



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 18 October 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
- Dan Parkes
- Tom Leverage
- Guy Shears

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Lizana Oberholzer
- Amarjit Cheema

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

Local Update

- Andrew and the board discussed the Advanced British Standard and how it has been perceived. There were comments around the proposal being interesting and excitement, how it is overdue but there is also some scepticism and unsure expectations.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to St Peter's CofE (VC) First School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join The Moorlands Primary Federation, Stoke-on-Trent.

AB discussion:

- St Peter's CofE (VC) First School, Staffordshire is an Ofsted "Requires Improvement" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The Moorlands Primary Federation consists of 7 academies across Staffordshire.
- The trust has prior experience of working with similar schools to St Peter's and achieving successful outcomes. This gives the school confidence that the trust is well placed to support it in moving forward, while still maintaining the school's autonomy and character.
- The school believes the trust is made up of many schools that share the values of the Woodlands Federation.
- The trust has expertise in working with small, rural schools like St Peter's. It already has schools with a similar demographic and religious character to St Peter's.
- The board sought assurances on the trust finances and capacity. The West Midlands Regions Group team and the board discussed school outcomes and the support in place.
- 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 Harlescott Junior School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Severn Bridges Multi Academy Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Harlescott Junior School, Shropshire is an Ofsted "Good" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to share their strengths and best practice with other schools in the trust.
- Severn Bridges Multi Academy Trust consists of 3 academies across Shrewsbury.
- The trust has experience of pupil populations with similar needs and characteristics to Harlescott. The schools also share similar FSM and EAL pupil demographics.
- This conversion aligns with current departmental priorities and fits into the strategic plan for Shropshire, supporting local primary schools to academise.

- The board sought assurances around 2023 data for the schools, and the governance and leadership across the MAT.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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 Sundorne Infant School and Nursery, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Severn Bridges Multi Academy Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Sundorne Infant School and Nursery, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to share their strengths and best practice with other schools in the trust.
- Severn Bridges Multi Academy Trust consists of 3 academies across Shrewsbury.
- The trust has experience of pupil populations with similar needs and characteristics to Sundorne. The schools also share similar FSM and EAL pupil demographics.
- This conversion aligns with current departmental priorities and fits into the strategic plan for Shropshire, supporting local primary schools to academise.
- The board sought assurances around 2023 data for the schools, and the governance and leadership across the MAT.
- 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 Bomere Heath CofE Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and form a new Multi-Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Bomere Heath CofE Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to build on the strengths of each school and their knowledge of the local areas to build a strong model of educational excellence.
- The Diocese of Lichfield and Diocese of Hereford have jointly developed a new MAT (Two Cathedrals Multi Academy Trust) to support schools in Shropshire and potentially North Herefordshire.

- The formation of a new diocesan MAT in Shropshire is in line with the local area plan that Regions Group have developed in collaboration with the Local Authority and the Diocese of Lichfield.
- The vision for the MAT is “living, learning and loving together”, to realise potential by working together sharing Christian values, knowing the children and families, and providing an ambitious and engaging curriculum with high quality teaching and learning.
- A member of the board commented that this is a way for smaller CofE schools to benefit from structural collaboration and efficiencies. There were also discussions around the trusts governance and the capacity to support the trust, along with the school improvement strategy.
- The board supported the recommendation to include a minimum tenure for the trust members of two years.

RD decision: Approve with the conditions that the interim CEO post is made to be full-time by the end of autumn term 2023 and to use a skills audit to inform a recruitment plan for trustees and members (by 30 November 2023) and implement the recruitment plan for trustees and members to demonstrate it is being delivered (by 31 January 2024).

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 Christ Church CofE Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and form a new Multi-Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Christ Church CofE Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to build on the strengths of each school and their knowledge of the local areas to build a strong model of educational excellence.
- The Diocese of Lichfield and Diocese of Hereford have jointly developed a new MAT (Two Cathedrals Multi Academy Trust) to support schools in Shropshire and potentially North Herefordshire.
- The formation of a new diocesan MAT in Shropshire is in line with the local area plan that Regions Group have developed in collaboration with the Local Authority and the Diocese of Lichfield.
- The vision for the MAT is “living, learning and loving together”, to realise potential by working together sharing Christian values, knowing the children and families, and providing an ambitious and engaging curriculum with high quality teaching and learning.
- A member of the board commented that this is a way for smaller CofE schools to benefit from structural collaboration and efficiencies. There were also discussions

around the trusts governance and the capacity to support the trust, along with the school improvement strategy.

- The board supported the recommendation to include a minimum tenure for the trust members of two years.

RD decision: Approve with the conditions that the interim CEO post is made to be full-time by the end of autumn term 2023 and to use a skills audit to inform a recruitment plan for trustees and members (by 30 November 2023) and implement the recruitment plan for trustees and members to demonstrate it is being delivered (by 31 January 2024).

