

Notes of Meeting: South West Advisory Board

6 July 2021

Attendance

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

AB members who sent their apologies for the meeting have, where possible, 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

- Hannah Woodhouse, RSC

Advisory Board members

- Brian Hooper (AB)
- Suzanne Flack (AB)
- Sally Apps (AB)
- Steve Savory (AB)
- Michael Larsen (AB)
- Alun Williams (AB)
- Paul Jones (AB)
- Joy Tubbs (AB)

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Lucy Livings (Deputy Director)
- Matthew Stevenson (Deputy Director)

Representations received

- Four representations were received in respect of whether to approve a significant change application for Coverack Primary School, **Cornwall** (Southerly Point Co-operative MAT) to make an age range change from 4- 11 to 4-7.
- One representation was received in respect of whether to approve Dauntsey Academy Primary School (SAT), **Wiltshire** to transfer to Equa Multi Academy Trust
- North West London South Central (NWLSC) received eight representations in respect of Whether to approve a significant change application for St Mark's Church of England Junior School, Wiltshire (Somerset Road Education Trust, (SRET)) to establish an Area Resource Base for 10 pupils for September 2021; and whether to approve a significant change application for Wyndham Park Infants' School, Wiltshire (SRET) to establish an Area Resource Base for 10 pupils for September 2021

General Discussion Points

General Update from RSC

- The RSC provided an update on the strategic issues arising, especially those from the pandemic management in schools.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to approve the Federated Wroughton Junior and Infant Schools, **Swindon** to convert to academy status and join Grove Learning Trust

AB discussion:

- There was a discussion about the cost pressures at the leadership level in the trust which are significant for a small MAT. SRMA visit in January 2020 did not identify any further savings the trust could make.
- AB members suggested that the trust appoint an appropriate School Improvement lead.

Other

- AB members suggested the trust would benefit from support to the trust with growth planning.
- Members noted some concerns about pupil outcomes.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the trust and school.

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

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

Project: Whether to approve Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust as the sponsor for Devon Local Authority's Presumption Special Free School, Okehampton, **Devon**

AB discussion:

- It was noted that the CEO is recently new in post.

Other

- Members noted that geographically, this proposal makes good sense.
- AB members raised concerns that this school could take up valuable trust capacity.
- It was noted that Ofsted judgments are due imminently.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust of RSC decision, and share conditions with the trust.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Pitton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, **Wiltshire** (Pickwick Academy Trust)

AB discussion: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Greentrees Primary School, **Wiltshire** (Pickwick Academy Trust)

AB discussion: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Winterslow CofE (Aided) Primary School, **Wiltshire** (Pickwick Academy Trust)

AB discussion: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: St Werburgh's Primary School, **Bristol** (Cathedral Schools Trust)

AB discussion: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Significant Change

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

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Compass Point Primary School, **Bristol** (Gatehouse Green Learning Trust) to add a resource base for 24 places for pupils with Education Health Care Plans (EHP) for Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

AB discussion:

- AB members were reassured by officials that appropriate funding for these pupils would be in place.

Other

- Members noted the capacity that Ashton Park and Ashton Vale provided to the trust.
- Members recognised that these places were needed ahead of September.
- AB members were cognisant of the need for SEND places in Bristol and the risk these pupils may be placed into provisions that do not meet their needs if resources bases are not utilised.

- Members queried the mix of ASC and pupils with a disability. They were reassured by officials that the trust has reviewed the ECHPs of the pupils due to join the resource base and the places would primarily be for pupils with ASC as their primary need.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Michael Larsen was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Lyde Green Primary School, **South Gloucestershire** (Castle School Education Trust), to add a satellite site.

AB discussion:

Finances

- Members recognised that it would be harder to achieve financial viability by the separation onto two sites.

Other

- AB members queried why this project had not progressed through the presumption route. They were advised that the need for the school is now and presumption would take too long.
- Members saw this as a pragmatic solution to places that are needed and were happy to approve.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Sally Apps was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Cury Church of England Primary School, **Cornwall** (Southerly Point Co-operative MAT) to make an age range change from 4-11 to 4-7.

AB discussion:

School improvement

- AB members discussed the School Improvement offer which is being delivered in conjunction with Link Academy Trust.

Finances

- AB members noted that this proposal does not in itself ensure the ongoing viability of the school.

Other

- AB members noted that the trust has been reviewing options with the RSC office since last June 2020 and that a similar application for Coverack Primary School within the trust was withdrawn following consultation with the community about alternative options.
- AB members were aware that Southerly Point MAT has a large number of small rural schools and therefore may not get the same benefits of scale as other MATs.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the trust and school.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Maiden Beech Academy, **Somerset** (Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust) to make an age range change from 9-13 to 4-11.

AB discussion:

School Improvement

- AB members noted the Trust's plans for school improvement at primary level, and also noted that the Trust was in the process of appointing a primary lead specialist.

