



Notes of Meeting: East of England

Date of meeting – 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

- 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
- Emily Williams, Deputy Director (DD)

Representations received

- Eight representations received about Ortu Hassenbrook and Corringham, **Thurrock**, 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 East of England Ofsted Regional Director was invited to the board to provide an update on Ofsted's work and to take questions and receive feedback from board members.

Sponsor Application

Project: Whether Buckden Church of England Primary Academy, Cambridgeshire, should become a sponsor.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Buckden Church of England Primary Academy has applied for sponsor status and to change from a single-academy trust (SAT) to a multi-academy trust (MAT) with support from the Diocese of Ely Educational Trust (DEET).
- The board heard the proposal to grant the trust sponsor status is due to the need for more Church of England MAT options for schools in the area to join, and for the new MAT, if approved, to sponsor a nearby school.
- The board asked questions about the trust's governance and finances and were reassured that it was going through a restructure and would be visited by a school resource management adviser (SRMA).
- The RD approved the application in principle with final approval subject to:
 - assurance on the governance arrangements and a governance review to take place.
 - a clear plan for when new schools are to join that will bring capacity to the trust.
 - an SRMA review to occur sooner than currently proposed.

RD decision: Approved with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the SAT and DEET of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: Whether to agree to increase the age range at Lawnside Academy, Central Bedfordshire, from a lower to a primary school.

AB discussion:

- The board heard the proposal to convert Lawnside Academy to a primary school, which would increase the age range from 5-9 to 5-11, in line with the LA's plans.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Significant Change

Project: Whether to agree to Fulbrook, Central Bedfordshire, continuing as an extended secondary school, to be reviewed in 5 years.

AB discussion:

- The board heard the school had previously been approved to extend their secondary school from a 9-13 age range to 9-16, with further transition to an 11-16 secondary school by the Regional Schools Commissioner at the time. The 9-16 arrangement was transitional and temporary.
- The board heard that the school has applied to remain as an extended 9-16 secondary school for a longer period than originally planned at the request of the LA to accommodate Year 5 pupils and Year 6 pupils pending the opening of primary school in the area.
- The RD and the board asked questions about the lack of a detailed plan and timetable from the LA on when the primary school would be opened as part of a forthcoming review.
- The RD chose to defer the proposal until further information and a clear plan is provided by the LA/school.

RD decision: Deferred.

Conflicts: None.

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

Significant Change

Project: Whether The Cranbourne Primary School in The Hoddesdon School Trust, Hertfordshire, should close its nursery provision, changing the age range from 3-11 to 4-11.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school has applied to close the nursery provision, changing the age range from 3-11 to 4-11.
- This was because of decreasing pupil numbers and a projected decrease in demands for the nursery provision in the coming years.
- The board discussed the implication of taking the nursery out of the local system of early years provision.
- The board noted the recent government announcement on early years.
- The RD decided to defer the proposal and requested the case be returned to the board following further discussions with the academy trust and the LA.

RD decision: Deferred.

Conflicts: None.

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

Significant Change

Project: Whether to approve an application to open a 12-place special resource provision unit for KS1 to KS2 at the Warren Dell Primary Academy, Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that The Agora Learning Partnership has applied, at the request of the LA, to expand the capacity of the school by way of opening a 12-place special resource provision unit for KS1 to KS2 at Warren Dell Primary Academy.
- The board heard that the LA has agreed to fund the expansion of the school.
- The RD felt that this would support the LA's SEN strategy.
- The RD felt that the proposal was strong, backed up by the data presented and a recent good Ofsted inspection judgement.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the trust and the LA of the decision.

