



## Notes of Meeting: East of England Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 20 October 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

- Brian Conway (AB)
- Tim Coulson (AB)
- Mark Farmer (AB)
- Clare Flintoff (AB)
- Al Kingsley (AB)
- Sarah Skinner (AB)
- Josephine Valentine (AB)

### DfE senior civil servants

- ESFA representative
- Ashish Vadher, Deputy Director (DD)

### Representations received

- No representations were received for this meeting.

## General Discussion Points

### AB Member feedback

- The September AB meeting notes were discussed and agreed.
- Attendees were given an update on the Department's current work and recent progress in the Priority Education Investment Areas.
- AB members provided feedback on issues within the sector

## Significant Change

**Project:** Whether to agree the addition of an Autism base at Greenways Primary School, **Southend**.

### AB discussion:

- The board heard that Learning in Harmony Multi Academy Trust (LIHMAT) is proposing to open a 12-place Autistic Resource Base (ARB) at Greenways Primary School.
- Southend City Council (SCC) have identified a need in the Greenways locality for school places for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC).
- The AB acknowledged that this would meet the local demand for places for pupils and that the consultation did not raise any concerns.
- The AB expressed no concerns and supported with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved subject to further checks

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to assess 2022 KS2 performance in LIHMAT's other primary school and to confirm primary ASC need with LA. Project Lead to inform the trust and school of the RDs decision.

## Converter Academy Orders

**Project:** Whether to approve the applications to convert into All Saints Catholic Academy Trust, Hertfordshire, from:

- a) St Thomas More Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, **Hertfordshire**.
- b) St Albert the Great Catholic Primary School, **Hertfordshire**.
- c) John F Kennedy Catholic School, **Hertfordshire**.

### **AB discussion:**

- These applications to convert are part of the Diocese of Westminster's programme to convert all its schools to academy status within Catholic academy trusts.
- The board heard that the three schools will form a geographical hub within the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust, Hertfordshire.
- It was recommended that the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust engage with an SRMA exercise from DfE to support the strategic development of the academy trust.
- The board would welcome an overview of the Diocese of Westminster's academy programme.

**RD decision:** Approved

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform the schools' governing bodies. The academy trust and the Diocese of Westminster of the RDs decision.

## **Converter Academy Order**

**Project:** Whether Greenway Primary and Nursery School, **Hertfordshire**, should convert and join Chiltern Way Academy Trust, **Hertfordshire**

### **Update:**

- The board discussed the proposed mutual benefits between the school and academy trust (similar geographical footprint and population; SEN expertise and mainstream expertise).
- The board discussed the capacity of Chiltern Way academy trust to expand in Hertfordshire; the importance of avoiding the MAT having a single school presence in the LA; and the Chiltern Way Academy Trust's plans to develop cross-phase provision.
- The board advised that Chiltern Way should develop a clear trajectory on growth in line with the Schools White Paper.

**RD decision:** Approved

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform the school governing body, the academy trust and the local authority of the RD's decision.

## Converter Academy Order

**Project:** Whether Yaxham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, **Norfolk**, should join the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT), **Norfolk**.

### Update:

- The board heard that Yaxham is a smaller-than-average Church of England primary school and DNEAT is the diocesan trust for the local area.
- The school leaders are keen to work in a MAT structure and the trust is aware that the school needs support and has identified those areas where effective support can be provided. DNEAT has recently appointed a School Development Partner who is currently working on the actions needed to bring about rapid improvement.
- The board asked whether smaller schools in need of improvement would stretch the trust's capacity and distract from the work the trust is carrying out with its existing schools. However, the board heard that the trust's new School Development Partner has added additional capacity to the trust, and he is already carrying out work with Yaxham.
- Board members also noted that as a faith school, the options are limited.

**RD decision:** Approved with conditions

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform the trust of the RD's decision. SRMA support to be arranged. Project Lead to also ask DNEAT for its primary improvement plan & growth strategy/plan.

## Trust Change

**Project:** Whether Thomas Mills School, **Suffolk**, should join the Alpha Trust, **Essex**

### Update:

- The board heard that Thomas Mills High School (TMHS) is a secondary school SAT with a sixth form near Woodbridge, Suffolk. A Termination Warning Notice was issued in February 2022. The RD met with the Trust Chair and CEO in March 2022 to make it clear that the Board had not demonstrated that it has the capacity to embed a strong safeguarding culture across the school.
- Thomas Mills completed due diligence and met with a number of multi academy trusts in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The board unanimously decided that Alpha Trust was the best fit for their school. One of the points

they highlighted was due to Thomas Mills being a rural secondary, they felt the Alpha Trust had good understanding of this context which would allow them to provide the right support whilst respecting the characteristics of the school.

**RD decision:** Approved

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform the trust of the RD's decision.

## Trust Change

**Project:** Proposed transfer of Seckford Education Trust schools, **Suffolk**, to transfer to Sapientia MAT, **Suffolk**.

**Update:**

- The board heard that Seckford Education Trust Trustees have resolved to merge into a larger trust following an 'inadequate' Ofsted rating at Saxmundham School. The trust board accepted they did not have the capacity to achieve a rapid turnaround at this school and would benefit from merging with a stronger MAT to improve educational performance.
- Seckford Education Trust completed due diligence and met with a range of local MATs. The trust board unanimously agreed Sapientia was their preferred choice.
- Sapientia's education leadership team was restructured in February 2020 and the trust has added significant capacity to the central team, ready for further growth.
- The board heard that both Seckford Education Trust and Sapientia MAT have accepted a SRMA visit which will take place before any transfers are undertaken.
- The AB members agreed this is a strong match.

**RD decision:** Approved

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform the trusts of the RD's decision.

## Free School Presumption

**Project:** To approve the sponsor of a new free school in Suffolk

**Update:**

- The board heard that Active Learning Trust withdrew from delivering the Central Ipswich Primary School free school project to concentrate on improving its existing schools. Ipswich is a priority education investment area, and the free school project is part of the regeneration of Ipswich town centre and we need a strong trust to deliver and manage the new school.
- DfE identified three possible MATs, that have the capacity to open the free school and of the three, DfE considered ASSET Education the strongest, with the sufficient capacity to deliver and run a successful new primary school in Ipswich town centre.
- The board heard the pros and cons of the alternative trusts but agreed ASSET was a strong partner who understood the type of school they would be taking on.

**RD decision:** Approved

**Conflicts:** Clare Flintoff

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform the trust of the RD's decision.

## Trust Change

**Project:** To agree the preferred transfer option for Ortu Gable Hall School, **Thurrock**

**Update:**

- The board heard that Ortu Federation (OF) is a MAT located in Thurrock managing three secondary academies, one of which is Ortu Gable Hall School (OGHS). Gable Hall received an Inadequate Ofsted judgement, citing serious weaknesses and the requirement for significant improvement.
- The DfE identified five potential trusts to take on the school and six additional trusts that came forward as part of an expression of interest exercise. Following assessment of the trusts, the list was narrowed down to Osbourne Co-operative Academy Trust and Harris Academies Trust and Harris strongly met all 6 criteria laid out by the Department.

- RD and Board members discussed the potential options and agreed in principle that Harris was the most suitable sponsor for Gable Hall school. This decision is subject to further due diligence and discussions with both trusts.

**RD decision:** Approved

**Conflicts:** Tim Coulson

**Further actions required:** Project Lead to inform the trust of the RD's decision.

## **Project on agenda not discussed**

### **Sponsor**

**Project:** The Wherry School Trust, **Norfolk**, to apply for sponsor status.

**Update:** Application not discussed and will be submitted at a future Advisory Board meeting.

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