

## Notes of Meeting: East Midlands and Humber Advisory Board

19 January 2022

### 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

- Kate Copley

### Advisory Board (AB) members

- Anne Martin
- Paul Stone
- Inderjit Sandhu
- Paul West
- Andy Child

### Guests

- Sally Jack, North East Lincolnshire Council
- Rebecca Taylor, North East Lincolnshire Council

### Apologies

- Peter Bell

### DfE senior civil servants

- Charlotte Marr
- Kelly Hughes

### Representations received

One representation was made for the free school presumption sponsor approval project – Rotherham Social, Emotional and Mental Health Free School, Rotherham.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** Whether to approve Embark Federation to enter into the secondary phase and approve conversions of Aldercar High School (Nottingham), Anthony Gell School (Derbyshire), Buxton Community School (Derbyshire) and Parkside Community School (Derbyshire).

### **AB discussion:**

The Embark Federation is a Derby-based Multi-Academy Trust that has 13 schools located across Derbyshire and are all within a 45-minute drive of the trust's head office. They plan to maintain this model as they grow.

All four schools are looking to join the trust because they share Embark's four core beliefs.

Embark conducted a high-level analysis of each school in collaboration with the headteacher and governing body. All four schools were rated as 'good' in their last Ofsted inspections.

The board agreed with the rationale for the proposal but advised there were too many unresolved questions about the impact of four secondary schools joining a primary-led trust at once. It was agreed that the trust undertake full due diligence at each school and further assess the impact of this on the trust's central capacity before bringing the project back to the AB. The board advised that the schools could take advantage of the benefits of associate membership of the trust.

The financial health of the school, strength of financial management and governance at the trust and the impact on the trust's future financial health were considered.

**RSC decision:** Deferred.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform the Trust and the schools of the decision taken.

## Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

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

**Project:** To discuss sponsor options for Rotherham Social, Emotional and Mental Health Free School, Rotherham.

**AB discussion:**

This proposal supports Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) to establish a special school for children and young people with special educational needs, specifically in relation to social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) in the Rotherham area.

RMBC has seen a significant increase in the number of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have SEMH identified as their primary need, and therefore require specialist placements.

The LA recognises that a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is not an appropriate setting for children and young people with SEMH needs and a longer-term solution is required. The first cohort of children in this setting will be those who are currently being educated in Rotherham's PRUs - The Rowan Centre and Rotherham Aspire Pupil Referral Unit. The LA has engaged throughout the process with the headteachers at both PRUs. They are aware of the proposal and plans, particularly at The Rowan Centre which will be most affected by the new school opening.

The LA concluded that Nexus Multi-Academy Trust, Ethos Academies Trust and Wellspring Academies Trust are all credible sponsor options, and the LA would be confident in any one of them to deliver the new free school. Ethos AT was their preferred option.

The board felt that they were not in position to make a clear recommendation during the meeting. It was not yet clear if the two schools would amalgamate or if indeed, they would form a new school with new staff. Because of this, it was not possible to determine what Ethos would be taking on. It was also highlighted that the consultation had not concluded and that any Advisory Board discussion should be taken after that point.

The financial health of the school, strength of financial management and governance at the trust and the impact on the trust's future financial health were considered.

**RSC decision:** Deferred.

**Conflicts:** Andy Child. Andy did not receive the papers and was not present for the discussion.

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to liaise with Local Authority.

## **Academy Opening Approved in Principle**

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** Meadow View Primary School, Rotherham.

**AB discussion:** Proposed school opening date – 01 February 2022.

**Further actions required:** No action required.

**Project:** Hawthorn Primary and Nursery School, Nottinghamshire.

**AB discussion:** Proposed school opening date – 01 February 2022.

**Further actions required:** No action required.

## Significant Change

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

**Project:** Whether to approve The Robert Smyth Academy, **Leicestershire**, to open a 15 - place communication and interaction resource unit.

### **AB discussion:**

Tudor Grange Academies Trust is seeking to establish a new 15 place communication and interaction (C&I) resource base at The Robert Smyth Academy with effect from August 2022.

The Robert Smyth Academy is an 11-19 secondary school located in Market Harborough, Leicestershire and opened as a standalone academy in August 2011. The school later joined Tudor Grange Academies Trust (based in the West Midlands region) in September 2017 and was inspected by Ofsted on 12-13 September 2017 and judged as good across all categories.

It is anticipated that the C&I resource base will open on a phased basis, reach full capacity in its second year, and all students attending the provision will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The proposal to establish a new resource base at the school is in response to the local need for additional secondary specialist places in South Leicestershire. This is also part of the Leicestershire SEND Strategy. The risk of not approving this proposal is that secondary aged students will be unable to access the special targeted provision required in their local area.

The board were in support of this proposal.

The financial health of the school, strength of financial management and governance at the trust and the impact on the trust's future financial health were considered.

**RSC decision:** Approved subject to the related planning permission being granted.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform the school of the decision.

**Project:** Whether to approve Acres Hill Primary, **Sheffield** to open a 10-place integrated resource unit in an unused space on the school site.

### **AB discussion:**

Sheffield South East Trust (SSET) is a six-school, primary-only MAT in south-east Sheffield.

The trust proposes to open an integrated resource (IR) unit within Acres Hill Community Primary School to support pupils with EHCPs. 10 FTE places will be registered on roll at the school. Pupils will have access to learning both in the IR unit and mainstream classes as

appropriate. This will not impact on either the PAN or the capacity of the school and will be recorded as 10 SEND places on the funding agreement.

Sheffield City Council (SCC) are strongly in favour of the proposal due to increasing demand in the area and city wide for this type of provision. If approved, the provision will support SCC's overall strategic plans for SEND.

The Ofsted section 8 short inspection of November 2019 gave Acres Hill an overall good effectiveness.

Increasing the number of IR places is a priority for SCC's SEND Sufficiency Plan as they enable children who might otherwise be placed in special school to remain in a mainstream setting.

The risk of not approving this is that some children in the local community may be unable to access specialist provision in their local area and as a result will need to be transported outside their local environment to access provision elsewhere.

The financial health of the school, strength of financial management and governance at the trust and the impact on the trust's future financial health were considered.

The board were in support of this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform the school of the decision.

## Trust Change

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

**Project:** Whether to approve the transfer of Thomas Cowley High School (SAT), **Lincolnshire** to join South Lincolnshire Academies Trust (MAT).

### **AB discussion:**

South Lincolnshire Academies Trust (SLAT) is a three school MAT with a proven track record of school improvement. All schools within SLAT are located 30 minutes from Thomas Cowley High School.

SLAT have been providing leadership and school improvement support to Thomas Cowley High School since 2020 and they are both in a position to formalise the strong working relationship already in place. Thomas Cowley High School is in close geographical proximity to existing schools within SLAT which will allow effective use of school improvement capacity across the trust.

The financial health of the school, strength of financial management and governance at the trust and the impact on the trust's future financial health were considered.

The board were supportive of the proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform the trusts of the decision.

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