



## Notes of Meeting: South East Regions Group

**Thursday 29 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

- Dame Kate Dethridge

### Advisory Board (AB) members

- Sarah Bennett
- Dame Yasmin Bevan
- Sarah Brown
- Sir Andrew Carter
- Stuart Gardner
- Paul James
- Claire Lowe
- Sue Samson MBE

### Apologies

- Paul Schofield, Deputy Director, South East Regions Group

### DfE senior civil servants

- Helen Brayley-Morris, Deputy Director, South East Regions Group

### Representations received

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

## General discussion

- Conflicts of interest were confirmed for Sir Andrew Carter and Claire Lowe. These are indicated against the projects to which they relate. These members were not present for the items when discussed and were not sent the papers for these items.

## Kent, Medway and Surrey Sub-Region

### Converter Academy Order

**Project:** To discuss the application from Ditton Church of England Junior School, **Kent**, to convert and join Aletheia Academies Trust.

**AB discussion:**

- The school is part of the Diocese of Rochester and is supported by the Parochial Church Council of St Peter's.
- The department received letters of consent for the proposed conversion from both bodies.
- The school has been working closely with Aletheia Academies Trust since April 2022.
- AB members discussed the governance structure of Aletheia Academies Trust.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority, trust and diocese of RD decision.

### Converter Academy Order

**Project:** To discuss the application from Luton Primary School, **Medway**, to convert and join Rivermead Inclusive Trust.

**AB discussion:**

- Luton Primary School is a 3-form entry, mixed 4-11 school with 644 pupils currently on roll. The school is currently judged outstanding.
- AB members discussed the capacity this would give Rivermead Inclusive Trust.
- AB members discussed the trust's finances, and the need for a school improvement strategy if the trust's growth is to continue.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority and trust of RD decision.

## Significant Changes

**Project:** To discuss the application from Banstead Infant School, Surrey, to lower the age range to include nursery provision.

**Project:** To discuss the application from The Vale Primary School, Surrey, to lower the age range to include nursery provision.

**Project:** To discuss the application from Windmill Primary School, Surrey, to lower the age range to include nursery provision.

### **AB discussion:**

- All the three schools are proposing to establish a nursery, changing the lower age limit by two years.
- AB members discussed the consultation responses received from the three schools. It was noted the local MP was in agreement for these to go ahead.
- AB members considered that the demand for places will increase from April 2024 as the extension to the early years funded entitlement is phased in.
- AB members discussed the trust's finances and governance structure.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform schools of the RD decision.

## Significant Change

**Project:** To discuss the application from St Matthew's CofE Primary School, Surrey, to increase numbers in the SEN provision unit.

**AB discussion:**

- This proposal is to expand capacity of the school's SEN unit by 13 KS1 places, (currently 16 KS2 places) to 29 places in total.
- AB members discussed the performance results of St Matthew's CofE Primary School and wanted assurance the risks had been mitigated for children currently within the school.
- AB members discussed the growth of the trust and highlighted the need to ensure sustainable capacity.
- AB members discussed the timescales of building the temporary accommodation structure and the risks these could impose.
- AB members discussed the governance structure of the trust specifically the number of members and sought clarity on the skills of the trust board.

**RD decision:** Approve with conditions:

- Trust to provide the department with the biographies of the trustees.
- Project lead to discuss the number of members within the trust.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform school, trust and diocese of RD decision.

## Significant Change

**Project:** To discuss the application from Woking High School (SAT), Surrey, to increase numbers in the SEN provision.

**AB discussion:**

- Woking High School is proposing to expand its premises to accommodate an expanded SEN unit for visually impaired pupils increasing the numbers by 20 pupils, from 9 to 29, by 2025/26.
- AB members discussed the governance structure of the SAT and whether they had plans to grow.
- AB members sought further assurances regarding the build project and the timescales of this being completed in time.

