



## Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

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

- Andrew Warren

### Advisory Board (AB) members

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

### Guests

- None.

### Apologies

- None.

### 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**

- Members reflected on the impact of the current industrial action taking place across the West Midlands. There were also discussions held on Ofsted visits and the current situation on vaping in schools.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** Whether to issue an Academy Order to Dunchurch Infant School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Diocese of Coventry MAT, Coventry.

### **AB discussion:**

- Dunchurch Infant School, Warwickshire, is an Ofsted rated 'good' school that has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to allow an effective programme of support to fulfil the school's needs.
- The Diocese of Coventry comprises of 19 schools and 1 pipeline. The Trust is supportive of bringing in both Dunchurch Infant and Dunchurch Boughton into the trust subject to due diligence.
- There is an established relationship between the Dunchurch federation and DMAT with the schools already having close feeder links to the trust's academies and sharing alignment of Christian vision and values.
- The school is financially viable with a nursery and wraparound care which brings in a strong income, and although financially viable, the department would not consider further growth until a conditional SRMA has been deployed.
- The board discussed school improvement, governance and performance data, reassurances were provided with most schools within the trust achieving above the average over the last year.
- The board supported the recommendation with the RD recommending that the school hold an External Review of Governance (ERG) and to arrange a School Management and Resource Advisor (SMRA) visit.

**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 an Academy Order to Dunchurch Boughton CofE Junior School, Warwickshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Diocese of Coventry MAT, Coventry.

### **AB discussion:**

- Dunchurch Boughton CofE Junior School, Warwickshire, is an Ofsted rated 'outstanding' school that has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to allow an effective programme of support to fulfil the school's needs.
- The Diocese of Coventry comprises of 19 schools and 1 pipeline. The trust is supportive of bringing in both Dunchurch Infant and Dunchurch Boughton into the trust subject to due diligence.

- There is an established relationship between the Dunchurch federation and DMAT with the schools already having close feeder links to the trust's academies and sharing alignment of Christian vision and values.
- The school is financially viable with a popular nursery and wraparound care which brings in a strong income, and although financially viable, the DfE would not consider further growth until a conditional SRMA has been deployed.
- The board discussed school improvement, governance and performance data, reassurances were provided with most schools within the trust achieving above the average over the last year.
- The board supported 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 an Academy Order to Moat Farm Infant School, Sandwell, to convert and join Stour Vale Academy Trust, Sandwell.

**AB discussion:**

- Moat Farm Infant School, Sandwell, is an Ofsted rated 'good' school that has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to add additional capacity to Stour Vale Academy Trust.
- Stour Vale comprises of 8 schools with another due to join soon. The conversion of the school will cement the strong pre-existing working relationship with the trust and the junior school which it shares a site with.
- The trust has a solid footprint in the Black Country with all their schools in the Sandwell and Dudley Local Authority sites, ensuring an understanding of the communities it serves as Education Investment Areas (EIA).
- Throughout the Pandemic, Moat Farm has benefitted from growing collaboration with the trust and found them to be supportive and a forward thinking environment for school leaders and a trust which shared their values and ethos.
- The board discussed the nursery provision, governance structure and capacity with the trust for expansion. Assurances were sought that the trust would have suitable support in place for growth.
- The board supported 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 an Academy Order to Albright Education Centre, Sandwell, to convert and join Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, Sandwell.

**AB discussion:**

- Albright Education Centre, Sandwell, is an Ofsted rated 'outstanding' school that has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to benefit from the trust's expertise and support offers.
- Shireland Collegiate consists of 9 schools and 3 pipeline projects, all of which are spread across Sandwell and Dudley. With Albright joining the trust they hope to increase capacity to meet the growing needs for Alternative Provision for Sandwell pupils.
- Albright joining the school is a key part of the trust's application for an AP Free School for Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) provision. The plan is to operate the two as a pair.
- As an 'Outstanding' school, Albright will be able to both draw from the trust and help provide additional strength and expertise in the Alternative provision sector.
- The board discussed the geographical location of the school and trust, raising conversation on capacity and the integration of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) into a more mainstream education setting.
- The board supported 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 an Academy Order to Fairhaven Primary School, Dudley, to convert and join St. Bartholomew's CE Multi Academy Trust, Wolverhampton.

**AB discussion:**

- Fairhaven Primary School, Dudley, is an Ofsted rated 'requires improvement' school that has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to enable school improvement and fit with the department's strategic plans.
- St Bartholomew's is a 7 school trust spread across Wolverhampton and Staffordshire LAs. The trust has a strong track record of school improvement and is currently working with Fairhaven, reviewing areas of development to offer specific support.
- Fairhaven has similar context and demographic to several schools within the trust, gaining an understanding of the Dudley area, the trust has plans to grow the Dudley hub over time.

- The transfer fits into the department's strategic plans for Dudley in ensuring accelerated school improvement for RI and Inadequate schools through joining a strong family of schools. Dudley is also an EIA and this transfer aligns with current departmental priorities.
- The board discussed governance structure, strategic dashboards and leadership capacity support, assurances were provided that the school have been working closely with the LA.
- The board supported the recommendation.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Amarjit Cheema.

**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 a physical expansion at Christopher Whitehead Language College, Worcestershire.

### **AB discussion:**

- Christopher Whitehead Language College, Worcestershire, is an Ofsted rated 'good' school that has proposed a significant change application for a physical expansion.
- The proposal is to build a Mainstream Autism Base (MAB) for 12 additional pupils on the existing school site. The base would open in September 2023.
- The MAB is being developed at request of the LA who require places for new autism cases in the area. They are supportive of this proposal and have granted funding to be provided.
- The addition of this unit, which will provide 12 commissioned places for students and will allow Worcestershire County Council to meet its existing concerns of insufficient places for autistic students in the local area.
- The board discussed finances for the MAB and English Baccalaureate (EBacc) within the provision.
- The board supported the recommendation with a recommendation from the RD of an ERG.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

**Project:** Penn Hall School

**Decision type:** Significant change – removal of boarding provision.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

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