Other

- AB members noted that the school will require remodelling to accommodate primary-aged pupils.
- Members noted that the wider changes to the school system from three-tier to two-tier are contentious locally.
- AB members wanted to recognise the support that should be given to staff during this transition.
- AB members recommended a review of the trust's growth plans at primary level.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the trust and school.

Trust Change

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

Project: Whether to approve Lipson Cooperative Academy (SAT), **Plymouth** to transfer to The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

Leadership

- Ted Wragg has a strong record of improving schools.

Governance

- This proposal would further establish the trust's hub in Plymouth.
- AB members noted they were happy with the work that Ted Wragg have been doing with Lipson Cooperative Academy.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the trust and school.

Project: Whether to approve Dauntsey Academy Primary School (SAT), **Wiltshire** to transfer to Equa Multi Academy Trust

AB discussion:

Leadership

- AB members recognised there are several strong headteachers within the MAT.

Governance

- AB members noted the importance of governors, who should be holding the school to account on its School Improvement data.

Finances

- Members discussed the potential for transfer funding and ensuring transparency in the level of funding awarded to SAT to MAT transfers, officials noted there is a case to make bid for additional funding in exceptional cases.

School Improvement

- AB members commented that they hoped this trust change would, in time, result in Equa being able to support other schools in the area.

Other

- AB members noted the representation from the nursery and took the view that it would be very pragmatic to maintain the preschool as an effective feeder for the school however it would not be appropriate to make its continued operation on site a formal condition of approval. Officials would continue to liaise with parties on the matter.

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: Brian Hooper was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the trust and school.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Lyngford Park Primary, **Somerset** (Richard Huish Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 2-11 and add nursery provision.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 28 June

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Hayle Academy, **Cornwall** (Truro and Penwith Academy Trust) to add a 20-place resource base for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 28 June

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for St Aldhelm's Academy, **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole** (Ambitions Academies Trust) to increase its capacity from 804 to 900 and retrospectively close its sixth form.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 5 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Sixpenny Handley First School, **Dorset** (The Heath Academy Trust) to change its age range from 5-9 to 2-9 and add nursery provision.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 1 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Plaistow Hill Infant and Nursery School, **Plymouth** (Horizon MAT) to change its age range from 3-7 to 2-7.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 21 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for St Meriadoc Infant Academy, **Cornwall** (Rainbow MAT) to change its age range from 3-7 to 2-7.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 21 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Charborough Road Primary School, **South Gloucestershire** (The Olympus Academy Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 3-11 and add nursery provision.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 21 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Berrycoombe School, **Cornwall** (Truro and Penwith Academy Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 2-11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 22 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Gulval School, **Cornwall** (Truro and Penwith Academy Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 2-11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 22 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for St Mawes Primary School, **Cornwall** (Aspire Academy Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 3-11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 26 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Braddock CofE Primary School, **Cornwall** (St Barnabas Church of England Multi Academy Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 2-11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 9 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for St Nicolas' Church of England VA School, Donderry, **Cornwall** (St Barnabas Church of England Multi Academy Trust) to change its age range from 5-11 to 3-11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 9 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Bristol Brunel Academy, **Bristol** (Cabot Learning Federation) to increase physical capacity from 1180 to 1363.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 2 August

Conflicts: None

Notes of discussion: This significant change is in response to the shortage of secondary school places in Bristol for September 2021. This is in part a retrospective change as most of the physical expansion works have previously taken place. Capacity assessments demonstrate that the school can accommodate the forecast pupil numbers as they move through the school. The trust has recruited additional staff within the school and trust central team to prepare for the change. The RSC office has discussed with the trust the health and safety arrangements for the site, and these considerations have been built into the business plan. The RSC office is content that the consultation requirements have been met.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust. Project lead to communicate to the trust and Local Authority that any requests for future expansions at this school will require detailed health and safety reports on both capacity and transport planning and approval of such requests is not guaranteed.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Bristol Metropolitan Academy, **Bristol** (Cabot Learning Federation) to increase physical capacity from 945 to 1060.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 2 August.

Conflicts: None

Notes of discussion: This significant change is in response to the shortage of secondary school places in Bristol for September 2021. It was noted that this is a retrospective change and the work to increase capacity has already been undertaken. Staffing has been increased to ensure that educational quality is not compromised, and health and safety implications have been considered. The RSC office is content that the consultation requirements have been met.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust. Project lead to communicate to the trust and Local Authority that any requests for future expansions at this school will require detailed health and safety reports on both capacity and transport planning and approval of such requests is not guaranteed.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for John Cabot Academy, **South Gloucestershire** (Cabot Learning Federation) to increase physical capacity from 1056 to 1400.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 2 August.

Conflicts: None

Notes of discussion: This significant change is in response to the shortage of secondary school places in Bristol for September 2021. Additional accommodation will be created on the John Cabot site to house the 6th form students, with the construction of a temporary classroom block. The trust has confirmed that if for whatever reason the permanent 6th form building is not built within 5 years, that the Academy will be able to accommodate all the students within this revised capacity and this is illustrated in the capacity assessments. The educational impact of the change was considered. It was noted that the trust will continue to provide the existing post-16 curriculum offer and there will also be timetable benefits for housing all the post 16 on one site. Health and safety and travel implications have been planned for by the Trust, with mitigations adopted where appropriate.

