



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 13 July 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

- Elizabeth Horne (AB)
- Dame Maura Regan (AB)
- Jo Heaton (AB)
- Anita Bath (AB)
- Colin Lofthouse (AB)
- Robert Tarn (AB)

Apologies

- Dame Nicola Stephenson (AB)
- Jason Brine (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 thanked them for their continued support and wished them an enjoyable summer break.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Grange Primary School, Hartlepool to convert and join Northern Lights Learning Trust (NLLT)

AB discussion:

- Grange Primary School was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in April 2015, the school retained its 'Good' in July 2019 following a short inspection.
- Educational performance at the school is above national average.
- The board was advised that the Grange has been working with NLLT for some time, it has already developed good relationships with the trust's Hartlepool based schools and therefore would like to formalise their existing partnership by joining NLLT.
- The board was informed that this proposal is in line with the strategic plan outlined in Hartlepool's Trust Development Statement.
- NLLT currently has 7 academies with an existing hub of 3 primary schools in Hartlepool. The trust has capacity to grow and is keen to expand within its existing hubs and beyond.
- The board was advised that the trust will complete the roll out of ICFP in its secondary schools by Autumn 2023.
- The board discussed the current trust governance structure and was advised that this is going to be reviewed.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that the trust accepts a SRMA deployment.

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.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for Stephenson Memorial Primary School, North Tyneside to convert and join SMART Multi Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Stephenson Memorial was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in November 2018.
- Academic performance at the school is currently below both the national and LA average.
- The board was advised that Stephenson Memorial is part of a soft federation and shares an executive headteacher with Grasmere who have also applied to join SMART.
- The board was advised that Stephenson Memorial has been collaborating with SMART, this proposal will formalise links that have already been formed.
- The board discussed the proposed decline in pupil numbers, the board was advised that there is potential to attract new pupils as housing developments are complete.
- The board was advised that the percentage of pupils receiving SEN support at Stephenson Memorial is higher than the national average. The board discussed the current challenges with SEN, particularly around funding and agreed that a further conversation with the trust would be useful.
- The board was advised that SMART currently has 8 primary schools, all judged Ofsted 'Good'. The trust has capacity to grow and is currently working with a number of schools.
- The board discussed the trusts school improvement model and was advised that the trust is reaching out to sector colleagues for advice as they prepare to grow their own school improvement team. The board supported the RDs recommendation that SMART should consider working alongside a CEO who has previous experience of growth.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that the trust accepts a SRMA deployment.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Colin Lofthouse was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

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

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: Grasmere Academy, North Tyneside to transfer to SMART Multi Academy Trust, Newcastle.

AB discussion:

- Grasmere Academy has operated as a sponsored single academy trust (SAT) since September 2012 following an inadequate judgement by Ofsted.
- Grasmere was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in December 2022.
- The board was advised that Grasmere is part of a soft federation and shares an executive headteacher with Stephenson Memorial Primary School who have also applied to join SMART.
- The board was advised that Grasmere formed a working group to approach a number of academy trusts and through this process they identified SMART, Grasmere would therefore like to formalise this partnership by joining the trust.
- Performance at Grasmere is below national and LA average however the high proportion of SEND pupils at the school was noted. The board agreed, that by joining a MAT, Grasmere will have the necessary school improvement support to help improve its educational performance.
- The board was advised that SMART currently has 8 primary schools, all judged Ofsted 'Good'. The trust has capacity to grow and is currently working with a number of schools.
- Grasmere received an SRMA deployment in March 2023, the report concluded that the ongoing decline in pupil numbers and the under investment of the buildings is challenging, however, the board was informed that SMART is aware and will consider as part of their due diligence phase.
- The board discussed the trusts school improvement model and was advised that the trust is reaching out to sector colleagues for advice as they prepare to grow their own school improvement team. The board supported the RDs recommendation that SMART should consider working alongside a CEO who has previous experience of growth.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that the trust accepts a SRMA deployment.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Colin Lofthouse was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

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 Beamish Primary School, Castleside Primary School, Catchgate Primary School and Pelton Primary School North Tyneside to convert and join New College Durham Academies Trust (NCDAT).

