



Department
for Education

Notes of Meeting: East of England and Northeast London Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 28 April 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

- Jonathan Duff (RSC)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Karen Kerridge (AB)
- Duncan Ramsey (AB)
- Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne (AB)
- Tom Canning (AB)
- Brian Conway (AB)
- AL Kingsley (AB)
- Caroline Derbyshire (AB)
- Diane Rochford (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- ESFA representative
- Alan Parnum (DfE Deputy Director)

Representations received

No representations were made for any items discussed at this meeting

General Discussion Points

AB Member Reflections

- The March AB meeting notes were discussed and agreed.
- Members welcomed the new RSC.
- The RSC provided a forward-looking update on planned visits, and introductions.
- The RSC and board members discussed headlines and reactions to the new White Paper.
- The RSC updated members on recent AB election, and the next steps for inductions.

Converter Academy Order

Project: Whether St Benedict's Catholic High School, **Suffolk**, should join Our Lady of Walsingham MAT, **Suffolk**.

AB discussion:

- The board discussed the voluntary conversion of St Benedict's, to join Our Lady of Walsingham MAT.
- The RSC & board heard that the school is now in a stronger position financially and now wants to move ahead with the conversion.
- The trust board has only met 3 times in the previous year, but this has now been addressed and the trust have made changes to their governance model.
- No objections.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: Brian Conway

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform Trust of the RSC's decision and will discuss Governance arrangements with them.

Trust Change

Project: Whether Benfleet Schools Trust (Appleton School), **Benfleet**, and Takely Education Trust (Woodlands School) **Basildon**, should join Compass Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the schools have been collaborating with Compass Education Trust for some time and now want to formalise the arrangement.
- The board heard that the Department is happy to support the transition however some concern was raised over the trusts results from 2019 and whether an improvement strategy was in place. The project lead confirmed an improvement plan has been produced and a governance review had been completed.
- While the board were happy to approve the change, they were keen to highlight that the trusts focus should be on improving the performance of their current schools.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: Karen Kerridge

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform Trust of RSC's decision.

Trust Change

Project: Whether City Academy Norwich, **Norfolk**, should join Sapiientia Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard how City Academy Norwich (CAN) has the capacity for 1100 pupils, but only has 650 on roll.
- The board heard that since 2017, CAN have been supported by Bohunt Education Trust, however, for several reasons, Bohunt were unable to produce sustained improvement in the performance
- Bohunt Education Trust had difficulty supporting CAN during the pandemic due to its distance from its existing academies and has now decided to step away.
- The Department looked at alternatives and following a selection process agreed Sapiientia to be a good fit for CAN.
- If agreed, Sapiientia will recruit a new strong headteacher and agree to take on the financial deficit of CAN.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust of RSC's decision.

Trust Change

Project: Whether the merger of **Newham** Community Schools Trust and Leading Learning Trust should go ahead

AB discussion:

- The AB heard details regarding the voluntary merger of Newham Community Schools Trust (NCST) and Leading Learning Trust (LLT), to create a trust for with both primary and secondary phases. LLT has two primary schools, and both are in a strong financial position.
- There has been evidence of strong collaboration across the two trusts as they share a similar ethos and vision.
- The board discussed concerns over schools' previous performance, and some of the trust's mergers from previous years.
- The RSC would like to meet with the trust to discuss the merger plans in more detail before making a decision.

RSC decision: Deferred

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trust of RSC's decision. The RSC would like trust to gather more information on existing schools and have an additional discussion.

Significant Change

Project: Whether Southend East Community Academy Trust, should change the age range at Thorpedean Primary School, **Essex**, from 4 - 11 to 2 – 11, to include a nursery.

AB discussion:

- The AB heard that there is a clear demand for nursery places locally and this is fully supported by the LA.
- The school has acknowledged that it needs to review its governance and add a fifth board member.
- The board and RSC reflected that there has been some change at the top of the leadership team, however, the Project Lead confirmed this has now stabilised.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trust of RSC's decision.

Significant Change

Project: Whether Bridge Academy Trust should merge Mildmay Junior and Mildmay Infant Schools to create Mildmay Primary School, **Essex**.

AB discussion:

- The board discussed the trusts track record and heard how the trust took on Mildmay junior school in 2017 when it required improvement and has now moved this school to 'Good' at the latest Ofsted inspection.
- No objections were raised by board members.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trust of RSC's decision.

Significant Change

Project: Whether Enrich Learning Trust, **Norfolk**, should expand the SRB at Dereham Netherd High School, **Norfolk**.

AB discussion:

- The AB heard Enrich Learning Trust's application to increase pupil places at the school's Autistic Spectrum Disorder Special Resource Base, to be able to take 3 additional pupils. This will increase places from 22 to 25 from September 2022.
- The discussions noted that this is a small change, that supports Norfolk's strategic SEND strategy.
- The school has a good OFSTED (February 2020).
- The board and RSC heard how the CEO has advised that there are plans to recruit a fifth board member.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead will inform the trust of the RSC's decision.

Significant Change

Project: Whether Wells Primary Academy, **Suffolk**, should lower the age range from 3-11 to 2-11

AB discussion:

- The board heard how lowering the age range of the nursery provision would benefit the local community and is fully supported by Suffolk LA.
- No objections from board members.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the school of the RSC's decision.

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

Project: Whether to approve the Local Authority's preferred sponsor, Meridian Trust, for the new presumption school in Sawtry, **Cambridgeshire**.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this new school is needed due to three new housing developments in the area which mean existing schools will not be able to meet the increased basic need.
- The board heard that the LA received applications from 5 trusts, met with 3 and choose Meridian. The Project Lead is satisfied with the process the LA followed.
- If agreed, Meridian will have 28 schools going forward. The board discussed and agreed that the trust had capacity to fully support the new school.
- The RSC is looking forward to meeting the trust in the summer to discuss their progress.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: Diane Rochford and AL Kingsley

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trust and LA of RSC's decision. The RSC will meet with trust in the summer.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

Project: Highams Park School, part of Highams Park Academy Trust, **Waltham Forest**, to retrospectively increase their PAN from 215 to 240.

Update:

- The RSC considered a retrospective request to increase the PAN from 215 to 240 at Highams Park School, **Waltham Forest**. The PAN increased in September 2012; however, the academy did not realise they needed to submit a significant change request when they expanded.
- The PAN was initiated by the local authority as part of the 2009 Waltham Forest Strategy for Change and was welcomed by the local community. Prior to the change, and to date, the school continues to receive considerably more applications than places.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust of the RSC's decision.