



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Headteacher Board

19 November 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)
- Sinead Smith (HTB)
- Sajid Gulzar (HTB)
- Margaret Yates (HTB)

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

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

Representations received

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

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 Belgrave Primary School, Cheshire West and Chester, to convert and become an academy and join The Learning Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Belgrave Primary School is a one form entry primary school situated in Cheshire; the primary was judged 'Outstanding' in December 2009.
- The Learning Trust is comprised of 2 academies and 1 studio school, all located within Chester.
- Belgrave joining the Learning Trust will support staff expertise and development, with shared staff training and teaching in specific subjects, giving further opportunities for development across the age ranges. This will significantly support the transition from KS2 to KS3, particularly as the majority of students go on to attend Queen's Park High School.
- The trust see the addition of Belgrave as the kickstart for future growth by creating a primary hub serving both Christleton High School and Queen's Park High School. Discussions with a key feeder primary school to Christleton has taken place, which TLT will revisit.
- The board reviewed the information presented and discussed a recommendation of an update from a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Leftwich Community Primary School, Cheshire West and Chester, to convert and become an academy and join Weaver Trust.

HTB discussion:

- Leftwich Community Primary School is a smaller than average primary school in Cheshire. It is rated Ofsted 'Requires Improvement' and latest performance results are below national average.
- Weaver Trust, located in Chester, currently has 3 primary academies. Having recently taken on Comberbach Primary, an Ofsted 'Good' school that has added to Weaver's capacity, the trust is now looking to take on an underperforming school. Leftwich has been identified as an appropriate match.
- Leftwich is located within 6 miles of Weaver's schools, which has allowed for regular cross-working and sharing of best practice to develop over the years.
- Leftwich has an experienced governing board, which will transfer across into Weaver's Governance structure as a Local Governing Body (LGB) upon conversion.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School and Trust to be informed.

Trust Formation Project: Whether to approve the transfer of S.Peter's Collegiate Church of England School, Wolverhampton, an appropriate sponsor for The King's Church of England School, Wolverhampton and the conversions of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Staffordshire and The King's Church of England School, Staffordshire to form The Three Spires Multi Academy Trust.

HTB discussion:

- The formation of this Multi Academy Trust will bring together four church schools into a single Diocese of Lichfield MAT under the leadership of Emily Verow. This will enable the sponsorship of The King's CofE School as well as providing direction and support to St Peter's Collegiate Academy, St Thomas CofE Primary School and King's CofE School, Kidsgrove.
- Coupled with externally sourced School Improvement and Leadership support from the John Taylor MAT, Thomas Telford and the Diocese, the proposed MAT will be educating pupils across Staffordshire and Wolverhampton. The local nature of the MAT will allow sharing of expertise via commitment to joint Continuing Professional Development and middle leadership networks operating across the trust to secure school improvement.
- The Trust's School improvement partners, Chief Executive Officer, Trustees and the Diocese have an established capacity to support the MAT and a proven track record of the impact of partnership working through previous trust and school to school support arrangements across Key Stages (KS1-5).
- Joint working has already taken place and links exist between the schools. Both S. Peter's Collegiate Academy and The King's CofE School have been jointly supported by Emily Verow, the Diocese of Lichfield and John Taylor MAT.
- All the schools forming the Lichfield MAT have core principles that align, including the faith ethos, and this will ensure that all academies contribute to the development of each other in a collaborative culture of challenge and support.
- Following an in depth discussion amongst HTB members, the project was approved with the condition that on transfer of S. Peter's to the Three Spires Trust a restriction should be placed around governance of the new trust. Specifically, the restriction should limit the involvement of governors appointed as members or trustees of S. Peter's before May 2020. Members noted that new governors had been appointed since that date to strengthen the governance at S. Peter's. A one-year MAT financial plan within 3 weeks of the RSC decision and a three-year plan within 6 weeks of MAT opening, there will be a deployment of an SRMA to the MAT, monthly management accounts to be supplied from the MAT for the first 12 months, stronger discussions to be had with both school improvement supports looking into future plans.

RSC decision: Approved in principle with conditions.

Conflicts: Mike Donoghue

Further actions required: Schools and Trusts to be informed.

Trust Change

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of Learning Link Multi Academy Trust, Dudley, to Dudley 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 (FNtI) 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.
- Dudley Multi Academy Trust is made up of five schools, one of which is Blowers Green, an 'outstanding' primary school. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has a record of working to support schools to secure improvement, both within and outside of the MAT. All four LLMAT schools are in close proximity and feeder schools to DAT secondary schools.
- The current proposal was considered however additional information and a reconsideration of approach requested by the RSC and board members, leading to the matter being deferred to be considered at a future HTB meeting.

