



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

21 July 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 Director (RD) chair

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Kate Brunt
- Sir Mark Grundy
- Mike Donoghue
- Sinead Smith
- Dame Mo Brennan
- Margaret Yates

Apologies

- Sajid Gulzar

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

Local Update

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

AB member reflections

- AB members reflected on the recent announcement of the Pay Award and strike action across the teaching profession. There was also a discussion on exam season, asking for feedback on members recent experience.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Bhylls Acre Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join St Stephen's Church of England Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Bhylls Acre Primary School, located in Staffordshire, is an Ofsted rated 'Good' school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- St Stephen's comprises of 2 Ofsted rated 'Good' primary school and will benefit from having another school join with a solid leadership team.
- The Headteacher and governors of the primary have been involved in academisation discussions and believe this trust is aligned to the core values of the school.
- The schools currently held within the Trust retain their own autonomy and identify whilst working collaboratively and sharing a strategic Trust vision.
- The board spoke on governance at the Trust including the even number of Trustee board members. This has been noted with the Trust who are working on reducing numbers.
- The Board supported the recommendation.

RD 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 Whittington Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join John Taylor Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Whittington Primary School, Staffordshire, are an Ofsted rated 'Good' school who are wanting to convert and join a cross-phase Trust after governors unanimously agreed that it was the best fit for the school.
- John Taylor is comprised of 15 schools situated across Staffordshire and Derbyshire, with a leadership team who hold a wealth of experience to share with the primary.
- The Primary have identified the benefits of joining a cross phase Trust and are keen to become part of an entity that will have a positive impact on the local community as a result of the conversion. This will be displayed in its shared practices contributing to further development.
- The board discussed the current governance structure of the trust and its position as a feeder school to the JTMAT.
- The Board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Mike Donoghue.

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 Etwall Primary, Derbyshire, to convert and become an academy and join Central Co-Operative Learning Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Etwall Primary, Derbyshire, is an Ofsted rated 'Good' school who are wanting to academise and join a trust with Primary expertise such as Central Co-Operative Learning Trust.
- The project was previously presented at the East Midlands Advisory Board which was granted approval for the academisation of the Derbyshire primary.
- The trust is comprised of 8 schools across Staffordshire and Walsall; and have begun to develop a relationship with the Trust due to sharing a similar ethos, vision and values.
- The board sought reassurance on finances due to an increase in staffing levels and costs at the trust; these are projected to be higher due to a housing expansion the re leading to further recruitment.
- There were also questions on Burton Fields school who joined in 2019, an update from trust has confirmed that progress is being made with improvements on attendance, governance and leadership.
- The Board supported the recommendation.

RD 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 The Corley Centre, Coventry, to convert and become an academy and join Thrive Education Partnership, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- The Corley Centre, Coventry, an Ofsted judged 'Good' school are proposing to convert and join a Trust who shares common values and approaches.
- Thrive Education Partnership is a trust comprising of 3 SEND schools across Warwickshire. The trust specialises in SEND provision and believes Corley will be a capacity giver due to its autism specialisation which can be shared with its other schools.
- The school leadership approached Thrive after considering other local options however found their ethos and values matched well.
- The board discussed the sufficient capacity this proposal would offer and would enable growth for the Trust who are evidently experienced in SEND.
- The Board supported the recommendation.

RD 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.

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

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

Project: Whether to approve the recommendation of the sponsor of a new Free School, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Stowe Valley Multi Academy Trust are proposed as a sponsor for the Warwickshire based all through presumption free school named Oakley Grove, with a planned opening date of 2023.
- Due to a significant amount of housing development taking place across the Warwickshire LA, there is now a growing need for additional school places. The LA conducted a review and found that Stowe Valley aligned the best with the goals of the new school.
- Stowe Valley is a 9 school cross phase Trust who have established strong school improvement links with other local schools, providing support to a number of them.
- The new school is set to include an integrated Specialist Resource Provision (SPR) primary for pupils with SEMH or communication and interaction (C&I) needs.
- Capacity in the local area were discussed by the board, querying whether the school could potentially affect local schools however the LA have considered this and confirm that the school should open to meet the short and long term need of the community due to the housing developments.
- The Board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the LA and Trust.

Significant Change

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

Project: Whether to approve a physical expansion at The Co-Operative Academy, Stoke

AB discussion:

- The Co-Operative Academy, Stoke, is proposing to increase their Pupil Adjustment Numbers (PAN) and physical capacity due to a request from the Local Authority (LA).
- The request has been created due to a developing data plan on local net housing growth in the area.
- The expansion will require 10 additional classrooms, an increase in dining facilities and changing areas for Physical Education.
- The board raised a question on governance after identifying that 2 board member also sit as trustees. The department have picked this up with the school and will be working with them to move into the best practice model.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To Inform the school.

Project: Whether to approve a physical capacity increase at Wistaston academy, Cheshire East.

AB discussion:

- Wistaston Academy, Cheshire, is proposing to increase its physical capacity within its Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision.
- The proposal is a result of a growing need for children with Special Educational and Mental Health (SEMH) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the area with the project being supported by the LA.
- The project will require building works with the addition of 3 new classrooms, multi-sensory facilities, communal areas and outdoor spaces.
- As there is a growing need for SEND places across the region, the members discussed the quality of SEND provision and what the outcomes had been. Reassurance was given with substantial evidence from the LA and previous reports.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To Inform the school.

