



## Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

**23 March 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

- Andrew Warren

### Advisory Board (AB) members

- Dame Mo Brennan
- Mike Donoghue
- Sarah Finch
- Amarjit Cheema
- Dan Parkes
- Lizana Oberholzer
- Tom Leverage

### Guests

- Yaseen Chikhliwala (DfE observer)

### Apologies

- Guy Shears.

### DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy (Deputy Director)
- Claire Trewartha (Deputy Director)

## **Representations received**

- No representations were made for any items discussed at this meeting.

## **General Discussion Points**

### **Local Update**

- The RD and AB members discussed the current climate in schools across the West Midlands Region.

### **AB member reflections**

- AB members reflected on the Regulatory and Commissioning Review and noted it would be helpful to delve into this further once published.
- AB members reflected that it was beneficial to see an overall picture of the West Midlands to understand the demographics of the geography within the region.
- The board discussed early years education, specifically the capacity of current establishments, and whether they have the suitable resources and training required for this.
- AB members reflected on Industrial Action across some areas of the West Midlands, particularly public transport strikes which were negatively impacting on attendance.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** Whether to issue the Academy Order to The Oaks Primary School, Birmingham, to convert and join DRB Ignite MAT, Birmingham.

### **AB discussion:**

- The Oaks Primary School, Birmingham, is a 2-11 school judged 'Good' by Ofsted.
- The school has proposed to join DRB Ignite MAT as the Trust aligns with its ethos and values. Many of the processes across the school and Trust are also comparable including the curriculum offer which was co-produced between both parties.
- The Trust offers a professional learning programme which will offer support to staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD)..
- The school has been collaborating with the Trust since March 2020 and has established a successful working relationship.
- There is a predicted fall in pupil numbers over the next 3 years due to a substantial birth rate dip in Birmingham and a major housing redevelopment which is causing a high level of mobility in the area.
- The board discussed the schools finances and governance and agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

**Project:** Whether to issue the Academy Order to Dorridge Primary School, Solihull, to convert and join Arden MAT, Solihull.

### **AB discussion:**

- Dorridge Primary School is a large 3-11 school in Solihull judged 'Good' by Ofsted.
- Arden MAT is a 4 school secondary MAT, all with Ofsted judgements of 'Good'. Arden sees Dorridge as a strong expansion to add primary capacity to the Trust.
- Dorridge Primary School is a main feeder of one of the secondary schools within the Trust.
- The Trust board has several members with primary experience, and plan to plan to add further expertise, bringing the total number of Trust members to 11.
- The proposal brings opportunity for the Trust to grow their capacity due to several LA maintained primary schools within the area yet to academise.
- The board agreed with the recommendation and the RD approved the proposal with a recommendation of an External Review of Governance (ERG).

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

**Project:** Whether to issue the Academy Order to Coppice Junior School, Solihull, to convert and join Arden MAT, Solihull.

**AB discussion:**

- Coppice Junior School is a 7-11 school in Solihull judged Good by Ofsted.
- Coppice would be able to provide additional capacity to the trust for years 3-6, as well as an outdoor learning area that Coppice's leaders have stated can be shared across the trust.
- There was a discussion around the viability for the school and pupil numbers, but in future years this is predicted to be improved.
- The Trust board has several members with primary experience, and plan to plan to add further expertise, bringing the total number of Trust members to 11.
- The proposal brings opportunity for the Trust to grow their capacity due to several LA maintained primary schools within the area yet to academise.
- The board agreed with the recommendation and the RD approved the proposal with a recommendation of an External Review of Governance (ERG).

**RD decision:** Approved with a recommendation.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

**Project:** Whether to issue the Academy Order to Abbey Hill School and College, Stoke-on-Trent, to convert and join St Bart's Multi Academy Trust, Stoke-on-Trent.

**AB discussion:**

- Abbey Hill School and College is an all through 3-19 special school in Stoke on Trent which is judged 'Good' by Ofsted.
- Abbey Hill has a long standing relationship with the trust and has ran satellite classes based at two St Bart's academies for several years.
- As Abbey Hill is an all-through special school, it has subject specialist teachers from Year 7 upwards. The school plans to utilise this subject-specialist knowledge across the MAT's existing 19 academies – reaching across 4 local authorities.
- Abbey Hill staff are skilled in transition from primary to secondary – again, something whereby expertise can be shared.
- Abbey Hill aims to be a centre of excellence for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) training, advice and partnership. Joining St Bart's Academy Trust will enable it to further expand on this.
- St Bart's Academy Trust has two special nursery/KS1 settings, whose pupils often transition to Abbey Hill. Their close working partnership has resulted in smooth and successful transitions.

- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Mike Donoghue.

**Further actions required:** Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

**Project:** Whether to issue the Academy Order to Priory CofE Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, to convert and join St Bart's Multi Academy Trust, Stoke-on-Trent.

**AB discussion:**

- Priory CofE Primary School is a 3-11 school in Stoke on Trent which is judged 'Good' by Ofsted.
- Priory has been keen to join an established MAT with the schools Governors exploring a multitude of options, finally agreeing that St Bart's would be the most suitable.
- The Headteacher of Priory has been exploring the work of the trust and Belgrave School for many years. She has also received support from the Chief Executive Officer.
- Priory's leadership team is fully committed to joining an established trust. St. Bart's Academy Trust seeks to ensure its schools are firmly embedded within their communities and its schools retain a great amount of autonomy, with Governors and senior leaders.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Mike Donoghue.

**Further actions required:** Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

**Project:** Whether to issue the Academy Order to Telford Junior School, Warwickshire, to convert and join Elm Tree MAT, Warwickshire.

**AB discussion:**

- Telford Junior School is a 7-11 school in Warwickshire which is judged 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in 2019. A recent section 5 Ofsted report confirms that the school is now 'Good' in all areas.
- There is an established pupil/parent community between the school and Elm Tree MAT, with Telford being the largest feeder link to the only school in the MAT, North Leamington School.
- There is a working relationship between the school and MAT, with mutual collaboration and previous shared governance.

- The trust has built capacity for school improvement work in-house, with the SENDCos, specialist support team, and English and Maths leads having pre-existing working partnerships with Telford Junior School.
- Elm Tree MAT feels that the proposal for Telford Junior to join the trust would benefit pupils to provide a continued curriculum, and would improve english and maths outcomes at KS3 as well as KS4.
- The Trust had recently completed a ERG and made the relevant changes based on the exercise.
- The board discussed the finances at Elm Tree MAT.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

## Significant Change

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

**Project:** Whether to approve the closure of a Sixth Form at John Willmott School, Birmingham.

### **AB discussion:**

- The Trust has been monitoring sixth form applications over the last 5 years. Due to a fall in pupil numbers and a lack of provisions, the sixth form has received a small number of applications and is now financially unviable.
- There are 59 students attending provision outside of the local area.
- The removal of the sixth form would provide additional capacity within the school to focus on the provision for 11-16.
- There were 60 students in 2022 and the students were entered into either an A level or AS level qualification.
- There is planning in place to ensure that year 11 students are catered for once their school year is complete. This was dependant on individuals circumstances but there would be options within the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership trust available.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform the school.

**Project:** Whether to approve Birches Green Infant School, Birmingham to merge with Birches Green Junior School, Birmingham.

### **AB discussion:**

- The amalgamation of Birches Green Infant School with Birches Green Junior School. The two schools are located on the same site and the trust has undertaken a public consultation. The new school will be called Birches Green Primary.
- This amalgamation will not impact on schools in the local area as the new Published Admission Number (PAN) will not exceed the combined PAN of the Infants and Juniors.
- With both schools now operating under one trust, there is a clear vision moving forwards, enhanced since academisation in that the Trust have created a single Local Governing Body to oversee both schools and report back to the Executive Board.
- There board discussed the Trust finances.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform the school.

**Project:** Whether to approve a physical expansion at Fountains High School, Staffordshire.

**AB discussion:**

- Fountains High School is seeking approval for an expansion of classroom accommodation which includes 4 classroom blocks including toilets. Each classroom would accommodate a maximum of 12 pupils.
- The school would be unable to accommodate further pupils due to the lack of permanent classroom space and of accessible facilities.
- The school is part of Esteem Multi Academy Trust and an East Midlands colleague joined the discussion.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform the school.

**Project:** Whether to approve an increase in pupil capacity at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, Coventry.

