



# Notes of Meeting: South-East England and South London Advisory Board

21 July 2022

## Attendance

Attendance data is published annually on the GOV.UK website.

AB members who have 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 has declared a conflict of interest.

## Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) chair

- Claire Burton

## Advisory Board (AB) members

- Paula Farrow
- Mark Ducker
- Stephen Carey
- David Boyle
- Sir Andrew Carter
- Alison Beane

## Guests

- Rama Venchard
- Vanessa Ogden
- Lee Mason-Ellis
- Susan Douglas
- Emma Bradshaw
- Gill Bal
- Cassie Buchanan
- Penny Barratt

## Apologies

- Jon Chaloner

## **DfE senior civil servants**

- Anna Barker

## **Representations received**

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

## **General Discussion Points**

### **RSC Update**

- Records of last meeting agreed.
- Regional Director shared SESL AB achievements over the last three years.

### **Regulations**

- DfE colleagues presented the Regulatory and Commissioning Review and sought views from AB.
- Discussion followed on what makes a strong trust, system leadership, funding agreements, schools budget setting, trust intervention powers and barriers and disincentives for schools joining trusts.

### **Exams**

- Qualifications 2022 team sought feedback from members on the 2022 exam series arrangements.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** Valley End Infant CoE (VC) School, Surrey, to join The Good Shepherd Trust

**AB discussion:** Valley End CoE (VC) Infant School is a smaller than average size 2FE infant school with 170 children on roll. It is situated in a rural setting. Most children are of white British heritage and from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils entitled to FSM is below the national average at 2.9%.

The school has historically performed well, with good practice in phonics which supports children to attain well in English and Maths. In 2019 the school was recognised by Ofsted as being significantly above the national average and in the highest 20% of schools within Key Stage 1 for expected standards and greater depth in Writing and greater depth in Reading. Valley End is also above the national average within Key Stage 1 for expected standards and greater depth in Maths.

The Good Shepherd Trust (GST) is a faith led Church of England MAT with vision and values which aligns with that of the Valley End Infant School. The school hopes to join the trust.

Noted that the Chair of Governors is also a trustee of GST, but assurances have been provided that she did not play any part in the decision to join GST.

AB discussed the School Improvement Strategy and the educational vision.

**RSC decision:** Approve with condition

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Recommendation that the trust review and move towards greater separation between chair and trustee roles.

**Project:** St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Surrey, to join Xavier Trust

**AB discussion:** St Cuthbert's Primary School is a 1FE primary Catholic school based in Egham, Surrey, with capacity for 210 pupils and with 199 pupils currently on roll.

Noted that the school was judged outstanding by Ofsted in its last inspection in June 2008.

The school is currently supported by an Executive Head from St. Dunstan's Catholic Primary School. This support was brokered by Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE) in March 22. The Head of School from St Dunstan's is currently Acting Headteacher at St Cuthbert's, covering for the absence of the substantive headteacher.

AB discussed staff turnover and recruitment plans and educational experience in the board of trustees.

AB noted that the school is vulnerable.

Discussed trust finances and noted deployment of SRMA.

**RSC decision:** Approve with condition

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** To schedule a call with the trust and ESFA to discuss current trust finances. Recommendation for an NLG review.

## Sponsored route

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

**Project:** Inspira Academies Trust, Sponsor Application

**AB discussion:** Inspira Academy Trust (IAT) was formed in April 2021 from the existing successful collaboration between Chartham Primary School and St Stephen's Infant School. The collaboration was directed by a strategic committee of governors from both schools who are now trustees of Inspira and led by an Executive Headteacher who is now CEO. Both schools are judged by Ofsted to be good.

IAT is now looking to grow its trust and is developing its relationship with St Stephen's Junior School with a view to it joining the trust.

AB discussed governance, finances, and School Improvement model.

AB suggested waiting for SATs results before proceeding any further.

**RSC decision:** Defer

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** To provide more information on results when they are available as well as developing the SI model and governance structure further.

## Trust change

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

**Project:** The Pathway Academy Trust, Kent, to merge with The Galaxy Trust, Kent

**AB discussion:** This is a voluntary merger proposal that The Pathway Academy Trust joins The Galaxy Trust. This will be achieved by The Pathway Academy Trust transferring its academies to The Galaxy Trust, which will then be renamed to The Golden Thread Alliance.

