



## Notes of Meeting: East of England

Date of meeting – 20 April 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

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

## 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 RD held a discussion on the Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review and invited the board members to give feedback on the plans.
- The Diocese of Ely were invited to the board to give an overview of their strategy and plans for the coming years.

## Sponsored Route

**Project: Whether Great Wilbraham CofE Primary School, Cambridgeshire, should join Buckden CofE Primary Academy, Cambridgeshire.**

### **AB discussion:**

- The RD approved Buckden CofE Primary Academy for sponsor status at a previous Advisory Board meeting on 23 March with conditions which have since been met.
- The board heard that Buckden CofE Primary Academy has the skills and experience to improve Great Wilbraham CofE Primary School.
- The ESFA supports the proposal and will work closely with the DfE and the trust.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Trust Change

**Project: Whether Burrowmoor Primary School, Cambridgeshire, should join The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust, Cambridgeshire.**

### **AB discussion:**

- The board heard that the school has been facing challenges and was judged Inadequate recently.
- The board heard the proposal to transfer the school to The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust, due to its good track record in improving schools and the proximity of its existing schools.
- The board discussed the trust's capacity to take on the school.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

**Project:** Whether to approve the Local Authority's recommendation of the sponsor for the new primary free school at Darwin Green, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire.

**Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the Local Authority of the RD's decision.

## Sponsored Route

**Project:** To consider sponsor options for The John Warner Academy, Hertfordshire, and the future of the Hoddesdon Schools Trust, Hertfordshire.

**AB discussion:**

- The board heard that the school has been facing challenges and has been judged Inadequate recently.
- A range of sponsor options were considered based on governance, education performance, leadership and financial position and Danes Educational Trust was identified as the preferred sponsor.
- The board felt that Danes Educational Trust would provide strong safeguarding support and raise standards at the school.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Josephine Valentine.

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

## Trust Change

**Project: Whether West Row Academy, Suffolk, should voluntarily transfer from Eastern MAT, Norfolk, to join Unity Schools Partnership, Suffolk.**

### **AB discussion:**

- The board heard that the school has been judged Requires Improvement in 2017 and its rating has not improved since then following a recent Ofsted inspection in 2022.
- The board heard the concerns about the school's curriculum delivery, pupil behaviour and teaching quality.
- The RD felt that Unity Schools Partnership would raise standards at the school due to the trust's strong track record.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Tim Coulson.

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

## Significant Change

**Project: Whether to approve application to change designation of the SEN Unit at Woodhall Primary School, Suffolk.**

### **Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Tim Coulson.

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

## Significant Change

**Project: Whether to approve application to set up a satellite site for specialist provision and an assessment nursery at The Bridge Special School, Suffolk.**

### **AB discussion:**

- The board heard that Unity Schools Partnership have applied to establish a satellite site for the Bridge School for additional capacity and to open a nursery, at the request of the Suffolk Country Council.
- The RD approved the application in principle with final approval subject to assurances and clarity on:
  - the consultation process and its responses.
  - the education plan for post-16 pupils.
  - the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

**RD decision:** Approved with conditions.

**Conflicts:** Tim Coulson.

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

## Trust Change

**Project: Whether Heart Academies Trust, Bedford, and ACES Academy Trust, Cambridgeshire, should merge to form a new academy trust.**

### **AB discussion:**

- The board heard that the trusts share alignment in vision and values and wish to build a partnership by merging.
- The merger would allow the trusts to share best practice to raise standards, enhance collaboration, provide greater financial security, and ensure long-term viability of the trust and 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 the trusts of the decision.

## Significant Change

**Project: Whether to increase the capacity at Wixams Tree Primary, Bedford, from 420 to 630.**

**AB discussion:**

- The board heard that there is a demand for additional primary places in the Wixams planning area, creating a need for the school's capacity to increase.
- The board discussed the school's requires improvement Ofsted judgement and long-term viability.
- The board felt that the school would benefit from joining a bigger trust.
- The RD noted the immediate demand for primary places in the area.
- The RD approved the application in principle with final approval subject to the trust to continue with its plans to merge into a bigger trust.

