



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 15 June 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)
- Jo Heaton (AB)
- Anita Bath (AB)
- Colin Lofthouse (AB)

Apologies

- Robert Tarn (AB)
- Elizabeth Horne (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 and invited them to share their views on current challenges including managing attendance within schools.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Lingdale Primary School, Redcar & Cleveland to convert and join Lingfield Education Trust (LET)

AB discussion:

- Lingdale Primary School was last inspected in September 2021, the school received consecutive 'Require Improvement' judgements in its last two inspections.
- Performance at Lingdale is below average. The board agreed, that by joining a strong MAT, Lingdale will have the necessary school improvement support to help improve its educational performance.
- The board was advised that following its last Ofsted inspection, Lingdale entered into a trust partnership agreement with LET.
- Lingdale believe that joining LET will enable them to continue their improvement journey and has therefore resolved to join LET.
- The board was advised that LET is a primary trust consisting of 11 academies, the trust has a strong track record of supporting challenging schools and improving outcomes.
- The board was informed that LET has a strategic plan to grow and move to a geographical hub model.
- The board agreed that whilst this is a strong trust, they do have several growth projects planned. The board was satisfied that the department are working closely with the trust and will ensure the proposed growth is managed carefully.
- The board was advised that LET have accepted a SRMA deployment.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal.

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: Skerne Park Academy, Darlington to transfer to Advanced Learning Partnership (ALP), Durham.

AB discussion:

- Skerne Park Academy was last inspected in February 2022, the academy received consecutive 'Require Improvement' judgements in its last two inspections.
- The board was informed that Skerne Park Academy joined Hummersknott Academy Trust in February 2013 forming a two school MAT.
- The board was advised that Skerne Park feeds into Hummersknott Academy, which has already been approved to join ALP.
- Performance at Skerne Park is below average. The board agreed, that by joining a strong MAT, Skerne Park will have the necessary school improvement support to help improve its educational performance.
- ALP is already providing Skerne Park with ongoing school improvement support through the Trust School Improvement (TSI) programme. ALP are confident that if Skerne Park joins their trust, they will be able to see improvements quickly.
- The board was informed that ALP is a strong trust with a history of supporting schools and improving outcomes at secondary level.
- ALP set up its primary arm in 2018 and has an experienced school improvement team in place. The board was advised that most of ALPs primary schools except for one, are recent additions judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- If approved the transfer of both Skerne Park and Hummersknott Academy will provide ALP with an opportunity to develop a Darlington hub which is in line with the strategic plan outlined in Darlington's Trust Development Statement.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Spring Gardens Primary School, Hadrian Park Primary School, Battle Hill Primary School, Burradon Community Park School and Denbigh Community Primary School, North Tyneside to convert and form Centurion Multi Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Denbigh Community Primary was judged 'Outstanding' in October 2013, Spring Gardens was judged 'Require Improvement' in December 2021 and the remaining three schools were judged by Ofsted to be 'Good'.
- The board was advised that the five schools would like to strengthen their existing partnerships and formalise collaboration by forming a new multi-academy trust.
- The board was advised that pupil numbers are forecasted to fall in Spring Gardens and Battle Hill, the trust has confirmed that a marketing strategy is already underway to try and attract pupils. The trust is also working with the community to establish family needs, with a view of offering some additional services.
- The board discussed the proposed trusts financial position and was informed that they would welcome an SRMA.
- The board discussed school performance data and the strategy for school improvement including how Spring Gardens will be supported.
- The board was satisfied that the recruitment process for the CEO & CFO will be undertaken shortly; however, advised the proposed trust should ensure they are clear about the process to be undertaken. The board recommended formal mentoring support from an established trust for both the CEO and CFO.
- The board discussed the trust's proposed governance structure and agreed that the trust should consider appointing some additional education expertise to their trustee board.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that CEO/CFO mentoring is arranged, additional education experience is appointed to the board of trustees and a SRMA is deployed upon opening.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for John Spence Community High School, North Tyneside and The Duchess Community High School, Northumberland to convert and join Pele Trust.

AB discussion:

- John Spence was judged 'Good' in November 2017 and Duchess was judged 'Requires Improvement' in October 2021. Duchess retained its 'Requires Improvement' in July 2022 following a short inspection, however, Ofsted recognised that it is taking effective action towards becoming a good school.
- The board was advised that collaborative working between leaders in Pele, Duchess and John Spence has already started.
- The board discussed the schools' performance data and was advised that if approved Pele already have a plan in place to ensure high quality outcomes.
- Pele Trust currently consists of six schools from the Northumberland area, five primary and one secondary. The board was informed that Pele's growth plan is to add capacity at secondary level with additional schools working alongside Ponteland High School.
- The board discussed the geographic proximity and was advised that the trust would like to form a hub in Alnwick.
- The board discussed the trusts current school improvement (SI) offer and agreed that the SI leadership arrangements would not be sustainable long term. The board suggested the trust will need to consider additional capacity.
- The board discussed the financial health of both schools and was advised that if this decision was approved, Pele trust would accept an SRMA deployment.
- The board discussed Pele's current governance structure. The board suggested the trust appoints some additional trustees to be in line with DfE preference and broaden the variety of skills.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that a SRMA is deployed, and the trust should review its trust board to ensure there is a balance of knowledge and expertise and considers increasing the number of trustees to be in line with DfE preference.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to approving significant changes to academies.

Project: This is a significant change application from Thomas Bewick School to increase the number of pupils and the physical capacity of the school to accommodate more children with autism.

AB discussion:

- Thomas Bewick School is a special school for children and young people with autism, whose needs can be best met within autism specific environment.
- The school converted and joined Prosper Learning Trust in April 2019. Prior to conversion the school was judged 'Good' by Ofsted and maintained a 'Good' following a short inspection in 2016.
- The board was advised that Thomas Bewick is one of the main providers of support in Newcastle for children with autism, however current accommodation available at Thomas Bewick will be insufficient to meet future needs.
- Following a recent capacity review, opportunities were identified to enhance the use of space within the existing premises. The proposed additional accommodation will increase the school's capacity at their West Denton Way site.
- The board was informed that the trust has been working closely with Newcastle LA on this proposal.
- Formal consultation has been carried out and the trust has responded to any issues raised.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Northumberland

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/07/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Holy Family Catholic Primary School, **Darlington**

Decision type: Significant Change – increase in age range.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Maura Regan did not receive papers for this item.

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: St Edwards Catholic Primary School, **Middlesbrough**

Decision type: Significant Change – increase in physical capacity.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Projects listed on the published draft agenda but were removed before the meeting

List of projects that were on the published agenda but not discussed at the meeting.

Converter Academy Orders

St Helen Auckland Community Primary School, Durham to join Eden Learning Trust

We agreed to reschedule to July Advisory Board.