RSC decision: Deferred.

Conflicts: Mark Grundy.

Further actions required: Trusts to be informed.

Trust Change

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of Woodseaves Church of England Primary Academy, Haughton St Giles Church of England Primary Academy and Gnosall St Lawrence Church of England Primary Academy, Staffordshire, to St Bartholomews Church of England Multi Academy Trust.

HTB discussion:

- The Shire Learning Trust identified the need to join a local Trust to ensure its future sustainability and to continue to improve on the educational outcomes of its children. This had also been identified as part of previous conversations between the Trust and the DfE.
- The Shire Learning Trust will close, and its 3 schools will transfer to St Bartholomew's CE Multi Academy Trust. The merger will form a 7-school primary phase MAT with 3 schools located in Stafford and 4 schools in Wolverhampton
- The Shire Learning Trust is a primary phase MAT based in West Stafford. The MAT formed in April 2015. The DfE have been working closely with the trust in recent years.

- St. Bartholomew's is a four school MAT, with a footprint across Staffordshire and Wolverhampton. The trust is led by a National Leader of Education (NLE), the Head of the Teaching School Alliance and a previous Ofsted Inspector.
- St. Bartholomew's CofE Primary School (St Bart's) is an 'Outstanding' school (Jan 2014) and was designated as a part of a Teaching School Alliance in September 2015. The school converted to an academy with sponsor status in September 2016 and is recognised as a centre of excellence, due to its performance and record of raising standards in its own and other schools.
- Since 1 September 2020, the St Bartholomew's Chief Executive Officer and Director of Financial Operations (DFO) have been providing support to the Shire Learning Trust equivalent to 1 day a week. Both Trusts are working together and discussing structures with a collaborative approach to have even stronger leadership across all of the schools within the combined Trust.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Trust and Schools to be informed.

Significant Change

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion at Fountains Primary School, Staffordshire.

HTB discussion:

- The Fountains Primary School is a Special Academy, part of the Esteem Multi-Academy Trust (EMAT) located to the northeast of Burton-upon-Trent. The school caters for children aged from 2 to 11 and offers teaching for pupils with a wide variety of needs and disabilities.
- EMAT was established in August 2018 with 7 Derbyshire and 2 Staffordshire Special schools/PRUs. The schools in the trust have a range of special needs support and consequently have a substantial amount of expertise across the schools.
- The proposal is a physical expansion which will allow the school to accommodate an additional 30 pupils. This is due to Staffordshire County Council commissioning more pupil places, beyond the school's current physical capacity.
- Staffordshire County Council are in favour of the proposal. The local authority is the admissions body for this special school.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve the addition of a nursery and a change in age range at The Meadows Primary School, Staffordshire.

HTB discussion:

- The Meadows Primary School is a small school part of The Shaw Education Trust, located in Kidsgrove, Staffordshire. At the most recent Ofsted inspection in 2014, the school was rated “Good”.
- The Nursery and wrap-around care provision will be operating 50 weeks per year with effect from April 2021, which will be off-site at the Trusts secondary School, Madeley. There is currently no existing provision for 2-year-olds in the area and provision for 3-year olds is limited to term time only.
- There will be a change in the age range lowered by two years hence becoming provision for 2 to 11-year-olds (previously 4 to 11).
- A consultation has taken place and there were no objections and the LA advise that although there is no current unmet demand, future housing developments predict a future squeeze on early years capacity and are therefore in support of the nursery provision.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an age range increase at Holy Rosary Catholic Voluntary Academy, Staffordshire.

HTB discussion:

- Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School is smaller than average sized primary school in Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2017 and was judged to be “Inadequate”. The school joined St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust in September 2018 and has not yet been inspected as an academy.
- They are proposing to change the primary school's age range from 4-11 to 2-11 to include nursery school children for registration purposes.
- During the process of converting from a Catholic Voluntary School it was identified that the school had been operating a nursery provision under a management committee of the school.
- For registration purposes the age range of the academy must be altered to encompass the age of the nursery school children so they can be registered as pupils of the Academy.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Whether to approve an increase in capacity at Holy Trinity Catholic School, Birmingham

Decision type: Significant Change

Background:

- Holy Trinity is a secondary school situated in Birmingham; Ofsted last rated the school 'Good' in 2017.
- They are seeking an increase in capacity of the school to 775 pupils to accommodate an additional class, taking the PAN from 126 to 151.
- The LA supported the change, which they initiated and are supporting through capital funding to make the necessary changes to site to accommodate the additional pupils.
- The LA have identified basic need for the additional places.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a determination for collective worship at George Dixon's Academy, Birmingham.

