



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 21 September 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)
- Dame Nicola Stephenson (AB)
- Jason Brine (AB)

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Matt Beer (Deputy Director, North East Regions Group)
- Gavin Davies (Deputy Director, Education and Skills Funding Agency)

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 updates following their return to school.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: This is a proposal for St Hild's College CofE Aided Primary School, County Durham to convert and join Melrose Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- St Hild's was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in April 2015.
- St Hild's has voluntarily applied to convert and become an academy within Melrose Learning Trust, which is in line with the Diocese of Durham's vision on education.
- The board was informed that this proposal is in line with the strategic plan outlined in the Department for Education's published Trust Development Statement for County Durham.
- Melrose Learning Trust comprises of 7 primary academies across Stockton, County Durham, Hartlepool and Darlington.
- The board was advised that the trust has capacity to grow and is keen to expand within its existing hubs.
- The board discussed the trust's school improvement strategy and was advised that the model they are currently operating will evolve over time as they bring in additional expertise.
- The board was advised that as a result of a previous Regional Director (RD) decision a condition was approved to deploy a School Resource Management Adviser (SRMA). The board was advised that this condition will be extended to include the whole trust and will take place within three months of St Hild's joining.
- The board discussed the current trust governance structure and agreed that the trust needs to add some primary expertise to its trustee board.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with condition that a SRMA deployment is extended to include the trust within three months of St Hild's joining and a further recommendation to consider appointing primary expertise to its board of trustees.

RD decision: Approve with condition.

Conflicts: Rob Tarn 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 Peases West Primary School, County Durham to convert and join Advance Learning Partnership (ALP).

AB discussion:

- Peases West was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in September 2013, the school retained its 'Good' in April 2023 following a short inspection.
- The board was advised that Peases West has applied to join ALP. If approved this proposal will strengthen transition links between two of its secondary feeders who already form part of the trust.
- The board was informed that this proposal is in line with the strategic plan outlined in the Department for Education's published Trust Development Statement for County Durham.
- The board was advised that ALP currently has 8 primary schools and 9 secondary schools, all of which are located in County Durham and Darlington.
- ALP has a good track record of supporting schools and improving outcomes.
- Trust governance structure is in line with DfE guidelines and includes a good mix of skills.
- Pupil numbers are predicted to decline, the trust is aware and have advised that marketing work will be carried out in the local area to help raise the profile of the school and increase numbers.
- As a result of a previous RD decision an SRMA was deployed, the board was advised that the recommendations will be reviewed once the report is available.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that an SRMA monitoring visit is deployed within 8 months of Peases joining and to discuss future growth plans with the trust.

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: Viewley Hill Academy Trust, Middlesbrough to transfer to Lingfield Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- Viewley Hill Academy has operated as a single academy trust (SAT) since January 2014.
- Viewley Hill was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in May 2011, the school retained its 'Good' in June 2022 following a short inspection.
- The board was informed that the decision to transfer into Lingfield is mutually beneficial to both trusts. Viewley Hill will add further capacity and will be able to share their expertise and strengths in SEND provision across the trust.
- Lingfield Education Trust is a primary trust consisting of 16 academies located across the Tees Valley and North Yorkshire area.
- The board was informed that this proposal is in line with the strategic plan outlined in the Department for Education's published Trust Development Statement for Middlesbrough.
- The board was advised that Lingfield has recently expanded its presence in Middlesbrough, the addition of Viewley Hill will strengthen the Middlesbrough hub further.
- The board discussed the recent growth of Lingfield. The board was advised that growth has been planned and managed carefully with the introduction of Regional Hub Boards, ongoing support from another experienced CEO and the acceptance of an SRMA.
- The board discussed the trust governance structure and agreed that given the size of the trust the vacancies on the trustee board should be reviewed.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with recommendation that the trust provides an update on plans to fill their vacant trustee positions.

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: St Aidan's CofE Academy, Darlington to transfer to Northern Lights Learning Trust (NLLT).

