

## Notes of Meeting: North Advisory Board

Thursday 16 June 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)
- Sir Michael Wilkins (AB)
- Andy Bayston (AB)

### Apologies

- Chris Clarke (AB)
- Lesley Powell (AB)
- Zoe Carr (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 discussed plans for the July Advisory Board as this will be the final meeting in this configuration.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for St Pius X Catholic Primary School, Cumbria to convert and join Mater Christi Multi Academy Trust.

### **AB discussion:**

- The board was informed that this proposal is in line with the Diocese of Lancaster's strategic plan for full academisation.
- The board was advised that St Pius X is below capacity, however, pupil numbers are expected to increase over the next 3 years.
- St Pius X Catholic Primary School was judged by Ofsted to be 'Requires Improvement' in November 2018; however, Ofsted did praise the headteacher's impact since being appointed in September 2017, the headteacher has continued to lead the school through various changes to raise standards.
- The board was advised that outcomes at the school up to 2019 are below average though performance data shows an improving trajectory.
- The board agreed that by joining the MAT, the school should have access to additional expertise and resources to continue to make the necessary improvements.
- The board challenged the current governance structure at the trust and agreed that the number of members should be increased in line with DfE preference.
- The board reviewed the trust's finances and agreed they look healthy, board members suggested that a further discussion with the trust regarding their reserve position would be helpful.
- The board supported this proposal with the recommendation that the trust reviews its current governance structure.

**RSC decision:** Approve

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

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform school/trust of decision

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for Newton Primary School, Cumbria to convert and join Furness Education Trust.

### **AB discussion:**

- Newton Primary School was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in June 2014
- The board was advised that outcomes at the school between 2017 and 2019 were below average.
- The board was advised that Newton Primary has previously worked with Furness Education Trust, and they would like to formalise this partnership by joining the trust.
- Whilst Newton is a small primary school, it's at capacity and this is expected to continue for the coming years.
- The board recognised that Newton would be able to share best practice within the trust based on their own experiences, whilst benefitting from the trust's primary expertise.
- The board was advised that after a period of consolidation the trust is now actively looking for growth opportunities.
- The board challenged the current governance structure at the trust and agreed that the number of members should be increased in line with DfE preference.
- The board discussed the CEO role and agreed as the trust grows this will need to be reviewed.
- The board supported this proposal with the recommendation that the trust reviews its current governance structure.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform school/trust of decision

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** This is a proposal for Witton-le-Wear Primary School, Durham to convert and join Advanced Learning Partnership (ALP).

### **AB discussion:**

- Witton-le-Wear Primary School was judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in April 2013
- The board was advised that 2019 performance was in line with the national average.
- The board was informed that Witton-le-Wear entered into an arrangement with Durham LA which allowed them to share a headteacher with a neighbouring school. This arrangement is coming to an end on 31 August 2022 so a review was undertaken and the governing body agreed that they would like to become an academy and have confirmed they would like to join ALP.
- If RSC approval is given ALP will appoint a new headteacher at Witton-le-Wear.
- ALP is dedicated to developing a strong primary arm within the trust; the board was advised that teachers and leaders within Witton-le-Wear will be able to assist in the development of ALP's primary hub.
- The board was informed that ALP has appointed a Primary Director of School Improvement, in addition an NLE has been appointed to lead the trust primary development as a School Improvement Partner.
- The board was advised that Witton-le-Wear feeds into two of ALP's secondary schools.
- The board supported this proposal

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform school/trust of decision.