**RD decision:** Approve with conditions:

- Provide the department with information about the skill sets of the trustees.
- Look to reduce the overall number of trustees and to bring the trust board in line with DfE preferences as set out in the Governance Handbook.
- Trust board to consider joining a MAT, or whether there is a case for Woking High to form a MAT.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school of the RD decision.

## Converter Academy Order

**Project:** To discuss the application from Crondall Primary School, Hampshire, to convert and join Weydon MAT.

**AB discussion:**

- Crondall is a one-form entry primary school applying to be the first primary school to join Weydon MAT.
- AB members discussed the trust's finances and governance structure, including the expertise of the trust board.
- AB members discussed that a school improvement strategy in respect of Crondall Primary would be beneficial but was not set as a condition for the approval.
- AB members acknowledged that this would improve pupil numbers and capacity for the school.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Sir Andrew Carter.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority and trust of RD decision.

## Converter Academy Order

**Project:** To discuss the application from Lavant CofE Primary School, **West Sussex**, to convert and join Bishop Luffa Learning Partnership.

**AB discussion:**

- Lavant CofE Primary School is a good performing primary school based just to the north of Chichester. It was rated Good by Ofsted in 2018.
- AB members noted that an external review of governance would be beneficial given the trust's expected future growth.
- AB members discussed the trust's finances and whether they would benefit from a School Resource Management Adviser (SRMA) to provide peer-to-peer advice to the school/trust.

**RD decision:** Approve with condition:

- Trust to arrange an external review of governance.
- Trust to explore SRMA before further growth is considered.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority, trust and diocese of RD decision.

## Sponsored Route:

**Project:** To discuss sponsor options for Manor Field Primary School, **West Sussex**.

**AB discussion:**

- Manor Field Primary School is a community primary school for pupils ages 4 to 11.
- AB members were presented with a number of sponsor options for discussion and consideration, including Aurora Academies Trust, Durrington MAT, South Downs Education Trust and the University of Brighton Academies Trust.
- AB members discussed the need to consider this year's KS2 performance data and school improvement plans before making a final decision on the most suitable sponsor match.

**RD decision:** Defer.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school and local authority of RD decision.

## Decisions escalated

**Project:** The request to revoke the Academy Order at St Andrew's CofE High School, **West Sussex**.

**AB discussion:**

- AB members were presented with the school's request to revoke the academy order following Ofsted's most recent inspection of the school.
- The diocese and local authority are both supportive of the revocation request.
- AB members were informed the final decision lay with the minister.
- The Regional Director was minded to support the revocation request to the minister.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Submission to be presented to the minister for decision.

## Significant Change

**Project:** To discuss the application by Russell Education Trust for King's School, **Brighton and Hove**, to change their faith designation to a Church of England School.

**AB discussion:**

- King's School are proposing that the school's religious designation is changed from 'Christian' to 'Church of England'.
- AB members discussed the admissions policy and sought confirmation as to whether this would change anything for the children entering the school.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform school and trust of the RD decision.

## West Sub-Region

### Converter Academy Order

**Project:** To discuss the application from Little Chalfont Primary School, Buckinghamshire, to convert and join Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust.

**AB discussion:**

- Little Chalfont Primary School is a one-form entry community primary with a 30-place nursery based in Amersham.
- AB members discussed the trust's growth strategy, with the RD seeking assurance that the trust's capacity for further growth was monitored.
- AB members discussed the finances of the trust, and the need for educational expertise on the trust board.

**RD decision:** Approve with conditions:

- Trust to seek further educational expertise on the trust board.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority and trust of RD decision.

### Converter Academy Order

**Project:** To discuss the application from St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Bracknell Forest, to convert and join the Keys Academy Trust.

**AB discussion:**

- St Michael's is a one-form entry primary school based in Sandhurst, Bracknell. The school is a Church of England VA Primary School and part of the Diocese of Oxford.
- The AB members discussed the performance of the schools currently within Keys Academy Trust.
- AB members discussed the governance structure of the trust.
- AB members discussed the school improvement strategy presented and indicated a need for a fuller plan, however this was not made a condition of the approval.
- AB members discussed the growth of the trust and what support could be offered to them.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority, trust and diocese of RD decision.



