



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Regions Group

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

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Dame Mo Brennan
- Mike Donoghue
- Guy Shears
- Sarah Finch
- Amarjit Cheema
- Dan Parkes
- Lizana Oberholzer
- Tom Leverage

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Claire Trewartha (Deputy Director)

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

National Tutoring Programme

- Members reflected on the current NTP process, and what factors impacted the programme being used effectively. There were also references to headteacher feedback and the practices of sharing requirements and framework.

Local Update

- The RD and AB members discussed the current climate in schools across the West Midlands Region.

AB member reflections

- AB members reflected on attendance across the region raising slightly and the high proportion of vacancies. There was also a discussion on the current economic climate and the effects this is having on schools across the region.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to issue an Academy Order to Flash Ley Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join Future Generation Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Flash Ley Primary School, Staffordshire, is an Ofsted rated 'Requires Improvement' school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Future Generation comprises of 4 schools based in Staffordshire. The trust has capacity for growth and have evidenced their school improvement capability through their support and improvement of other schools.
- The trust has matched with the primary school as of the Trust and Improvement Offer. It is part of the Staffordshire Local Authority delivery and strategy plan to consolidate trust capacity in key priority areas.
- Engagement with the LA has taken place and they are supportive of the approved trust partnership and existing academisation plans.
- The board spoke on the current trustee board, specifically the number of trustees, and sought assurances that board numbers will be reviewed.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RSC 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 Tipton Green Junior School, Sandwell, to convert and become an academy and join Elston Hall Learning Trust, Wolverhampton.

AB discussion:

- Tipton Green Junior School located in Sandwell, is an Ofsted rated 'Required Improvement' school who are converting to join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Elston Hall Learning Trust is built of 5 schools across Wolverhampton and Walsall. The trust has experience offering school support, especially with training for Early Careers Teachers.
- The school has worked previously worked with Elston Hall with the CEO providing support in his role as a National Leader in Education (NLE).
- The school and the Trust share the same ethos where children are put first and there is a friendly collaborative approach to all aspects of school life.
- The board spoke on the school improvement capacity plans as both the school and trust have recorded substantial pupil 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 Queen Victoria Primary School, Dudley, to convert and become an academy and join Stour Vale Academy Trust, Dudley.

AB discussion:

- Queen Victoria Primary School, Dudley, are an Ofsted judged 'Requires Improvement' school who are proposing to convert and join a trust such as Stour Vale.
- Stour Vale is a 7 school trust based in Sandwell and Dudley, who have a pre-existing relationship with the school through collaborative work on school improvement. The headteachers across the school and trust have been actively collaborating since February and have built professional relationships with the team.
- The trust have recently expanded and have further plans to increase their capacity for both operational and school improvement support for their other schools.
- Questions on capacity for school improvement where the board sought reassurances that the team would monitor this.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Guy Shears.

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 Leigh and Bransford Primary School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join The Mercian Educational Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Leigh and Bransford Primary School, located in Worcestershire, is an Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Mercian comprises of 4 primaries situated across Worcestershire, and works closely with the LA.
- The school had considered other trusts however feels Merican is the best fit, offering opportunity to maintain and further enhance its unique offer and bespoke curriculum which is tailored to the local community. They have also established 3 partnerships with MET's schools which will enable the school to integrate quickly.
- The Local area is currently over capacity, with the LA reviewing the situation and will be holding discussions with all schools and trusts in the 2022 autumn term.
- The board spoke on school improvement strategy and the current governance structure within the trust, sighting how an external review would be beneficial.
- The board supported the recommendation with the RD approving a recommendation of an External Governance Review (EGR).

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 Provost Williams CofE Primary School, Coventry, to convert and become an academy and join The Diocese of Coventry Multi Academy Trust, Coventry.

