



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 16 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

- 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

- N/A

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 and guest Dom Gilchrist from the No. 10 Delivery Unit to the meeting and discussed a range of topics around teacher recruitment, tutoring and teacher professional development.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Whinfield Primary School, Darlington, to convert and join The Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT), Darlington

AB discussion:

- Whinfield is an Ofsted rated 'Good' school. Whinfield have good working relations with EVAT, their vision and values closely align with those of the trust.
- EVAT is located within one mile of Whinfield and has specialist facilities that pupils at Whinfield are already benefitting from due to the existing working relationship between the schools.
- ESFA suggested a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) deployment for EVAT to assist with expansion of the trust.
- The board suggested that additional mainstream capacity would benefit the board to enable greater challenge.
- The board agreed that an experienced SRMA should be deployed to assist EVAT, and proposed strengthening the trust board to ensure sufficient challenge from the mainstream sector.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- School Resource Management Advisor deployment to be scheduled.
- Delivery Officer to inform school and EVAT of decision.
- Recommend strengthening trust board to ensure sufficient challenge from the mainstream sector.

Project: This is a proposal for Deaf Hill Primary School, County Durham and Kelloe Primary School, County Durham to convert and join Ad Astra Academy Trust, Hartlepool

AB discussion:

- Deaf Hill and Kelloe Primary Schools are both Ofsted rated 'Good'. The schools within Ad Astra are predominantly rated 'Good' with 2 rated as 'Requires Improvement'.
- The board discussed concerns surrounding a reduction in pupil numbers in both Deaf Hill and Kelloe, due to a low nursery provision intake following COVID-19.
- Both schools have good working relationships with the trust, with plans to start a Durham hub with further schools to join in the future.
- The board advised that an SRMA is deployed and recommended strengthening the trust board to provide clarity on the school improvement structure.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- School Resource Management Advisor deployment to be scheduled.
- Delivery Officer to inform the schools' and Ad Astra of decision.
- Strengthen trust board and provide clarity on the school improvement structure.

Project: Wark Church of England Primary School Northumberland and Green Lane Church of England Controlled Primary School, Durham to convert and join Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust, Durham

AB discussion:

- Wark Church of England Primary is a small rural school. The school is Ofsted rated 'Good'. Due to a reduced birth-rate in the area pupil numbers are low.
- Wark have expressed an interest in joining DNDLT to benefit from wider networks, in addition Wark can bring experience from a small school rural to other schools in the trust.
- Green Lane Church of England Controlled Primary School, is also a small rural school facing the similar challenges as Wark due to rurality. Green Lane is Ofsted rated 'Good'.
- DNDLT have advised they will provide marketing support to help promote both schools on joining the trust.
- The board discussed the risk of low pupil numbers and a declining birth-rate in rural areas of the North East.
- ESFA recommended an SRMA deployment to assist with the expansion of DNDLT.
- The board advised that an SRMA is deployed, and that DNDLT have an external governance review to support the next phase of development.
- They also recommended that the CEO is offered support from a CEO of a trust that has already experienced significant growth.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- School Resource Management Advisor deployment to be scheduled.
- Delivery Officer to inform the school and DNDLT of decision.
- Trust is offered an external review of governance and support for CEO in preparation for any further growth.

Project: Greenfield Community College, A Specialist Arts and Science School, County Durham, to convert and join Advance Learning Partnership (ALP), County Durham

AB discussion:

- Greenfield secondary school received an Ofsted rating of 'Requires Improvement' in 2017, with a follow up inspection in 2019 obtaining the same result. Since this time the school governors' have been searching for a trust to support them, and believe a permanent arrangement is necessary to obtain a future 'Good' rating.

- ALP consists of 7 primary academies and 7 secondary academies based in County Durham.
- The board discussed the risk of adding further pressure to ALP's capacity, however believe that ALP are able to expand following an external review in June 2022 which suggests that processes are in place to mitigate such risks.
- The board recommended approval of the project.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform school and ALP of decision.

