



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 22 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

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

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

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

- West Midlands Regions Group colleagues delivered a presentation to the AB members on the South sub-region. This included the South context, academies and trusts overview, academisation rate and strategic priorities for all LAs.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss an Academy Order to Mary Howard CofE (VC) Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Mary Howard CofE (VC) Primary School, Staffordshire is an Ofsted “Outstanding” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust consists of 4 academies across the West Midlands.
- There is a shared ethos and vision for the Trust and it was highlighted this would be a good opportunity for the trust to grow and learn from each other.
- The board discussed the demographics and school improvement capacity whilst considering recommendations to help improve the proposal.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve with the recommendation of an SRMA.

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: To discuss an Academy Order to St Andrew's CofE (C) Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- St Andrew’s CofE (C) Primary School, Staffordshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust consists of 4 academies across the West Midlands.
- There is a shared ethos and vision for the Trust and it was highlighted this would be a good opportunity for the trust to grow and learn from each other.
- The board discussed the demographics and school improvement capacity whilst considering recommendations to help improve the proposal.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve with the recommendation of an SRMA.

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: To discuss an Academy Order to Hanley St Luke's CofE Aided Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, to convert and become an academy and join Three Spires Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- St Hanley and St Luke's CofE Aided Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent is an Ofsted "Good" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to formalise their relationship with the trust who have benefited the school in terms of leadership and curriculum support.
- The Three Spires Trust consists of 4 academies across Staffordshire and Wolverhampton. The school wishes to join the Trust having been in partnership for the past two years.
- The board discussed school improvement and considered recommendations to help improve the proposal and allow for sustained improved outcomes.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Mike Donoghue – was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss an Academy Order to Thorns Primary School, Dudley, to convert and become an academy and join Excelsior Multi Academy Trust, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Thorns Primary School, Dudley is an Ofsted "Requires Improvement" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust for support on its curriculum development and wider leadership.
- Excelsior Multi Academy Trust consists of 6 academies across Birmingham.
- The sponsor is a good match for the school as the trust is a primary only MAT with a good track record for school improvement and has strong governance and leadership.
- The board discussed the school improvement capacity.
- 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.

Sponsored Route:

Points discussed in relation to a school's sponsor status.

Project: To discuss a sponsor for Crowmoor Primary School, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Crowmoor Primary School, Shropshire, is an Ofsted rated "Inadequate" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- SHINE Academies consists of 4 schools placed across Wolverhampton and Walsall.
- SHINE Academies was identified as a strong primary sponsor trust with an interest in growing into other local authorities. SHINE has also completed TSI support for Crowmoor, meaning they have existing knowledge of the school's challenges and a detailed support plan in place.
- The board discussed school improvement and governance.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve with the recommendation of an SRMA.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School and Sponsor.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes application(s).

Project: To discuss a satellite expansion at Belgrave St Bartholomew's Academy, Stoke-on-Trent.

AB discussion:

- Belgrave St Bartholomew's Academy, Stoke-on-Trent, is an Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' from March 2017. The Academy wish to expand the Early Years SEN units for a 15 place SEN unit.
- St Bart's have been working with Stoke-on-Trent LA for a number of years to look at supporting the LA with the high needs deficit budget position and the need for additional SEND places in the city.
- There is huge demand within Stoke to create additional special school places to minimise the amount of children being educated out of city or in independent provision at considerable cost.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: To discuss an expansion of a specialist resourced provision at Studley Infant's School, Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Studley Infant's School, Warwickshire has not yet been inspected by Ofsted. It's predecessor was an Ofsted rated 'Good' in May 2013 and remained 'Good' in July 2017. The Academy wish to increase its SEN High Needs places from 8 to 12.
- The school has received at least 5 extra SEN applications for Reception places, but currently there are no spaces available.
- There is no other Communication and Interaction provision for infant age children in the Central and South Warwickshire area and this increase will allow more children with Communication and Interaction needs to access an appropriate provision.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Tom Leverage - was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss St Giles' and St George's Church of England Academy, Staffordshire, to transfer to Three Spires Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- St Giles' and St George's Church of England Academy, Staffordshire is a Single Academy Trust that is on Church of England Voluntary Controlled (VC) articles. This change forms part of the Diocese of Lichfield academisation and hub strategy.
- The Three Spires Trust consists of 4 academies across Staffordshire and Wolverhampton. This SAT has been an associate member of Three Spires Trust since September 2022 and would like to formalise this relationship.
- Forming a two school hub in Stoke-on-Trent strengthens each individual proposal - and is the start of a proposed hub in the city (which supports the Stoke-on-Trent Trust Development Statement).
- The board discussed school improvement and considered recommendations to help improve the proposal and allow for sustained improved outcomes.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Mike Donoghue - was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss Greywood Multi-Schools, Staffordshire to transfer to Primitas Learning Partnership, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Greywood Multi Schools, Staffordshire is a cross-phase MAT. The MAT to MAT merger will form an 7-school mixed phase MAT at Primitas Learning Partnership with all schools located in the Burntwood/Lichfield/Rugeley area.
- Primitas Learning Partnership consists of 4 academies across Staffordshire.
- Primitas Learning Partnership and Greywood Multi-Schools Trust are two like-minded MATs, in close geographical proximity of each other, with a complimentary educational philosophy and compatible vision and values.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss Astwood Bank Primary School, Worcestershire, to transfer to Shires Multi Academy Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Astwood Bank Primary School, Worcestershire is a Single Academy Trust. Astwood Bank Primary School will add capacity to the trust and support development of the trust offer.
- Shires Multi Academy Trust consists of 4 academies across Worcestershire and Warwickshire.
- Astwood Bank Primary School will benefit from trust support with business, finance, and school improvement processes.
- Ridgeway Academy joined in September 2022 as a sponsored academy. Astwood Bank Primary School is the main feeder school for Ridgeway. Supporting the transition of pupils to Ridgeway will help to increase pupil numbers and school improvement at Ridgeway.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss Midland Academies Trust, Warwickshire, to transfer to United Learning Trust, Peterborough

AB discussion:

- Midland Academies Trust, Warwickshire consists of four secondary (11-16) schools across North Warwickshire and Leicestershire. Midlands Academies Trust advised that its strong preference was for a full trust transfer all four MAT schools.
- ULT comprises of 33 primaries, 43 secondaries and 4 all through schools, including 3 open free schools (2 secondary and 1 all-through). 50 of the trust's academies are sponsor-led. It is the country's largest multi academy trust.
- United Learning Trust has significant resources at its disposal which will be deployed to support all four Midland Academies Trust schools.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Mo Brennan - was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Free School Presumption

Project: To discuss and consider the sponsor for the new Free School in Warwickshire.

AB discussion:

- Myton Gardens Primary School will be located adjacent to the new Myton Green housing development that is a part of the larger 4,500 home urban extension currently building out to the South of Leamington/Warwick. The school would plan to open in September 2024.
- Myton Gardens will provide 420 primary places (2 form entry) for children aged 4-11. The new school will include a Specialist Resource Provision providing 8-14 places dependent on identified local area need.
- Stowe Valley Multi Academy Trust comprises of 3 secondaries and 6 primaries and is due to open its first free school, all through presumption Oakley School, in September 2023. Eight schools in the trust are in South Warwickshire and one in West Northamptonshire.
- Warwickshire County Council are supportive of Stowe Valley Multi Academy Trust as the strongest bidder and, having also worked closely with the trust on the Oakley School presumption project.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the LA and Trust.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: St Ambrose Catholic Primary.

Decision type: Significant Change – Change of lower age limit of up to 2 years

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Myton School.

Decision type: Significant Change – Expansion of physical capacity.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

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

Project: None.

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