AB discussion:

- Provost Williams CofE Primary School, Coventry, are an Ofsted rated 'Good' primary who are wanting to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to continue their growth strategy whilst continuing their journey of improvement.
- The Diocese of Coventry is a Church of England Trust consisting of 19 schools, with their core mission to build a better future for all within their academies. The trusts board is supportive of bringing Provost Williams.
- The school selected DMAT as it aligns with its Christian vision and values and have already built a strong working partnership, engaging in recruitment of an Executive Headteacher to replace the outgoing Headteacher.
- The board sought assurances on Ofsted and Performance data for primaries within the Trust including Burton Green. There was also discussion on the current trustee board as well as the recruitment of a 13th member.
- 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.

Sponsored Route

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

Project: Nuneaton Academy, Warwickshire, to be sponsored by Tudor Grange Academies Trust.

AB discussion:

- Tudor Grange Academies Trust, Solihull, are proposed as a sponsor for Nuneaton Academy, Warwickshire, after being placed in intervention due to an 'Inadequate' Ofsted Judgement in 2021.
- Nuneaton Academies current trust, Midlands Academies Trust have agreed to the voluntary transfer of the academy.
- The DfE issued out invitations to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the sponsorship to 9 trusts. 5 trusts submitted an EOI and following a review of options, Tudor Grange was selected as the most suitable sponsor.
- TGAT consists of 12 schools across East and West Midlands and have experience of supporting secondary academies with a strong Ofsted record.
- There has been a marked interest in this proposal from MPs and the Local Authority due to the impact on the community and history of the school.
- There were discussions on school improvement capacity at TGAT with them pulling expertise from across their trust, however they have also hired an advisor to build plans for future direction.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Mo Brennan.

Further actions required: To inform the LA, Academy and Trust.

Significant Change

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

Project: Whether to approve a reduction in age range at Brooke School, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Brooke School is an all-through special school based in Rugby who are requesting approval to close its nursery provision and reduce its age range.
- The proposal is due to the Unity Multi Academy Trust wanting to focus and improve their core provision at the school.
- This request is a retrospective proposal, the change was effective of the school closing the provision at the end of summer 2022.
- As Warwickshire County Council does not commission nursery places at the school as specialist places, this has reduced the number of pupils attending the nursery. The Trust have stated that continuing the provision would be a financial risk.
- Questions on staffing costs and board member numbers, reassurances were provided that they will be reviewed by the Trust.
- The board supported the recommendation with the RD approving conditions of a School Management and Resource Advisor (SMRA) and an ERG.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: N/A.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: Whether to approve an increase in capacity at Woodlands, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Woodlands is an all-through special school based in Warwickshire, who are requesting approval to increase their capacity due to local demand.
- The school is looking to increase capacity to meet the demand to accommodate additional children in the Warwickshire area. Increasing demand has already seen pupil numbers at Woodlands exceed capacity, therefore this application is retrospective.
- A four week consultation has taken place in across June to July 2022, they received no objections however there was concerns of future increasing numbers.
- The board discussed how the Trust had proposed two retrospective applications and wanted to understand the contingencies in place to manage risk and mitigate the same situations.
- The board supported the recommendation with the RD approving conditions of a SMRA and an EGR.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: N/A.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Trust Change

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

Project: Whether to approve The Learning Village Trust, Sandwell, to transfer to Windsor Academies Trust, Stoke-on-Trent.

AB discussion:

- The Learning Village Trust, Stoke-on-Trent, have proposed to join Windsor Academies Trust and merge forming an 11 school Trust including 2 nursery and preschool settings.
- Windsor has been working closely with the 2 primaries within LVT, with the Head teachers spending time in WAT's schools to understand operations. Whilst collaborating they noted the educational vision and values they shared, leading to a formalisation of their relationship.
- The proposal fits within Stoke's plans and will bolster capacity within the city. Benefits for the trusts include, collaborative opportunities, shared oversights from experienced and skilled teams and access to larger infrastructures and services.
- The board discussed the current trustee board and the levels of capacity within the trusts. There were specific questions raised on school improvement capacity and a review on governance. Assurances were provided.
- The board agreed with the recommendation with the RD approving a recommendation for a SMRA in 6 months' time.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform both Trusts.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Blue Coat School, Coventry

Decision type: Significant Change – Capacity Increase.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: Oakfield Primary Academy, Warwickshire.

Decision type: Significant Change – Physical expansion.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.