



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 18 May 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)
- Elizabeth Horne (AB)
- Jo Heaton (AB)
- Robert Tarn (AB)

Apologies

- Colin Lofthouse (AB)
- Anita Bath (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- None

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

RD welcomed board members to the meeting.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Columbia Grange School, Sunderland to convert and join The Oak Learning Trust (OLT).

AB discussion:

- Columbia Grange School was judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in March 2011, the school retained its 'Outstanding' in March 2020 following a short inspection.
- The board was advised that Columbia Grange has been working with OLT for some time, the trust is very close to Columbia Grange geographically and they would like to formalise their existing partnership by joining OLT.
- The board was informed that Columbia Grange has an established outreach programme that they are keen to develop alongside OLT.
- OLT is a small trust of three primary schools, with 1000 pupils on role. All three schools are Ofsted 'Good'.
- Given the current economic pressures and the absence of a business manager at Columbia Grange, SFSO have recommended that an SRMA is deployed.
- The board discussed the trusts future growth plans and how this relates to the Trust Development Statements for Sunderland.
- The board challenged the current trust governance structure and agreed that the number of members should be increased in line with DfE preference. The board agreed that the trust should review its governance including skills gap and incorporate some SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) experience onto the trust board.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that a SRMA is deployed, the trust reviews its governance structure, considers their future growth strategy, and agrees to some peer-to-peer support.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Beacon of Light School, Sunderland to transfer to The Laidlaw Schools Trust, Newcastle.

AB discussion:

- This proposal was previously presented at Advisory Board on 16 March 2023, the RD was unable to approve the transfer and therefore requested additional information regarding the trust's leadership structure, school improvement strategy and plans to develop alternative provision (AP).
- The board discussed the current leadership arrangements at the trust and raised concern regarding accountability within this structure.
- The board discussed the trusts school improvement strategy, they were advised that the trust will deliver different levels of support depending on the school's needs. The board was advised the school improvement team are already in place, and the secondary SI position is soon to be filled.
- The board discussed the trusts plans for alternative provision. Given Beacon of Lights current 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgement the board was concerned about the additional challenges this could place on the trust.
- The board agreed with the RD to defer this decision and escalate for Director General's decision.

RD decision: Defer and escalate for Director General's decision.

Conflicts: None

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

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Hummersknott Academy, Darlington to transfer to Advanced Learning Partnership (ALP)

AB discussion:

- Hummersknott Academy was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in September 2021.
- The board was advised that Hummersknott has already been working collaboratively with ALP, this proposal will formalise links that have already been formed.
- The board was informed that ALP is a strong trust with a history of supporting and improving schools.
- The board discussed ALPs growth strategy and was advised that ALP plans to move beyond their Durham borders, but within a sensible geographic reach.
- The board discussed the trust's governance structure and agreed that the trust should consider appointing some additional finance expertise to the board.
- The board enquired whether a decision has been made regarding the destination of the second academy, which forms part of this 2 school MAT. The RD confirmed that discussions are still ongoing with potential stakeholders, however, she reassured the board that the trusts involved will work together to ensure a smooth transition.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that ALP provide an update on how they plan to strengthen their trust board skill set.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Green Lane Academy, Middlesbrough to transfer to The Legacy Learning Trust (TLLT)

AB discussion:

- The board was advised that Green Lane Academy converted to academy status in April 2014, and has operated as a SAT (Single Academy Trust) ever since.
- Green Lane Academy was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in September 2013, the school retained its 'Good' in February 2022 following a short inspection.
- The board discussed the recently published trust development statement for Middlesbrough, they were advised that this proposal will help towards the consolidation of existing small trusts in the area.
- The board was advised that Green Lane would like to formalise working with TLLT, they already have a positive working relationship with leaders through existing links with TLLT's secondary school.
- The board was advised that performance is relatively strong at Green Lane and would therefore bring additional capacity to the trust.
- The board was informed that TLLT is currently a two school MAT, a further 3 schools were approved to join the trust in March 2023.
- The board was advised that an SRMA deployment is now underway at the trust, the board agreed that this would help the trust to identify efficiencies particularly as it begins to grow.
- The board supported the RD's recommendation for the CEO, CFO and chair to undertake some peer mentoring from experienced colleagues of a larger trust.
- The board was advised that the TLLT has strengthened its trust board since its visit to Advisory Board in March 2023. A further member has been appointed and the trust has identified 2 further trustees.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that the CEO, CFO and chair undertake some peer mentoring.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Jo Heaton was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

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

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Priors Mill CofE Primary School, Stockton on Tees

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/05/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Collierley Nursery and Primary School, Durham

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/06/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Vane Road Primary School, Durham

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/06/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Wellfield School, Durham

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/06/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Woodham Burn Community Primary School, Durham

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/06/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Harrow Gate Academy, Stockton on Tees

Decision type: Significant Change – increase in age range.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Annfield Plain Infant School, County Durham

Decision type: Significant Change – increase in age range to add nursery provision.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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