

## Notes of Meeting: North Advisory Board

Thursday 12 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

- Katherine Cowell (RSC)

### Advisory Board (AB) members

- George Beveridge (AB)
- Nick Hurn (AB)
- Elizabeth Horne (AB)
- Zoe Carr (AB)

### Apologies

- Chris Clarke (AB)
- Lesley Powell (AB)
- Sir Michael Wilkins (AB)
- Andy Bayston (AB)

### DfE senior civil servants

- N/A

### Representations received

- No representations were made for any items discussed at this meeting.

## General Discussion Points

RSC welcomed board members to the meeting and informed them that the new Advisory Board members will take up their roles from September.

### Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for Ormsgill Nursery and Primary School, Cumbria to convert and join South Cumbria Multi Academy Trust.

#### **AB discussion:**

- Ormsgill Nursery and Primary School was judged to be 'Good' in June 2019, however, pupils outcomes were judged 'RI'.
- Ormsgill has seen a decline in pupil numbers however the trust has plans to increase pupil numbers through marketing and school improvement strategies.
- The board discussed the trust's future growth plan and confirmed this conversion was in line with South Cumbria Multi Academy Trust's growth plan.
- It was suggested by the board that an SRMA should be deployed to help with the trust's future finances and sustainability.
- The board agreed that the trust has the capability to support this school and, therefore, supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

### Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for Sedgefield Hardwick Primary School (SHPS), Durham to convert and join Laidlaw Schools Trust (LST).

#### **AB discussion:**

- SHPS was judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in 2017 highlighting inspirational leadership and strong governance.
- The board was advised that SHPS has been considering a move towards academy status for some time.
- The board discussed the opportunity the conversion of SHPS could bring. They agreed with the trust's vision of a potential hub in Sedgefield that could include feeder primary schools and sixth form provision at SCC.
- The board noted that three of LST's 4 primary academies have been judged as Good and Westgate Hill (a sponsored academy) went from Inadequate to Outstanding at its first inspection in autumn 2021.
- The board supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal Hetton School, Sunderland to convert and join Northern Education Trust (NET).

### AB discussion:

- Hetton School was inspected in September 2021 and judged to be 'RI'. Despite this judgement all areas were judged Good except for quality of education.
- The board was advised that Hetton School has been receiving support through the department's ONE (Opportunity North East) vision programme. As the programme is coming to an end this conversion into NET would help to continue Hetton's improvement journey
- The governing body at Hetton believes that the trust has values that they share with NET, the size and capacity to support them and a willingness to work with them. Governors feel that NET offers an established reputation for rapid school improvement and a sound corporate platform to support Hetton in making progress.
- Although Hetton currently has capacity, pupil numbers are forecasted to rise within the next few years due to houses being built within the area and reputation of the school improving.
- The board discussed the trust's strong record of school improvement with the vast majority of its schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding.' Two have yet to be inspected following their conversion. Three of NETs schools have 'Outstanding' judgements. Since 2017, 10 schools have improved from RI or worse to Good or better.
- The board supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** Nick Hurn was not present and did not receive papers for this item

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for Bothal Primary School and Central Primary School, Northumberland to convert and join Leading Learners Multi Academy Trust.

### AB discussion:

- Bothal Primary School and Central Primary Schools are federated and belong to the same foundation trust. Bothal was judged 'Good' in 2018 and Central was judged 'RI' in 2019 however, a recent monitoring Ofsted inspection at Central reflects improvements are being made.

- The board was informed that Leading Learners MAT has been working with Central and Bothal Primary Schools since March 2017. Much of this more formal collaboration has taken place since spring 2020, and this led to the schools deciding to formalise their relationship with the trust by applying to convert and join Leading Learners.
- The trust is based in Bradford, approximately 130 miles from Bothal and Central Primary Schools. It also includes a school in Wigan. However, the trust and schools do not think this is an issue as they have been in an informal partnership for several years and therefore have well established systems in place to overcome any challenges created by the geographical distance.
- The board members felt that this was a high-risk proposal and were not confident that the model was work-able, particularly due to the large distance between the schools and the trust. There were questions about whether this proposal fit with the strategic plans for the area and whether it made strategic sense in the long-term. This should be explored further. It was agreed that if the schools and trust continue to work together, they keep the RSC office updated on any developments. For example, any other schools in Northumberland who are interested in working with the trust.

**RSC decision:** Defer

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for St Michael's CoE Primary School, Northumberland to convert and join Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust (NCEAT).

