



Department
for Education

Notes of Meeting: East of England and North East London Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 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

- Jonathan Duff (RD)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Karen Kerridge (AB)
- Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne (AB)
- Tom Canning (AB)
- Al Kingsley (AB)
- Caroline Derbyshire (AB)
- Diane Rochford (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- ESFA representative

Representations received

- No representations were received for this meeting.

General Discussion Points

AB Member Reflections

- The June AB meeting notes were discussed and agreed.
- Attendees were given an update on the SWP regulation & commissioning review. AB members were able to give their views on the current system.
- The RD discussed the existing board tenure and gave thanks to those serving members.
- The RD updated AB members on the recent changes to the Ministerial team, our seven 'Education Investment Areas' and confirmed the launch of the new Regions group within DfE.

Converter Academy Order

Project: Whether Scole Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, should join the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust, **Norfolk**.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Scole Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a smaller than average school in Norfolk. The school currently has four classes but plans for this to reduce to three as rolls fall. The school has had a sustained period of time without sufficient leadership.
- The school would like to join The Diocese of Norwich St Benet's MAT in order to access the support that the trust can provide. Joining St Benet's may also provide costs savings, which could support the school with its falling roll. The diocese has given permission for this change.
- The trust has already been actively engaging with Scole Primary in an attempt to help them resolve their leadership issues. The trust has carried out due diligence on the school with preliminary findings showing a range of challenges.
- The board agreed the school is vulnerable and needed support but also noted limited options that make this trust the only viable option. The board want to make sure the trust has a strategy in place to address the range of issues identified. The project lead will discuss these points with the trust.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Brian Conway

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trust of the RD decision. School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) visit to be arranged.

Converter Academy Order

Project: Whether Ardleigh Green Infant and Junior School, Ardleigh Green Learning Federation, **Havering**, should join Empower Learning Academy Trust (ELAT), Havering.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Ardleigh Green Learning Federation (Ardleigh Green) operates a 3-form entry infant school and junior school across two adjacent sites, alongside a family centre, for 5–11-year-olds in Hornchurch, Havering. Both schools are graded Outstanding.
- The schools and trust would like to formalise their existing working relationship. Last year, ELAT commissioned the executive headteacher at Ardleigh Green to support the deputy head at Hacton Primary School whilst the substantive headteacher was on maternity leave.
- They continue to develop curriculum frameworks in tandem, share resources and assessment systems, and moderate across schools. Conversion will further enhance this work as the schools become even more closely aligned, with plans for shared CPD opportunities across the trust.
- The board agreed the move is sensible and is fully supported.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust and school of the decision.

Sponsored

Project: Whether Diamond Academy, **Norfolk**, should transfer from its current MAT: Eastern Multi-Academy Trust (EMAT) to Inspiration Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Diamond Academy is a mixed 7-11 junior school in Thetford, Norfolk, which joined Eastern MAT when it transferred from Academy Transformation Trust in 2017. When its predecessor school, Diamond Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2016, it was judged Requires Improvement.
- Since the previous inspection of the predecessor school, the headteacher and over half of all staff have left the school. Until recently, an associate principal and associate vice-principal have led the school and a new, substantive principal took up post in January 2022. EMAT has agreed to work with the department to transfer Diamond Academy to another trust.

- While some concerns were raised about splitting junior & infant schools into different trusts, it was agreed that this was sensible in this case.
- It was highlighted that strategically this is a good match, bringing a good trust into a new area and that there was potential to incorporate the infant school into the trust in the future.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: Duncan Ramsay

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: Whether Meridian Academy Trust should change the age range at Northstowe Secondary College, **Cambridgeshire**, from 11-19 to 2-19, to include nursery and primary.

AB discussion:

- The board heard the Meridian Trust proposal to lower the age range of Northstowe Secondary College from 11-19 to 2-19 to add a nursery and primary provision to create an all-through school. The trust proposes to admit 30 reception children from September 2024. The new primary building will be funded by the LA and from Section 106 funds and will be situated on the existing Northstowe Learning community campus.
- The LA identified the need for additional primary school places for 2024 to serve the growing population of phase One of the Northstowe town development and the expected demand from phase Two. A full consultation has been carried out and the LA are fully supportive of this project.
- The trust has the relevant experience and expertise to successfully run the primary phase. The addition of primary provision at Northstowe will increase parental choice in the town and complement the existing school
- Board members commented that the trust has a good structure, this creates choice for parents in the local area and were fully supportive of this change.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust of the decision

