



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 26 October 2023

Attendance - **The meeting was held via correspondence only.**

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 note of 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

- Dame Maura Regan (AB)
- Jo Heaton (AB)
- Colin Lofthouse (AB)
- Robert Tarn (AB)
- Dame Nicola Stephenson (AB)
- Jason Brine (AB)

Apologies

- Anita Bath (AB)
- Elizabeth Horne (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- None

Representations received

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

Converter Academy Orders

Points raised in relation to school conversion.

Project: Fishburn Primary School, County Durham to convert and join Eden Academy Trust.

AB key points raised:

- Fishburn Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2023 and judged Requires Improvement (RI). The outcome of the school's previous inspection in March 2019 was also RI.
- Following the latest inspection, the Governing Body of Fishburn Primary School resolved to apply to convert to academy status.
- The school has received support from multiple Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) over the past three years and has been working with Eden Academy Trust since the beginning of 2023.
- Fishburn believe that Eden Academy Trust has the capacity to strengthen the school, having supported and improved nearby schools with a similar demographic. The Trust has experience working with schools with a high % of disadvantaged pupils.
- Eden Academy Trust consists of four primary schools. Geographically, the schools in this trust are within a 12-mile radius, enhancing the opportunities for staff and children to work collaboratively.
- The growth of Eden Academy Trust is in line with the published trust development statement (TDS) for County Durham as an education investment area (EIA).
- AB members are supportive of this proposal however they advised that the trust should review its governance structure to add some legal, HR and financial expertise to its trustee board.
- The board also recommended that an SRMA deployment is undertaken with Eden Academy Trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Converter Academy Orders

Points raised in relation to school conversion.

Project: Whitehouse Primary School, Stockton on Tees to convert and join The 1590 Trust.

AB key points raised:

- Whitehouse Primary School was judged to be a good school in its last section 5 inspection in 2014 and it retained this judgement at its short inspection in 2018.
- The application from Whitehouse Primary school to join the 1590 Trust is in line with the Trust Development Statement for Stockton on Tees for all LA maintained schools to become part of existing multi-academy trusts.
- The headteacher and governing body are confident they have explored the trust landscape to ensure that The 1590 Trust is the best fit for Whitehouse Primary and its community.
- The 1590 Trust has operated as a MAT in the local authority for several years and comprises 6 schools (1 secondary and 5 primary).
- Performance of schools in the trust is positive and all schools are judged to be good by Ofsted.
- The Board was supportive of this proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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

Converter Academy Orders

Points raised in relation to school conversion.

**Project: Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Darlington to convert and join Swift Academies as a re-branded new Multi-Academy Trust (Inicio)
(Deferred from September AB)**

AB key points raised:

- Queen Elizabeth (QE) was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in January 2012; the college retained its 'Good' in March 2020 following a short inspection.
- QE has previously 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.
- This proposal is in line with the published Trust Development Statement for Darlington.
- The board was advised that the conversion of QE will bring additional leadership and organisational capacity to the re-branded trust. The inclusion of QE will also be beneficial to the trust's potential growth options.
- The board was advised that pace of progress towards an Ofsted Good judgement, continues to be monitored at Longfield.
- The board advised that the re-branded trust be established, and the Regional Director assured of improved progress at Longfield in advance of any further growth.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: None

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

Trust Change

Points raised in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: The Federation of Abbey Schools Academy Trust to merge with Melrose Learning Trust

AB key points raised:

- Both Abbey Infants and Abbey Juniors were judged Ofsted Good at their most recent inspections.
- Melrose Learning Trust consists of seven primary schools across County Durham, Darlington, Hartlepool, and Stockton-on-Tees.
- The decision to merge with Melrose Learning Trust is mutually beneficial to both trusts. Becoming one MAT will build collaboration across the trusts and will enable leaders, staff, governors, and directors to draw on each other's experience.
- Melrose Learning Trust central offer will continue to be reviewed in line with current and future growth.
- The Federation of Abbey Schools Academy Trust will be the first non-church schools to join Melrose Learning Trust. The Federation of Abbey Schools Academy trustees understand and approve this governance arrangement.
- The board was informed that the proposal is in line with the Trust Development Statement for Darlington, regarding the consolidation of existing trusts.
- The board was advised that high staffing costs within the Federation Of Abbey Schools will need to be addressed by the trust.
- AB members advised that no further growth should be considered after this trust merger until the financial position of the trust has improved.
- An SRMA deployment is recommended as a priority, within 3 months of The Federation of Abbey Schools Academy Trust joining.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

Conflicts: Rob Tarn did not receive papers for this item or provide advice on this project.

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

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Durham Sixth Form Centre County Durham

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/11/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: John Spence Community High School North Tyneside

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/11/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

Project: Lingdale Primary School Redcar and Cleveland

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/11/2023

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. Joseph's Catholic Academy County Durham

Decision type: Significant Change – Discussion to consider the change in age range from 3-11 to 2-11

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

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