi Academy Trust was originally formed in 2010 and became a MAT in 2016.
- The primary has an existing relationship with Brine MAT through their mutual membership of the Nantwich Educational Partnership (NEP), a federation of 14 primary and 2 secondary schools in the Nantwich area that share resources and support each other. Discussions for Audlem to join Brine MAT began in 2016 and have been steadily advancing ever since.
- Plans for growth have been taking shape since 2016 and Brine MAT now plans to grow further.
- Whilst discussing this project, the Regional Schools Commissioner has set conditions in place including: The trust to update the reserves policy and provide a copy, the trust to provide a date for an internal audit and share it with the Department for Education, Monthly management accounts to be provided for the 6 month embedding period. Furthermore a new SRMA deployment and an action plan to be provided within 6 weeks of the deployment, Integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP) analysis for the trust, a review of their governance, to seek out mentoring support, to update to the new Master Funding Agreement (MFA) and to amend their articles.

RSC decision: Approved with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Haslington Primary School, **Cheshire East**, to convert and become an academy and join Alexandra Academy Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Haslington Primary School is an average sized primary school located in Crewe, Cheshire East. Performance scores have dipped since the Ofsted 'Good' judgement in 2017, and after significant intervention from the trust, the school is now looking to join them.
- Alexandra Academy Trust was formed in 2016 and currently comprises of one Ofsted 'Outstanding' School (February 2011), Monks Coppenhall Academy. There is also a high level of children with SEND for a mainstream setting.
- The trust and school have an existing relationship. Whilst working together, the trust and Haslington School have established a similar ethos, vision, and curriculum. The trust has instilled consistency across the school in terms of expectations, behaviour, standards, and stability within the staff team. No statutory assessments have taken place since the support started.
- The trust have also provided SEND support through its experienced Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) lead, which has led to improvements in the SEND provision.
- Whilst discussing this project, the Regional Schools Commissioner has set conditions in place including: a restructure of the Trustee board which is to be completed in tandem with Haslington joining the trust, Monthly management accounts for the first 6 months after Haslington has joined The trust and for these to be submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and also an SRMA to conclude the visit that began in February 2020 at the earliest opportunity.

RSC decision: Approved with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

**Project:** Whether to issue an Academy Order to Clive Church of England Primary School, **Shropshire**, to convert and become an academy and join Fields Multi Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

- Clive Church of England Primary School is a small school located in Shropshire, with a current judgement from Ofsted of 'Good'. 71% of pupils met the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths in 2019, which is above the national average (65%).
- Fields Multi Academy Trust was formed in 2016 as a two-school Primary MAT. Both schools in the trust are Ofsted 'Good' and overall performance across the trust is good.
- The trust aims to ensure the sustainability of small rural primary schools, whilst maintaining the uniqueness of each individual school.
- Significant joint working has already taken place over the past two years and links exist between the parties. Clive's geographical links with Fields are strengthened by a shared Christian ethos and commitment to maintaining the uniqueness of small rural primary schools.
- Clive's Governing body undertook negotiations with the trust and feel the school has had the opportunity to trial the practical consequences of joining the MAT on an informal basis, concluding that the arrangements over the past two years have worked extremely well.
- The board reviewed the information presented and discussed a recommendation of an updated visit from a SRMA.

RSC decision: Approved in principle with a recommendation.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to St John Bosco Catholic Primary, **Sandwell**, to convert and become an academy and join St John Bosco Catholic Multi Academy Company and whether to approve St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, **Walsall**.

HTB discussion:

- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School located in Sandwell received a directive Academy Order (dAO) after they were judged 'Inadequate' by Ofsted in January 2018. They were due to join St Catherine of SIENA Multi Academy Company (MAC) on 1 September 2020, however following a change in leadership the MAC withdrew.
- Following this withdrawal, the Archdiocese of Birmingham approached St John Bosco MAC on behalf of the primary school and also approached them for St John Bosco Primary School to join the MAC which is an Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' Teaching School.
- The St John Bosco Multi Academy Company is a 5 school trust currently based in Sandwell and Dudley. The MAC has recently appointed a full time Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL) which has created further capacity in the trust to take on more schools.
- St Bernadette's will be the MAC's second sponsored project after taking Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School in April 2020.
- St John Bosco Primary School operate a teaching school. They have performed consistently above the national and LA averages and are a capacity giver. The School will help add to the trust's school improvement capacity to take on sponsored projects and further improve the schools that are already part of the MAC.
- The Primary School have also been providing School Improvement support to St Bernadette's since the withdrawal of St Catherine of SIENA's sponsorship.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Schools and Company to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to St Peter's Church of England Controlled Primary School, Bratton, **Telford and Wrekin**, to convert and become an academy to join St Chad's Academies Trust.

