



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 24 March 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

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

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

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Claire Trewartha (Deputy Director)
- 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 the launch of the White Paper and rising Covid levels. There was particular focus on supply teacher availability and exam preparation.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Moat Hall Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join the Future Generation Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Moat Hall Primary School is a school based in Staffordshire with a current Ofsted judgment of 'Requires Improvement' as of January 2020.
- Future Generation Trust comprises of four primary academies ranging from Ofsted 'Outstanding' to 'Good'.
- There is an established relationship between the Trust and School as they have been supporting each other on school improvement. It had been noted that the school also identifies closely with the principles and values promoted by the Trust.
- The Local Authority (LA) have been supportive of this plan.
- The board raised questions on capacity at the Trust, including finances and expenditure with both staff and capital projects. The board were assured that this is being monitored and will continue to be prioritised.
- 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 DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Manor Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join the Fierte Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Manor Primary School is located in Tamworth, Staffordshire and holds a current Ofsted judgment of 'Requires Improvement' given in January 2020.
- Fierte Multi Academy Trust is comprised of 8 primary schools, of which 2 are currently graded Ofsted 'Outstanding'.
- The governors and headteacher of Manor had researched and explored several other trusts before making an informed decision on Fierte. The Trust have capacity to grow with a core service team to offer the required school support to Manor.
- Both the Trust and School share a vision and ethos that are deeply rooted in their collaborative networks.
- The board raised comments on the current trustee board, including the structure of the board, suggesting a review would be welcome due to a possible conflict. There were also questions raised on finances and amounts being spent on specific areas such as technical support, HR management and catering.
- A restructure of the board was recommended.
- 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 DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Kineton CofE Primary School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Stour Federation, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Kineton CofE Primary School is located in south Warwickshire and holds a current Ofsted judgement of 'Good'.
- The Stour Federation Multi Academy trust is built up of 3 schools, all rated Ofsted 'Good'. The governing body have recognised the opportunity for its pupils and for its staff, in terms of development and progression by being part of a MAT.
- The proposal has been put together after Kineton's governing body wanted to solidify the existing links between the school and trust after identifying the many principles and common approaches they both shared.
- The Diocese of Coventry is supportive of the proposal which is aligned to its wider Diocesan strategy of encouraging all its schools to academise and join a trust.
- The board raised their support for this proposal and offered comments on Governance capacity and the transitional timescales.
- 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 DCS to be informed of the decision.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: Portland School and Specialist College, Stoke-on-Trent, to be sponsored by Shaw Education Trust.

Reason for Academy Order: Ofsted Category 4.

AB discussion:

- Portland School and Specialist College is an all-through special school located across two sites, with a current Ofsted judgment of 'Inadequate' as of December 2021.
- The sponsor, Shaw Education Trust, is a large trust consisting of 25 schools across the West Midlands, Lancashire and West Yorkshire and East Midlands and Humber.
- Shaw has been providing immediate support for Portland via its leadership and management tasks including risk assessments and safeguarding admissions.
- Portland is currently in the process of installing an Interim Executive Board (IEB). It is expected that the IEB will remain in place until a suitable long term sponsor solution is found.
- The board raised questions on the financial plans for both the Trust and the school, querying future funding requests and future financial positions. The board were assured that finances were to be stabilised if the sponsor was approved.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Margaret Yates.

Further actions required: To inform the school and trusts.

Sponsor Application

Points discussed in relation to applications for sponsor application.

Project: Whether to approve a sponsor application for The Orchard Community Trust, Stoke-on-Trent.

AB discussion:

- The Orchard Community Trust is a Stoke-on-Trent based Multi- Academy Trust comprising of 8 schools providing a mixture of mainstream and special school provision.
- Having recently reviewed its central team and centralised functions, OCT is looking to grow after currently supporting several local primary schools with school improvement, performance management and governance activities.
- The majority of schools within OCT are performing above the average national level, however two of its school have been recognised as lower than average from previous results. Due to this, it is not possible to determine the level of school improvement that has taken place at these schools.
- The board provided comments on governance structure and experience, looking at best practices and plans moving forward with this. There were also discussions on future financial positions and how school improvement would be embedded whilst actively remaining in positive financial standing.
- The RSC agreed with a recommendation of a Governance review and to action best practice with the Trustee board.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Deferred.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trust.

Significant Change

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

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion and increase in Published Admission Numbers for The County High School, Leftwich, Cheshire West and Chester

AB discussion:

- The County High School, Leftwich is a secondary school based in Northwich, Cheshire. They currently hold an Ofsted judgment of 'Outstanding' from 2016. The school currently sits with The Sir John Brunner Foundation.
- The application submitted by the school focuses on an increase in Published Admission Numbers (PAN) in September 2022 with a physical expansion of 6 new classrooms.
- The proposal was submitted due the school already operating over capacity whilst there is also an increase in demand for places in the area.
- The Local Authority (LA) are supportive of the application due to high demand in the local area.
- The board discussed the Foundation's other schools, their current performance scores and it's financial viability. There was a question regarding the current member numbers and the consultation process on this application. The board were reassured that a consultation had taken place within the correct timelines.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform school of decision.

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion and increase in Published Admission Numbers for Tytherington School, Cheshire West

AB discussion:

- Tytherington School is a secondary school based in Cheshire. They currently hold an Ofsted judgment of 'Good' from 2016.
- The school submitted an application to retrospectively expand their physical premises and increase their PAN from September 2023.
- The proposal was submitted due to the LA forecasting a shortage of secondary school places across the next few years driven by new housing developments.
- The Local Authority (LA) are supportive of the application, with a consultation being held by the school showing favour to the proposal.
- The board discussed the school's current governance structure, highlighting proposed board changes. There was also a discussion around why the application was retrospective.
- The board members supported the recommendation.
- The RSC approved the decision and added a recommendation of a Schools Management and Resource Advisor (SMRA) deployment and also setting a condition to complete an external review of the trust's governance structure.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform school of decision.

Trust Change

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

Project: Whether to approve Carmountside Primary Academy, Stoke-on-Trent, to transfer to The Societas Trust, Stoke-on-Trent.

AB discussion:

- Carmountside Primary Academy is a standalone academy located in Stoke-on-Trent. They currently hold a 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgment from October 2018.
- The Societas Multi Academy Trust is built up of 6 primary schools based around Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
- Societas and Carmountside have a pre-existing relationship with them having entered into an Associate member agreement in 2021. The Trust is also providing support wot the school through the LA's Opportunity Area initiative.
- The proposal will further address the concerns raised in the last Ofsted report which were showing improvement prior to the pandemic. Alongside this, Carmountside will bring a wealth of skill sets and experience to support the Trust including leadership, inclusion and governance.
- The board discussed the current governance structure at Carmountside, reviewing the current experience held on the board. There was also a discussion on the Trust's future financial capacity if approved.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform both Trusts.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy, Stoke-on-Trent.

Decision type: Significant Change – Capacity increase.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Titan St Georges, Birmingham.

Decision type: Significant Change – Moving site.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

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

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

Project: North Leamington School, Warwickshire.

Type of decision: Sponsor application.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient information to present at AB.

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