

Notes of Meeting: North Advisory Board

Thursday 9 December 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 school commissioner (RSC) chair

- Katherine Cowell (RSC)

Advisory board (AB) members

- George Beveridge (AB)
- Lesley Powell (AB)
- Elizabeth Horne (AB)
- Nick Hurn (AB)
- Sir Michael Wilkins (AB)
- Zoe Carr (AB)
- Andy Bayston (AB)

Guests

- Paul Rickeard – Diocesan Director for Education for the Church of England Diocese of Durham and Newcastle / CEO Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Trust.
- Richard Noake – Diocesan Director of Education in the Diocese of Leeds.

The diocese representatives were only present for the start of the meeting and left before the discussion of cases.

Apologies

- Chris Clarke (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- None

Representations received

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

General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

RSC welcomed board members to the meeting and discussed the government's response to Covid 19 following the Prime Minister's announcement.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Handale Primary School, Redcar and Cleveland, to convert and join Lingfield Education Trust

AB discussion:

- Handale Primary School was judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted in February 2020.
- Handale has developed close links with Lingfield Education Trust and is keen to formalise this relationship by joining the trust.
- The board was advised that Handale is a well-performing school and will therefore, add additional capacity to Lingfield.
- Based on 2019 data, Handale's performance has improved significantly over the previous 3 years.
- Lingfield Education Trust has a strong track record of supporting schools and improving outcomes.
- The trust's governance structure is in line with DfE preference.
- The board supported this proposal

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Trust Change

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

Project: This is a proposal for two academies from The Dove Academy Trust, Darlington to voluntary transfer to Melrose Learning Trust

AB discussion:

- The board was advised that the proposed merger is part of wider Durham and Newcastle CofE diocesan plans to move from smaller MATs to larger MATs.
- High Coniscliffe Church of England Primary School and St Mary's Cockerton Church of England Primary School will transfer to Melrose Learning Trust, and The Dove Academy Trust will be dissolved in the process.
- St Mary's was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in October 2014 and High Coniscliffe was judged by Ofsted to be 'Outstanding' in June 2008.
- The board discussed the future leadership of the Melrose Trust and was advised that discussions are ongoing, however, the trust is aware that they need to provide a clear leadership strategy prior to the transfer.
- The board discussed the trust's growth strategy and agreed that the trust has the capability to support more challenging schools.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Zoe Carr was not present and did not receive papers for this item

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Trust Change

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

Project: Sunnyside Academy, Middlesbrough to join Ad Astra Academy Trust

AB discussion:

- The board was advised that Sunnyside Academy has operated as a single academy trust (SAT) since opening in 2012.
- Sunnyside was judged by Ofsted to be 'Requires Improvement' in November 2019, having previously been 'Good'.
- Based on 2019 data, performance at Sunnyside is below average. The board agreed, that by joining a strong MAT, Sunnyside will have the necessary school improvement support to help improve its educational performance.
- The board was advised that Sunnyside has received a recent SRMA, the report has identified a number of efficiencies which if approved Ad Astra has committed to fulfil.
- Ad Astra is currently in a healthy, sustainable financial position, it has the capacity and capability to improve Sunnyside.
- The board discussed the school's SEND provision and the cuts to the high-needs funding. The board was advised that Ad Astra has a number of schools that can provide specialist support to Sunnyside.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Trust Change

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

Project: Castle Carrock School, Cumbria to join Cumbria Education Trust (CET)

AB discussion:

- The board was advised that Castle Carrock School has operated as a single academy trust (SAT) since opening in 2011.
- Castle Carrock was judged by Ofsted to be 'Requires Improvement' in June 2019, having previously been 'Good'.
- Based on 2019 data, performance at Castle Carrock is below average and declining from previous years.
- The board discussed concerns with the current governance structure, there has been a number of departures over the last 12 months and subsequently no replacements have been recruited
- The board agreed, that by joining a strong trust, Castle Carrock will have the necessary school improvement support to help improve its educational performance.
- Castle Carrock has been receiving leadership and governance support from CET and, as a feeder to one of CET's secondary schools, they see CET as the logical solution.
- The board was informed that CET has a good track-record of supporting challenging schools. The board agreed that CET has the necessary expertise to implement the required changes at Castle Carrock.
- The board was advised that Castle Carrock is experiencing falling pupil numbers. CET is aware of this and is confident that by raising standards and outcomes, along with specific marketing strategies, numbers will increase at the school.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: George Beveridge was not present and did not receive papers for this item