The consultation process was reviewed, and the RSC was content that a fair and open consultation has taken place and that those who wished to make representations were able to do so. It was acknowledged that a public meeting may have been a useful exercise, however mandatory consultees were notified of the proposed changes by letter and individual meetings were offered to discuss the proposals. Furthermore, post 16 students and their families were actively engaged in the development of plans.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust. Project lead to communicate to the trust and Local Authority that any requests for future expansions at this school will require detailed health and safety reports on both capacity and transport planning and approval of such requests is not guaranteed.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Drake's Church of England Primary School, **Devon** (Link Academy Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 3-11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 9 August.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Otterton Church of England Primary School, **Devon** (Link Academy Trust) to change its age range from 4-11 to 3-11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 9 August.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Bridgwater College Academy, **Somerset** (Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust) to increase capacity at the school's resource base from 20 to 25 places.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 9 August.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Cheddar First School, **Somerset** (Wessex Learning Trust) to make an age range change from 5-9 to 2-9 and add a nursery and baby unit.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 9 September

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for St Nicholas Church School, **BANES** (Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust) to increase SEND places from 10 to 20.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved with a condition to have a relationship with a good special school nearby, including some external validation and quality assurance of provision being provided via RSC correspondence log on 30 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for St Mark's Church of England School, **BANES** (Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership) to increase the Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) resource base from seven to 20 places.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via RSC correspondence log on 2 July

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Whether to approve significant change applications for the following schools in Chulmleigh Academy Trust, **Devon** to make age range changes from 4-11 to 2-11:

- Chumleigh Primary School, **Devon**
- East Worlington Primary School, **Devon**
- Lapford Community Primary School, **Devon**

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via an internal meeting on 23 August.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Whipton Barton Infants and Nursery School, **Devon** (Ted Wragg Multi-Academy Trust) to make changes to their provision reserved for SEN pupils.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: approved via an internal meeting on 26 July.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Whether to approve the voluntary transfer of the following schools in the Salisbury Plain Academy (SPA), **Wiltshire** to Acorn Education Trust

- Netheravon All Saints CofE Primary School
- Durrington All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infants' School
- Avon Valley Academy
- St Michael's Church of England Academy
- Bulford St Leonard's CofE (VA) Primary School

Decision type: Trust change

RSC discussion:

- RSC note that this has been a long-standing decision, but due to the urgency of needing to take a decision ahead of the new academic year this application was considered outside of an AB meeting. All AB members were informed of this project and were given the opportunity to share their views, ask questions, and raise concerns ahead of an internal meeting to discuss this project.
- RSC recognised that Acorn have been working with RDD SW and EFSA to get to this point.
- It was noted that this is a decision in principle – the final decision will be subject to ministerial approval for a funding package to support the transfer.
- RSC reiterated that this is the strongest trust opportunity for these schools and that the two trusts have been working closely for a sustained period.
- RSC noted that Acorn are a high-performing trust who have been providing significant school improvement capacity and support to the schools within SPA, over a significant period. This support has recently been supplemented by support from the Department via the Emergency fund.
- No representations received

RSC Decision: recommend for Ministerial approval.

Conflicts: Paul Jones and Joy Tubbs did not receive or review the paperwork for this application.

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for St Mark's Church of England Junior School, Wiltshire (Somerset Road Education Trust, (SRET)) to establish an Area Resource Base for 10 pupils for September 2021.

Whether to approve a significant change application for Wyndham Park Infants' School, Wiltshire (SRET) to establish an Area Resource Base for 10 pupils for September 2021

Decision type: Significant change

RSC discussion:

- AB members were given the opportunity feed in their views prior to this internal meeting.
- RSC raised the issue of timing, and this application coming in very late which has impeded the RSC office publishing on the draft agenda.
- RSC recognised the representations which had been received in receipt of these projects.
- RSC asked the team to raise the issue of the timeliness of the application (both LAs and schools) and ask SRET to work on communications and relationships given the representations received.
- RSC asked that an SMRA visit should be added as a condition to approval.

RSC Decision: recommend for Ministerial approval.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

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: Whether to approve a significant change application for Coverack Primary School, Cornwall (Southerly Point Co-operative MAT) to make an age range change from 4- 11 to 4-7.

Type of decision: Significant change

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Removed from the agenda following trust decision to take an alternative approach.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application St Edmund's Girl's School, Wiltshire and Wyvern College, Wiltshire (Magna Learning Partnership) to amalgamate from September 2022.

Type of decision: Significant change

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Additional time required to complete assessment of application.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Devonport High School for Boys, Plymouth to increase capacity by 150 places.

Type of decision: Significant change

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: As per the guidance in the decision-making framework this was referred to the minister for decision.

Project: Whether to approve a retrospective significant change application for Preston School Academy, Somerset (SAT) to add an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Resource Base and increase places from 16 to 20

Type of decision: Significant change

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient application.

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