



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

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). This excludes items where that member declared a conflict of interest.

Regional Director (RD) chair

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Dame Mo Brennan
- Mike Donoghue
- Sarah Finch
- Amarjit Cheema
- Dan Parkes
- Tom Leverage

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Lizana Oberholzer

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

Local Update

- None.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Baginton Fields School, Coventry, to convert and become an academy and join Thrive Education Partnership, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Baginton Fields School, Coventry is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust so that it will benefit from centralised services to achieve economies of scale.
- Thrive Education Partnership consists of academies across Birmingham, Coventry and Walsall.
- The school feels that its values align with that of Thrive.
- Thrive works with practitioners who are specialists in a number of fields (i.e., Autism, PMLD, SEMH) which will enable opportunities at Baginton for staff development.
- The school feels that, within Thrive, its individual nature and culture will be respected.
- The board sought assurances on governance and discussed the trusts growth plans.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Castle Wood School, Coventry, to convert and become an academy and join Thrive Education Partnership, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Castle Wood Special School, Coventry is an Ofsted “Outstanding” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to benefit from greater collaboration with schools who are not broad spectrum but specialists in particular fields.
- Thrive Education Partnership consists of academies across Birmingham, Coventry and Walsall.
- Joining a trust will give school staff greater development and career progression opportunities without losing their skill and expertise to other settings.
- The board sought assurances on governance and discussed the trusts growth plans.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Limbrick Wood Primary School, Coventry, to convert and become an academy and join Finham Park Multi-Academy Trust, Coventry.

AB discussion:

- Limbrick Wood Primary School, Coventry is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to be part of an established trust with a proven record of success where children are at the heart of all the decisions made, which it feels is consistent with Finham Park MAT.
- Finham Park Multi- Academy Trust consists of 7 academies, 6 in Coventry and 1 in Warwickshire.
- There is an already established pupil/parent community between Limbrick Wood and Finham Park 2, with Limbrick Wood being a feeder to the secondary school. The close geographic proximity will make a supportive relationship easier.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Blackwell First School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join Worcestershire Hills Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Blackwell First School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted “Outstanding” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to enable it to support other schools and to protect the school’s existing strengths in a rapidly changing educational, social, political and financial climate.
- Worcestershire Hills Trust is proposing to form in November 2023. It will initially comprise four schools across Worcestershire.
- Blackwell First will benefit from a shared trust vision that will allow it to preserve the school’s educational ethos.
- The trusts growth was discussed.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Charford First School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join Worcestershire Hills Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Charford First School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to enable it to support other schools and to protect the school’s existing strengths in a rapidly changing educational, social, political and financial climate.
- Worcestershire Hills Trust is proposing to form in November 2023. It will initially comprise four schools across Worcestershire.
- Charford First has an existing relationship with Prince Henry’s High School (one of the proposed schools to form Worcestershire Hills Trust) through the Teaching School Hub.
- The trusts growth was discussed.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Catshill Middle School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join The Spire Church of England Learning Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Catshill Middle School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to further enhance the collaboration.
- The Spire Church of England Learning Trust consists of 4 academies across Worcestershire.
- The school already works with schools that are part of or who intend to be part of this trust. The trust has worked closely with Catshill Middle School and there is a clear strategic plan for growth, developing capacity to support other schools.
- The board sought assurances on the trusts finance and governance.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve with the condition of an SRMA.

Conflicts: Tom Leverage was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Catshill First School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join The Spire Church of England Learning Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Catshill First School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to work collaboratively with the other schools within the current trust or those intending to join.
- The Spire Church of England Learning Trust consists of 4 academies across Worcestershire.
- The trust has worked closely with Catshill First School. There is a clear strategic plan for growth, developing capacity to support other schools.
- The board sought assurances on the trusts finance and governance.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve with the condition of an SRMA.

Conflicts: Tom Leverage was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Oak Hill First School, Worcestershire, to convert and become an academy and join Central Region Schools Trust, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Oak Hill First School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust for the education, collaboration, and professional development opportunities that joining the trust will open for the children and staff.
- Central Region Schools Trust consists of 12 academies across Worcestershire, Birmingham and Sandwell.
- The Governing Body agreed that the trust's scale, maturity, and approach to school management and school improvement, closely matched that of Oak Hill First School.
- Trust capacity was discussed during the meeting.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Guy Shears was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School and Nursery, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust, Cheshire.

