



Notes of Meeting: East of England

Date of meeting – 23 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

- Jonathan Duff (RD)

Advisory Board (AB) members

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

DfE senior civil servants

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

Representations received

- Two; Littleport & East Cambs Academy, Cambridgeshire, Trust Change.

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

General Discussion Points

- The RD gave some general national and regional updates and invited feedback from the board.
- The board considered Ofsted judgment outcomes for the previous month.
- The Diocese of Norwich were invited to the board to give an overview of their strategy and plans for the next three years. The RD indicated it was his intention to invite other dioceses to give similar presentations to the board in the coming months.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: Whether Kelvedon Hatch Community Primary School, Essex, should join the Discovery Educational Trust, Essex.

AB discussion:

- The board heard how the Governing Body had concluded the school would benefit from the support of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) having experienced a challenging period.
- The board also heard about the support that Discovery Educational Trust (DET) has been providing the school and how the Governing Body felt it would be a suitable trust to join.
- The board members felt confident that DET will support the school well having received reassurances about its capacity to take on additional schools.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and DET of the decision. Converter Academy Order to be issued and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: Whether Hogarth Primary School and Nursery, Essex, should join the Discovery Educational Trust, Essex.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school has faced a number of challenges and that the Governing Body had concluded it needs the support of a MAT.
- The board heard that Discovery Educational Trust (DET) has recently been engaged to provide support and has put in place a school improvement plan. The School Improvement Board that is currently in place is confident this support will enable the school to address areas for improvement.
- The board members felt confident that DET will support the school well having received reassurances about its capacity to take on additional schools.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and DET of the decision. Converter Academy Order to be issued and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Trust Change

Project: Whether Colchester Royal Grammar School, Essex, should transfer to the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT), Kent.

AB discussion:

- The board agreed that the school should join a MAT at its previous meeting on 26 January.
- The board heard that Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) is the preferred sponsor for Colchester Royal Grammar School.
- The RD felt that TSAT is a sensible match as the trust already operates grammar schools and would be well placed to support the school with its areas for improvement, as identified in the most recent Ofsted inspection.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and TSAT of the decision.

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

Project: To approve the Local Authority's recommended sponsor for the new primary free school in Cringleford, Norfolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that there were four applicants to sponsor the new free school and the Local Authority had identified Inspiration Trust as its preferred provider.
- Inspiration Trust were preferred as they have knowledge of the local area, experience of opening and running new schools, and the necessary capacity to do so in this case. It also aligns with the Trust's growth plans.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the Local Authority of the decision.

Trust Change

Project: Whether The Fen Rivers Academy, Norfolk, should join The Bridge MAT Ltd, Islington.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school's current trust, Catch22 Multi Academies Trust, had resolved to cease operating and voluntarily transfer their schools to other trusts by September 2023.
- A number of MAT options had been explored for the school, but The Bridge MAT had been identified as a preference due to an alignment of values and approaches.
- The board agreed that the school and trust would work well together, but that it was also an opportunity to help the trust to develop its provision in Norfolk, having recently opened The Bridge Easton special school in the county.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Lawrence Chapman.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and The Bridge MAT Ltd of the decision.

Trust Change

Project: Whether Littleport & East Cambs Academy, Cambridgeshire, should join Eastern Learning Alliance, Cambridgeshire.

AB discussion:

- The board agreed that the school should transfer to another trust at its previous meeting on 26 January.
- The board considered two representations received and felt that they had been satisfactorily addressed, raising no significant concerns.
- The board agreed with the proposed sponsor being Eastern Learning Alliance because of its existing presence in the local area, its understanding of and experience with the local community, its secondary experience and its school improvement record and capacity.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the Trust and ELA of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: Whether to approve the application from Danes Educational Trust, Hertfordshire, to close the Speech, Language and Communication Needs unit located at Onslow St Audrey's School, Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that there is no demand now or anticipated for the SLCN unit at Onslow St Audrey's School.
- Danes Educational Trust, with the support of the Hertfordshire Local Authority (LA) has applied to close the unit.
- The board heard and discussed how the LA is rationalising provision of special resource units across the entire LA to align place of provision more efficiently with the demographic demand.
- The Regional Director approved the application in principle with final approval subject to:
 - an update on the LA's SEND strategy and progress with its implementation.
 - assurance from the LA and the academy trust that those pupils in the MAT's geographical area requiring a special resource provision would have an identified resource for placement with the closure of the Onslow St Audrey's provision.
 - This information is requested from the MAT and the LA.

RD decision: Approved with conditions.

Conflicts: Josephine Valentine.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the Trust of the decision. Delivery officer to get assurance that any pupil with SLCN is provided with sufficient and accessible support.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

Project: Whether Catalyst Academies Trust can open a 10 place Autism Resource Base (ARB) at Aveley Primary School, Thurrock.

Decision type: Retrospective Significant Change.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the Trust of the decision.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

Project: Whether Northstowe Secondary College, Meridian Trust, Cambridgeshire, can change the age-range from 2-19 to 4-19.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the Trust of the decision.