

Notes of Meeting: South West Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 11 October 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
- 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

- Lucy Livings (Deputy Director)

DfE senior civil servants

- Matthew Stevenson (Deputy Director)

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

Advisory Board Process

- Members received an update on the upcoming Advisory Board elections. Members were advised that registration is now open and nominations will be accepted up to 29 October at 5pm.
- Polls will open on 22 November and close on 10 December 2021.
- The RSC noted that she will consider her options for co-opted and appointed board members following the outcome of the elections.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to approve the following schools converting to academy status and forming a new trust: The Dunstan Catholic Education Trust

- Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School, **North Somerset**
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School, **Somerset**
- St Gildas Catholic Primary School, **Somerset**
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Bridgwater), **Somerset**
- St Joseph and St Teresa Catholic Primary School, **Somerset**
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary and Nursery School, **Somerset**

AB discussion:

Leadership:

- The Board considered and discussed the trust's leadership structures and advised that the project lead assist the trust to source a mentor for the CEO and newly appointed CFO.

Governance:

- AB members discussed the benefits of a diverse board of trustees and members.
- The spare member was discussed, AB members questioned whether this should be the Chair of Directors.

School Improvement:

- AB members recognised further development is needed to support the trust's school improvement strategy as it develops.
- AB members noted the progress data of the schools and discussed the importance of school improvement plans.

Other

- AB members were clear that there was considerable strength in this group of schools and that with the correct structures in place the MAT has strong potential.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions

Conditions:

- The CEO and CFO should each have an experienced mentor in place, and to build a strong partnership with another trust.
- Expand on the Trust's school improvement plans, especially for St Gildas.
- That the Trust has termly review meetings with RDD, as a further support, for the first two years following formation.

Conflicts: None

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

Project: Whether to approve the following schools converting to academy status and joining The Cardinal Newman Catholic Educational Trust:

- SS Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**

AB discussion:

Leadership:

- AB members discussed the challenges of operating a new multi academy trust and advised that the project lead assist the Trust to source a mentor for the CEO and CFO.

Governance:

- AB members considered the current membership of the trustee board's and noted the important role of trustees, and the difficulty with hiring new and experienced members.

School Improvement:

- AB members noted the importance of supporting sponsored academy conversions.

Finances:

- AB members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of having a part-time CFO.
- AB members queried the top-slice figure.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions

Conditions:

- The CEO and CFO should each ideally have an experienced mentor in place and should request advice on their top-slice.
- Organise termly meetings with RDD to provide updates on the trustee board membership.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Whether to approve Greenmeadow Primary School, **Swindon** to convert to academy status and join Blue Kite Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

Governance:

- AB members noted the strong skillset of key members in the trust.
- Members noted that the Chair of Trustees was very proactive on matters of financial governance.
- AB members discussed the member/trustee overlap, best practise advises that Members should not be Trustees.

Finances:

- AB discussion took place on the growth of the trust and its development in the long-term.
- AB members noted that reducing the form of entry from 1.5 to 1 was a credible move.
- AB members discussed the SMRA visit, and EFSA are supporting the trust to incorporate the review and implement recommendations.
- An EFSA official advised that the financial forecast of the trust is healthy.
- Members noted the RAGF and MDIF funding that the trust has received and noted that the trust is building capacity ahead of growth.
- Members discussed the financial vulnerability of Greenmeadow but were content that there were already plans in place to address this.

Other:

- AB members discussed the importance of having a growth strategy in place.
- Blue Kite have been supporting Greenmeadow as part of their Covid support scheme so there is a strong partnership already in place.

School Improvement:

- Members noted the good school improvement record of the trust.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Whether to approve English Bicknor Church of England Primary School, Gloucestershire to convert to academy status and join The Severn Federation Academy Trust.

AB discussion: This item was discussed in conjunction with Severnbanks Primary School (SAT) joining The Severn Federation Academy Trust at the same time.

Governance

- AB members queried the odd number of members on the board.
- Ab members wanted to know more about the pupil experience committee, and the accountability for that group in terms of the wider governance of the trust.

Other

- AB members noted that this would bring mutual benefits for both schools and that Severnbanks would bring capacity to the trust.
- AB members were pleased that SFAT is already growing as a new trust, as capacity is needed in the area especially at primary.
- AB members were pleased to see the connection that had been made with the LINK Academy Trust in Devon who have expertise in running a trust with small rural schools.
- AB members noted that the Diocese of Gloucester are in support of the English Bicknor proposal and have confidence in The Severn Federation Academy Trust.
- AB members noted that English Bicknor is geographically isolated and not engaged with local networks and will benefit from the support of the trust.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: Whether to approve St Francis Catholic Primary School, North Somerset to be sponsored by The Cardinal Newman Educational Trust.

Reason for Academy Order: Ofsted Category 4

AB discussion: This project was discussed in conjunction with the converter academy orders for:

- SS Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**

Notes of the discussion can be found with the record for that project.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Sponsor Application

Points discussed in relation to applications for sponsor application.

Project: Whether to approve The Cardinal Newman Catholic Educational Trust's application for sponsor status.

AB discussion: This project was discussed in conjunction with the converter academy orders for:

- SS Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**

Notes of the discussion can be found with the record for that project.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the trust.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

No academy openers in October 2021

Significant Change

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

Project: Whether to approve the proposed merger of Wyvern College and St Edmund's Girl's School, **Wiltshire** (Magna Learning Partnership) to become a single school and for the Trust to amend admissions arrangements accordingly.

AB discussion:

Other

- AB members were content that the schools were already functioning successfully together and the merger was a sensible way to further formalise this relationship.
- AB members recommended approval.

RSC decision: Approve

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

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

Trust Change

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

Project: Whether to approve St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol** (SAT) to join The Cardinal Newman Catholic Educational Trust.

AB discussion: This project was discussed in conjunction with the converter academy orders for:

- SS Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**
- St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, **Bristol**

Notes of the discussion can be found with the record for that project.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Project: Whether to approve Severnbanks Primary School, **Gloucestershire** (SAT) to join The Severn Federation Academy Trust.

AB discussion: This item was discussed in conjunction with the academy conversion of English Bicknor Church of English Primary school, notes of the discussion can be found with the record of that project.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Decisions taken by another RSC

List of decisions taken by another RSC.

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for East Huntspill Primary School, **Somerset** (Priory Learning Trust) to extend its age range from 4 to 11 to 2 to 11 and add nursery provision.

Name of RSC who made the decision: Claire Burton (SESL)

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Hannah Woodhouse was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

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

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for West Huntspill Primary School, **Somerset** (Priory Learning Trust) to extend its age range from 4 to 11 to 2 to 11 and add nursery provision.

Name of RSC who made the decision: Claire Burton (SESL)

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Hannah Woodhouse was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

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

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 ACE Tiverton Free School, **Devon** (Transforming Futures Multi Academy Trust Limited) to increase capacity by 30 places.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Project: Whether to approve a significant change application for Alverton Primary School, **Cornwall** (Truro and Penwith Academy Trust) to amend age range from 3 to 11 to 2 to 11.

Decision type: Significant change

RSC decision: Approved via RSC correspondence log on 1 September

Conflicts: None

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