



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

07 October 2021

Attendance

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

AB members who sent their apologies for the meeting have 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 Schools Commissioner (RSC) chair

- Andrew Warren.

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Sajid Gulzar.
- Dame Maureen Brennan.
- Kate Brunt.
- Margaret Yates.
- Sinead Smith.
- Sir Mark Grundy.
- Mike Donoghue.

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Margaret Yates.

DfE senior civil servants

- Claire Trewartha (Deputy Director)
- Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

Local Update

- The RSC and AB members discussed the current climate in schools across the West Midlands Region.

AB member reflections

- AB members reflected on their experiences in schools regarding vaccinations and Ofsted visits.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Brownhills West Primary School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Central Co-Operative Learning Trust, Walsall.

AB discussion:

- Brownhills West Primary School is located in Walsall, with a current Ofsted rating of “Good” in May 2017.
- Central Co-Operative Learning Trust (CCLT) was established in November 2017, consisting of 6 primary academies.
- CCLT have a track record in school improvement including Maths, highlighting a good match between the school and Trust as this is an area recognised needing support at Brownhills.
- The school has identified it would benefit from joining a Trust, and after having explored several options; they feel that CCLT align best with the Trust’s ethos, values and surrounding community.
- There is a pre-existing relationship, with the school and Trust sharing not only training but also resources and undertaking joint working in preparation for the planned conversion.
- The Trust has plans to expand further in the area, building a new hub in Walsall. With the addition of Brownhills, further capacity would be achieved, supporting the planned expansion with the help of their current school Blackwood School.
- Discussions were held on the viability of the conversion as risks have been identified surrounding pension contributions. Conversations are currently underway regarding this.
- The board members were supportive of the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school and trust.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: Summerfield Education Centre, Solihull to be sponsored by Solihull Alternative Provision Academy, Solihull

Reason for Academy Order: Ofsted Category 4.

AB discussion:

- Summerfield Education Centre is a 11-16 pupil referral unit based in Solihull, providing education for pupils who have been excluded from mainstream establishments. The School was rated Ofsted 'Inadequate' in June 2019 followed by a more recent judgement of 'Requires Improvement' this year; following this, the school continues to seek academisation.
- Due to a recent review of alternative provision by Solihull Local Authority, they have confirmed a need for provision at Summerfield, and sponsorship by a Trust with alternative provision expertise will bring sustained school improvement.
- Solihull Academy are seeking sponsor status to enable them to support other AP schools in Solihull and the surrounding local areas and the ethos of both Solihull and Summerfield are aligned with a focus on wellbeing and maximising potential.
- Solihull Academy have demonstrated strengths in areas of weaknesses flagged on Summerfield's Ofsted reports including attendance, curriculum planning and subject expertise.
- The board support the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school and trusts.

Sponsor Application

Points discussed in relation to applications for sponsor application.

Project: Whether to approve a sponsor application from Solihull Academy.

AB discussion:

- Solihull Alternative Provision Academy is a single academy trust within Solihull, which opened in April 2018; the school has current capacity of 150 pupils and is yet to be inspected by Ofsted.
- The academy are seeking sponsor status to enable them to support other AP schools in Solihull and the surrounding local areas.
- Although the school is yet to have an official judgement from Ofsted, they have received praise in the form of a School Advisor report provided by Solihull LA. This data is also reflected in the performance data published on the academy's website.
- Solihull Academy sponsoring Summerfield would enable them to transition from a Single Academy Trust to a Multi Academy Trust.
- The board members are in support of the recommendation, with conversations held on the broad range of skills and experience of the trust board and also the record of experience in school improvement.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Significant Change

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

Project: Cannock Chase High School, Staffordshire, the addition of a self- contained SEND provision.

AB discussion:

- Cannock Chase High School is a school located in Cannock, Staffordshire with a mixed age range of 11-18.
- Staffordshire County Council commissioned a number of alternative provision places and selected the High School to house and run a co-located SEND resource.
- The school was chosen due to its track record of successful cases and expert reputation of supporting managed moves in the area.
- The proposal dates back to January 2020 and is a retrospective decision.
- A consultation has taken place and received no objections.
- The board are supportive of this recommendation with the RSC recommending that the school review the structure of their trustee board.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: Biddulph High School, Staffordshire, the addition of a resource centre.

AB discussion:

- Biddulph High School, Staffordshire has requested to add an additional resource centre to specifically support students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The High School hold a current Ofsted judgement of 'Good'.
- The provision will be a small modular building, installed on the existing grounds; the planning permission is still subject to approval.
- A consultation has been held; no objections were received.
- The board discussed the educational performance of the school, looking specifically at the current improvement plan.
- The board are supportive of this recommendation with the RSC recommending that the trustee board undertake a skills audit.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: Holyoakes Field First School, Worcestershire, to relocate to a new site.

AB discussion:

- Holyoakes Field First School, Worcestershire are requesting a relocation of the school to a new premises with an increase in Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and capacity.
- The new larger premises are only 0.8 miles away from the current site and will alleviate capacity issues in the area.
- Subject to approval, the new premises will be available from November with the school relocating in the spring half term to avoid further disturbance to children's education.
- The board discussed the school's governance structure, identifying a strong presence of specialists in education. This was later addressed as the Chief Executive Officer recognises this and they are looking at restricting their board membership.
- The board are supportive of the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: Cherry Orchard Primary School, Worcestershire, to increase their age range.

AB discussion:

- Cherry Orchard Primary School, Worcestershire are requesting to change the school's age range enabling the school to establish a Pre-school.
- The School was judged as 'Special measures in Jan 2020 by Ofsted, and later joined Rivers CofE MAT as a sponsored academy in April 2021.
- Pending approval, the proposal will enable all year round provision which is currently difficult to source in this area.
- The board reviewed the papers, discussing the capacity in the area and the consultation that was held.
- The board are supportive of the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Kate Brunt.

Further actions required: To inform the school and Trust.

Trust Change

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

Project: Chase Terrace Academy, Staffordshire, to join to John Taylor Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Chase Terrace Academy located in Staffordshire, is part of the Stephen Sutton Multi Academy Trust. The academy is currently the only school within the trust and has a current Ofsted judgement of 'Good'.
- SSMAT have completed a due diligence process exploring the local successful MATs to find the right one that shares their ethos and culture where it will help them to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children in the school.
- The transfer will lead to John Taylor MAT increasing to a 15 school MAT with majority of the schools located in Staffordshire.
- The academy has a long standing association with JTMAT due to previous collaboration on Initial Teacher training work and the professional development of both staff and governors.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Mike Donoghue.

Further actions required: To inform both Trusts.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

List of decisions taken by the RSC outside of AB meetings.

Project: St Austin's Catholic Primary School, Staffordshire.

Decision type: Retrospective Significant Change to increase age range.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: N/A.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: St Patrick's RC School and Nursery, Staffordshire.

Decision type: Retrospective Significant Change to increase age range.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: N/A.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: Blessed Mother Teresa's, Staffordshire.

Decision type: Retrospective Significant Change to increase age range.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: N/A.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

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 AB meeting.

Project: Greenhall Nursery, Staffordshire.

Type of decision: Converter Academy Orders.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient information to present at AB.

Project: Aspire Educational Trust, Staffordshire.

Type of decision: Converter Academy Orders.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient information to present at AB.

© Crown copyright [2021]