Project: Whether to approve an age range increase at Adelaide Heath Academy, Cheshire East.

AB discussion:

- Adelaide Heath Academy, Cheshire, are requesting approval to raise its age range and expand its planned number of pupils.
- As the local area requires more high needs places, this proposal aims to expand the schools existing provision whilst adding a further SEMH provision. Due to the academy having pre existing physical capacity, no further work will be required.
- Adelaide joined Manor Hall Academy Trust in 2021, comprising of 13 schools who focus on special school provision.
- The board discussed the school improvement team and its enhanced level of support now they have recently joined the behaviour hub programme.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To Inform the school.

Project: Whether to approve the addition of a Special Educational Needs Resource at The Lacon Childe School, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- The Lacon Childe School, Shropshire, are respectively requesting approval to open a SEN resource provision due to an increase in needs for provisions from the LA.
- A consultation was held over 4 weeks, being shared by both the LA and the school; this resulted in no negative responses.
- The school have built additional teaching and resource space meeting the criteria of need. There was no additional staffing needed with the schools existing SENDCO leading the provision.
- The school were unaware of the need to inform the Department and was completed due to a request from the LA.
- Governance and trustee boards were discussed by the members, highlighting the need for a further varied skillset. Due to the need of SEND provisions across the regions, the board discussed how quality is being reviewed and measured.
- The board agreed with the recommendation with the RD approving a recommendation for an external review of governance at the Trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To Inform the school.

Project: Whether to approve the addition of a Special Educational Needs Resource at Cleobury Mortimer Primary School, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Cleobury Mortimer Primary School, Shropshire, are respectively requesting approval to open a SEN resource provision due to an increase in needs for provisions from the LA.
- A consultation was held over 4 weeks, being shared by both the LA and the school; this resulted in no negative responses.
- The school have used existing buildings to be refurbished to create small teaching spaces for the SEN pupils.
- The school were unaware of the need to inform the Department and was completed due to a request from the LA.
- Governance and trustee boards were discussed by the members, highlighting the need for a further varied skillset. Due to the need of SEND provisions across the regions, the board discussed how quality is being reviewed and measured.
- The board agreed with the recommendation with the RD approving a recommendation for an external review of governance at the Trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To Inform the school.

Project: Whether to approve the addition of a Special Educational Needs Resource at Stockingford Academy, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Stockingford Academy, Warwickshire, are proposing to add an SRP resource provision for pupils with SEMH at the request of the LA due to a lack of capacity in the area.
- The number of pupils across the north of Warwickshire with SEMH needs is increasing. There is currently no SEMH provision for pupils under 9 years old. The proposal is in line with LA's strategy to provide more resourced provision in mainstream settings.
- A 4 week consultation was carried out in 2022 with no responses.
- The board discussed the affects the provision could have on the surrounding area and mainstream provision, reassurance was provided that stated the trust has high SEND capacity with existing expertise across staff.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To Inform the school.

Project: Whether to approve the addition of a Special Educational Needs Resource at Rugby Free Secondary School, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Rugby Free Secondary School, Warwickshire, are proposing to establish an SRP at the request of the LA due to need in the local area.
- Establishing the SRP will meet the LA' aim to establish more resourced provisions in mainstream settings in secondary schools.
- An extensive consultation was held with the trust ensuring to address any concerns that were raised.
- The provision will be run by pre existing staff with experience in SRP and SEN.
- Due to the current stance of performance at the trust, the board asked for reassurance on an updated performance report, wanting to ensure that the provision would be ran efficiently and effectively.
- The board agreed with the recommendation with the RD setting a recommendation in place that the current trust CEO will be provided a mentor.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To Inform the school.

Trust Change

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

Project: Whether to approve Bridgnorth Endowed School, Shropshire, to transfer to The 3-18 Education Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Bridgnorth Endowed School, Shropshire, have proposed for BES to join The 3-18 Trust due to a condition placed by the department for the school to explore joining further established Trust.
- A pre existing service level agreement is in place between the trusts, who are looking to formalise the relationship.
- The trust will increase primary school governance expertise through the recruitment of governors and the already experienced middle leaders at BES who will promote best practice across the trust.
- The board discussed the schools held within the trust, focusing on staffing structures, governance and performance data. The current Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is working with a mentor to support all schools within the trust.
- The board agreed with the recommendation with the RD approving a recommendation for an external review of governance at the Trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform both Trusts.

Project: Whether to approve Lickhill Primary School, Worcestershire, to transfer to Central Regions Schools Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Lickhill Primary School, Worcestershire, have proposed to voluntarily transfer to join Central Region School Trust (CRST) after working closely together since the delivery of a school improvement offer in 2019.
- Central Regions Schools Trust is an 11 school cross phase trust with close links to the Royal Society of Arts who offer a variety of benefits to all provisions across the trust.
- The two trusts have shared values and have built strong and mutually beneficial working relationships. The primary will benefit from the strengths of being part of a trust such as increased access to school improvement opportunities and shared centralised services.
- The board discussed the improvement of educational performance in both schools with the improvements being made across the provisions in the trust.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform both Trusts.

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

List of projects that were on the published draft agenda but not discussed at the AB meeting.

Project: Gayton Primary School, Wirral.

Type of decision: Academy Converter Order.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient information to present at AB.

Project: Worcestershire Free School.

Type of decision: Free School Presumption.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient information to present at AB.