



Notes of Meeting: South-East England and South London

23 September 2021

Attendance

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

AB members who send their apologies for the meeting are, where possible, 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

- Claire Burton

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Jon Chaloner
- Stephen Carey
- Andrew Carter
- Mark Ducker
- Paula Farrow
- David Boyle
- Alison Beane

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Paul Schofield

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

RSC update

- Minutes from previous meeting agreed.
- An update on the election process for Advisory Board was provided. More information will be provided when the election website goes live.
- The Advisory Board reflected on priorities and issues across the regions including: future policy direction, Covid-19 and the return to school, school placements for children of Afghan arrivals.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Ditchling (St Margaret's) Church of England Primary School, East Sussex, and Albourne CofE Primary School, West Sussex, to join Hurst Education Trust

AB discussion: The benefits of converting to academy status and the formation of a MAT were discussed. The board noted that the college wants to create a MAT that is local and to work closely with the Diocese of Chichester.

The proposed trust's executive and governance structure was discussed, including the overlap with the college and the Diocese of Chichester. The trust's school improvement model was also discussed, as was capacity of the proposed MAT to support pupils with SEN.

RSC decision: Defer

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Clarification sought on whether any trustees would be providing 'hands-on' school improvement support and on the trust's primary/SEND expertise. Application then to be deferred to the National Schools Commissioner for a final decision.

Project: Uplands Community College, East Sussex, to join Beacon Community College Academy Trust

AB discussion: The college and the trust have shared interests and want to join to improve the opportunities for children in their areas, in particular, to improve their sixth form offer. Other benefits include use of new school facilities in Uplands, support in marketing and recruitment, and economies of scale.

There was a discussion on the school improvement strategy with clarity sought on the details of the plans and the vision, including timings. There was also a question on governance and the number of parents and staff members. It was noted that there still seemed to be details to work out for example on the provision of central services.

RSC decision: Defer

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: To seek more information in line with the above discussion including more information on governance, more details on the proposed structures and more detail on the school improvement offer. Proposal to come back to the board in due course.

Project: Palm Bay Primary School, Kent, and East Stour Primary School, Kent, to join EKC Schools Trust Limited

AB discussion: Both Palm Bay and East Stour primary schools have identified EKC as the best match. The benefits include economy of scale and the schools will also benefit from the link to EKC college group.

The board noted that full financial data is not yet available due to the trust being newly established. Clarified that staffing costs are in anticipation of future growth. ESFA are confident that the trust is sustainable and is supported by EKC college group which is stable financially.

Discussed finances of other schools within the trust. Noted that discussions are taking place with the trust and ESFA to understand any risks.

The board asked about plans for future growth.

RSC decision: Approve with condition

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Conversation with trust about future plans for growth and capacity.

Project: Halstead Community Primary School, Kent, to join The Pioneer Academy

AB discussion: The school is currently running at 40% capacity but expecting this to increase. The board noted that Pioneer Academy has had recent growth and that Pioneer Academy had recently expanded leadership capacity.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Strategic conversation with The Pioneer Academy.

Project: Communitas Education Trust joining Nexus Education Schools Trust

AB discussion: This is a proposal seeking to transfer the two open academies from Communitas Education Trust (CET) to join Nexus Education Schools Trust (NEST). The board noted the scale of the growth and the challenge of falling roles presenting in some academies.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Paula Farrow was not present for this item and did not receive the paper.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Shawley Community Primary School, Surrey, to join LEO Academy Trust

AB discussion: Shawley is a mixed community Primary School for pupils aged 4-11 located in Epsom Surrey. The school was inspected in January 2019 and judged as Requires Improvement (previously Good: April 2016)..

LEO has provided interim leadership to the school since June 2021 and is now working with them through a Trust Partnership arrangement.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required

Project: St Martin's CoE (Aided) Junior and Infant School, Surrey, to join Enlighten Learning Trust

AB discussion: This is a proposal for a linked infant and junior schools to join a MAT. The junior schools is currently judged to be good by Ofsted, with the infant school being rated outstanding. The schools have considered other trusts but have decided on Enlighten.

The board noted the potential for economies of scale and discussed the trust operations and governance structure.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Folly Hill Infant School, Surrey, to join The Kite Academy Trust

AB discussion: Folly Hill is a 1FE infant school. Following a number of meetings and discussions with trusts, they have decided that Kite will be the best match. The board discussed the school's location and proximity to other schools, trust growth plans and the trust's support offer.

The board queried the top slice figure and clarification was provided that the trust no longer top slice and have moved to a model of pooling their GAG and distributing funding based on pupil numbers.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required

Sponsored route

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

Project: Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust, Kent, and Cliffe Woods Academy Trust, Medway - Proposal to merge

AB discussion: Cliffe Woods is a two-school trust. The Cliffe Woods board, concerned about its capacity to improve the schools, has chosen to join with Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust. Aletheia is already providing leadership support in Halling Primary School. There was general agreement that this is a good match, the board noted that AAAT intends to consolidate following this growth.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Stephen Carey was not present for this item and did not receive the paper.

Further actions required: No action required

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: White Cliffs Primary School (part of Dover Federation of the Arts MAT) - lowering of age range from 4-11 to 2-11 to formally incorporate Pebbles nursery

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Meadhurst Primary School (part of The Howard Partnership Trust) - Changing designation of the school's SEN unit, and increase the overall number of pupils that can be accommodated in the unit

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: The Abbey School (part of Weydon Multi Academy Trust) - increase the number of student places available by increasing converting from a 2-form entry to a 3-form entry school

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Three Rivers Academy (part of The Howard Partnership Trust) - retrospective approval to assign a formal SEN designation to their SEN provision, and increase the number of pupils for this provision

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: West Hill School (part of The Howard Partnership Trust) - Change age range from 3-11 to 4-11, internally reorganise its teaching space, and increase its number of planned places

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Wishmore Cross Academy (part of Academies Enterprise Trust) - Increase the lower age limit by 2 years, and increase the schools overall planned places

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Bramley Oak Academy (part of London South East Academy Trust) - Increase the number of pupils on roll

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

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: Harris Kent House Secondary, Bromley - change in pre-opening from mixed to boys only

Type of decision: Significant change

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Awaiting further information needed for the paper.

Project: Malden Oaks School & Tuition Service, Kingston Upon Thames, to join The Auriga Academy Trust

Type of decision: Converter Academy Orders

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Awaiting further information needed for the paper.

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