



Notes of Meeting: East Midlands Advisory Board

20 September 2023.

Attendance data is published annually on the GOV.UK website.

Advisory Board 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

- Carol Gray (Regional Director, East Midlands Regions Group).

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Inderjit Sandhu.
- Mark Thomas.
- Paul West.
- Sarah Armitage.
- Paul Heery.
- Julian Scholefield.
- Sian Hampton.
- Chris Wheatley.

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Kate Copley.

DfE senior civil servants

- Kelly Hughes (Deputy Director, East Midlands Regions Group).

- ESFA representative.

Representations received

Two representations were received in relation the Sponsored Route project: 'To discuss a sponsor match for The Grange School, Daventry, West Northamptonshire'.

General Discussion Points

No discussion points were raised.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss Wrangle Primary School, Lincolnshire, converting to join University of Lincoln Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

Wrangle Primary School is a foundation school located in Wrangle, Boston. Ofsted's inspection in September 2021 judged the school to be good.

Wrangle Primary School seeks to voluntarily convert to academy status and join University of Lincoln Academy Trust. Wrangle Primary School approached University of Lincoln Academy Trust due to their experience of successfully improving a small school, their focus on putting children first in everything they do, and they have a very similar ethos. A resolution has been passed by Wrangle Primary School's governing body.

University of Lincoln Academy Trust consists of 5 academies, this includes 2 secondaries, 2 primaries and a special academy.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at University of Lincoln Academy Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, trust, and Lincolnshire County Council of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management adviser was recommended, as was an external review of governance.

Project: To discuss The Spalding Monkshouse Primary School, Lincolnshire, converting to join the University of Lincoln Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

The Spalding Monkshouse Primary School is a two-form entry primary school in Spalding, Lincolnshire. The most recent Ofsted inspection (short) of The Spalding Monkshouse Primary School in May 2018 judged that the school continues to be good.

The Spalding Monkshouse Primary School seeks to voluntarily convert to academy status and join University of Lincoln Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust that consists of 5 academies (2 secondaries, 2 primaries and a special academy).

Following discussions with a number of multi-academy trusts, the school considers that University of Lincoln Academy Trust meets the principles they want in a multi-academy trust, and that there are synergies between their ethos' and working practices. A resolution has been passed by The Spalding Monkshouse Primary School's governing body.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at the University of Lincoln Academy Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school, trust, and Lincolnshire County Council of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management adviser was recommended, as was an external review of governance.

Project: To discuss Newlands Community Primary School, Leicestershire, converting to join Oadby, Wigston and Leicester Schools Trust.

AB discussion:

Newlands Community Primary School is a two-form entry primary school in Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. The most recent Ofsted inspection of Newlands Community Primary School in July 2019 judged that the school continues to require improvement.

Newlands Community Primary School seeks to voluntarily convert to academy status and join Oadby, Wigston and Leicestershire Schools Trust (OWLS Trust). Newlands Community Primary School has been receiving support from OWLS Trust since December 2022, and due to sharing the same ethos, the trust's school improvement record and the board recognising the benefits of joining a strong trust, the school now wishes to formalise this arrangement to allow this support to continue. A resolution has been passed by the Newlands Community Primary School's governing board.

OWLS Trust currently has 8 primary schools in Leicestershire.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at OWLS Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Inderjit Sandhu. Inderjit was not in attendance for this part of the meeting, nor was she in receipt of project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school, trust, and Leicestershire County Council of the decision.

Project: To discuss Coddington CofE Primary and Nursery School, Nottinghamshire, converting to join Minster Trust for Education.

AB discussion:

Coddington CofE Primary and Nursery School is a voluntary controlled school located in Coddington, Newark. The most recent Ofsted short inspection of Coddington CofE Primary and Nursery School in January 2019 judged that the school continues to be good.

Coddington CofE Primary School seeks to voluntarily convert to academy status and join Minster Trust for Education, a multi-academy trust that currently runs 5 primary schools and 2 secondary schools in Nottinghamshire. A resolution has been passed by Coddington CofE Primary and Nursery School governing body.

Coddington CofE Primary and Nursery School has been working closely with the trust for the last 12 months. It feels it is now ready to formalise the partnership because both the trust and school values and ethos closely align.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Minster Trust for Education and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sian Hampton. Sian was not in attendance for this part of the meeting, nor was she in receipt of project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school, trust, and Nottinghamshire County Council of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management adviser was recommended.

Project: To discuss Ravenshead CofE Primary School, Nottinghamshire, converting to join the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi-Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

Ravenshead CofE Primary School in Nottinghamshire seeks to voluntarily convert to academy status and join the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust with 22 academies. The most recent Ofsted inspection of Ravenshead CofE Primary School in March 2022 judged that the school continues to be good.