Significant Change

Project: Whether Mundford Church of England Primary Academy, Norfolk, should lower its age range from 4 to 3, to add a nursery to the school.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Mundford Church of England Primary Academy want to add a nursery to the school, which will require lowering the age range to three and expanding capacity by thirty.
- There is not currently space within the academy building to house the nursery, so the plan is for a modular classroom to be sited on the grounds. This will provide classrooms for the nursery and reception children. The trust has submitted planning permission for this and is currently awaiting approval.
- A local parent-run pre-school in Mundford, which operates at the local village hall, is looking to close. Due to rising costs, the committee no longer wishes to run the facility and is looking to Mundford Primary to take this provision on.
- Adding a nursery to Mundford Primary will benefit the local community by allowing provision for three-year-olds to continue. This will also benefit the school by securing the feed-in of pupils to the school and ensuring greater consistency of standards.
- Project was fully supported by the board.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust of the decision

Significant Change

Project: Whether Gayton Church of England Primary Academy, **Norfolk**, should increase its capacity by 210 pupils and move to a new site.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that due to an increase in demand for places, Gayton Church of England Primary Academy needs to increase its capacity. As the current school site is too small for expansion, a new school has been built by Norfolk County Council.
- Several years ago, Norfolk County Council (NCC) identified a need for a new primary school within the village of Gayton to replace the existing Primary School at Lynn Road. In view of the continuing demand for school places, including from planned housing developments, they believe the current school facilities were insufficient. Therefore, a replacement school building would be required to cater for the needs of the area. Norfolk County Council consulted

on the proposed change between 21 November 2019 and 5 February 2020. 25% of responses were negative. The trust has also held a separate consultation on the proposed change in order to comply with the significant change guidance with no negative responses.

- No objections were made, and all board members were fully supportive of this change.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust of the decision

Significant Change

Project: Whether Jane Austen College, **Norfolk**, should expand the sixth form accommodation onto a satellite site.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this proposal is to expand Jane Austen College, by acquiring use of an additional satellite site.
- There is no increase in numbers of pupils at this point and there is no change to the curriculum. The satellite provision is anticipated to support pupils in its sixth form and the proposal is to create a social sciences hub at this site, which can accommodate 70 pupils.
- The current estate is too tight/small to allow teachers to have their own workspace during non-teaching time and increasing the available space for students and staff will provide opportunities for a better education and environment.
- The board agreed that the move is sensible and fully supported.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform the trust of the decision

Significant Change

Project: St Clere's school, **Thurrock**, to consider adding a sixth form provision from September 2023.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Osborne Co-Operative Academy Trust are requesting an age range change at St Clere's School in Thurrock to allow the opening of a sixth form.

- The Trust carried out a consultation in the local area which highlighted strong support for a school sixth form at St Clere's. Added to this, there is a growing demand for secondary places which is filtering through into the post-16 space.
- The eventual capacity of the sixth form would be 300 students but the Trust propose that the post-16 provision initially opens in September 2023 with 75 students to mitigate against any negative impact to local providers.
- Overall, the trust's financial position is strong, but due to in-year deficits, there is decline in cumulative reserves. There are no immediate financial concerns regarding the health of the Trust in taking on this sixth form expansion.
- The board raised concerns regarding the curriculum and whether a broad range of subjects could be offered with low pupil numbers initially. The trust wants to mitigate against local provision with small pupil numbers to start and the subjects will be led by pupil choice. Confidence has been taken from finance plans and staffing structures which show the provision will be viable and offer a broad curriculum once at capacity.
- It was raised that Osbourne has the right experience, having previously taken an undersubscribed sixth form which is now much more popular and is over subscribed.

RSC decision: Supported this request to proceed to Ministers for a decision

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Business case to be submitted to the Minister for a decision

Trust Change

Project: Whether Atwood Primary Academy (SAT), **Croydon**, should join The Pegasus Academy Trust (PAT), **Croydon**.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Atwood Primary Academy, a single academy trust, has decided that they would be a stronger educational establishment by joining a multi academy trust. They carried out a review of fifteen MATs and shortlisted three. They believe that The Pegasus Academy Trust share the same vision and ethos and are proposing to join them from September 2022.
- The trust board of Atwood Primary Academy and Directors of PAT have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in which both bodies agree to work together with the objective of Atwood ceasing to exist as a SAT and joining the Pegasus Academy Trust.
- Some concerns were raised around governance and leadership of the academy, partly in terms of shared roles in the executive leadership and at trustee level. The trust is currently going through a period of transition so a governance review would be welcomed.

- The board agreed that Pegasus Academy Trust is a good option for Atwood and the proposal is supported. It was also noted that it is a good move going forward creating a mixed primary/secondary MAT.

RSC decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: Regional Director for London, Claire Burton has a personal conflict of interest with the Pegasus Academy Trust

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the trust of the decision. Agreement for only 1 of the trust employees to be on the trust board and a governance review to be completed.