



Notes of Meeting: South West

18 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

- Hannah Woodhouse

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Rachel Howie
- Mark Ducker
- Benjamin Antell
- Jennifer Blunden
- Margaret Simmons-Bird
- Adele Haysom
- Jackie Smith

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Steve Savory

DfE senior civil servants

- Lucy Livings – Deputy Director
- Matthew Stevenson – Deputy Director

Representations received

- Two representations were received for Beaminster School converting to academy status and joining Aspirations Academies Trust

These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

Regional Director Update

- The Ofsted inspection outcomes from the start of this academic year were shared with AB members
- Provisional data was due to be released within the week and that teams should consider new performance data alongside recommendations in line with guidance.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to approve Beaminster School, Dorset converting to academy status and joining Aspirations Academies Trust

Points raised in discussion:

Governance:

- The structure of the board was discussed and specifically, potential conflicts of interest at senior level.
- It was confirmed that an external review of governance (ERG) commissioned by the trust had been undertaken in 2020.

Finance:

- The trust's financial forecast and returns was discussed and highlighted specifically the level of pay for the executive team.

Other:

- Questions were raised about the retention of the Christian ethos of the school, and it was confirmed that assurances have been given by the trust that this will be retained.
- The potential arrangements at the joint Sixth Form with the Sir John Colfox Academy were discussed and how this will work with two MATs involved, with a need to ensure that this remains in place for children in the area.
- RG SW team were asked to review the performance data of the trust alongside the clarification of the conditions.
- It was recommended that these issues are discussed with the trust.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conditions:

- Evidence of progress in implementing the trust's external review of governance and corresponding action plan
- Assurances that there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect the effective running of the Beaminster/Sir John Colfox joint sixth form in terms of the governance arrangements between the trusts

- Confirmation on how the trust is maintaining the religious character of the school in joining the trust.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

Project: Whether to approve Leighterton Primary School, Gloucestershire converting to academy status and joining The Athelstan Trust **

Project: Whether to Avening Primary School, Gloucestershire converting to academy status and joining The Athelstan Trust **

Points raised in discussion:

Governance:

- The diversity of the board was discussed and the education expertise especially at primary
- This has been discussed with the trust and they are putting plans in place to mitigate

Other:

- The strength of the trust's vision and how the board has a clear growth plan and understands the area and schools that would benefit from being part of the Athelstan Trust.
- The primary schools both completed their due diligence on the type of trust that would be right for their own vision and ethos and have the full support of their respective local governing bodies to join Athelstan Trust

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

** Both projects were discussed together

Project: Whether to approve Langford Budville Church of England Primary School, Somerset converting to academy status and joining Richard Huish Trust

Points raised in discussion:

School Improvement:

- The current SI support for this vulnerable school provided by Richard Huish Trust and the wider SI capacity of the trust, including recent changes the trust has made to develop it's trust-wide school improvement model.
- It was noted that the trust has provided an Executive Head with a strong primary focus and an additional class teacher supporting for the remainder of the academic year
- The trust-wide model and track record of school improvement across the trust was queried.

Other:

- It was noted that The Taunton Academy (Richard Huish Trust) was awaiting the publication of an Ofsted inspection, having been rated below Good for consecutive inspections since joining the trust. A further below Good inspection would mean that the academy would be eligible for new intervention powers.
- It was decided that it is not the right time for a vulnerable school to join this trust and to defer until assurances are received

RD decision: Defer paper to be brought back to AB at later date once identified issues have been resolved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

Project: Whether to approve St Thomas à Becket Church of England Aided Primary School, Wiltshire converting to academy status and joining Equa Multi Academy Trust

Points raised in discussion:

- Documented under The John of Gaunt School project

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: Steve Savory was not present and did not receive the papers for this project

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

** This project was discussed together with The John of Gaunt School (SAT) trust change. Minutes are documented on the latter

Sponsor Application

Points discussed in relation to applications for sponsor application.

Project: Whether to approve an application for The Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust, Somerset to become an approved sponsor

Points raised in discussion:

School Improvement:

- It was noted that the CEO is the School Improvement lead, and that over time there should be a more structured model as the trust grows and this will be reviewed with the trust

Other:

- The Dunstan Trust was established in March 2021, it was acknowledged that the trust is continuing to establish teams and systems.
- The support that Dunstan can offer to underperforming catholic schools cannot be underestimated, which needs to be considered when considering future growth plans and the capacity of the trust

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Whether to approve Churchill Academy & Sixth Form (SAT), North Somerset transferring to Lighthouse Schools Partnership

Points raised in discussion:

Finances:

- The financial forecasting for Lighthouse Schools Partnership was discussed and it was advised that the trust have demonstrated conservative budgeting historically. Projected trust reserves through to 2024/5 will remain within the trust's reserves policy.

School Improvement:

- There was a discussion about the trust's secondary school improvement (SI) strategy. The MAT is increasing their focus on standardised practices in the secondary phase and are aligning the focus of SI visits. They have increased their secondary school improvement capacity and have funded a new role to further develop links between secondary schools' departments and middle leaders.
- It was noted that bringing Churchill Academy into the trust will increase the opportunities for support and challenge across the trust's secondary schools.

Other:

- AB members made comment on the geographic cohesiveness of this transfer, as a number of the feeder primary schools are already in the MAT and this should support transition and monitoring of pupil progress.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: Adele Haysom was not present and did not receive the papers for this project

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

Project: Whether to approve Crispin School Academy (SAT), Somerset transferring to Wessex Learning Trust

Points raised in discussion:

Other:

- There was a discussion about the alignment of curriculum, school improvement model and standardisation across all schools. Assurances were given that the trust has recognised this need and the leadership are invested in delivering a consistent approach

- It is essential to have primary expertise on the board which should be discussed with the trust

RD decision: Approve with the conditions

Conditions:

- (WLT) commissions an external review to assess progress towards and opportunities to support the effective strategic alignment of curriculum and systems across the trust.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

Project: Whether to approve The John of Gaunt School (SAT), Wiltshire transferring to Equa Multi Academy Trust

Points raised in discussion:

School Improvement:

- There was a discussion about the maturity of the school improvement model and experience across the trust. It was noted that a more structured model will be needed as the trust grows
- It was noted that the Headteachers are the School Improvement Leads, as the trust grows this may not be sustainable and to be discussed with the trust

Governance:

- There was a query about the position of Director of Primary Education. It was advised that the former CEO has moved into this role

Other:

- It was acknowledged that both schools have an established relationship with Equa MAT
- Both schools are seeking a trust that will be right for their vision and ethos and Equa is a good match

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: Steve Savory was not present and did not receive the papers for this project

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the schools and trust

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Durweston CofE VA Primary School, **Dorset** (Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust

Points raised in discussion:

Opening date 1 November 2022

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: No action required

Project: Furzesham Primary School, **Torbay** (The Thinking Schools Academy Trust

Points raised in discussion:

Opening date 1 November 2022

Conflicts:

Further actions required: No action required

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Whether to approve a significant change for Brannel School, **Cornwall** (Cornwall Education Learning Trust) to increase capacity by 150 places

Decision type: Significant Change

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project lead to inform the school and trust

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

None

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