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Trust Change

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

Project: This is a proposal for two academies from Sage Multi Academy Trust, Darlington to join Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust (DNDLT)

AB discussion:

- The board was advised that the proposed merger is part of wider Durham and Newcastle CofE diocesan plans to move from smaller MATs to larger MATs.
- St George's Church of England Academy and St John's Church of England Academy will transfer to Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust, and Sage Multi Academy Trust will be dissolved in the process.
- St George's was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in November 2009 and St John's was judged by Ofsted to be 'Outstanding' in February 2008.
- The board was advised that Sage had originally planned to grow itself, however over time realised that viable growth was not realistic. Following conversations with the diocese it resolved to join DNDLT.
- DNDLT's governance structure is in line with DfE expectations and there is a strong range of skills on the trust board.
- The board supported this proposal.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to approving significant changes to academies.

Project: This is a significant change application from Stanley Learning Partnership to add an enhanced learning provision to Greenland Community Primary School, Durham enabling KS2 pupils with EHCPs, who require additional support, to be educated within a mainstream school.

AB discussion:

- Greenland has applied to add an enhanced learning provision to the school, the board was advised that the school already runs a 'SEN nurture group' for existing pupils, the addition of this enhanced provision will provide these children with a formalised and more suitable learning environment.
- The board was advised that this proposal will improve local provision and allow more children to access education in their locality.
- If approved, there will be 12 places available in the new provision, all of which are forecasted to be filled over the next five years. The board was advised that many of the places will be taken by existing pupils at Greenland.
- The trust has been working closely with Durham LA on this proposal, following a public consultation, the LA issued an SLA to Greenland for the creation of an ELP.
- The trust has identified key staff who will be involved in this change, these staff members have all been involved in the school's current 'nurture group' and have a wide range of qualifications and experience. The board was advised that there is an additional post to fill for an ELP lead, who will oversee the day to day running of the provision.
- The board discussed the need for an additional classroom and questioned why the trust is funding this themselves.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; the responses received were positive and supported the proposal.
- The board supported this proposal; however, they recommend the trust confirms the staffing structure is satisfactory and discuss further funding support with the LA.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Sponsor Application

Points discussed in relation to applications for sponsor application.

Project: This is a proposal to approve the sponsor application for Iris Learning Trust (ILT), Sunderland

AB discussion:

- The board was advised that ILT is a multi-academy trust comprising three primary schools.
- All three schools in the trust were judged Ofsted 'Good' prior to joining the trust, Highfield Academy was judged 'Good' in April 2013, Valley Road Academy was judged to be 'Good' in May 2013 and Teesville Academy was judged to be 'Good' in May 2013.
- The board was advised that the current governance structure is not in line with DfE preference, currently the trust has appointed 3 members and 8 trustees. The board discussed concerns with the apparent cross over of trustees and local academy council, the board agreed that the governance structure had to be reviewed.
- The board discussed the trust's leadership and strategic vision and agreed that given the Ofsted inspections date back to 2013, evidence of improving outcomes is difficult to consider without a recent judgement.
- The board discussed the trust's school improvement offer and wanted further clarity as to how the trust would generate school improvement capacity without affecting the three existing schools.
- The board agreed that they would like to continue to encourage and support this trust in obtaining sponsor status, however, at this stage the board is unable to support this proposal.
- The board agreed that the trust should consider accepting additional support from the department, adopting a much stronger governance structure in line with DfE preference and develop a robust school improvement strategy.

RSC decision: Defer

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Brandon Primary School

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/01/2022

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No further action required

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Ellenborough and Ewanrigg Infant School

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/01/2022

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No further action required

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Howden le Wear Primary School

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/01/2022

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No further action required

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Malton Community Primary School

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/01/2022

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No further action required

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: St John Bosco Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/01/2022

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No further action required

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/01/2022

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No further action required

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/01/2022

RSC decision: approve

Conflicts: none

Further actions required: No further action required

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Wreay CofE School, Cumbria

Decision type: Significant Change - to lower the age range from 4 to 3 years with effect from January 2022.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland to join Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Gregory's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Tyneside to join Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Matthew's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Tyneside to join Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St. Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Newcastle to join Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St John Vianney RC Primary School, Newcastle to join Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Vincent's RC Primary School, Newcastle to join Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, North Tyneside to join Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School, North Tyneside to join Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Robert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Northumberland to join Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

Project: St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick, Northumberland to join Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Decision type: Converter Academy Order

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

List of projects that were on the published agenda but not discussed at the meeting.

Project: Cramlington Learning Village, Northumberland

Type of decision: Sponsor Application

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Further information required.