



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 16 February 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)
- Robert Tarn (AB)

Apologies

- Elizabeth Horne (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 St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Northumberland, to convert and join Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust (NCEAT)

AB discussion:

- The proposal for St Michael's to join NCEAT was previously taken to the May 2022 North Advisory Board and was deferred to allow time for ESFA to have further discussions with NCEAT on their financial position.
- In addition, the board had concerns surrounding the forecasted reduction in pupil numbers at the converting school over the coming years.
- NCEAT have been supporting St Michael's since 2021 and the school have formed a good working relationship with the Trust.
- NCEAT has a dedicated school improvement team that has been supporting school improvement at St Michael's. This, along with the Ofsted 'Good' rating retained following the November 2022 monitoring visit, are hoped to directly impact on increasing pupil numbers.
- In May 2022 NCEAT had an external review of governance (ERG). The review confirmed the governance of the trust is effective.
- The board agreed to support this project, however agreed that a further conversation with the Trust was needed to discuss the improvement plan and seek assurances surrounding the 'Inadequate' secondary school within the Trust, in advance of any further growth.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform school and NCEAT of decision to approve, with a note to further discuss the improvement plan for the 'Inadequate' secondary within NCEAT.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Captain Cook Primary School, Lingfield Primary School, The Avenue Primary School and Marton Manor Primary School, of the James Cook Learning Trust (JCLT) Middlesbrough to join Lingfield Education Trust (LET), Darlington

AB discussion:

- The board discussed the proposal for James Cook Learning Trust to close and for the four primary schools within the Trust (Captain Cook Primary School, Lingfield Primary School, The Avenue Primary School and Marton Manor Primary School) to join LET.
- LET was noted to be aligned with the vision and values of the JCLT primary schools.

- The primary schools within JCLT are all rated Ofsted 'Good' and were noted to be in financial surplus.
- The board unanimously supported the project and had no objections.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform the Multi Academy Trusts of decision to approve.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for High Clarence Primary School, Stockton to convert and join The Enquire Learning Trust (ELT)

AB discussion:

- High Clarence Primary School, Stockton is now eligible for intervention following two Ofsted judgements of 'Requires Improvement'.
- The board discussed the challenges of the local area and agreed that High Clarence needed to join a strong trust to access additional support to flourish.
- ELT contains 30 primary academies across England with 6 in the North East.
- All of the Stockton schools within ELT are rated Ofsted 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- The board discussed challenges around pupil numbers at the school, with forecasts declining slightly in the coming years, noting that the community the school serves is isolated, however ELT is looking at marketing to drive future pupil numbers back up.
- The board agreed to support the project with no objections.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

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

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Farringdon Community Academy (Brighter Academy Trust), Sunderland, to join Northern Education Trust (NET).

AB discussion:

- Farringdon Community Academy, Sunderland is the only school within Brighter Academy Trust (BAT). The proposal is for Farringdon to join NET and close BAT.
- At the request of Sunderland Local Authority, Farringdon applied to increase capacity as a result of a predicted increase of pupil numbers due to new housing developments in the area. The school is due to be rebuilt with works due to start in May 2023.

Concerns were identified surrounding the governance of BAT and a Notice to Improve (Ntl) was issued in March 2022. A temporary Chair was appointed to support BATs governance processes. The temporary Chair agreed to remain in place until the school could find a suitable MAT to join. The Ntl has now been lifted from BAT.

- An SRMA deployment in September 2022, an annual audit and Ofsted inspection all highlighted that BAT was approaching compliance with the Governance Handbook.
- Following consideration of a number of trusts BAT are keen for Farringdon to join NET due to their track record and capacity. All schools within NET are Ofsted rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding', and NET have capacity to support improvement.
- The board discussed pupil numbers and capacity of Farringdon, although the school is 75% full, there is a forecasted rise predicted due to an increase in housing in the local area and the new build of school.
- The board supported this proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts:

- Jo Heaton (AB) was not present and did not receive papers for this item.
- Robert Tarn (AB) was not present and did not receive papers for this item.
- Elizabeth Horne (AB) was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform trusts of decision.