HTB discussion:

- St Peter's Church of England Controlled Primary School, Bratton is a larger than average primary school in Telford. The school is a voluntary controlled school with a Christian ethos and was judged to be 'Outstanding' when last inspected by Ofsted in May 2012.
- The school has reviewed multiple conversion options; having considered several elements including trust ethos, structures and opportunities for development, the school ultimately felt that St Chad's Academies Trust offered the best solution for its future development.
- St Chad's Academies Trust is the core Diocesan MAT within the Diocese of Lichfield. The trust supports church schools which are making decisions about converting to academy status, whilst maintaining and promoting its Christian ethos.
- The trust will reinforce the foundation of the school as a Church of England Primary School and provide it with the structures, support, and opportunities to the school. The vision, values and ethos of St Chad's Academies Trust fit with St Peter's.
- St Chad's has a clear school improvement strategy, which has been demonstrated in rising standards and recognition from Ofsted. Furthermore, the trust gives the employees at St Peter's the opportunity to work in other schools allowing their staff to gain experience.

- Whilst discussing this project, the Regional Schools Commissioner has set a condition in place and has requested an SRMA to visit.

RSC decision: Approved with a condition.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Schools and Trusts to be informed.

## Trust Transfer

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of the following from Learning Link Multi Academy Trust:

Dudley Wood Primary School to The Rivers Church of England Multi Academy Trust  
 Netherbrook Primary School to The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust  
 Kates Hill Primary School to Dudley Academies Trust  
 Sledmere Primary School to Perry Hall Multi Academy Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Learning Link Multi Academy Trust consists of four large primary schools: Netherbrook Primary; Sledmere Primary; Kates Hill Primary and Dudley Wood Primary. All four schools are in Dudley and are Ofsted rated 'Good'.
- A Financial Notice to Improve (FNI) was issued to the Trust in January 2020, due to concerns with the budget and with wider governance issues including an inability to identify members and trustees. This resulted in an investigation which is still ongoing.
- The Termination warning notice was issued on the 13th October 2020.
- The previous proposal was considered however there was a reconsideration of approach requested by the RSC and board members, leading to the matter being deferred.
- Kates Hill Primary to Dudley Academies Trust (DAT); DAT is made up of five schools, one of which is Blowers Green, an Ofsted 'Outstanding' primary school. The headteacher has a track record of working to support schools to secure improvement, both within and outside of the MAT. Kate's Hill is a feeder for St James' within DAT.
- Sledmere Primary to Perry Hall Multi Academy Trust; Perry Hall is a primary only MAT based in Wolverhampton, Perry Hall have the capacity to take on another school and the leadership team has been restructured to reflect the trust's decision to grow.
- Dudley Wood Primary to The Rivers CofE; The Rivers is a Primary only MAT based in Worcestershire. The Trust have recently taken on two schools in Sandwell which are geographically close to Dudley Wood, allowing a small hub to develop and bringing Rivers into Dudley LA which will add capacity.
- Netherbrook Primary to The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust. With a cluster of schools in the West Midlands based in Birmingham, Sandwell and Walsall LAs the addition of Netherbrook into the Trust will secure a footprint in Dudley. Nearby Rounds Green (school soon to join the Trust) is located 4 miles from the school and would allow for collaboration across the schools.
- Whilst discussing this project, the Regional Schools Commissioner has set a condition in place and has requested an SRMA is to visit Kate's Hill and Dudley Academies Trust.

RSC decision: Approved with conditions.

Conflicts: Mark Grundy and Kate Brunt.

Further actions required: Trusts to be informed.



## SAT to MAT Transfer and Free School Presumption

Project: Whether to approve a transfer of William Brookes Single Academy Trust, Shropshire, to join The 3-18 Education Trust, Shropshire, and for The 3-18 Education Trust to take on the Bowbrook Primary Free School (awarded via Presumption route).

HTB discussion:

- William Brookes is a 11-18 school, with an Ofsted rating of 'Good' given in Oct 2017 having progressed from 'special measures' in Feb 2017. It is oversubscribed at KS3 and KS4, plans to grow by 8% (due to local housing growth) to 1020 students.
- An SRMA had visited the 3-18 Education Trust (3-18 ET) in early 2020 and examined the MAT's curriculum through the ICFP toolkit; this same process will be applied to the SAT. The Trust are planning for growth in the Trust Central office, specifically to centralise attendance monitoring and to engage an Educational Welfare Officer.
- Since its formation in 2016, the Trust have changed their governance significantly, both in personnel, process, structure and reporting. All of this has been done to ensure that they have both the skills and capacity for growth and believe that such changes are now being embedded to manage this period of growth.
- Growth within the 3-18 Education Trust has been carefully analysed, The joining of William Brookes School has been factored in when the capacity to take on the Free School was ascertained.
- The Trust have been successful in their bid to take on a one form entry Primary Free School through the Shropshire Presumption route. The proposed school is due to open in September 2022.
- Whilst discussing this project, the Regional Schools Commissioner has set conditions in place including, an SMRA deployment, the trust is to provide 6 months of monthly management accounts and has to enter a period of consolidation. There was also a recommendation to review the trustee board.

RSC decision: Approved with conditions and a recommendation.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Trusts and School to be informed.

## Significant Change

Project: Whether to approve a reduction in capacity at the resource provision at Ivy Bank Primary School, **Cheshire East**.

