



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

26 May 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
- Sinead Smith
- Mike Donoghue
- Sajid Gulzar
- Dame Maureen Brennan

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Sir Mark Grundy
- Margaret Yates

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)

Representations received

- 1, Whether to approve a sponsor for Highters Heath Community School, Birmingham.
- 1, Whether to approve Brine Multi Academy Trust, Cheshire East, to transfer to Alsager Multi Academy Trust, Cheshire East.

These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

Local Update

- The RSC and AB members discussed the current climate in schools across the West Midlands Region. The RSC provided an update on Regions Group within the Department.

AB member reflections

- AB members reflected on SATs week and the Schools White Paper. There was also a discussion on complaints being deferred to ESFA before exhausting the schools complaints procedures.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to approve Fordbridge Community Primary School, Castle Bromwich Infant and Nursery School, Castle Bromwich Junior School, Windy Arbor Primary School, Birmingham, to form a new Multi Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- The proposal was to bring 4 schools together to form Prosper Together Multi Academy Trust.
- The schools have worked together formally for over 7 years as part of a Teaching School Alliance and have already established a shared ethos and vision.
- The MAT would initially be comprised of 4 non-faith primary schools in north Solihull, which has a large demographic of deprivation. There is also a general gap in primary MATs or MATs with strong primary expertise in Solihull.
- All schools have an Ofsted rating of either 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- The Teaching School Alliance the schools are currently in has proven successful.
- Leadership of Windy Arbor had changed since there had been some performance issues.
- The board discussed the financial position of the schools, all of which were in a healthy financial position.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC set a recommendation of mentor support for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and a condition of an Schools Management and Resource Advisor (SMRA) to be deployed in Spring/Summer 2023.

RSC decision: Approved with condition.

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 Holland House Infant School, Birmingham, to convert and become an academy and join Broadleaf Partnership Trust Birmingham

AB discussion:

- Holland House is an infant school in the Sutton Coldfield area of Birmingham.
- An existing relationship had been established between Holland House Infant and Broadleaf Partnership Trust. This change would represent the formalisation of this relationship.
- Holland House directly neighbours Town Junior and Plantsbrook, the former for which is a main feeder school.
- The school has an 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgement from 2010 but has experienced some declines due to leadership. A permanent head had now been established and the school was beginning to stabilise.

- Broadleaf is currently a MAT of 3 schools, all of which are in Birmingham. Broadleaf has outlined a strong offer of support that involves a senior leader of the Trust being seconded to Holland House.
- The board discussed the financial positions of the school and Trust.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC set a recommendation of an SRMA deployment.

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 Heath Mount Primary School, Birmingham, to convert and become an academy and join Excelsior Multi Academy Trust, Birmingham

AB discussion:

- Heath Mount is a larger than average sized primary school in the Hall Green area of Birmingham.
- The school was rated 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in 2019 though was noted to be taking effective action in a June 2021 monitoring visit.
- Excelsior Multi Academy Trust has a track record of improving schools and plans to provide support to Heath Mount via their deputy CEO, curriculum lead practitioner, EYFS lead practitioner and trust maths lead.
- The addition of Heath Mount to Excelsior provides a geographical link between the trust's three schools in the south of Birmingham and Parkfield, further to the north of the city centre.
- Assurances were provided around the capacity of the Trust and the leadership. Assurances were also provided around pupil numbers at Heath Mount, with a housing development also being developed nearby.
- The performance of the schools currently in the Trust was discussed.
- The Trust are looking to fill the vacancies within the Trustees by September 2022.
- The financial position of the Trust was discussed along with the varying demographics of Heath Mount and schools which are already in the Trust, and the reputation the Trust hold in terms of improvement.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC set a recommendation of an SRMA deployment.

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 Queenswood Primary School and Nursery, Telford and Wrekin, to convert and become an academy and join Learning Community Trust, Telford and Wrekin

AB discussion:

- Queenswood Primary School and Nursery is a smaller than average foundation school located in Telford and Wrekin.
- Pupil progress in all subjects is below national average. Persistent absence and recruitment are also concerns within the school. There are also significant capital issues at the school.
- Learning Community Trust is an 8 school trust with a primary, secondary and special mix along with a range of Ofsted judgements.
- The Trust also have a pipeline presumption free school due to open in September 2023.
- Learning Community Trust have agreed to appoint a new headteacher at Queenswood along with permanent teachers throughout.
- The school is geographically close to other schools within the Trust and will act as a feeder school.
- The Trust have received an external review of their governance and an SRMA visit was due to be scheduled.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC set a condition of an SRMA deployment in the Autumn term.

RSC decision: Approve with condition.

