



Notes of Meeting: East of England

Date of meeting – 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). Board members with conflicts of interest with an item were not present during the discussion, nor received papers for the item.

Regional Director (RD) chair

- Jonathan Duff (RD)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Al Kingsley (AB)
- Tim Coulson (AB)
- Mark Farmer (AB)
- Clare Flintoff (AB)
- Lawrence Chapman (AB)
- Sarah Skinner (AB)
- Josephine Valentine (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- ESFA Representative
- Emily Williams, Deputy Director (DD)

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

- The RD gave some general national and regional updates and invited feedback from the board.
- The RD provided a discussion on the recent issues involving reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools in the East of England.
- The board considered Ofsted judgment outcomes for the previous month.

Free School Presumption

Project: To discuss the sponsor for the new primary school in Wixams in Bedford.

AB discussion:

- The board that the Bedford local authority have chosen Kingsbridge Education Trust as its preferred sponsor of the new primary school in Wixams, Bedford, because of its clear-set plans, capacity, and range of skills the trust can bring to the new school.
- The board discussed the finance and governance of the trust.
- The RD noted that the trust has good track record in delivering academic results.
- The RD decided to approve the proposal with the condition that the trust reconsiders its governance structure.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the local authority of the decision.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss whether Pyramid Schools Trust should merge with The Harlington and Sundon Academy Trust, Central Bedfordshire, to form a 7 academy MAT.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the trusts are local Central Bedfordshire single academy trusts and merging them could have benefits such as consistency of opportunity for pupils, financial efficiencies, shared best practice and school improvement plan.
- The board discussed finances and future plans of the trust.
- The RD requested further assurances on governance structure.

RD decision: Approved with conditions.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the trusts of the decision. Trusts to provide assurances to RD on governance and finances.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss whether Ralph Sadleir School (MAT), should merge with Freman College (SAT) to form a new MAT named the Halcyon Trust, Hertfordshire

AB discussion:

- The proposal was deferred at the July Advisory Board pending additional information on school improvement and growth strategy and analysis of potential risks which have since been fulfilled and address the concerns raised.
- The board heard that if approved, the newly formed MAT aims to expand in the Buntingford area, Hertfordshire.
- The board discussed the breadth of information provided by the trusts.
- The board discussed the proposed school improvement strategy.
- The RD requested further information of the school improvement strategy and governance plans.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the trusts of the decision. Trusts to provide further information on school improvement strategy and assurance on its governance plans.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss whether Mill Mead Primary, Hertfordshire, should join the Simon Balle Academy Trust, Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The board considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.
- The RD requested further information to make a decision.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. Further information requested for RD to make a decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss whether Edwinstree Church of England Middle School, Hertfordshire should join the Halcyon Trust, Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The RD deferred the decision to allow the formation of the Halcyon Trust and therefore the decision for Edwinstree Church of England Middle School to join the trust.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trusts of the decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss Whether Anstey First School, Hertfordshire, should join the Halcyon Trust, Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The RD deferred the decision to allow the formation of the Halcyon Trust and therefore the decision for Anstey First School to join the trust.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trusts of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss whether to approve the redesignation of the Speech, Language and Communication Needs provision to become a Special Resource Provision at Longdean School, Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The board considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Significant Change

Project: To discuss whether to approve the closure of the Speech, Language and Communication Needs provision at Chaulden Junior School, Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The board considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss whether Queen Elizabeth School, Luton, should join the Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust, London.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that a number of MATs were considered for the school to join and a preference for Every Child, Every Day Trust was made because its school improvement package and its emphasis on children and local communities best aligned with the school's own vision.
- The RD discussed the other trusts that were considered to take on the school.
- The board discussed the school's engagement with other schools in the local area.
- The RD requested assurance that geographical distance is not an issue, and a clear rationale for the chosen trust.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. The school to provide assurances requested by the RD.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss whether Barons Court Primary School and Nursery, Southend on Sea, should join Learning in Harmony Multi Academy Trust, London.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that a number of MATs were considered for the school to join and a preference for Learning in Harmony MAT was made because of its offer of high-quality teaching, high expectations and outcomes of pupils, strong curriculum and leadership.
- The board discussed the governance of the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

Free School Presumption

Project: To discuss the sponsor for the new primary school in Silfield in Norfolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that there is a need for a new primary school in Silfield, Norfolk, by September 2025 and there are no schools within 3 miles radius of the proposed new school.
- The board heard that a number of trusts were considered, and Unity Schools Partnership is the preferred sponsor because of its educational performance, governance and strong track record.
- The board discussed the capacity of the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the local authority and the trust of the decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss whether Dale Hall Community Primary School, Suffolk, should join Penrose Learning Trust, Suffolk

AB discussion:

- The board considered the case and provided no advice in relation to the proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: To discuss whether Holton St Peter Community Primary School, ASSET Education, Suffolk, should expand nursery provision.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust 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: To discuss sponsor options for St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Essex.

Type of decision: Sponsored Route.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Further information requested to make an informed decision.