



## Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

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

- Andrew Warren

### Advisory Board (AB) members

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

### Guests

- None

### Apologies

- Dame Maureen Brennan

### 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 release of the White Paper and how it has been received across the region. There was also a focus on staff resources within schools and levels of capacity.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** Whether to issue an Academy Order to Tettenhall Wood School, Wolverhampton, to convert and become an academy and join the Amethyst Academies Trust, Wolverhampton.

### AB discussion:

- Tettenhall Wood School is a community special school with an Ofsted rating of 'Good' as of 2017.
- Amethyst Academies Trust currently consists of two secondary schools with one Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) unit. Both schools are rated Ofsted 'Good'.
- The school has been working in a Trust partnership with Amethyst for over a year and has collaborated prior to this.
- Tettenhall has been working closely together with Penn Hall sharing senior leadership management across the schools.
- The board discussed both school's performance strategies, focusing on school improvement and current expertise. There were also comments on the trust lacking SEND experience, but members were reassured there were plans in place for this.
- 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 Penn Hall School, Wolverhampton, to convert and become an academy and join the Amethyst Academies Trust, Wolverhampton.

### AB discussion:

- Penn Hall School is a community special school with an Ofsted 'Outstanding' rating in 2017.
- Amethyst Academies Trust currently consists of two secondary schools with one Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) unit. Both schools are rated Ofsted 'Good'.
- The school has been working in a Trust partnership with Amethyst for over a year and has collaborated prior to this.
- Penn Hall has been working closely together with Tettenhall Wood sharing senior leadership management across the schools.
- The board discussed both school's performance strategies, focusing on school improvement and current expertise. There were also comments on the trust lacking SEND experience but were reassured there were plans in place for this.
- 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 Harbury CofE Primary School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join the Arden Forest CofE Multi Academy Trust, Warwickshire.

**AB discussion:**

- Harbury CofE Primary School, located in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, currently holds an Ofsted judgement of 'Good'.
- Arden Forest is a 7 school Trust with all schools judged at Ofsted 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- Harbury reviewed various options but felt as though Arden Forest's views closely aligned with their own, matching their vision and collaborative style whilst bringing capacity to the Trust.
- The Diocese of Coventry is supportive of the proposal as it has encouraged academisation amongst its remaining Local Authority Maintained schools.
- The board discussed performance data and financial health, focusing on the Trust's financial forecasts and projected figures.
- The board members supported the recommendation.
- The RSC approved the decision and added a condition of a Schools Management and Resource Advisor (SMRA) deployment.

**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.

## **Sponsored Route:**

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

**Project:** King Edward VI High School, Staffordshire, to be sponsored by Walton Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

**Reason for Academy Order:** Ofsted Category 4.

### **AB discussion:**

- King Edward VI High School is a secondary school based in Staffordshire, with a current Ofsted judgement of 'Good' dating back to July 2018.
- Walton Multi Academy Trust was created in 2016 and comprises of 1 secondary academy on the outskirts of Stafford.
- Although KEVI was issued a 'Requires Improvement' in 2017, the school has progressed and after a re-inspection, they now hold a judgement of 'Good'.
- Through the intervention both KEVI and Walton have built up a strong relationship with both parties now progressing to formalising the arrangement.
- Pupil projections are forecast to increase due to a basic need in the area for places; the increase is a result of new local housing developments and other local schools reaching max capacity.
- The board discussed both schools' performance strategies, focusing on school improvement, recruitment and financial stability.
- The board members supported the recommendation.
- The RSC agreed with a recommendation for Walton to provide a 3 year forecast, incorporating both schools to provide assurances on staffing costs.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Mike Donoghue.

**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 Walton Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

### **AB discussion:**

- Walton Multi-Academy Trust is comprised of one secondary academy, which serves pupils in Walton-on-the-Hill on the outskirts of Stafford.
- The Trust is interested in becoming a sponsor to grow and develop a Staffordshire based Academy Trust.
- Both schools have previously worked together and have maintained a strong working relationship to overcome any challenges in the longstanding process of this proposal.
- The leadership teams in both establishments are aware of the improvements needed in the respective schools and the current offering within Staffordshire. They have worked closely to build a detailed school improvement plan and will provide financial support through its central business and resource function.
- The board discussed budgets and finances, reviewing stability and the school improvement plans which will be put in place for both schools.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Mike Donoghue.