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 Holly Grove Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join Primitas Learning Partnership, Staffordshire

AB discussion:

- Holly Grove Primary School is an average sized primary school located in Burntwood, Staffordshire.
- The school was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in 2020 and no educational concerns have been identified.
- The school recognise the benefits of joining a mixed phase MAT and Primitas Learning Partnership have a positive working relationship with other MATs that have agreed to proactively support growth and development.
- The finances of the Trust are in a healthy position but an SRMA deployment was expected.
- The growth of Primitas Learning Partnership would add cross-phase capacity to the Cannock area.
- The board 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 Our Lady and St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, St Marie's Catholic Primary School, English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, St Augustine's Catholic Primary, Kenilworth, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Studley, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady of the Magnificat Multi-Academy Trust

AB discussion:

- The proposal was to approve academy orders for 5 catholic primary schools.
- All schools are currently rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and would add capacity to Our Lady of the Magnificat Multi Academy Trust (the MAC). The schools' governing bodies feel that the ethos and values of their schools are aligned with the MAC and the MAC's vision.
- Assurances were provided in that all chairs of governing bodies had been informed and reasonable consultations have taken place.
- The MAC was already working closely with 3 of the schools through SLAs and the MAC has held in person consultations with all schools too.
- The headteachers of all schools attended the MACs recent conference.
- Development opportunities would be provided as the MAC expands and the model for finance had always had the ability to grow.
- The OLOM MAC currently hold 12 schools. The conditions of this merger had all been met.
- Assurances had been provided from the MAC on their governance and a governance review had been completed as part of a condition of the previous merger.
- The financial position of the trust was discussed.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC set a recommendation of an SRMA in Spring 2023 and for the Trust to send quarterly management accounts for 12 months from point of conversion.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sinead Smith.

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 Newbold and Tredington CofE Primary School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join Fosse Multi Academy Trust, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Newbold and Tredington CofE Primary School is a small, vulnerable, Ofsted rated 'Good' school.
- The school serves a large traveller population and experiences high pupil mobility.
- Fosse MAT was formed in April 2021 and currently holds 2 schools. The Trust is one of six Diocese of Coventry MATs across Warwickshire selected for growth, in line with the Diocese of Coventry's strategic plan.
- The school holds the same Christian values as the Fosse MAT which is geographically close and within the same consortium of schools.
- The board discussed the financial position of Fosse MAT.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC recommended an SRMA deployment.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Kate Brunt.

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 Far Forest Lea Memorial CofE Primary School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join Severn Academies Educational Trust, Worcestershire

AB discussion:

- Far Forest Lea Memorial CofE Primary School is a smaller than average sized primary in Kidderminster, Worcestershire.
- The school has been judged 'Requires Improvement' in 2017 and again in 2019.
- Severn Academies Educational Trust is currently a 5 primary and 2 secondary, mixed MAT.
- The Local Authority and the Diocese are supportive for the school to join the Trust.
- The school had been an associate member of the Trust since September 2019 and has since received 2 Ofsted positive monitoring reports.
- The Trust had deployed an executive head at the school and the school has received wide support and development across all areas.
- Assurances were provided on the available data in terms of performance of the Trust.
- The financial position of the Trust was discussed.
- The board 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 Moat Farm Junior School, Sandwell, to convert and become an academy and join Stour Vale Academy Trust, Sandwell.

AB discussion:

- Moat Farm is an Ofsted rated 'Good' school that would add capacity to Stour Vale Academy Trust.
- The school and the Trust have been working together since 2018 and the Trust is currently providing school improvement for the Trusts sponsored primary projects.
- The school would further benefit from receiving wider back office support and access to increased security from being part of a local mid sized trust.
- Stour Vale is currently a 7 school trust based in Sandwell and Dudley. Of the 7 schools, 2 are 'Outstanding', 2 are 'Good' and 3 are yet to be inspected since they joined as sponsored projects.
- The financial position of the trust was discussed.
- The board 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: Whether to approve a sponsor for Highters Heath Community School, Birmingham.

Reason for Academy Order: Ofsted Category 4.

AB discussion:

- Highters Heath is an LA maintained school in the Selly Oak area of Birmingham. The school was judged 'inadequate' and to require special measures in January 2022.
- There are currently 183 pupils on roll and 53.9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals.
- Sponsor options were discussed along with the locality of the school and potential Trusts.
- The preferred Trust was Excelsior Multi Academy Trust and assurances were provided around the capacity and financial position of the Trust.
- The board discussed the leadership within the Trust.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC set a recommendation of an SRMA deployment.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school and trusts.

Trust Change

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

Project: Whether to approve Brine Multi Academy Trust, Cheshire East, to transfer to Alsager Multi Academy Trust, Cheshire East.

AB discussion:

- The proposal was for Brine Multi Academy Trust to close and for its two schools to join the Alsager Multi Academy Trust.
- The change would help establish effective economies of scale and delivery of an effective school improvement strategy.
- The aid improvement, pastoral support and covid recovery would be implemented initially followed by specific EYSF, SEND, curriculum and school improvement partner support for each of the primaries within the trust.
- The school improvement within the Trusts were discussed and conversations with the Trust were being held on this.
- The financial position of the Trusts were discussed by the board and assurances on compliance were provided.
- Assurances from the Trusts have been provided to ensure positive steps are being made.
- The board supported the recommendation and the RSC set conditions of a SRMA deployment at the point of merger and 6 months later and an external governance review in Spring/Summer 2023. A condition for the Trust to complete the ESFA financial management and governance self-assessment 6 months after merger to ensure full compliance with the Academies Trust Handbook. A condition of monitoring of primary performance during the 2022/23 academic year.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: Mike Donoghue.

Further actions required: To inform both Trusts.