



Department
for Education

Notes of Meeting: NWLSC Headteacher Board

27 April 2021

Attendance

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

HTB members who sent apologies for absence 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 Schools Commissioner (RSC) chair

- Dame Kate Dethridge

Headteacher Board (HTB) members

- Sarah Bennett
- Dame Yasmin Bevan
- Dame Sue Bourne
- Sarah Brown
- Dr Jamie Clarke
- Claire Robins OBE

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Jo Thomas, Deputy Director, NWLSC

DfE senior civil servants

- None

Representations received

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

General discussion points

- HTB members were asked for reflections on future ways of working.
- Temperature check discussion points: exams, workload, summer schools and the wellbeing of pupils and staff.
- The March HTB meeting notes were agreed at the meeting.
- There was a conflict of interest for the following:
 - Sarah Bennett (item 1.4) – the member left the meeting during this discussion.
 - Dame Yasmin Bevan and Sarah Brown (item 1.5) – the members left the meeting during this discussion.

Discussion of projects, including decisions made by RSC with advice from HTB

North Sub-Region

Sponsor Application & Converter Academy Order

Project: Whether to approve the MAT sponsor application for Freman College SAT, **Hertfordshire**, to establish the Halcyon Trust.

Project: Whether to approve the academy order application made by Edwinstree Church of England Middle School, **Hertfordshire**, to join the proposed Halcyon Trust.

HTB discussion on both projects:

- HTB members expressed concerns over the performance results at Edwinstree CofE Middle School.
- HTB members appreciated that Freman College SAT is performing well with a need to join a Multi-Academy Trust.
- HTB members discussed the track record of school improvement at Freman College.
- HTB members discussed the proposed financial funding assessment from Freman College SAT.
- The RSC expressed the need for Freman College SAT to provide additional information on its track record of school improvement.

RSC decision: Decline.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform parties of the RSC decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: Whether to approve the academy order application made by Dundale School, Hertfordshire, to join Ridgeway Learning Partnership.

HTB discussion:

- HTB members expressed concerns about not seeing a detailed school improvement plan.
- HTB members discussed the finances of Ridgeway Learning Partnership, expressing the need for clear detail on what funds Dundale will receive.
- HTB members considered the benefits of the existing working partnership between the trust and Dundale School.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform parties of the RSC decision noting the following conditions: More detail needed on the trust charging policy, and for RSC to receive a detailed school improvement plan.

Sponsored Route

Project: Whether to approve Northampton Primary Academy Trust (NPAT) as the sponsor for Langland Community School, in **Milton Keynes**.

Reason for Academy Order: Ofsted Category 4

HTB discussion:

- HTB members discussed the financial concerns of the school and the Local Authority's commitment to help fund the staffing restructure.
- HTB members discussed the travel distance between the school and NPAT.
- HTB members expressed the need for a detailed school development plan.
- HTB members recognised NPAT's record on taking on challenging schools.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: Sarah Bennett – Sarah was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: Inform parties of the RSC decision. Condition: NPAT to provide detailed school development plan by end of May 2021.

Trust Change

Project: Whether to approve the voluntary transfer of 4 schools from Challenger Multi Academy Trust (MAT), **Bedford**, to Chiltern Learning Trust as part of Challenger MAT's request to close the Trust.

HTB discussion:

- HTB members discussed the financial issues which need to be resolved and agreed by ministers and HM Treasury prior to transfer.
- HTB members and RSC expressed concern that there were no individual school improvement plans.
- HTB members discussed the capacity of Chiltern Learning Trust (CLT) and the trust's growth.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: Dame Yasmin Bevan, Sarah Brown – both HTB members were not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: Inform parties of the RSC decision. Conditions: Financial circumstances are to be resolved to DfE satisfaction; More detailed individual school improvement plans to be provided.

West Sub-Region

Converter Academy Order

Project: Whether to approve the applications for the following **Buckinghamshire** schools: St Peter's Catholic Primary School (*Marlow*), St Edward's Catholic Junior School (*Aylesbury*), St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (*Gerrards Cross*), St Joseph's Catholic Infant School (*Aylesbury*), Our Lady's Catholic Primary School (*Amersham*) St Louis Catholic Primary School (*Aylesbury*) to join St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust.

HTB discussion:

- HTB members discussed St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust (STCAT)'s capability of supporting primary schools.
- HTB members expressed the need for confirmation of related party transactions and whether there are sufficient controls.
- HTB members considered the potential challenge due to the trust's rapid growth.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform parties of the RSC decision.

Trust Change

Project: Whether to approve the application from The Gold Rose MAT, **Slough**, to join The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.

HTB discussion:

- HTB members discussed the performance of the current schools within the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- HTB members considered the financial position of The Gold Rose MAT.
- HTB members reflected on the benefits of this project and supported the RSC decision to approve.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform parties of the RSC decision.

Significant Change

Project: Whether to approve the significant change application to extend the upper age limit at Faringdon Infant School, **Oxfordshire**, to include Year 3, 4, 5 and 6 to become a full primary school - (linked with item below)

Project: Whether to approve the significant change application to extend the lower age limit at Faringdon Junior School, **Oxfordshire**, to include Nursery, Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 to become a full primary school.

HTB discussion:

- HTB members discussed the board of trustees at Faringdon Learning Trust (FLT) and whether there was a need for more diverse expertise.
- HTB members considered the skills set of the board and the need to expand their expertise to run a full primary.
- HTB members discussed and received assurance about the stakeholder consultation that had taken place.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform parties of the RSC decision. Discuss with FLT the need to review skill set of the board of trustees.

Decisions escalated to the NSC/Minister

Project: Whether to recommend to the Minister the approval of the transfer of Buckinghamshire UTC, **Buckinghamshire**, to The Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust (MTOAT).

HTB discussion:

- HTB members reviewed recommendations to go to ministers in respect of the transfer of Buckinghamshire UTC to Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust (MTOAT).
- HTB members discussed the associated transfer costs and potential risks.
- HTB members considered other examples where other UTCs have succeeded in transferring this way.
- HTB members considered the capacity of MTOAT.
- HTB members reflected on the proposed financial support Bucks University have offered to the UTC.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Project Lead to recommend for Ministers approval on this transfer.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

- No academies in the region were opening on 1 May 2021.