



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

18 November 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

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

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

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Claire Trewartha (Deputy Director)

DfE senior civil servants

- 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 Ofsted visits and the National Tutoring Programme (NTP).

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Birches Green Infant School, Birmingham to convert and become an academy and join Robin Hood MAT, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Birches Green Infant School is based in Birmingham on the same site as the Junior school, currently holds an Ofsted rating of 'Good' from a judgement made in 2019.
- Robin Hood is made up of 4 schools and if approved the project will add further capacity to the trust whilst allowing the opportunity of school improvement to be spread across all schools.
- The school has carried out a consultation with stakeholders to seek views on amalgamating both Birches Green Schools, the majority of the consultation agreed with the proposal.
- The financial status of the trust has been reviewed internally with assurances sought over the forecasting of funding for staffing, curriculum provision and site management.
- There was a discussion around PFI and finances; noting the new efficiencies that had been made possible with both schools coming together.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and LA to be informed of decision.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to St Mark's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, to convert and become an academy and join St John Bosco Multi Academy Company, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- St Mark's Catholic Primary School is a primary situated in the Perry Barr constituency with a current Ofsted rating of 'Outstanding', received in 2012.
- St John Bosco is a Multi Academy Company consisting of 7 schools, spread across Dudley and Sandwell.
- Both schools are within the same Diocese, enabling them to harbour a long standing relationship and shared ethos. This also includes previous collaboration as part of a cluster of three schools.
- If both schools are to join together, St Mark's will gain access to a support structure providing not only stability but school improvement services provided by the governance and leadership of the MAC.

- Governance and Leadership were discussed by the board, notably the skill sets shared by the staff and how this reflects within the MACs structure and support system.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and LA to be informed of decision.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Elworth Hall Primary School, Cheshire East, to convert and become an academy and join Chancery Multi Academy Trust, Cheshire East.

AB discussion:

- Elworth Hall Primary School is a primary school currently maintained by Cheshire East Local Authority, with an Ofsted Judgement of 'Good' dating from 2016.
- The Chancery MAT currently comprises of 4 schools, ranging from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'. If approved, this decision will give the trust an opportunity to actively grow, which in recent months has been a priority for the trust.
- Both the school and trust have a shared ethos and values with the governing body supportive that this change will lead to development opportunities for the school.
- Elworth have recently strengthened the leadership of the school through restructure of the senior leadership team and believe their capacity to support leadership at this level in other schools within the trust will be a positive advantage to the trust should they join.
- The board discussed the recent restructure and the impact this has had on the capacity and sustainability of the trust.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and LA to be informed of decision.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Greenhall Nursery, Cheshire East, to convert and become an academy and join the Creative Learning Partnership Trust, Cheshire East.

AB discussion:

- Greenhall Nursery is a community special school located in Staffordshire with a current Ofsted Judgement of 'Outstanding' in 2018.
- Creative Learning Partnership Trust, established in 2016, is currently made up of 6 schools. The Trust has worked with Greenhall for several years and has continued to collaborate with the use of school improvement resources and professional development.

- The school supports the vision and values of the trust and brings with it a range of skills including a strong SEND team to support SEND children which will benefit the other CLPT schools across the trust.
- The trust has been involved in extensive school-to-school support through National Leaders of Education and former teaching schools throughout Staffordshire, consolidating a central School Improvement team.
- The board discussed the range of skillset at the school and trust and how it will be beneficial to share those opportunities across the other schools within the trust.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and LA to be informed of decision.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Camp Hill Primary School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Futures Trust, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Camp Hill Primary School is situated in north Warwickshire, Nuneaton and has an Ofsted judgement of 'Good' in 2017.
- The Futures Trust consists of 7 schools all ranging from 'Inadequate' to 'Outstanding' with the majority of judgements given before conversion.
- Camp Hill has recognised the benefits of joining with a trust and have concluded that The Futures Trust is the right fit for the school in terms of shared ethos, vision, values and principles.
- The LA supports the school's conversion to increase accountability and consistency of teaching and, is not planning a pre-conversion restructure (having completed one recently).
- The board spoke on the trust's capacity and growth strategy, reviewing information on trust plans that are due to be put in place, enabling progress in all schools within the trust.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and LA to be informed of decision.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Moreton Morrell CofE Primary School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join Fosse MAT, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Moreton Morrell CofE Primary School, located in Warwickshire holds a current Ofsted rating of 'Good' dating back from 2017.
- Fosse MAT was newly formed in April 2021, comprising of 2 primary schools. The trust holds matched Christian ethos and values and works closely with the school as part of the local consortium.
- The Diocese of Coventry are supportive of this proposal and have made a strategic commitment to providing each of its CofE schools a strong steer in either joining the Diocese MAT or a CofE trust (of which there are five in Coventry and Warwickshire).
- The school's educational performance has seen a decline over recent years but remains above the national average. The decline was due to staffing pressures and cohorts of pupils with additional needs.
- The board discussed the trust's performance and strategic plans, suggestions of mentoring were put forward aswell as the views of a forthcoming Strategic Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) visit.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and LA to be informed of decision.

Significant Change

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

Project: Whether to approve an increase in age range for Winshill Village Primary and Nursery School, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Winshill village Primary and Nursery School is located within Staffordshire Local authority and has a current Ofsted rating of 'Good'.
- The nursery have retrospectively proposed to expand their age range to include 2 year olds, providing much needed provision in the local area since 2014.
- The school have stated the proposal is delayed due to an administrative error; the error was replicated in the Supplemental Funding Agreement when the school became a sponsored academy in July 2018.
- This application is a necessary administrative process to correct action that should have been taken in 2014.
- The board discussed retrospective proposals generally and whether there was a pattern with specific LAs.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform school of decision.

Project: Whether to approve an increase in capacity and the addition of a post-16 provision at Kingfisher School, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Kingfisher School, Worcestershire, is located in Redditch and is joined with Central Learning Partnership trust; the school hold an Ofsted rating of 'Good' from 2016.
- The retrospective proposal is to increase capacity and to add a post-16 provision to meet the LA's need for specialist Social, Educational and Mental Health (SEMH) provision in the area.
- There has been a significant increase in the demand for special school places, (particularly SEMH) over the last three years.
- The application was retrospective and goes back to September 2021 due to a late request to the LA advising of a need for post 16 places, with Kingfisher being the most suitable school to accommodate this. The request is due to a pressure on SEND places in the area.
- The board considered site capacity, governance structures going forward and growth.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform school of decision.

Trust Change

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

Project: The Quarere Academy Trust (Q3), Sandwell to join the Mercian Trust, Walsall.

AB discussion:

- The Quarere (Q3) Academy Trust is a secondary phase trust based in Sandwell consisting of 3 schools, ranging from Ofsted 'Good' to 'Inadequate'.
- The Mercian Trust is a secondary phase trust based in Walsall, consisting of 6 schools, ranging from Ofsted 'Outstanding' to 'Requires Improvement'.
- This project was previously presented at an Advisory Board however the project was deferred pending additional information and a further discussion.
- Since the deferral, the RSC's recommendation of an SRMA and External Expert (EE) have taken place, they have both presented findings to confirm that Mercian do have the skills, knowledge and capacity to merge with Q3.
- The trusts are continuing to work together, collaborating on school improvement plans and sharing resources including experienced staff. This has shown a positive increase in stability at both trusts' schools.
- The board raised questions on governance, reviewing recently added expertise and highlighting the stability of the trusts.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Mo Brennan.

Further actions required: To inform both trusts of the decision.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

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

Decision type: Significant Change – increase of age range.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Staffordshire.

Decision type: Significant Change – increase of age range.

RSC decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.