HTB discussion:

- Ivy Bank Primary School opened as a converter academy on 1 March 2015 and is the sole academy within the Silk Academy Trust. The school currently has 454 pupils on roll with a capacity of 480 and is currently rated 'Good' by Ofsted (February 2018).
- Cheshire East LA commissioned a report into Resource Provision (RP) places across the county in July 2019. This report concluded that, due to concerns over the physical

environment and nature of the specialist placements being made, the recommended capacity for places should be reduced from 21 to 14.

- Governors believe it is the right time strategically for the school to reduce to 14 pupils where they will continue to be committed to the complex and specialist children they have in their care.
- Historically, Ivy Bank has had a resource provision since it opened in 1966 with a small provision moving to 15 places in 2002. From 2005 onwards, the provision had more children placed by the local authority where numbers have been 21 since academisation in March 2015. Within the past 10 years, there has been a shift in the profile in need of the children placed, a recent review by the local authority found the provision to be specialist and working as a unit rather than a resource provision.
- The trust proposed a reduction in capacity in the resource provision from 21 to 14.
- The board reviewed the information presented and the Regional Schools Commissioner has set condition of a visit from a SRMA.

RSC decision: Approved with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

## Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve an increase in capacity at Coton Green Primary School, Staffordshire.

HTB discussion:

- Coton Green Primary is a one form entry school located in Tamworth, that has requested to increase their Pupil Admission Number (PAN).
- The primary has a current PAN of 45 which would be increased by 15 extra places per year group, enabling further capacity and taking the school to a two form entry by the beginning of September 2021. This change will deliver 105 more places across the academy.
- Additional building capacity is required to accommodate the increase, this will be helped by a local scheme which has agreed to extend the school's teaching accommodation; including a studio, with a food bay area and 3 general teaching classrooms.
- From September 2021 the children will be taught in single age groups in order to achieve this work.
- A consultation has taken place and no negative responses were received.
- Staffordshire LA has approved the design and has approved the use of the secured section funding to be utilised for the provision of this expansion project.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a change in age range at Willaston Primary Academy, Cheshire East.

HTB discussion:

- Willaston Primary Academy is a 4-11 school based in Nantwich, Cheshire East. It currently has 221 pupils on roll against a capacity of 210 and is oversubscribed at entry point.
- The academy are requesting to change the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 to accommodate a nursery class of 30 children from September 2021.
- The local area currently has 4 housing developments which is estimated at increasing primary places by up to 64 pupils. Pupil numbers over the last three years have been increasing and the school are always over subscribed for reception class places.
- The school seeks to have an early year's environment fit for purpose that caters for the needs of Willaston. They will offer a wraparound care facility and increase their current capacity to support the families in their community who are working.
- The school already have qualified staff in place and have the site, the teaching and administration team which can manage a nursery within the school setting. The change will not require any physical expansion as the school already has additional space ready for a new class.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a Local Authority request of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) at Grove Primary School, Worcestershire.

HTB discussion:

- Grove Primary School is an averaged size LA maintained school catering for pupils aged between 2 and 11 and has approximately 200 pupils on roll. The primary school is currently judged as 'Good' by Ofsted.
- The School was forwarded a School Causing Concern letter by Worcestershire LA on 8 July 2020.
- The letter highlighted the concerns around governance, leadership and educational performance of the school and in addition poor financial management.
- Following this in a review meeting between the LA and the school the entire governing body of the school resigned. It was agreed that another board was set up in the short term.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and LA to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion at Welland Primary, Worcestershire.

HTB discussion:

- Welland Primary School is a Worcestershire based school with a current Ofsted rating of 'Good' from June 2018.
- The change is to expand the physical capacity of Welland Primary from 140 to 210 to accommodate 70 additional pupils generated by a PAN increase from September 2021.
- Worcestershire County Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient places for children and have identified that they need to provide additional places at Welland Primary from September 2021 due to forecasts and housing trajectories.
- The funding from the Basic Need Capital Programme 20/21 was approved by full council in February 2020 and is ready to start building work in January 2021.
- The school support the increase because there is a shortage of pupil places in the area, they are responding to parental and LA demand as well as benefitting the rest of the Trust.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion at St Bartholomew's Church of England, Wolverhampton.

HTB discussion:

- St Bartholomew's CofE is an Ofsted 'Outstanding' primary based in Wolverhampton.
- The school intend to expand their physical capacity through internal remodelling of their existing site and creating additional accommodation.
- The proposed change would increase PAN by 15 from 45 to 60 places. The school's capacity would increase from 315 to 420 and support the Council meet the basic need for providing additional school places.
- In 2015, the school supported the Local Authority in meeting demographic challenges, by increasing places to 60 within a bulge class. The same occurred in 2016, which means that St Bartholomew's has now put in place two consecutive bulges and has exhausted its capacity to offer additional temporary places.
- St Bartholomew's Trust approached the Local Authority regarding the expansion of the primary, from 1.5 forms of entry to 2 forms of entry. The Local Authority agreed that there was demand in the local area and that the expansion of the school would be included in the Council's Primary School Expansion Programme 2021 and 2022 (PSEP 2021 and 2022).
- It has been agreed that additional accommodation to provide teaching space and some internal remodelling of the existing accommodation is required to cater for the permanent increase in places.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and LA to be informed.