Ravenshead CofE Primary School already works with the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi Academy Trust and follows their principles and ethos. A resolution has been passed by Ravenshead CofE Primary School's governing board.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi Academy Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sian Hampton. Sian was not in attendance for this part of the meeting, nor was she in receipt of project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school, trust, and Nottinghamshire County Council of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management adviser was recommended, as was an external review of governance.

Project: To discuss Toton Bispham Drive Junior School, Nottinghamshire, converting to join The Spencer Academies Trust.

AB discussion:

Toton Bispham Drive Junior School is a community school located in Beeston, Nottinghamshire. The most recent Ofsted inspection of Toton Bispham Drive Junior School in June 2017 judged that the school was good.

Toton Bispham Drive Junior School seeks to voluntarily convert to academy status and join The Spencer Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust that currently runs 17 primary schools, 8 secondary schools and 1 special school predominantly in Nottinghamshire.

Toton Bispham Drive Junior School chose to join The Spencer Academies Trust due to their shared values and a common approach to high academic standards and excellent personal development. The school is also a feeder school for George Spencer Academy and wants to work collaboratively and in partnership with the other feeder primaries who are the trust schools. A resolution has been passed by Toton Bispham Drive Junior School's governing board.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at The Spencer Academies Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Paul West. Paul was not in attendance for this part of the meeting, nor was he in receipt of project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school, trust, and Nottinghamshire County Council of the decision.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss Mayflower Specialist School Academy Trust (multi-academy trust), Lincolnshire, transferring to join Lincolnshire Wolds Community Trust.

AB discussion:

Mayflower Specialist School Academy Trust is a multi-academy trust that contains Warren Wood - A Specialist Academy and Aegir - A Specialist Academy. The most recent Ofsted inspections in November 2021 and June 2018 judged that both schools were good.

Lincolnshire Wolds Community Trust is a 2-school trust based in Lincolnshire. Both schools are special academies judged good at their most recent Ofsted inspections.

Lincolnshire Wolds Community Trust is currently supporting Mayflower Specialist School Academy Trust with governance, leadership, and finances. The voluntary transfer of Mayflower Specialist School Academy Trust into Lincolnshire Wolds Community Trust would support the consolidation of 2 small multi-academy trusts in Lincolnshire, providing the opportunity for sharing best practice across all 4 schools. It would additionally support the increasing need for SEND places in Lincolnshire and formalise the current relationship to ensure leadership stability across the 4 schools and continue to deliver quality outcomes for children.

The financial health of the Mayflower Specialist School Academy Trust, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Lincolnshire Wolds Community Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform both trusts of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management adviser was recommended, as was an external review of governance.

Project: To discuss the Vines Academy Trust (multi-academy trust), Leicestershire, transferring to join Learn Academies Trust.

AB discussion:

The Vines Academy Trust is a multi-academy trust formed of 4 CofE primary schools (1 in Leicester and 3 in Leicestershire) of which 3 are currently judged by Ofsted to be good. The fourth school has 4 consecutive requires improvement judgements (September 2013, October 2015, January 2018 and November 2022). The Vines Academy Trust Board decided to explore a trust merger. They resolved to join Learn Academies Trust as that will offer geographical coherence, alignment of systems, ethos, culture, and values, and will provide a strong culture of professional collaboration.

Learn Academies Trust is a faith trust in Leicestershire that currently runs 11 primary schools. Moving the Vines Academy Trust into Learn Academies Trust provides: i) school improvement support to the schools that need it; ii) stable leadership for all 4 of the Vines schools; and iii) brings capacity to Learn Academies Trust to both strengthen support to its current and future schools and bring a new trust into that part of the county.

The financial health of the Vines Academy Trust, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Learn Academies Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Inderjit Sandhu and Paul Heery. Inderjit and Paul were not present for this part of the meeting, nor were they in receipt of associated project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform both trusts and Diocese of Leicester of the decision. The supportive deployment of a school resource management adviser was recommended, as was an external review of governance.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: To discuss a sponsor match for Ashbourne Hilltop Primary and Nursery School, Derbyshire.

AB discussion:

Ashbourne Hilltop Primary and Nursery School is a community school, located in the village of Ashbourne, which has received 2 consecutive requires improvement judgements from Ofsted – December 2018 and September 2022. The school was in scope for intervention by the department under The Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022. Following analysis of the school's representations, the school was issued with an academy order on 8 March 2023.

An information gathering exercise was conducted by the department to seek a sponsor for Ashbourne Hilltop Primary and Nursery School. The department shortlisted 2 trusts.

While both trusts were considered a strong match, Djanogly Learning Trust was recommended as the sponsor for Ashbourne Hilltop Primary and Nursery School. They are well positioned to provide support to Ashbourne Hilltop Primary and Nursery School and have the capacity to secure the improvements needed. In addition to their general school improvement strategy, Djanogly Learning Trust has a strong offer in respect of improving the Early Years and SEND provision at the school.

