



## Notes of Meeting: South-East England and South London

16 December 2021

### Attendance

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

AB members who send their apologies for the meeting are, where possible, 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

- Claire Burton

### Advisory Board (AB) members

- Jon Chaloner
- Stephen Carey
- Mark Ducker
- Paula Farrow
- Alison Beane
- Andrew Carter
- David Boyle

### Guests

- None

### Apologies

### DfE senior civil servants

- Paul Schofield

### Representations received

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

# General Discussion Points

## RSC update

- Minutes from previous meeting agreed.
- Discussion on contingency plans amidst the Omicron disruptions.
- Discussion on plans and readiness for the new year.
- AB gave feedback and reflections on secondary assessment guidance at the request of the RSC.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project: St Andrew's CofE Primary School to join Bishop Otter Academy Trust and St Nicolas & St Mary CofE(Aided) Primary School to join Bishop Otter Academy Trust**

**AB discussion:** The approval of St Nicolas & St Mary's CofE Primary School and St Andrew's CofE Primary School to convert to academy status would formalise the 'opening' of Bishop Otter Academy Trust (BOAT).

The establishment of the trust is part of the Diocese of Chichester's strategy to enable academisation and provide another option for a CofE MAT in this part of the region. The trust is looking to cover the central and southern part of the Diocese. This includes Brighton and Hove, Shoreham (Adur) and Worthing, as well as up the A27 towards Lewes and A23 corridor to Crawley.

Question on governance and it was noted that there are currently only six trustees.

**RSC decision:** Approve with condition

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Condition that the seventh trustee is appointed and that the trust consider appointing a trustee with educational experience.

## Sponsored route

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

### **Project: Busbridge Infant School, Surrey - sponsor match**

**AB discussion:** Following the latest Section 5 Ofsted inspection on 6 October 2021, Busbridge Infant school was judged as Inadequate.

South Farnham Educational Trust (SFET) is supporting Busbridge Infant School on an interim basis until a sponsor solution is finalised.

After initially identifying three potential sponsors, the recommendation is to match the school with SFET due to its primary expertise and capacity.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** None

## Significant change:

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

**Project:** Pilgrims Way Primary School (Veritas Trust), Kent - Increase in pupil capacity

**AB discussion:** This proposed change involves the increase to pupil capacity from 315 to 420 and PAN from 45 to 60 at Pilgrims Way Primary School in Canterbury, Kent. The expansion will involve the addition of extra classrooms to accommodate the expansion of the school from 1.5 to 2FE.

Pilgrims Way was announced as one of 50 schools prioritised for the second wave of projects in the School Rebuilding Programme in July. The Programme carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at school and sixth form college buildings across England, with buildings prioritised according to their condition.

Kent County Council (KCC) and Veritas Academies Trust are keen for the DfE to approve the application to increase the capacity of Pilgrims Way Primary School as it will allow them to meet the needs of planned housing in the area, which is outlined in The Kent Commissioning Plan for Education 2019-2023.

Question on recruitment plan for CEO position as the current CEO is leaving.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** To have a conversation in early January with the trust about their plans for recruitment and possible trust partnerships.

**Project:** Orchards Academy (The Kemnal Academies Trust), Kent - Closure of 6th form

**AB discussion:** Orchards Academy was approved for the Schools Rebuilding Programme (SRP) in July 2021.

The school is currently 11-18 but has had an empty sixth form in recent years, with no pupils in 2020/21 and only four in 2019/20.

There is a surplus of sixth form places around Orchards, which is projected to continue even with an overall forecast increase in sixth form demand over the next few years.

The school is looking to close the sixth form and the new building will be built for 11-16 year olds.

**RSC decision:** Approve in principle

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Full business case to be returned to RSC upon conclusion of consultation.

**Project:** Wrotham School (Character Education Trust), Kent - Increase in pupil capacity

**AB discussion:** As part of the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP), as well as re-building existing worn-out buildings, Wrotham School has been asked by KCC to expand its capacity from 165 to 210.

Noted that Wrotham School as well as other schools in the area are above capacity.

Building works will be joint funded by SRP and KCC, who are committed to the expansion.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Condition of the approval is a review of governance with possible NLG support, as appropriate.

**Project:** St Columba's Catholic Boys' School, St Anthony's Catholic Primary School and St Peter Chanel Catholic Primary School to join South East London Catholic Academies Trust (SELCAT)

**AB discussion:** The development of SELCAT is part of the wider strategy for the Archdiocese of Southwark to consolidate its schools into a small number of MATs and is part of the DfE Diocesan MAT pilot. The highest concentration of Single Academy Trusts within the Archdiocese is in the South-East London boroughs. SELCAT aims to bring together existing academies and converter schools in the boroughs of Lewisham, Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich. SELCAT is a multi-phase MAT, offering all-through education to pupils from 3-19 years old.

AB recognised the trust had only been operating since 1 September 2021 and that its development is still in the early stages. The RSC's office will work closely with both SELCAT and the Archdiocese over the coming months as the trust develops plans to build capacity further, particularly the school improvement offer and approach to back-office functions, in order to bring more schools into the trust.

**RSC decision:** Approve with condition

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Condition for CEO to receive external mentoring support, ideally from the leader of another Catholic academy trust. CEO has since confirmed he already receives such mentoring support from another trust.

**Project:** Peacehaven Community School, East Sussex - to change from a Speech and Language facility to become an ASC/SPL facility

**AB discussion:** East Sussex has identified a need to extend the designation of Peacehaven to ensure that the current facility can meet the needs of local pupils with special educational needs (SEN). This is as a result of changes seen by the type of SEN being presented.

Peacehaven Community School currently has a specialist facility for up to 20 pupils aged between 11-16 with speech, language, and communication needs. The LA are currently forecasting that the demand for speech, language and communication is falling whilst children with EHCP for autistic spectrum disorder is rising.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** None

**Project:** Brantridge School, West Sussex, to expand provision to secondary and become co-educational

**AB discussion:** Brantridge School is responding to demand from its home Local Authority (LA), West Sussex County Council (WSCC), to develop a new social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) secondary provision, (Year 7-Year 11) on its current site. The primary provision is currently for boys only and will remain a boys only primary provision. The secondary provision will be co-educational and will offer academic and vocational pathways alongside a blended pathway according to the needs of the individual child.

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is looking for an overall total of 80 secondary places over a five year period. The new secondary provision will require new accommodation on the current site, which will be funded and undertaken by West Sussex from WSCC's capital programme.

Question around capacity to implement the change given scale of the challenge.

**RSC decision:** Defer

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** To conduct further external scrutiny on the plan. The board was happy to reconsider in January.