



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 19 January 2023

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)

Advisory Board (AB) members

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

Apologies

- Robert Tarn (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 board members to the meeting.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Wellfield School, Durham to convert and join New College Durham Academy Trust (NCDAT)

AB discussion:

- Wellfield School, Durham has an age range of 11 to 16 years and was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in June 2018.
- Governors voted unanimously to join NCDAT due to an existing partnership which they believe is working well.
- Wellfield School has a historic deficit and is in discussions with Durham County Council around potentially paying this deficit.
- Wellfield currently has capacity for 1011 pupils and is 86% full. Forecasts over the next few years expect the school to grow to 97% capacity.
- The recommendation to the board is to approve subject to the deficit being paid by Durham County Council.
- NCDAT is a secondary Multi Academy Trust (MAT) consisting of 2 schools.
- The board discussed concerns surrounding the new growth of NCDAT and recommended an updated governance plan is received following the impending National Governance Association (NGA) review to check the capacity of the trust.
- The board members agreed to approve subject to confirmation Durham County Council agree to pay the historic deficit for Wellfield School, and that a satisfactory governance plan is received with no significant risks identified.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform school and Multi Academy Trust of decision to approve subject to confirmation that Durham County Council agree to pay Wellfield School's deficit prior to conversion.
- Completion of the governance review by NGA, with no significant risks identified.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Durham Sixth Form Centre (DSFC), Durham to convert and join Providence Learning Partnership (PLP)

AB discussion:

- DSFC was judged by Ofsted to be 'Outstanding in March 2017.
- DSFC is the largest post 16 school in England with capacity for 2000 pupils, it is currently 91% full, with this percentage predicted to rise to 97% in the coming years.

- Following a government initiative to develop a specialist maths school in each region of England, DSFC was chosen as the school to develop the maths school in the North East.
- DSFC is working in partnership with Durham University to create Durham Mathematics School (DMS). DMS is due to open in September 2025.
- The priority of PLP would be to focus on DMS for the first 3 years of opening before developing growth opportunities.
- Discussion followed on reviewing the membership of PLP's trust board to ensure a broad skillset to give the greatest impact for the school system in the North East.
- The board agreed to approve with the condition that governance arrangements are finalised and meet requirements of the Governance Handbook prior to the funding agreement being signed.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Approve with the condition that governance arrangements are finalised and meet requirements of the Governance Handbook prior to the funding agreement being signed.
- Delivery Officer 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 Woodham Burn Community Primary School (WBCPS), Durham to convert and join Lingfield Education Trust (LET)

AB discussion:

- WBCPS serves children aged between 2 to 11 years old.
- WBCPS was judged by Ofsted as 'Requires Improvement' in December 2021. As this was the consecutive 'Requires Improvement' judgement WBCPS is in scope for intervention, with the recommendation for the school to join a strong trust.
- The capacity of WBCPS is currently 71%, with pupil numbers predicted to fall to 69% in the coming years.
- The board was supportive of this match and discussed how LET's network of central support services could assist WBCPS.
- The ESFA view was also supportive, and highlighted LET recently accepted the offer of a School Resource Management Advisor to realise efficiencies from growth.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer 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 Vane Road Primary School (VRPS), Durham to convert and join Lingfield Education Trust (LET)

AB discussion:

- VRPS was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in 2017.
- VRPS is currently 100% full with pupil number forecasts predicted to remain between 99% and 100% in the coming years.
- The board were supportive of the proposal for VRPS to join LET and had no objections.
- The ESFA view was also supportive and highlighted LET has recently accepted the offer of a School Resource management Advisor to realise efficiencies from growth.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer 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 Prior's Mill Church of England Controlled Primary School, Billingham, Stockton to convert and join Melrose Learning Trust (MLT)

AB discussion:

- Prior's Mill Church of England Controlled Primary School, Billingham, Stockton was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in October 2017.
- The capacity of Prior's Mill is currently 97% with pupil numbers forecast to reduce to 90% over the coming years.
- The proposal to join MLT is in line with the Diocese of Durham's strategy to join a strong Church of England Multi-Academy Trust, to work collaboratively and share expertise to strengthen the pupil experience.
- The board discussed current levels of support Prior's Mill would require if they were to join MLT and current capacity of the trust.
- MLT have support structures available for new schools joining the trust and have been increasing back-office capacity to support growth.
- MLT are in the process of scheduling a School Resource Management Advisor visit to review capacities and structures to assist with upcoming growth and efficiencies.
- The board supported the motion to approve, subject to a discussion with MLT to clarify the support required by Prior's Mill, and to review MLT's governance to ensure it is appropriate for the next phase of growth.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Review current governance structures of MLT to ensure the trust is ready for growth.
- Determine the level of support Prior's Mill requires from the trust in advance of conversion.
- Delivery Officer 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 Newbrough Church of England Primary School, Northumberland to convert and join Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust (DNDLT)

AB discussion:

- Newbrough Church of England Primary School, Northumberland was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in 2019.
- Newbrough is currently 78% full with pupil number forecasts set to decrease to 62% over the coming years. To mitigate declining pupil numbers, the suggestion is to join DNDLT who are proposing to operate a hub model in Northumberland with Newbrough being the first school to join.
- ESFA advised that a School Resource Management Advisor visit had been offered to DNDLT to assist with growth plans.
- The board were supportive of the project but noted the need for an outstanding land ownership query to be resolved before the conversion is completed.
- In addition, the board discussed a potential concern about the isolation of Newbrough, if no other schools in the area joined the proposed Hub and suggested that at least one other school in Northumberland should be in discussions to join in advance of Newbrough's conversion.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Ensure landownership query resolved prior to conversion.
- Encourage progression of an additional school to join the Hub before signing papers.
- Delivery Officer 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 Morpeth All Saints Church of England Aided First School, Northumberland to convert and join The Three Rivers Learning Trust (TRLT)

AB discussion:

- Morpeth All Saints Church of England Aided First School, Northumberland was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in July 2022.
- The school is currently over capacity at 104%, with pupil numbers set to drop over coming years to between 79% and 89%.
- Morpeth All Saints would like to join TRLT in advance of the trust merger with Tyne Community Learning Trust, to allow time to embed into the trust and prevents delays.
- The board were supportive of the proposal and had no objections.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: Anita Bath (AB)

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform school and Multi Academy Trust of decision.