



Notes of Meeting: South-East England and South London

27 January 2022

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

- A submission was received from Jonathan Morris regarding the 'Burgess Hill Northern Arc' agenda item, which was shared with Advisory Board members prior to the meeting.

General Discussion Points

RSC update

- Minutes from previous meeting agreed.
- RSC provided an update on Advisory Board elections and thanked AB members for their continued support.
- Discussion on day-to-day operations in schools in the South-East England and South London region.
- Discussion on current direction of travel for academies within the region.
- AB noted the outcomes from Ofsted inspections across the region.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: The Minster Nursery and Infants School and The Minster Junior School to convert and join Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) MAT

AB discussion: This is a converter project for The Minster Nursery and Infant School and The Minster Junior Primary School to convert to academy status and join Southwark Diocesan Board of Education Multi-Academy Trust (SDBE MAT). Both schools are situated on the same site. The Infant and Junior school will remain separate schools post conversion maintaining their own individual budget allocations and will report results separately.

Discussed the rationale for the schools joining the MAT and noted that both Minster schools are Ofsted good and likely to add capacity.

The permanent CEO recently retired. Trust is recruiting for a new part-time CEO who will be supported by a COO. AB discussed this arrangement.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: RSC to meet with trust to discuss strategic plan for growth and capacity.

Sponsored route

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

Project: Coastal Academies Trust for Royal Harbour Academy, Kent - Fully sponsored funding

AB discussion: Following the Advisory Board in February 2021 the RSC approved CAT as the sponsor. Conversion has been delayed due to the challenges associated with converting other PFI schools in Kent. The North School (PFI) recently converted to an Academy which will allow future PFI conversions to take place, including Royal Harbour.

Noted that the project meets the criteria for full sponsored funding.

Discussion on trust's school improvement plan.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Holmesdale School, Kent - Fully sponsored funding

AB discussion: In June 2018, the RSC approved Swale Academies Trust as a sponsor for the school. Conversion has been delayed due to the challenges associated with converting other PFI schools in Kent. Following the sponsor match, Kent County Council (KCC) have been funding Swale to provide school improvement support for Holmesdale.

Full sponsor funding is being recommended due to the complex nature of the PFI conversion, the length of time required to convert the school, the level of school improvement required and the investment required to increase numbers on roll.

Discussion on school improvement plan and capacity.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Willow Learning Trust, Sutton, Academy Sponsor Application

AB discussion: The Willow Learning Trust (TWLT) is a small trust based in the Stonecot area of Sutton and currently comprises of three schools: Glenthorne High School, Aragon Primary School and Abbey Primary School. TWLT leads the Sutton SCITT. TWLT was established in July 2017. Abbey Primary joined Glenthorne High School and Aragon Primary School in the trust on 1st September 2018. The trust has good performance across all schools and has capacity to lead improvement.

Noted that there are currently 5 members, of which one is also a trustee.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Trust to work towards separation between trustees and Chairs of LGBs in the future.

Project: Burgess Hill Northern Arc, West Sussex - Sponsor approval for presumption free school project

AB discussion: It was noted that West Sussex County Council has launched a presumption project to deliver an all-through free school in Burgess Hill which will provide additional school places in the area. The LA's projections indicate that additional places are needed at primary for September 2023 and at secondary for September 2024, including a need for early years provision at primary and specialist provision at both primary and secondary. This demand cannot be fully addressed by expanding existing schools.

The board discussed the assessment process undertaken by the local authority and the proposed sponsor selected via this process.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Significant change:

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

Project: Wilmington Primary School SAT, Kent, to join Endeavour MAT

AB discussion: Wilmington Primary School (WPS) became an academy in November 2011 and is a single academy trust. WPS is very close to both Wilmington Grammar School for Boys (0.2 miles), Wilmington Grammar School for Girls (0.5 miles) and Stone Lodge Free School (3.8 miles) – all of which are part of Endeavour MAT (EMAT). The schools have enjoyed a productive working relationship over many years, and this was strengthened during the pandemic when the school was supported by the trust e.g. by providing risk assessments, capital project bids and with the provision of overspill classroom space.

WPS is within half a mile of the EMAT and is a feeder school for both the grammar and secondary schools within the trust.

WPS and EMAT have had an ongoing working relationship since September 2017.

AB discussed how EMAT will build capacity and expertise to support primary phase.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Discussion with EMAT focusing on plans for developing primary school improvement capacity.

Project: Ark Evelyn Grace Academy, Lambeth - closure of sixth form

AB discussion: Ark Evelyn Grace Academy (AEG) is a mixed secondary school in Lambeth for 11–18-year-olds. The school joined the trust in 2008 and was rated as good at its last inspection in May 2017. AEG has seen a fall in pupil and currently has only 508 on roll across its KS3 and KS4 cohort (capacity of 1200). Only 76 pupils joined Y7 in September 2021. The trust views the sixth form as financially unviable and took the decision to pause the provision. This is therefore a retrospective request to officially close the sixth form. There are no post-16 pupils on roll.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Surrey Hills All Saints Primary, Surrey - closure of satellite site in Abinger and consolidating provision to main site in Westcott

AB discussion: Surrey Hills All Saints Primary School is a 1 FE split-site 4-11 primary with an additional 10 pupils from Y3 onwards, formed through an amalgamation of two village schools in 2010. The Reception/Key Stage 1 site is in Abinger with the Key Stage 2 site three miles away in Westcott (approximately 15 minutes' drive). There is capacity for 300 children across both sites. 210 children can be accommodated on the Westcott site and 90 on the Abinger site. The school's current admission policy states that pupils can expect to be educated at either site.

The school was judged Inadequate in 2017 and GST have worked hard to turn it around. The additional challenge of a split site with falling numbers exacerbates the situation. Rationalising the sites would enable GST to provide the best educational experience for children, allow effective collaboration between staff and to achieve a balanced budget by 2022/23 and future years.

Noted that the school is currently not achieving its PAN and has falling numbers of pupils.

Discussed representations from the consultation.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required

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

AB discussion: A decision was deferred at the December 2021 Advisory Board to allow for the proposal to be scrutinised by an external NLE. This review took place in early January, and it was noted that the NLE was confident in the trust's proposal and their implementation plan.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Trust to update their Articles of Association to the latest model version and to recruit two further members, bringing them to five in total.