Pathway and Galaxy teams have worked collaboratively on a number of school improvement projects over the last two years and feel that a merger is a natural and next step for both trusts.

There was a discussion about the trusts' finances and the proposed governance structure.

**RSC decision:** Approve with conditions

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** 1. An external review of governance by a National Leader of Governance with a requirement that the trust submits an action plan (before the actual merger takes place) showing how any recommendations will be implemented. 2. A deployment of a School Resource Management Adviser to the merged trust in its first year of operation. 3. A period of consolidation is recommended to allow the merged trust to become fully established before any further growth is considered.

## Significant Change

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

**Project:** Strood Academy (Leigh Academies Trust), Medway, addition of resourced provision.

**AB discussion:** In collaboration with Medway local authority, Leigh Academies Trust (LAT) is proposing to establish a Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) for up to 26 pupils (at full capacity). This will be done in a phased approach over 4 years from September 2022. The provision which will be based at Strood Academy will cater for pupils with ASD and who are subject to an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP).

The provision will admit 5 pupils from September 2022 and 7 pupils per year over the next 4 years.

Strood Academy currently has 1360 pupils against a capacity of 1500. There is therefore capacity within current school figures to accommodate the additional pupils.

Medway LA is funding the physical expansion of the school to accommodate up to 50 SRP places as part of its SEND strategy.

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** No action required

**Project:** Surrey Local Authority SEN Free School Presumption, approval of proposed Sponsor

**AB discussion:** Following Surrey Cabinet's approval of a 10-year Strategy for Specialist Placements, Surrey County Council (SCC) launched a presumption Special Free school competition in November 2021, with consultation through to December 2021, to meet long-term demographic demand for ASD and Communication & Interaction needs Special School Places in both north-west and north-east of the county.

The proposed Special Free School will have a capacity of 200 and will be coeducational provision for pupils working at broadly age-related expectations. Pupils will follow a number of educational pathways, including Entry Level 1-Level 2 Functional Skills qualifications and/or GCSEs, and A Levels or Vocational qualifications.

As a presumption FS, this project is being funded and delivered by SCC and is due to be completed in 2024

SCC's preferred sponsor is Bourne Education Trust (BET)

Discussed Expression of Interest process and the trust's relationship with Freemantles School (FMS).

**RSC decision:** Approve with condition

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** FMS to submit an application to join BET in the next year or establish a formal SLA with BET.

**Project:** Dove House School Academy Trust, Hampshire, application for increase to age range

**AB discussion:** Dove House, a special school in Basingstoke, is applying for approval of a significant change to increase the age range of pupils attending the academy.

Following a successful pilot project, the academy is proposing to permanently change the age range of the academy from 11-16 to 11-19 years old. It is also proposing to increase the total number of students to 220. This would enable 41 students in a year group in KS 3/4 and 10 students in Post 16 provision. This is due to the high need for specialist placements locally.

Discussed consultation.

Discussed quality of education at the school.

Discussed trust joining a MAT.

**RSC decision:** Approve with condition

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** The trust to provide assurance that it is actively considering joining a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).



## Decisions escalated to the Minister

List of decisions that have been escalated to the Minister.

**Project:** Hatherden Church of England Primary School, Hampshire, conversion status

**RSC decision:** Approve

**Further actions required:** No action required

## 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:** Ditton Church of England Junior School, Kent, to join Aletheia Academies Trust

**Type of decision:** Converter Academy Order

**Reason for why it was taken off agenda:** Application not submitted.

**Project:** River Hill Federation, Southwark, joining Nexus Education Schools Trust, Bromley

**Type of decision:** Converter Academy Order

**Reason for why it was taken off agenda:** Application not submitted.

**Project:** Test Valley School, Hampshire - to join HISP Multi Academy Trust

**Type of decision:** Converter Academy Order

**Reason for why it was taken off agenda:** Application not submitted.

**Project:** North Waltham Primary School, Hampshire - to join South Farnham Educational Trust

**Type of decision:** Converter Academy Order

**Reason for why it was taken off agenda:** Application not submitted.

**Project:** Hawthorns Primary School, West Sussex - to join Schoolworks Academy Trust

**Type of decision:** Converter Academy Order

**Reason for why it was taken off agenda:** Application not submitted.

**Project:** Highfield CE Primary School, Southampton, to join Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust

**Type of decision:** Converter Academy Order

**Reason for why it was taken off agenda:** Application not submitted.