**RD decision:** Approved with conditions.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Significant Change

**Project: To consider a retrospective application for a 10-place specialist resource provision for ASD pupils in The Rushmere Park Academy, Central Bedfordshire.**

**Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to 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:** To consider a retrospective application for a 10-place specialist resource provision for ASD pupils in The Vale Academy, Central Bedfordshire.

**Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Trust Change

**Project:** Whether Castledon Special School (Single-academy trust) should transfer to Zenith Multi-Academy Trust, Essex.

**AB discussion:**

- The board heard the proposal for Castledon Special School to transfer to Zenith Multi-Academy as they share the same values, vision and ethos and is open to supporting further growth with other special schools.
- The proposal would provide opportunity for a cohesive education for pupils across all the trust's schools, allowing pupils from special schools and mainstream schools to learn together.
- The board felt that Castledon Special School would bring SEND expertise to the Zenith Multi-Academy Trust.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform Castledon Special School and Zenith Multi-Academy Trust of the decision.



## Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

**Project: Whether to approve sponsor match for a free school on the Limebrook Way development, Essex.**

**Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

**Project: Whether to approve sponsor match for a free school on the Dry Street development, Essex.**

**Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Significant Change

**Project: Whether to approve the application to expand the capacity of Hillhouse CofE Primary School, Essex, from a 45 to 60 PAN from September 2023.**

**AB discussion:**

- The board heard the proposal to expand the capacity of the school due to growing demands for school places in this part of Essex.
- The board discussed the wider performance and governance of the trust.
- The RD noted the demand for primary places in the area and this school recently being judged Good.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Converter

### **Project: Whether Great Bentley Primary School, Essex, should join South Suffolk Learning Trust, Suffolk.**

#### **Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Sarah Skinner.

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

## Converter

### **Project: Whether Frinton-On-Sea Primary School, Essex, should join the South Suffolk Learning Trust, Suffolk.**

#### **Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Sarah Skinner.

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

## Converter

### **Project: Whether Elmstead Primary School, Essex, should join South Suffolk Primary School, Suffolk.**

#### **Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Sarah Skinner.

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

## Converter

**Project: Whether St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Marks Tey, Essex, should convert and join Canonium Learning Trust, Essex, in September 2023.**

### **AB discussion:**

- The board heard that the school is looking to join an established trust to access greater resources in the interests of sustaining a good quality education for local children.
- The board heard the proposal for the school to join Canonium Learning Trust due to its capacity, shared ethos and geography.
- The board discussed the school's size and current pupil capacity.
- The RD felt that this proposal would benefit pupils at the school.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Converter

**Project: Whether Earsham CEVA Primary School, Norfolk, should join the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust, Norfolk.**

### **Project considered.**

- The board members considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## Sponsor Application

**Project: Whether The Wherry School Trust, Norfolk, should be granted sponsor status.**

**AB discussion:**

- The board heard that the school is seeking sponsor status to share its expertise more widely and grow by taking on more schools.
- There is a need for more special provision in Norfolk and The Wherry School Trust may be a suitable sponsor for future special free schools, if approved.
- The board felt that the proposal would be a positive development for the county, by offering more MAT options for special schools.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Brian Conway.

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

## Sponsored Route

**Project: To consider sponsor options for school A, Norfolk.**

**AB discussion:**

- The RD agreed to consider sponsor options for the school.
- The board were presented with a range of sponsor options and advised on the leading trusts to focus on.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** Tim Coulson.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to bring the project to the Advisory Board meeting on 25 May with the school and a preferred sponsor named.

## Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

**Project: Whether to approve the retrospective significant change by SENDAT, Suffolk, to expand the capacity of Priory School, Suffolk, to accommodate additional pupils.**

**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.

**Project: Whether Cranbourne Primary, Hoddesdon School Trust, Hertfordshire, should close its nursery.**

**Decision type:** Significant Change.

**RD decision:** Approved.

**Conflicts:** None.

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