



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 22 September 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

- Katherine Cowell (RD)

Attendees

- Jason Brine (AB)
- Maura Regan (AB)
- Nicola Stephenson (AB)
- Anita Bath (AB)
- Colin Lofthouse (AB)
- Robert Tarn (AB)
- Elizabeth Horne (AB)
- Jo Heaton (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- N/A

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

RD welcomed the new Advisory board members to their role and gave an overview of Advisory Board processes and the type of work Advisory Board will see.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Collierley Nursery and Primary School to convert and join Stanley Learning Partnership (SLP).

AB discussion:

- Collierley Nursery and Primary School is a small village school in Stanley, County Durham that was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in June 2013 with a continued Good in 2017.
- The school is currently under capacity at 65% full however no further reductions are forecast and SLP are supporting a promotion of the school in the local community through social media.
- Collierley has existing and positive links to the Stanley cluster of schools with a large percentage of the cluster already in Stanley Learning Partnership.
- SLP was created on 1st January and currently have nine primary schools in the trust with seven of them currently rated 'Good' by Ofsted.
- The board discussed SLPs governance structure and recommended an increase of members to come in line with the department's preference.
- Finances of both the school and trust were discussed, and it was agreed that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) would undertake a review of finances before conversion.
- The board agreed that the trust has the capacity and capability to support this school and, therefore, supported this proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school and Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Greatham CofE Primary School, Hartlepool to convert and join Melrose Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- Greatham CofE Primary School in Hartlepool was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in November 2017.
- The school would like to be part of a Church of England MAT to provide the platform for leaders and teachers to work collaboratively and share expertise to strengthen pupils' learning experience.
- Greatham currently has the capacity for 105 pupils and is 83% full. However, forecasts over the next few years expect the school to grow to 89% capacity. There is a 26 place nursery within the school which in the next intake will take reception up to capacity.
- Melrose Learning Trust was formed in 2015 and currently has 4 academies across Stockton-on-Tees, Durham and Darlington.
- The board heard that this conversion forms part of the Diocese of Durham and Newcastle's strategic vision.
- The trust is financially healthy and has the capacity for Greatham to join. They have a comprehensive approach that Greatham will benefit from.
- The board acknowledged the vacancy at trustee level however are reassured the trust board has a broad range of skills. The Board supported this proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school and Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Oxbridge Lane Primary School, Stockton to convert and join Tees Valley Collaborative Trust (TVCT).

AB discussion:

- Oxbridge Lane Primary School in a large maintained school in Stockton-on-Tees which was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in September 2021.
- Oxbridge Lane has applied to join TVCT as governors and staff want to secure benefits of closer collaboration and stability offered by being part of a MAT.
- TVCT was established in 2017, consisting of three Ofsted rated 'Good' academies; a PRU, a primary and a 16-plus provider. It was identified that only 1 school has been inspected since joining the trust.
- The trusts ambition is to add more schools to become an all-through trust.
- The board discussed the trusts growth plan and raised the risks of a lack of clarity on other schools in the pipeline to meet their aim.
- The trust are financially stable however ESFA recommend a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) on the basis of this project and to support their growth.
- The board agreed that further information is needed to be able to understand the trusts strategic and growth plans before a decision is made. The board therefore supported the deferral of this proposal pending further information.

RD decision: Defer pending further information on the trust's strategic growth plans.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school and Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Northern Saints CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland to convert and join Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust (DNDLT).

AB discussion:

- Northern Saints CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School is a maintained school in Sunderland which is 86% full. There is a Nursery school which shares the same site and is judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. This is the main feeder to the school.
- The school received a 'Good' rating in January 2015 from Ofsted and a short inspection in January 2019 continued their 'Good' rating.
- The board heard the Local Governing Body (LGB) of Northern Saints wish to join DNDLT due to the opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practice, shared vision and diocesan links which build on an existing strong working relationship.
- DNDLT was set up in 2017 specifically to offer an academy option to all Diocesan schools across the Durham Diocesan region. This includes the Sunderland area where Northern Saints Primary School is situated. The trust currently has 11 primary schools.
- This conversion is in line with the Diocese wider strategic plan for academy trust growth in the North East.
- The board agreed that Northern Saints will bring primary capacity to the trust.
- A SRMA is scheduled to be deployed in late Spring 2023 by ESFA for the trust.
- The board agreed that the trust meets the expectations for governance set out in the Academies Handbook, with 5 members and 9 trustees covering a range of appropriate skills on the trust board.
- The board acknowledged the potentially quick growth of the trust however are happy they have the capacity to take on Northern Saints.
- The board supported this proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school and Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Trust Change

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

Project: This is a proposal for Cleadon CE Academy, All Saints' Academies Trust, South Tyneside to merge and transfer to Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust (DNDLT).

AB discussion:

- All Saints' Academies Trust (ASAT) consists of Cleadon CE Academy in South Tyneside. It is a large primary school with 477 pupils currently at 104% capacity.
- Cleadon was rated Ofsted 'Outstanding' in 2011 and results show strong performance across all subjects.
- ASAT originally had planned to grow but following conversation resolved to join DNDLT as they believe they will benefit from greater shared capacity for school improvement and collaboration.
- 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 primary education.
- ASAT will cease to exist at the point of the merger however the academy will retain a local academy council which will report to the DNDLT Trustee Board.
- An SRMA is scheduled to be deployed in late Spring 2023 by ESFA for the trust.
- The board discussed other schools already in the trust and acknowledged the potential quick growth of the trust however are happy they have the capacity to take on Cleadon CE Academy.
- The board supported this proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school and Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: St John Boste Catholic Primary School, Sunderland

Decision type: Significant Change

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school / Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Project: St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Durham

Decision type: Significant Change

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school / Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Project: All Saints Catholic Primary School, Durham

Decision type: Significant Change

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school / Multi Academy Trust of decision.

Project: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Durham

Decision type: Significant Change

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform school / Multi Academy Trust of decision.