**AB discussion:**

- Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School is the only secondary school within the The Romero Catholic Academy Trust and is judged 'Good' by Ofsted.
- There is a total of 8 academies, with 7 primaries all being feeder schools.
- Cardinal Wiseman will temporarily provide an additional 30 places on entry point to year 7 from September 2023 to 2023. This will temporarily increase the school's current capacity figure from 1400 to 1460.
- The school will also have three additional temporary classrooms built and will extend an existing classroom space to add square footage for a science lab.
- Coventry has had a large cohort of primary school children working their way through the system due to historical increases in birth rates across the city. As a result, there will be a growth in secondary pupil numbers as larger primary cohorts move through to secondary provision in September 2023.
- The Local Authority has been working with The Coventry Secondary Headteacher Partnership to meet the need for additional places and has agreed a programme, which includes temporarily increasing pupil numbers and providing associated physical expansions at multiple schools across the city.
- The board agreed with the recommendation and was approved with a condition of an School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

**RD decision:** Approved with condition.

**Conflicts:** Tom Leverage.

**Further actions required:** To inform the school.



## Trust Changes

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to a new trust.

**Project:** Whether to approve the transfer of Idsall School, Shropshire, to Marches Academy Trust, Shropshire.

### **AB discussion:**

- Idsall School is a secondary Single Academy Trust in Shropshire with a capacity of 1300 pupils. The school was judged 'Inadequate' by Ofsted in September 2022.
- Marches Academy Trust is providing immediate support to Idsall School via the Trust School Improvement funding which is now complete. Both parties have indicated they would like to formalise this existing relationship.
- There is significant evidence that the Trust do have capacity to take Idsall School.
- The Trust are open to governance changes around Trustees and remain in conversation with Regions Group around this.
- The board discussed performance at the schools within Marches Academy Trust.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Sarah Finch.

**Further actions required:** To inform both Trusts.

**Project:** Whether to approve the transfer of Stoke Minster CofE Primary Academy, Stoke-on-Trent, to St Bart's Multi Academy Trust, Stoke-on-Trent.

### **AB discussion:**

- Stoke Minster CofE Primary Academy is a 3-11 school in Stoke on Trent which was rated 'Inadequate' in May 2022.
- The findings of the inspection highlighted concerns regarding leadership, teaching and the curriculum. Quality of education and leadership and management were judged Inadequate, and behaviour and attitudes, personal development and early years provision were rated 'Requires Improvement'. There were no concerns regarding safeguarding.
- St Bart's Multi Academy Trust is a well-established trust minority diocesan articles, located close to Stoke Minster. The trust's lead school is Belgrave St Bartholomew's Academy and is less than 4 miles away. Stoke Minster fits with St Bart's stated growth strategy of expanding further into Stoke-on-Trent and supports the Priority Education Investment Areas Trust Development Plan.
- St Bart's has begun working with St Chad's to provide immediate support to Stoke Minster including school improvement support consisting of secondments, staff training and an external performance review.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Mike Donoghue.

**Further actions required:** To inform both Trusts.

**Project:** Whether to approve the transfer of The Chantry School, Worcestershire, to Heart of Mercia, Herefordshire.

**AB discussion:**

- The Chantry School is an 11-6 Single Academy Trust in Worcester, judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted prior to its conversion in 2009.
- The school has been working closely with the Heart of Mercia having developed a new ECT programme for September 2022.
- Joining Heart of Mercia will benefit the Trust by strengthened expertise in the secondary phase, including support and collaborative working on the delivery of level qualifications at the trust's sixth form colleges.
- The Trust would be requested to submit quarterly management reports for the next 12 months.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform both Trusts.

**Project:** Whether to approve the transfer of John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form College, Herefordshire, to Heart of Mercia, Herefordshire.

**AB discussion:**

- John Kyrle is an 11-18 academy in Herefordshire, judged 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in March 2022.
- Governors had encouraged John Kyrle to join a Multi Academy Trust and Heart of Mercia is the preferred option.
- The board discussed governance within the school and support for the leadership team would improve this.
- The Trust has KS5 expertise which John Kyrle would need to improve its own KS5 provision.
- The Trust would be requested to submit quarterly management reports for the next 12 months.
- The board agreed with the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** To inform both Trusts.