## Converter Academy Order

**Project:** To discuss the application from Birch Hill Primary School, **Bracknell Forest**, to convert and join Maiden Erlegh Trust.

**AB discussion:**

- Birch Hill Primary School is a two-form entry school, from Reception to Y6, plus a 27-place nursery.
- AB members discussed the finances of Maiden Erlegh Trust.
- AB members reviewed the governance structure and skill set of the trust and expressed the need for primary expertise on the board.

**RD decision:** Approve with conditions:

- Trust to seek further primary expertise on the trust board.

**Conflicts:** Claire Lowe.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority and trust of RD decision.

## Sponsored Route

**Project:** To discuss Insignis Academy Trust as the sponsor for Sir William Ramsay School, **Buckinghamshire**.

**AB discussion:**

- AB members discussed Insignis Academy Trust's growth and their leadership in reference to their capacity to take on Sir William Ramsay School.
- AB members discussed the performance of the schools currently within the trust.
- AB members discussed the school improvement strategy provided by the trust and indicated the need for a more specific final plan.
- AB members discussed the board of trustees and whether there was a need for more financial expertise on the board.

**RD decision:** Approve with conditions:

- Trust to provide a final and detailed school improvement plan.
- Trust to seek further financial expertise on the trust board.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school and trust of RD decision.

## Significant Change

**Project:** To discuss the application to open an Autism Spectrum Disorder Unit at Bearbrook Combined School, **Buckinghamshire**.

**AB discussion:**

- Great Learners Trust and Buckinghamshire Council propose to open an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Unit at Bearbrook Combined School in Aylesbury. The ASD Unit will be for 12 pupils and is planned to open on 1 January 2024.
- AB members were in agreement for this to be approved as it enforces the department's objective for SEND and alternative provision to fulfil children's potential in the education system.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school, local authority and trust of RD decision.

## Significant Change

**Project:** To discuss Chiltern Way Academy Trust's proposal to increase pupil numbers at Chiltern Way Academy, **Buckinghamshire**.

**AB discussion:**

- Buckinghamshire Council has requested that Chiltern Way Academy Trust increase pupil numbers at Chiltern Way Academy from 217 to 298 (81 places) from September 2023.
- AB members discussed the leadership and skill set of the trust board at Chiltern Way Academy Trust and their current capacity.
- AB members discussed the potential disruption on the pupils regarding the transport between sites considering the needs of the children.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school and trust of the RD decision.

## Significant Change

**Project:** To discuss the application to lower the age range at Shepherdswell Academy, **Milton Keynes**, from 4 - 7 to 2 - 7 years old.

**AB discussion:**

- Shepherdswell Academy is a two-form entry primary school for pupils aged 4-7yrs with a published capacity of 180 and a PAN of 60.
- AB members discussed the skill set of the trust board and indicated a need for educational expertise.
- AB members considered the current demand for nursery places in the local area, especially given the closure of the privately run provision at the school.

**RD decision:** Approve with conditions:

- Trust to seek educational expertise on the trust board.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform the school and trust of the RD decision.

## Academy Opening Approved in Principle

- Emmbrook Infant School, Wokingham, joining The Circle Trust.
- Emmbrook Junior School, Wokingham, joining The Circle Trust.

## Decisions taken between AB meetings

**Project:** Queenborough School and Nursery, part of EKC Schools Trust, to lower the age range of the school from 3-11 to 2-11.

**Decision type:** Significant Change.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform school/trust of the RD decision.

**Project:** Bordon Junior School, part of University of Chichester Trust, to increase capacity from 240 pupils (two-form entry) to 360 pupils (three-form entry) from 1 September 2024.

**Decision type:** Significant Change.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Inform school/trust of the RD decision.

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