AB discussion:

- Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School and Nursery, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to ease capacity challenges faced by the small federation and provide access to the full range of support provided by
- Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust consists of 6 academies, 5 in Cheshire East and 1 in Cheshire West and Chester.
- The board discussed the distance between the school and the trust. There were also discussions on the growth and diocesan strategy.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Hinstock Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Collective Vision Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Hinstock Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to benefit from the additional support and to allow local school leaders to focus on teaching and learning
- Collective Vision Trust consists of 5 academies across Staffordshire.
- Hinstock Primary School is a capacity-bringer for Collective Vision Trust. The school has an established relationship with nearby Cheswardine and would continue to support its school improvement as part of the wider trust improvement strategy.
- Given the established relationship between the two schools, the Governing Body has decided that it would be preferable for the schools to convert together and join the same trust.
- The board discussed governance and the number of trustees, as well as pupil numbers and the growth capacity based on housing developments.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Hodnet Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join The 3-18 Education Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Hodnet Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to allow for strengthening of longstanding relationships and enhance the quality of their existing transition events and activities.
- The 3-18 Education Trust consists of 6 academies across Shropshire.
- Hodnet receives existing support from another school in the trust via a Maths Hub.
- The trust has a well-established footprint in Shropshire, with experience supporting rural schools with a geographical make-up like Hodnet’s.
- The board discussed the trust’s growth and capacity whilst also working on a Free School.
- There was also a discussion around the trust’s governance and number of trustees.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sarah Finch was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Kineton Green Primary School, Solihull, to convert and become an academy and join Summit Learning Trust, Birmingham and Solihull.

AB discussion:

- Kineton Green Primary School, Solihull is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust as they believe they would be joining an organisation that has a vision and values that match their own with a proven track record of success.
- Summit Trust consists of 8 academies across Birmingham and Solihull.
- The school will contribute to the wider Trust in terms of expertise and experience from the education and care they provide and be in a strong position to contribute heavily to cross-trust collaboration.
- The board discussed the leadership at Kineton Green and the number of trustees at the trust. There were also reassurances around the capacity at the trust.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Walsall Wood School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join St Martin's Academy Trust, Wolverhampton.

AB discussion:

- Walsall Wood School, Walsall is an Ofsted "Good" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to allow the school to further grow and provide opportunities for experienced staff and leaders with specialisms in core subjects to grow and share expertise with other schools in the trust.
- St Martin's Multi Academy Trust consists of 3 academies across Birmingham and Solihull.
- The school believes that St Martins shares its core values and approach.
- The headteacher has had regular engagement and attended meetings with the trust, which have further confirmed the school's desire to join the trust.
- The board discussed leadership and stability, and the school being in a strong position to be a capacity giver to the trust.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors. Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Telford and Wrekin, to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust, Cheshire.

AB discussion:

- St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Telford and Wrekin is an Ofsted "Good" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to ease pressures on their capacity and allow them to receive additional support.
- St Martin's Multi Academy Trust consists of 3 academies across Birmingham and Solihull.
- Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust consists of 6 academies, 5 in Cheshire East and 1 in Cheshire West and Chester.
- There were discussions around the growth and diocesan strategy, and how this would increase opportunities for improvement.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Converter Academy Order to be issued to Chair of Governors.
Trust and DCS to be informed of the decision.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: To discuss a sponsor for Coventry Extended Learning Centre, Coventry.

AB discussion:

- Coventry Extended Learning Centre, Coventry is an Ofsted rated "Requires Improvement" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Solihull Alternative Provision Multi Academy Trust consists of 2 schools placed across Solihull.
- The trust CEO is experienced in delivering school-to-school support, actively supporting other AP providers throughout the West Midlands and nationally.
- There is good locality between Coventry ELC and the existing trust schools.
- The board discussed governance and trustees at both the sponsor and schools.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School and Sponsor.

Project: To discuss a sponsor for Cheswardine Primary School and Nursery, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Cheswardine Primary School and Nursery, Shropshire is an Ofsted rated "Requires Improvement" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Collective Vision Trust consists of 5 schools placed across Staffordshire.
- Regions Group conducted an options appraisal of all schools within a 20-mile radius of Cheswardine, and of trusts which are part of the hubs plan. Collective Vision Trust was identified as a suitable primary sponsor Trust for Cheswardine.
- The board discussed governance and the number of trustees, as well as pupil numbers and the growth capacity based on housing developments.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School and Sponsor.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes application(s).

Project: To discuss opening a 16-place resource base for primary aged pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Aston Tower, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Aston Tower, Birmingham, received a short inspection March 2019 and was judged as continues to be Good. This was the first short inspection carried out since the predecessor school was judged Good in October 2012. The school wishes to open a 16-place resource base for primary aged pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).
- Aston Tower was recently awarded the Leading Parent Partnership Award (LPPA) and the school's existing SEND provision is of a high standard led by the school's Deputy Headteacher with highly skilled staff who understand the needs of pupils and parents. The school has key adaptations to enable SEND pupils to succeed.
- There is significant need for more school places in Birmingham for children with EHCPs, both in special schools and resource bases in mainstream schools.
- The board sought assurances around pupil numbers and discussed the change at Birmingham City Council.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: To discuss Haberdashers' Adams, Telford and Wrekin, becoming co-educational for admissions from September 2024.

AB discussion:

- Haberdashers' Adams, Telford and Wrekin, received a section 5 Ofsted inspection in May 2022 and was judged Good. The Trust has submitted a Significant Change application and proposes to revise the Admissions policy in respect of Haberdasher's Adams ("HA") to admit girls to its 11-16 provision at year 7 and become fully co-educational for admissions from September 2024.
- The school sees becoming fully co-educational as a natural progression which builds on its long established co-educational sixth form.
- The board discussed the recommendation.

RD decision: Sensitive decision that has been escalated to a Minister to decide.