**AB discussion:**

- St Michael's was judged to be 'Good' in 2013 when the school was a first school. It became a primary school in 2015 and again was judged 'Good' from a short inspection in 2017.
- The board was informed how the school has been receiving considerable levels of support from NCEAT and that the trust has a very good understanding of the needs and strengths of the school.
- The school has listed several reasons for joining NCEAT including improved opportunities for pupils and staff. The Diocese also strongly supports this proposal having initially commissioned support in May 2021.
- St Michael's has forecasted a decline in pupil numbers by 2024/25 and primary school provision. The board discussed capacity in the local area and raised concerns about the predicted growth of surplus of primary school places.
- Although the board accepted that NCEAT may have capacity to support St Michael's they were concerned that 5 out of the 6 primary schools within the trust have not yet been inspected since de-amalgamating.

- The board was also concerned about the financial strength of the trust, particularly with the growing number of surplus places at St Michael's. The RSC deferred making a decision until further enquiries were made about the trust's finances.

**RSC decision:** Defer to allow time for ESFA to have further discussions with the Trust on their financial position.

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for South Kilvington CE VC Primary School, North Yorkshire to convert and join Elevate Multi Academy Trust

**AB discussion:**

- South Kilvington was judged to be 'Good' in 2012 by Ofsted and continued to be judged 'Good' from a short inspection in 2017, however, it reflected mixed progress against areas identified for improvement in 2012.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2021 having previously worked as assistant headteacher at two Elevate schools.
- The board discussed ongoing land issues at South Kilvington, however, these would be resolved before conversion.
- As a 13 primary school MAT with 4 judged 'Outstanding', 5 'Good', 3 sponsored schools awaiting their first Ofsted inspection, and a free school, the inclusion of South Kilvington is judged to have capacity to support school improvement within the trust.
- The board supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for Springwell Community Special School in Hartlepool to convert and join Extol Trust.

**AB discussion:**

- Springwell School was judged to be 'Outstanding' in 2015 by Ofsted. The school retained this judgement with a short inspection in 2019. Springwell covers a wide range of primary SEN needs.
- The board was informed that leaders at the school have been interested in becoming an academy for some time. A relationship between the school and the trust has been

held now for a number of years, and both parties feel the time is right to formalise this.

- Extol Academy Trust is a 5 school MAT formed in 2013. The trust includes Rossmere Primary (Hartlepool) which also provides Alternative Resource Provision (ARP). The trust and school believe that aligning Hartlepool's two ARPs will ensure that best practice between both schools can be shared, as well as resource and expertise.
- The board recognised that Springwell joining the trust will add further capacity, expertise, and resource given its strong track record. The board considered the governance of the trust and advised they would like to see some specialist expertise on the board.
- ESFA advised they would like the trust to submit a financial plan prior to conversion.
- The board supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

### **Academy Opening Approved in Principle**

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** All Saints' Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

### **Academy Opening Approved in Principle**

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** Rossmere Primary School, Hartlepool

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

### **Academy Opening Approved in Principle**

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** St Agnes' Catholic Primary School, Gateshead

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project: St Cuthberts Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham**

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project: St Helen's Primary School, Hartlepool**

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project: St Mary and St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School, Gateshead**

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project: St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Gateshead**

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project: St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham**

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Durham

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Gateshead

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/05/2022

**Further actions required:** No further action required

## Significant Change

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

**Project:** This is a proposal to remove the sixth form at North Gosforth Academy, North Tyneside and change the age range from the current 11-18 to 11-16 with effect from 1 September 2023.

**AB discussion:**

- The board was advised the trust has applied to formally close its sixth form provision as it has not enrolled any sixth form students since 2017 and no students have attended the sixth form since 2019/20.
- The board also heard how pupils at the academy will not be disadvantaged as they will continue to have the option of attending the trust's other post-16 provision in the neighbouring local authority area, Newcastle (Gosforth Academy is 4 miles and Jesmond Park Academy is 6 miles away).
- The trust's consultation to formally close the sixth form resulted in only one response from North Tyneside Council. It did not have any objections and confirmed that it was in alignment with its school capacity planning.
- The board supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve



**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision

## Trust Change

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

**Project:** This is a proposal for Dayspring Trust and Northern Lights Learning Trust to merge through the transfer of schools in Dayspring Trust to Northern Lights.

### AB discussion:

- Dayspring trust was established in 2013 and consists of two secondary schools, both of which are currently judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted.
- Northern Lights Learning Trust is a trust with a strong reputation in the Sunderland and Tees Valley areas. It currently consists of three academies.
- The board was advised that this merger is part of the Diocese of Durham's proposal to develop a small number of strong MATs in the region. The proposal will enable both trusts to share their expertise in different phases of education.
- The board was pleased to hear that as part of this merger a review of governance will be undertaken and that a full transition plan is in place including an audit of all systems and processes in both trusts.
- It was recommended that an SRMA review take place prior to the merger.
- The board supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform school/trust of decision