Djanogly Learning Trust is a 9-school multi-academy trust operating in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, including 2 small primaries with fewer than 200 pupils.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Djanogly Learning Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve – Djanogly Learning Trust.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, both trusts and Derbyshire County Council of the decision.

Project: To discuss a sponsor match for Killamarsh Junior School, Derbyshire.

AB discussion:

Killamarsh Junior School is a local authority-maintained school that has been judged by Ofsted to be requires improvement on 2 consecutive occasions (January 2019 and October 2022). The school was in scope for intervention by the department under The Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022. Following analysis of the school's representations, the school was issued with an academy order on 27 March 2023.

Two trusts were identified by the department as strong sponsor options. On balance, it was recommended that Steel City School Partnership would be the best match for Killamarsh Junior School.

Steel City School Partnership is a multi-academy trust with 10 schools based in Sheffield local authority area. Killamarsh Junior School is on the border of Sheffield, is close to schools within Steel City School Partnership and would join their south hub, which would provide support and capacity to the school on its improvement journey.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at Steel City School Partnership and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve - Steel City School Partnership.

Conflicts: Chris Wheatley. Chris was not present for this part of the meeting, nor was he in receipt of associated project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, both trusts and Derbyshire County Council of the decision.

Project: To discuss a sponsor match for The Richmond School, Skegness, Lincolnshire.

AB discussion:

The Richmond School is a local authority-maintained community school based in Skegness for pupils aged 4 to 11 years. It has been judged by Ofsted to be requires improvement on 2 consecutive occasions (November 2017 and September 2021). The school is therefore in scope for intervention by the department under The Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022. Following analysis of the school's representations, an academy order was issued on 6 March 2023.

Four trusts expressed an interest in sponsoring the Richmond School. It was decided that David Ross Education Trust was the best fit.

The David Ross Education Trust consists of 34 academies and has a track-record in delivering strong outcomes at primary level and in primary school improvement. It has capacity to support the Richmond School, and the conversion of the school into this trust would strengthen the diversity of the multi-academy trust landscape in the locality.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at David Ross Education Trust and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve – David Ross Education Trust.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, trusts and Lincolnshire County Council of the decision.

Project: To discuss a sponsor match for The Grange School, Daventry, West Northamptonshire.

AB discussion:

The Grange School, Daventry is a local authority maintained primary school for ages 2-11 with nursery provision. The school has had 2 consecutive Ofsted inspections resulting in a requires improvement judgment, in October 2018 and July 2022. The school is therefore in scope for intervention by the department under The Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2022.

Following analysis of the school's representations, on 18 May 2023, the school was issued with an Academy Order. The department then assessed local sponsor options, shortlisting 4 trusts. It was decided that E-ACT was the best fit. The trust has strong evidence of school improvement and experience of similar cohorts to The Grange School, Daventry. The trust's 2 secondary schools are the only secondaries within a 5-mile distance in the local authority so there is added benefit of consistency throughout the pupil's educational journey for the school to join the trust.

E-ACT is a large trust consisting of 28 academies, 12 of which are secondaries, 15 primaries and 1 all-through. Out of the 28 academies 3 are rated outstanding, 24 rated good and 1 is rated requires improvement. All primaries are rated good or outstanding.

The financial health of the school, the strength of financial management and governance in place at E-ACT and the trust's future financial health were also considered.

RD decision: Approve – E-ACT.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, trusts and West Northamptonshire County Council of the decision.

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval:

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

Project: To discuss a sponsor match for Airfield Farm Presumption Primary School, Leicestershire.

AB discussion:

Airfield Farm Primary School is a presumption free school in the Harborough District of Leicestershire. The construction of the school has commenced and is due to complete in summer 2024. The school is intended to serve pupils between the ages of 4 and 11 and will have a PAN of 30.

Six trusts submitted written proposals, and these were considered and scored against the published criteria. The local authority's preferred sponsor was Discovery Schools Academy Trust.

The local authority-led panel determined that Discovery Schools Academy Trust showed, amongst other things, a clear vision for the establishment of the new school in keeping with the local authority's expectations, strong capacity and experience and a very good understanding of the local context. The trust also demonstrated a strong emphasis on collaboration and has 2 established schools within the immediate area.

Discovery Schools Academy Trust comprises 15 schools across Leicestershire (9), Leicester (5) and Rutland (1). This includes 13 mainstream primary schools and 2 special schools.

RD decision: Approve – Discovery Schools Academy Trust.

Conflicts: Chris Wheatley. Chris was not present for this part of the meeting, nor was he in receipt of associated project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, trusts and Leicestershire County Council of the decision.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Stonebroom Primary and Nursery School.

AB discussion: Proposed school opening date – 1 October 2023.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: The Gateway School.

AB discussion: Proposed school opening date – 1 October 2023.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Thrapston Primary School.

AB discussion: Proposed school opening date – 1 October 2023.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.