Conflicts: Sarah Finch was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: To inform the trust of the escalation.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss Coundon Court, Coventry, to transfer to The Futures Trust, Coventry.

AB discussion:

- Coundon Court is a secondary school in Coventry which has been operating as a SAT since 1 April 2012.
- The Futures Trust consists of 8 schools across Coventry, Warwickshire and Leicestershire.
- Coundon Court School already has a collaborative working relationship with The Futures Trust. The proposed SAT to MAT transfer would further strengthen this relationship, which is founded upon an alignment of vision, values, and beliefs.
- The Futures Trust has increased its capacity to work on school improvement with Coundon Court, as two of its sponsored schools have moved out of special measures and are now judged Ofsted Good
- The board discussed the schools finances and governance at the trust. They supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss Honeybourne Primary Academy, Worcestershire, to transfer to The Black Pear Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Honeybourne Primary Academy is a 5-11 Primary SAT which academised in 2013.
- The Black Pear Trust consists of 5 schools across Worcestershire.
- In joining a larger organisation, the SAT will benefit from the synergies available, including shared resources and the economies of scale, which the MAT offers. Being part of a larger family of schools will also provide greater opportunities for staff development and collaborative working.
- The Black Pear Trust have been working in an informal partnership with Honeybourne Primary Academy for 18 months.
- The board discussed the financial management, they supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss Prince Henry's High School Academy Trust, Worcestershire, to transfer from SAT to MAT to create Worcestershire Hills Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Worcestershire Hills Trust is proposing to form in November 2023. It will initially comprise of four schools.
- This growth plan lead by Prince Henry's High School Academy Trust converts two SATs into a MAT with two LA maintained school converters.
- The board discussed growth and the trust improvement strategy. There were also conversations around the trust wide strategic finance.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss Bredon Hill Academy, Worcestershire, to transfer to Worcestershire Hills Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Bredon Hill Academy/The Hill Trust wish to transfer join the Worcestershire Hills Trust to improve the opportunity available for pupils through building a shared vision that will raise standards and provide support in a rapidly changing social, political and financial climate through being part of a larger trust.
- Worcestershire Hills Trust is proposing to form in November 2023. It will initially comprise of four schools.
- Joining a MAT will allow Bredon Hill to achieve the best possible outcomes for the well-being, progress and personal development of children and young people.
- The board discussed growth and the trust improvement strategy. There were also conversations around the trust wide strategic finance.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss Walkwood Church of England Middle School, Worcestershire, to transfer to The Spire Church of England Learning Trust, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Walkwood Church of England Middle School will be a voluntary transfer to The Spire Church of England Learning Trust.
- The trust has worked closely with Walkwood Church of England Middle School. There is a clear strategic plan for growth, developing capacity to support other schools.

- The board sought assurances on the trusts finance and governance.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve with the condition of an SRMA.

Conflicts: Tom Leverage was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Lyng Hall School

Decision type: Significant Change - Permanent physical expansion to accommodate additional pupils - 30 in September 2022, 30 in September 2023 and 30 in September 2024.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Solihull Alternative Provision

Decision type: Significant Change – The trust’s growth plan in the immediate future is the opening of the Primary Additional Resource Provision (ARP) from September 2023 to provide up to 20 full time places for pupils aged 4 to 11. The trust is looking to continue to grow within and beyond the Solihull borough.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Aldersley High School

Decision type: Significant Change – Approve the construction of a modular build to allow SEND capacity of a pre-existing Resource Base to increase from 20 to 25.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Madeley School

Decision type: Significant Change – To physically expand the school by 0.5FE to accommodate increased local population due to house building programme within the catchment of Madeley School.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Damson Wood Nursery and Infant Academy

Decision type: Admission Variation – Temporarily change to the PAN from 60 to 30 for September 2023 and return back to 60 in September 2024.

RD decision: Declined.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Stanley Road Primary School, Worcestershire and Bird's Bush Primary School

Decision type: Admission Variation – To approve a PAN decrease from 60 to 30 at Stanley Road Primary School, to come into effect in September 2024

RD decision: Declined.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Holly Grove Primary Academy

Decision type: In-year variation request – To approve a PAN reduction from 45 to 30.

RD decision: Declined.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Bishop Vesey's Grammar School

Decision type: Significant Change – The proposal is to increase Sixth Form capacity by 100 from 400 to 500 from September 2024. The school is seeking to increase admission in Year 12 by an additional 50 places from 200 to 250 with this increase feeding through to Year 13 the following academic year.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Two Rivers High School

Decision type: Significant Change – To increase capacity from 200 to 290.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Watermill School

Decision type: Significant Change – The expansion of Watermill’s SEN provision by 82 places on the Middlehurst site, located in close proximity to the school.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school 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 Kinver High School and Sixth Form opening a sixth form satellite site at The Crestwood School, Staffordshire.

Type of decision: Significant change.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient information to present at Advisory Board.

Project: To discuss a sponsor for Broadmeadow Infant School, Birmingham.

Type of decision: Sponsored Route.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Insufficient information to present at Advisory Board.

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