Decision type: Significant Change

Background:

- George Dixon Academy is a secondary based in Edgbaston, Birmingham, with a current Ofsted rating of 'Good'.
- The academy has pupils from multiple faith backgrounds, including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and other. The Muslim population of the school is 57.9% and Christian make up 21.5% of the school population.
- The academy had previously applied and been granted a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) determination, however there is no record of this. The academy requested a renewal, which will last for another five years.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion at St Edmunds, Wolverhampton.

Decision type: Significant Change

Background:

- St Edmunds, a secondary academy based in Wolverhampton was previously approached by the LA to accept an extra 50 students above their PAN of 150, they accepted two consecutive groups and have exhausted the school's capacity.
- Following from this, the LA approached them with a proposal to permanently increase the academies Year 7 PAN from 150 to 200 (providing a total of 250 additional permanent places).
- The Proposal is to build additional dining space, changing rooms and three extra classrooms. Some non-teaching spaces would be repurposed as teaching spaces.
- A three-week online consultation was made through their website (due to COVID).

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a retrospective increase in capacity at Haybridge High School and Sixth form, Worcestershire.

Decision type: Significant Change

Background:

- School currently has 1218 pupils on roll and would like to increase their net capacity from 1221 to 1336 pupils.
- Over the past few years there was a marked increase in new housing developments within the local area.
- The LA are supportive of an increase to their PAN.
- For the PAN increase, an official consultation process was not needed as this was an increase in student numbers, however, local schools, staff and parents/carers were written to in September 2015 to notify them of the trust's intentions and no concerns were raised.
- Due to the locality of the new developments and the direct impact this was having, the school was awarded funding to build a new teaching block containing 4 new classrooms.
- The build was completed two years ago and is already in use / operation.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve Manor Hall Special School becoming a single sex school (boys only admissions), Stoke-on-Trent.

Decision type: Significant Change

Background:

- The recommendation is based on the premise that complex Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) pupils do not have the same boundaries or social literacy to keep themselves and others safe.
- Their behavioural choices can be impulsive. Most students will have suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) including physical and verbal abuse, physical and emotional neglect, experience of domestic violence, imprisonment of a family member, mental health issues in the home and divorce or bereavement.
- The Trust and LA believe ensuring equality for a small number (5-7 girls) across year groups is not feasible – grouping the girls in one class as a solution would create inequality of opportunity in itself with potential for 5 year groups within one class
- The plans for the school building inclusive of girls would be very different to that without. Plans have moved ahead after initial meetings between the Trust and LA to plan for a single sex offer.
- The LA have indicated that they will make other provision for SEMH girls within the authority.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: LA to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve a change in age range at Rushton CofE Primary, Staffordshire.

Decision type: Significant Change

Background:

- Proposing to change its age range change from 4-11 to 4-9. This will change the schools Primary status to a First School (YR-Y4).
- Staffordshire County Council has no objection to the proposal to change the age range to 4 years to 9 years at the School.
- This reflects the age range of a First School within the 3 tier system that operates within the locality of Leek and the surrounding Moorlands area.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.

Project: Whether to approve an increase in age range at Crewe UTC, Cheshire East.

Decision type: Significant Change

Background:

- The UTC is proposing a change in age range to allow Year 9 students to join the UTC from January 2021. Current recruitment is into Year 10 and Year 12.
- Proposal is supported by the Trust Board, Governing Body as well as by the Baker Dearing Educational Trust which oversees and supports all University Technical Colleges.
- There is a significant risk to these proposals that there is not the basic need within the Crewe area, that it may significantly negatively affect other Crewe schools, that the finances of the UTC may be adversely affected should pupil numbers not be achieved and that the proposed trust the UTC may join are looking to other areas (mainly Sixth Form) to strengthen the collaborative working between Crewe schools.
- The UTC is required, as a condition of funding, to join a MAT by the end of the academic year and to continue formalising those discussions, whilst continuing to develop the partnership working with Crewe schools

RSC decision: Rejected.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: School to be informed.