Converter

Project: Whether Bentley St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School should join Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust, Essex.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school and the multi-academy trust (MAT) have been working collaboratively since 2014.
- The board heard that the school has found working with the MAT and its schools beneficial and welcome the ongoing support and strategic leadership this proposal would offer.
- The board heard that if approved, this conversion would support the MAT's long-term growth plan.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Trust Change

Project: Whether Ortu Hassenbrook and Corringham, Thurrock, should join the Gateway Learning Community, Thurrock.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that, following an inadequate Ofsted inspection judgement and pending transfer of Gable Hall School, the Ortu Federation MAT has resolved to voluntarily transfer its remaining two schools to another trust.
- The board heard that the Gateway Learning Community (GLC) is the Ortu Board's preferred sponsor. Reasons put forward for this were its priority of safeguarding, its school improvement plans and its broad and aspirational curriculum.
- The board heard concerns about the GLC's capacity and capability to provide the necessary support and raise standards at Ortu Hassenbrook and Corringham, while also improving outcomes at its existing schools.
- The board considered 8 representations received and felt that they had been satisfactorily addressed.
- The board asked questions about the GLC's school improvement strategy and supported the RD's decision to decline the proposal.

RD decision: Declined.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, the Ortu Trust board and the GLC of the decision.

Converter

Project: Whether to approve the application for Benhall St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Suffolk, to join All Saints School Trust, Suffolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school has applied to join the All-Saints School Trust (ASST) to overcome recent challenges of staff turnover and to stabilise and maintain the school.
- The board heard that the trust is an approved Diocesan MAT with primary schools cross Suffolk and has the capacity and leadership to help improve standards within the school.
- The RD felt that the governance and leadership of the trust is strong, and the board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Trust Change

Project: Whether to approve the application for Avocet Academy Trust to merge with East Anglian Schools Trust, Suffolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that both Suffolk-based trusts are strong and have mutually agreed that the 5 primary schools in Avocet Academy Trust (AAT) would transfer to the East Anglian Schools Trust (EAST).
- The board heard that the rationale for the restructure is to provide the support, financial capacity, collaboration, and share expertise to improve the schools.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Significant Change

Project: Whether King's Lynn Academy, Norfolk, should increase its pupil capacity by 100 places.

AB discussion:

- The board heard the proposal to expand the school's capacity to increase pupil admission numbers (PAN) from 6 to 8 forms of entry due to a growth in housing and pupils in the school's catchment areas.
- The board heard that Norfolk LA fully supports the proposed expansion of the King's Lynn Academy (KLA) and will fund the capital costs.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Brian Conway.

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

Trust Change

Project: Whether Taverham High School, Norfolk, should join Enrich Learning Trust, Norfolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard Taverham High School (single-academy trust) has applied to join Enrich Learning Trust (multi-academy trust) to increase collaboration with other trust schools, increase financial capacity, and share best practice to raise standards of the school.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Converter

Project: Whether Dereham Church of England Infant and Nursery, Norfolk, should join the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust, Norfolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school has applied to join the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies (DNEAT) due to aligned values and ethos and DNEAT's track record of supporting schools to preserve their Christian heritage.
- The board heard the school would benefit from the support of a large MAT in terms of its available resources, capacity, and improvement expertise.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposals.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Converter

Project: Whether Little Plumstead CofE Primary School, Norfolk, should join the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's Multi- Academy Trust, Norfolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school has applied to join the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's MAT as they have been receiving school improvement support from the MAT and the staff at the school have seen a positive impact from working in collaboration with other church schools.
- The board discussed the MAT's capacity to take on the school.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposal.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Brian Conway.

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

Converter

Project: Whether Acle St Edmund Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Norfolk, should join the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust, Norfolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school has applied to join the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's MAT as it aligns with the trust's Christian values and ethos.
- The board heard that the school has been making efforts to improve the quality of education provided and would benefit from the expertise of a MAT.
- The board discussed the MAT's capacity to take on the school.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve the proposals.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Brian Conway.

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

Decisions taken between AB meetings

List of decisions taken by the RD outside of AB meetings.

Project: 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.

Decision type: Significant change.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To close the sixth form at The Nicholas Hamond Academy, Academy Transformation Trust, Norfolk.

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.