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

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

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/07/2022

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

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

**Project:** St Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School, North Tyneside

**AB discussion:** Proposed opening date 01/07/2022

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

## Significant Change

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

**Project:** This is a proposal to increase the age range at Trinity Academy, Newcastle

### **AB discussion:**

- The board was advised that Trinity Academy proposes to add KS1 provision, expanding the age range from 7-16 to 5-16 from September 2022.
- By lowering the age range of their special provision places Trinity will help the local authority to provide specialist support in line with increasing numbers of KS1 pupils.
- The school already has the physical capacity and facilities to accommodate the increase in numbers.
- The board was advised that the trust has appointed two new full time early years teachers and will have the full support of a specialist nursery nurse for SEMH and the SEND outreach service.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; the responses received were positive and supported the proposal.
- Trinity Academy was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in November 2018.
- The board discussed the trust's governance structure and recommended that the trust considers recruiting some primary and secondary expertise at trustee level.
- The board supported this proposal

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform school/trust of decision

## Sponsored Route

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

**Project:** Ripley Endowed Church of England Primary School, North Yorkshire and Beckwithshaw Community Primary Schools, North Yorkshire to be sponsored by Elevate Multi Academy Trust

**Reason for Academy Order:** 'Inadequate' Ofsted judgement

### **AB discussion:**

- Ripley and Beckwithshaw are part of a three-school federation. Ripley was judged by Ofsted to be 'Inadequate' in November 2021 and Beckwithshaw was also judged to be 'Inadequate' by Ofsted in December 2021. The final school in the federation was not inspected, however, they would like to voluntarily convert and join Elevate.
- The board was advised that the federation contains three small rural schools which need to remain together under a strong mixed MAT to ensure ongoing viability.
- The federation currently has an IEB in place following a local authority application to the RSC to replace the governing body.
- Elevate has been identified as the preferred sponsor and has carried out early due diligence on all three schools within the federation.
- The board was informed that Elevate is an experienced sponsor having recently sponsored three schools, early indications are positive, however, the impact has yet to be tested out formally by Ofsted.
- The board discussed Elevate's school improvement strategy and was advised that Elevate intends to bring in new leadership from within the trust to address the failings highlighted by Ofsted.
- The board was advised that if this proposal was approved, an SRMA would be deployed to help support Elevate and ensure that the trust's finances are not impacted by taking on this group of schools.
- Elevate has one free school open and one approved to open in North Yorkshire. Recent feedback following an internal inspection on the open free school has been positive.
- The board supported this proposal and agreed that Elevate can proceed and undertake further detailed due diligence.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer 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 Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, St Francis Xavier School, St Mary's Catholic Primary School (Richmond), St Joseph's Catholic Primary School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School, (Malton), North Yorkshire and Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Primary School, St Aelred's Catholic Primary School, St George's Catholic Primary School and St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School York to transfer to Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust

### **AB discussion:**

- The board was advised that this proposal is a voluntary MAT merger achieved by transferring ten academies from St Margaret Clitheroe Catholic Academy Trust (SMCCAT) to Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust (NPCAT). It is part of a wider diocesan trust reorganisation which involves a proposal for the remaining seven SMCCAT academies to transfer to St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust, as part of this whole process SMCCAT will be dissolved.
- The proposed closure of SMCCAT and the need to transfer its academies results from concerns that were identified following an independent review that was commissioned by the Diocese.
- NPCAT's current governance structure is in line with DfE preferences, however, they are considering increasing the number of trustees to provide additional capacity and a broader skills base.
- The board was advised that the trust has a comprehensive school improvement plan in place which includes the first twelve months after transfer. The board agreed that the DfE should continue to work closely with the three trusts throughout the transfer, and then with the remaining two trusts subsequently to ensure the future success of the trusts and schools within them.
- The board discussed the impact of this proposal and agreed that if approved the CEO should be matched with a strong mentor to help provide support as the trust goes through this rapid period of growth.
- The board agreed that a SRMA should be deployed to the trust to identify further efficiencies, and that NPCAT should provide updated financial forecasts along with the latest management accounts, six months from the date of transfer.
- The board supported this proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve with conditions

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform school/trust of decision

## Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

**Project:** Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic Primary School, Durham

**Decision type:** Significant Change – increase in physical capacity

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform school/trust of decision

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