AB discussion:

- The four primary schools converting are rated Ofsted 'Good'.
- The board was advised that this proposal is in line with the recently published trust development statement for County Durham.
- The board was advised, where schools have falling pupil numbers, work will be carried out in the local area to increase roll numbers.
- Headteachers' within the 4 schools have been considering academisation to support their long-term future and have agreed to join NCDAT.
- NCDAT is a 3 secondary school MAT, the 4 primaries being feeders to secondary schools within the trust.
- The board was informed that these four 'Good' schools will establish a primary hub in the County Durham area. NCDAT is in the process of appointing a new director of primary education, who will enable good practice across the schools.
- The board discussed the trust's governance structure and agreed that the trust should appoint some additional primary expertise to their trustee board. The board was informed that the trust intends to increase the number of members to 5 to be in line with DfE preference.
- The board was advised that the trust proposes a four-phase expansion plan to ensure that the trust expands in a controlled and sustainable way,
- The board discussed the proposed trust's financial position and agreed that they would benefit from a SRMA deployment.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that a SRMA is accepted.

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: King James I Academy Bishop Auckland, Durham to transfer to Eden Learning Trust (ELT), Durham.

AB discussion:

- King James has operated as a single academy trust (SAT) since June 2011.
- King James was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in March 2015.
- The board discussed ELT's growth strategy which is to develop a 'through school' model of education, the board was informed that this proposal is in line with the recently published trust development statement for County Durham.
- Educational performance at King James I is strong.
- ELT consists of 4 secondary schools and 1 primary school, all based in County Durham.
- The board discussed the trust governance structure and was informed that the trust is in the process of appointing additional primary expertise to help strengthen their board.
- The board discussed finances and agreed, that further clarity is needed regarding the financial arrangements with individual schools.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal subject to a further conversation with the trust to clarify the position regarding the financial arrangements with individual schools, the scheme of delegation and the trusts vision for building future capacity. The RD also recommends a review of the trust governance structure and to arrange mentoring for the CEO and Chair of Trustee, to help support the trust as they move into the next stage of growth and for an SRMA to be deployed.

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 St Helen Auckland Community Primary School, Durham to convert and join Eden Learning Trust (ELT).

AB discussion:

- St Helen Auckland Community Primary School is a 2-11 primary school in County Durham.
- St Helen was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in October 2018.
- The board was advised that St Helen is particularly attracted to working with its neighbouring secondary feeder school, King James I Academy, who have also applied to join ELT.
- The board was advised that this proposal is part of a phased growth plan by ELT which aims to develop a primary arm within the trust.
- The board was advised that ELT's growth strategy is in line with the recently published trust development statement for County Durham.
- The board was advised that educational performance at St Helen's is good, the school is a strong primary with expertise in SEND provision. The board was informed that St Helen will add capacity to the trust and will provide support to other schools in ELT, particularly as they develop their primary hubs.
- The board discussed finances and agreed, that further clarity is needed regarding the financial arrangements with individual schools.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal subject to a further conversation with the trust to clarify the position regarding the financial arrangements with individual schools, the scheme of delegation and the trusts vision for building future capacity. The RD also recommends a review of the trust governance structure and to arrange mentoring for the CEO and Chair of Trustee, to help support the trust as they move into the next stage of growth and for an SRMA to be deployed.

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: Kepier Academy, Sunderland to transfer to Eden Learning Trust (ELT), Durham.

AB discussion:

- Kepier is a secondary academy and has operated as a single academy trust (SAT) since August 2011.
- Kepier was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in March 2022.
- Educational performance at Kepier is below national average. The board agreed that by joining a MAT, Kepier will have the necessary school improvement support to help improve its educational performance.
- The board discussed the recently published trust development statements for Sunderland and Durham and agreed that this proposal is in line with the aspirations.
- The board supported the RD's recommendation for the CEO and chair to undertake some peer mentoring from experienced colleagues of a larger trust, to help support them as they begin the next stage of growth.
- The board was informed that Kepier has already been working in collaboration with ELT schools, therefore the transfer will build on existing partnerships.
- The board discussed the trust governance structure and was informed that the trust is in the process of appointing additional primary expertise to help strengthen their board.
- The board discussed finances and agreed, that further clarity is needed regarding the financial arrangements with individual schools. The RD also recommended a future SRMA deployment.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal subject to a further conversation with the trust to clarify the position regarding the financial arrangements with individual schools, the scheme of delegation and the trusts vision for building future capacity. The RD also recommends a review of the trust governance structure and to arrange mentoring for the CEO and Chair of Trustee and for an SRMA to be deployed.