**Further actions required:** To inform the Trust.

## **Sponsored Route:**

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

**Project:** King Edward VI High School, Staffordshire, to be sponsored by Walton Multi Academy Trust.

**Reason for Academy Order:** Ofsted Category 4.

### **AB discussion:**

- King Edward VI High School, Staffordshire, was previously inspected in 2016 and put into special measures. It now holds a current Ofsted judgement of 'Good' as of July 2018.
- The sponsor, Walton Multi Academy Trust is comprised of one secondary academy serving students in Staffordshire.
- Both schools have previously worked together and have maintained a strong working relationship to overcome any challenges in the longstanding process of this proposal.
- The leadership teams in both establishments are aware of the improvements needed in the respective schools and the current offering within Staffordshire. They have worked closely to build a detailed school improvement plan and will provide financial support through its central business and resource function.
- The board discussed budgets and finances, reviewing stability and the school improvement plans which will be put in place for both schools.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Mike Donoghue.

**Further actions required:** To inform the school and trusts.

## Significant Change

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

**Project:** Whether to approve the addition of a nursery at Maple Court Mutli Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

### **AB discussion:**

- Maple Court Academy is a primary based in Stoke-on-Trent with a current Ofsted judgement of 'Requires Improvement'.
- The proposal is for the Academy to lower their age range and accommodate a nursery which would open in September 2022.
- The addition of the nursery will provide pupils with a clear path into the primary; there is also a pre-existing building for the nursery leading to no capital implications.
- A consultation has been held with no objections from members of the public; the Local Authority (LA) are also supportive of this addition.
- The board discussed capacity at the school and how it could affect the school improvement plans in place. There were also comments on local nursery provision and were assured the potential impact on local providers had been noted by all parties.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Margaret Yates.

**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 Glebe Academy Trust, Stoke-on-Trent, to transfer to The Co-operative Trust, Stoke-on-Trent.

### **AB discussion:**

- Glebe Academy is a stand-alone academy in Stoke-on-Trent with a current Ofsted judgement of 'Outstanding'.
- The Co-Operative Academies Trust is a large trust made up of 27 academies including primary, secondary, sixth form colleges and special schools.
- The Trust have an existing relationship with Glebe and have recognised the capacity this formalisation will bring to the Trust.
- This project was also discussed at another regional board meeting due to the location of the trust, which was approved.
- The schools have recognised there is a need to focus on school improvement as joining the trust would give greater capacity and opportunity to align with Stoke LA's plan.
- The board raised no further concerns or questions and supported the recommendation.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform both Trusts.

**Project:** Whether to approve Tanworth-in-Arden CofE Primary School, Warwickshire, to transfer to Arden Forest CofE Multi Academy Trust, Warwickshire.

### **AB discussion:**

- Tanworth-in-Arden CofE Primary School is located in Solihull, Warwickshire and holds a current Ofsted judgement of 'Requires Improvement'.
- Arden Forest CofE Multi Academy Trust is comprised of 7 schools, all with an Ofsted judgement of 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- There is an established relationship between leaders from Tanworth and Arden, including shared meeting attendance. Staff from Tanworth will bring expertise enabling growth of the Trust.
- The LA, Coventry and Birmingham Dioceses are supportive of the proposal of Tanworth joining a larger Trust.
- The board discussed staffing models and costs and how they could affect the school improvement plans in place.
- The board members supported the recommendation.
- The RSC approved the decision and added a condition of a Schools Management and Resource Advisor (SMRA) deployment.

**RSC decision:** Approve with Condition.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform both Trusts.

**Project:** Whether to approve Ridgeway Secondary School, Worcestershire, to transfer to Shires Multi Academy Trust, Warwickshire.

**AB discussion:**

- Ridgeway Secondary School is based in Redditch, Worcestershire with a current Ofsted judgement of 'Inadequate' as of October 2021.
- Shires Multi Academy Trust is a Warwickshire based trust, composed of 4 schools ranging from Ofsted 'Outstanding' to 'Good'.
- The trust has been working with Ridgeway since the latest Ofsted inspection, with the trust board voting for the school to join the trust before the proposal and Ofsted judgement.
- The LA is in support of the proposal as this option gives the local community a feeder school close by.
- The board discussed staffing costs, focusing on high staff expenditure which has been impacted due to the cost basis financial model used, they are aiming to reduce this as an SMRA was deployed and highlighted these challenges.
- The board members supported the recommendation.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform both Trusts.