



Notes of Meeting: East Midlands Advisory Board.

14 December 2022.

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

Advisory Board 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

- Carol Gray.
- Kate Copley.

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Paul West.
- Inderjit Sandhu.
- Mark Thomas.
- Sian Hampton.
- Paul Heery.
- Chris Wheatley.

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Julian Scholefield.
- Sarah Armitage.

DfE senior civil servants

- Kelly Hughes – Deputy Director for East Midlands Regions Group.
- ESFA representative.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whether to approve Charnwood Primary School, Leicestershire, to convert and join Attenborough Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

Charnwood Primary School is a larger-than-average sized primary school in the city of Leicester. Following an Ofsted inspection in March 2009, the school was judged to be outstanding.

Charnwood Primary School's governing board considered other multi-academy trusts and considered a range of information including strategic fit, financial health, education performance and governance. The school governing body passed a resolution to join Attenborough Learning Trust.

Charnwood Primary School's governors are of the view that Attenborough Learning Trust is the right trust for the school given its proximity to existing Attenborough Learning Trust academies and that the trust's academies serve communities with a similar demographic profile. The governors are also assured that Charnwood Primary School's vision, values, and aspirations are aligned with those of the trust.

A consultation has taken place on the proposal and no objections were received.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Attenborough Learning Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

The board was in agreement with this proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school and trust of the decision, along with Leicestershire County Council. The supportive deployment of a school resource management advisor to Attenborough Learning Trust was recommended, post-transfer. An external review of governance was also recommended.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: Discuss sponsor options for Bentinck Primary and Nursery School, Nottingham.

AB discussion:

Bentinck Primary and Nursery School was inspected by Ofsted on the 21 and 22 July 2022 and judged to be inadequate with safeguarding concerns. The school was issued with an Academy Order in September 2022.

The Advisory Board was presented with more than 1 sponsor option. The board decided that on this occasion Archway Learning Trust was their recommended sponsor for the school.

The trust has supported other trusts in this area on their safeguarding practice. The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Archway Learning Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approved – Archway Learning Trust.

Conflicts: Two Advisory Board members. Neither member was present for this part of the meeting, nor were they in receipt of project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school and trust of the decision.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Heathlands Primary School.

RD decision: Proposed school opening date – 1 January 2023.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Significant Change

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

Project: Whether to approve the closure of Little Linchfield Pre-School (Community Inclusive Trust), Lincolnshire.

AB discussion:

Linchfield Academy, part of Community Inclusive Trust, is seeking approval to raise the school's admission age from 2 to 4 years and to close its pre-school with immediate effect as there are no children enrolled or attending the nursery.

The nursery class has a maximum of 30 places, offering sessions for a total of 15 hours a week and is open only during school term-times. To remain financially viable the pre-school needs at least 18 children, each utilising their 15 hours entitlement each week. Over the last the number of children accessing Little Linchfield pre-school has dropped significantly below 18 children needed.

The board was in agreement with this proposal.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Community Inclusive Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school and trust of the decision taken. The supportive deployment of a school resource management advisor to the Community Inclusive Trust was recommended.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Whether to approve the transfer of Westgate Academy (single-academy trust), Lincolnshire, to join Aspire Schools Trust (multi-academy trust).

AB discussion:

Westgate Academy Ltd (Westgate Academy) is seeking approval to join Aspire Schools Trust with a proposed transfer date of 1st March 2023. Both trusts' boards have passed a resolution in favour of the transfer.

Westgate Academy is a primary single-academy trust in Lincoln which opened in June 2011. It received an Ofsted good judgement in 2016. Ofsted conducted a section 8 inspection in November 2021 which showed that the academy continues to be good.

Westgate Academy identified Aspire Schools Trust as their preferred match, as the culture of the schools within Aspire Schools Trust is similar to Westgate Academy. Westgate Academy developed a positive relationship with Aspire Schools Trust when the trust began providing financial services support to Westgate Academy.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Aspire Schools Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

The board was in agreement with this decision.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the trusts of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management advisor to Aspire Schools Trust was recommended post transfer, along with an external review of governance.

Project: Whether to approve the voluntary transfer of Believe Academy Trust (multi-academy trust), Nottingham, to join Willows Academy Trust (multi-academy trust), Derbyshire.

AB discussion:

Believe Academy Trust and Willows Academy Trust made a voluntary proposal to transfer all 4 of Believe Academy Trust's schools to Willows Academy Trust and for Believe Academy Trust to close.

The proposed date for the transfer of schools is 1 September 2023.

Both trusts sought advice early to help understand any risks and issues associated with a transfer. The trusts have completed a joint risk-assessment of the proposed transfer, covering key areas such as governance, capacity for improvement, financial stability, people, and leadership.

Merger plans are well advanced, with both trusts working together to plan for a smooth transition.

The 2 CEOs have worked collaboratively for the past 6 years: sharing good practice across their schools, quality assurance, moderation, and reviews. Together they have developed and supported subject leadership networking, and during the pandemic they worked together, sharing key documents and approaches to remote learning.

The financial health of the trusts and their future financial health were also considered.

The board was in agreement with this proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the trusts of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management advisor was recommended post-transfer. An external review of governance was also recommended.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Whether to approve the increase in capacity at The South Wolds Academy and Sixth Form (East Midlands Education Trust), from 1,114 to 1,234 (including 300 post-16 places), Nottingham.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer has informed the academy and trust of the decision.

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