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 Berwick Academy to increase the age range and add a SEN provision.

AB discussion:

- Berwick Academy is a single-academy trust located in Northumberland.
- Berwick was judged 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in October 2021.
- The board was advised that Berwick has requested to increase their age range from 13-18 to 11-18 with a reduced PAN and to add SEN provision from September 2025.
- The board was informed that Northumberland County Council has proposed the reorganisation of education structure within the Berwick Partnership to move to a 2-tier structure. The LA's Cabinet will meet late July to consider the outcomes from the statutory proposals and make a final decision on a move to 2-tier.
- Educational performance at Berwick is below national and LA averages.
- The board was advised that Berwick is already being supported through a trust partnership, both parties are committed to Berwick joining the trust, the process will commence later this year.
- The board was informed that the Schools Financial Support & Oversight (SFSO) work closely with the trust and recognise that a move to 2-tier will have a positive impact on the financial viability of the school moving forwards.
- The board discussed Berwick's future and agreed, that this proposal will create a better future for the academy.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal subject to the local authority's Cabinet formally approving the move from three-tier to two-tier in the Berwick area.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Maura Regan and Anita Bath were not present and did not receive papers for this item.

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 North Fawdon Primary School to change the designation of the Additional Resource Provision (ARP).

AB discussion:

- North Fawdon Primary School caters for pupils aged 3-11 and is part of SMART Multi Academy Trust. North Fawdon Primary currently operates a 6 place SEMH Nurture ARP, however whilst North Fawdon has applied to change the designation, if approved the number of places would remain the same.
- North Fawdon was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in July 2019.
- The trust has been working closely with Newcastle LA on this proposal, following a review of the existing provision for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The board was advised that due to the significant increase of communication and interaction needs has created an opportunity for the trust to offer a newly refurbished C&I ARP within North Fawdon.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; the responses received have been addressed by the trust.
- The board was advised that some minor alteration work will be required, however, these costs will be funded by Newcastle LA.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Colin Lofthouse was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

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 West Walker Primary School to decommission the Additional Resource Provision (ARP) for pupils with SEMH needs.

AB discussion:

- West Walker Primary School caters for pupils aged 2-11 and is part of NEAT Academy Trust.
- West Walker was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in Jan 2020.
- All of the pupils currently in the West Walker and other primary ARPs will be moved to specialist provisions for September 2023.
- The board was advised that following a review of the existing provision, Newcastle LA has de-commissioned its ARP provision and has created an outreach SEMH service which will be operational from September 2023.
- The board was advised that formal consultation has been carried out and that no objections were 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.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to approving significant changes to academies.

Project: This is a significant change application from Benfield School to remove their sixth form provision.

AB discussion:

- Benfield School is an 11-18 school and is part of NEAT Academy Trust.
- Benfield was judged 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in March 2020.
- The school has a capacity of 1214 (including sixth form), with 1046 on roll.
- The board was advised that due to low numbers attending the sixth form, the trust requested an independent review in 2019, to determine the future viability of the sixth form.
- The review concluded that numbers of students attending the sixth form would need to increase significantly to support its long-term viability and if this was not achievable it should look to close the provision.
- The board was advised that numbers have remained low despite working with other local post-16 providers to enable a wider more attractive curriculum offer.
- The board was advised that formal consultation has been carried out and that no objections were raised. The LA fully supports the proposal for closure and agrees there is enough provision across the local authority area to cater for student needs.
- The board discussed the impact on staffing and agreed a further discussion with the trust would be useful.
- The board was advised that the closure of the sixth form will have positive impact on school finances, with more resources being available.
- 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: Green Lane CofE Controlled Primary School, Durham

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/08/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Wark Church of England Primary School, Northumberland

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/08/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: St Cuthbert's First School, Berwick, **Northumberland**

Decision type: Significant Change – increase in age range.

RSC decision: Approve subject to the local authority's Cabinet formally approving the move from three-tier to two-tier in the Berwick area.

Conflicts: Anita Bath did not receive papers for this item.

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

Cramlington Learning Village - temporary increase in capacity.

Consultation is still ongoing.