AB discussion:

- St Aidan's has operated as a single academy trust (SAT) since September 2007.
- St Aidan's was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in January 2020.
- The board was advised that St Aidan's was issued with a notice to improve (Ntl) in January 2023, a condition of which was for St Aidan's to consider joining a strong multi academy trust.
- The board was informed that an SRMA was deployed, and an external review of governance was carried out and a report published in July 2023. The report highlighted several recommendations, and the board was advised that St Aidan's has made progress in improving the governance of the trust.
- NLLT currently has 7 academies, consisting of 2 secondary and 5 primaries.
- The board was informed that this proposal is in line with the strategic plan outlined in the Department for Education's published Trust Development Statement for Darlington.
- The board discussed the ongoing challenges St Aidan's face as a standalone secondary and agreed that NLLT is well placed to support the school and make the necessary improvements.
- The board discussed NLLT's governance structure and recommended that the trust reviews the balance of trustees currently on the board.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal with condition that NLLT receives an SRMA deployment within 6 months of approval, and that they provide a financial plan that addresses how the trust plans to mitigate against the forecasted in-year deficits and that they review their trustee board.

RD decision: Approve with condition.

Conflicts: Jo Heaton and Rob Tarn were 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: Thornaby Academy, Stockton to transfer to Northern Education Trust (NET).

AB discussion:

- Thornaby Academy opened in Falcon Education Academies as its first academy in September 2020 following consecutive 'Inadequate' judgements.
- The board was advised that Thornaby's school improvement support included delivery via the One Vision programme (part of Opportunity North East) and most recently through a service level agreement with NET.
- The board was advised that improvements have been made in both performance and pupil numbers, and Thornaby has moved from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in June 2023.
- As Falcon was intended to be a temporary solution for Thornaby it has been agreed with Ministers to transfer the school to a permanent trust.
- Falcon trustees proposed to transfer Thornaby to NET is due to its excellent track record in driving school improvement. The board was advised that, if approved, NET will provide enhanced support to Thornaby during its transition to NET.
- NET is a large cross regional trust with 10 primary and 13 secondary academies across 11 local authority areas.
- The board discussed the trust governance structure and recommended that the trust reviews its current model.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to approve this proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Rob Tarn and Jo Heaton were 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 Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Darlington to convert and join Swift Academies as a re-branded new Multi-Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Queen Elizabeth (QE) was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in January 2012; the college retained its 'Good' in March 2020 following a short inspection.
- The board was advised that QE has considered several options in relation to the College's conversion. and have decided they would like to join Swift and become a newly branded 2-19 MAT.
- The board was informed that this proposal is in line with the strategic plan outlined in the Department for Education's published Trust Development Statement for Darlington.
- The board was advised that the conversion of QE will bring additional leadership and organisational capacity to the newly established trust. The board discussed the strengths of the leadership team and was advised that the inclusion of QE will be beneficial to the trust's potential growth options.
- The board discussed the viability of adding sixth form provision to an already established trust and was advised that this proposal is not an expansion of Swift, this is the creation of a new trust with the intention of creating a different experience for all of its students.
- The board was advised that Longfield Academy in Swift was judged 'Inadequate' and was subsequently issued with a Termination Warning Notice (TWN). A new headteacher was appointed and following a recent monitoring inspection Ofsted has stated that improvements have been made. The board was advised that progress at Longfield will continue to be monitored.
- The board agreed with the RD's decision to defer this case in order to hold further discussions with Swift and QE Sixth Form about Longfield's progress under new leadership.

RD decision: Defer.

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: Abingdon Primary School, Middlesbrough

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/10/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Breckon Hill Primary School, Middlesbrough

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/10/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Columbia Grange School, Sunderland

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/10/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Newham Bridge Primary School, Middlesbrough

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/10/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Cramlington Learning Village, **Northumberland**

Decision type: Significant Change – temporary increase in capacity.

RSC decision: Approve with condition that a SRMA is accepted.

Conflicts: None

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

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