Project: This is a proposal for Knop Law Primary, Milecastle Primary, Newburn Manor Primary, Simonside Primary, Throckley Primary, Waverley Primary, West Denton Primary and Westerhope Primary, Newcastle to convert and form a new multi academy trust, Outer West Learning Trust, Newcastle

AB discussion:

- This is a proposal for the following schools to convert and form a new multi academy trust, Outer West Learning Trust (OWL) in Newcastle: Knop Law Primary, Milecastle Primary, Newburn Manor Primary, Simonside Primary, Throckley Primary, Waverley Primary, West Denton Primary and Westerhope Primary, Newcastle.
- The 8 schools have worked closely together for the past 9 years as part of a foundation trust, which will be dissolved on creation of the new OWL Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The schools would like to create a MAT to strengthen partnerships throughout the 8 schools.
- All schools have been judged Ofsted 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- OWL propose to open in January 2024, using Throckley as the main site for the trust.
- The board discussed the different PFI and land arrangements at some schools that add complexity to the conversion process but that could be overcome.
- The ESFA recommended an SRMA deployment once the trust opens.
- The board recommended approval with the condition that an SRMA deployment would be taken up when the trust opens. It was also recommended that the new trust CEO would seek support from an experienced trust CEO to assist the transition.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: Colin Lofthouse (AB)

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform schools of decision.
- School Resource Management Advisor deployment to be scheduled upon opening of the trust.
- Recommendation for the trust CEO to seek mentor support.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Beacon of Light School (Single Academy Trust) Sunderland to transfer to The Laidlaw Schools Trust (Multi-academy Trust) Newcastle.

AB discussion:

- Beacon of Light was rated Ofsted 'Requires Improvement' in July 2019.
- Laidlaw is an 8 school trust, consisting of primary and secondary schools.
- Ofsted ratings are strong in Laidlaw, with the majority of schools rated as Ofsted 'Good' and 'Outstanding', with one school rated as 'Requires Improvement' and one yet to be inspected following conversion in 2022.
- The board highlighted the need to further understand the trust's changed leadership, school improvement strategy and plans to develop AP.
- The board recommended deferring the project so that further conversations with the trust could take place.

RD decision: Defer

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

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

Significant Change

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

Project: St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Ryhope Sunderland – significant change, new nursery provision and capacity expansion.

AB discussion:

- The board discussed the proposal to allow St Patrick's Catholic Primary School Ryhope, member of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET) to open a nursery provision for 3 year olds as part of a proposed physical expansion and rebuild of the school.
- In response to the trust's consultation, Sunderland Local Authority advised there was no requirement for an additional nursery in the area due to the declining birth-rate. No objections had been received from other providers and a very large majority of respondents were supportive.
- The board also considered choice in the area and the recent announcements to expand childcare.
- The RD decided to defer the decision pending further conversation.

RD decision: Defer

Conflicts: Dame Maura Regan (AB) was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required:

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

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Abingdon Primary School, Breckon Hill Primary School and Newham Bridge Primary School Middlesbrough, to convert and join Legacy Learning Trust, Middlesbrough

AB discussion:

- The 3 schools are rated Ofsted 'Good' and have been in discussions with Legacy Learning Trust (LLT) in recent months, in addition they have good existing working relationships with LLT.
- Abingdon has feeder links to Acklam Grange, the secondary school within LLT, and is keen to formalise its collaboration with the school. The pupil population of Abingdon is transient, Abingdon believe the school improvement support that can be gained from LLT will enable them to develop and improve, to continue to offer their pupils a good education.
- Breckon Hill is noted to require additional school improvement support and assistance. The school has been working with LLT for a number of years. LLT have provided a plan to assist with the current challenges in the school that will be implemented on joining the trust to support SEND strategies, safeguarding, and levels of attainment.
- Newham Bridge would like to join LLT as they believe becoming an academy will allow the school to continue to provide a good education to their pupils.
- The proposal for the 3 schools to join LLT link to the ambition for remaining Local Authority schools in Middlesbrough to convert to academies.
- The board discussed LLT's plans to appoint a fifth trust board member to support their expansion plans, and increase from 7 to 9 trustees.
- The board recommend an SRMA deployment to the trust, to assist with the expansion.
- The board recommended approval with the condition of deploying an experienced SRMA who can apply integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP), and with a strong recommendation to strengthen the trust board.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform school and trust of the decision.
- SRMA deployment, using an experienced SRMA that can apply ICFP.
- Strong recommendation to strengthen the trust board.