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 Meole Brace CofE Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and form a new Multi-Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Meole Brace CofE Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to build on the strengths of each school and their knowledge of the local areas to build a strong model of educational excellence.
- The Diocese of Lichfield and Diocese of Hereford have jointly developed a new MAT (Two Cathedrals Multi Academy Trust) to support schools in Shropshire and potentially North Herefordshire.
- The formation of a new diocesan MAT in Shropshire is in line with the local area plan that Regions Group have developed in collaboration with the Local Authority and the Diocese of Lichfield.
- The vision for the MAT is “living, learning and loving together”, to realise potential by working together sharing Christian values, knowing the children and families, and providing an ambitious and engaging curriculum with high quality teaching and learning.
- A member of the board commented that this is a way for smaller CofE schools to benefit from structural collaboration and efficiencies. There were also discussions around the trusts governance and the capacity to support the trust, along with the school improvement strategy.
- The board supported the recommendation to include a minimum tenure for the trust members of two years.

RD decision: Approve with the conditions that the interim CEO post is made to be full-time by the end of autumn term 2023 and to use a skills audit to inform a recruitment plan for trustees and members (by 30 November 2023) and implement the recruitment plan for trustees and members to demonstrate it is being delivered (by 31 January 2024).

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 St John the Baptist CofE Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and form a new Multi-Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- St John the Baptist CofE Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to build on the strengths of each school and their knowledge of the local areas to build a strong model of educational excellence.
- The Diocese of Lichfield and Diocese of Hereford have jointly developed a new MAT (Two Cathedrals Multi Academy Trust) to support schools in Shropshire and potentially North Herefordshire.
- The formation of a new diocesan MAT in Shropshire is in line with the local area plan that Regions Group have developed in collaboration with the Local Authority and the Diocese of Lichfield.
- The vision for the MAT is “living, learning and loving together”, to realise potential by working together sharing Christian values, knowing the children and families, and providing an ambitious and engaging curriculum with high quality teaching and learning.
- A member of the board commented that this is a way for smaller CofE schools to benefit from structural collaboration and efficiencies. There were also discussions around the trusts governance and the capacity to support the trust, along with the school improvement strategy.
- The board supported the recommendation to include a minimum tenure for the trust members of two years.

RD decision: Approve with the conditions that the interim CEO post is made to be full-time by the end of autumn term 2023 and to use a skills audit to inform a recruitment plan for trustees and members (by 30 November 2023) and implement the recruitment plan for trustees and members to demonstrate it is being delivered (by 31 January 2024).

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 Castle School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and form a new multi-academy trust.

AB discussion:

- Castle School, Walsall is an Ofsted “Outstanding” school who have requested to convert and form a Multi Academy Trust.

- Castle Lane Academy of Special Schools (CLASS) is a proposed new MAT within Walsall. Initially there will be two schools in the trust. These schools are both community special schools in Walsall.
- The schools have worked together effectively in a de facto federation since 2019.
- Castle School has a proven record of improving leadership, curriculum, pupil outcomes and safety. The Castle leadership team has provided strategic support to other schools across the borough of Walsall for more than a decade. Castle was approached by Walsall LA to support Jane Lane following its Ofsted inspection late 2018 which placed Jane Lane in special measures.
- Castle School and Jane Lane have been working as a federation, with the support of Walsall LA.
- Members of the board supported the academisation of Castle School and sponsor of Jane Lane, and the clear and successful track record of the working sponsorship.
- There were reassurances given around school improvement and discussions on governance.
- The board supported the recommendation to set up an external mentor relationship.

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 The Jane Lane School, A College for Cognition & Learning, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and form a new multi-academy trust.

AB discussion:

- The Jane Lane School, Walsall is an Ofsted “Requires Improvement” school who have requested to convert and form a Multi Academy Trust.
- Castle Lane Academy of Special Schools (CLASS) is a proposed new MAT within Walsall. Initially there will be two schools in the trust. These schools are both community special schools in Walsall.
- The schools have worked together effectively in a de facto federation since 2019.
- Castle School has a proven record of improving leadership, curriculum, pupil outcomes and safety. The Castle leadership team has provided strategic support to other schools across the borough of Walsall for more than a decade. Castle was approached by Walsall LA to support Jane Lane following its Ofsted inspection late 2018 which placed Jane Lane in special measures.
- Castle School and Jane Lane have been working as a federation, with the support of Walsall LA.
- Members of the board supported the academisation of Castle School and sponsor of Jane Lane, and the clear and successful track record of the working sponsorship.

- There were reassurances given around school improvement and discussions on governance.
- The board supported the recommendation to set up an external mentor relationship.

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 Withymoor Primary School, Dudley, to convert and become an academy and join Hales Valley Trust, Dudley.

AB discussion:

- Withymoor Primary School, Dudley is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Hales Valley Trust consists of 5 academies across Dudley.
- Withymoor have been a trust partner for 18 months, and teachers have benefited from relevant and successful cpd/networking/moderation work. Governors feel that the trust's values are aligned with those of the school, and they believe this is the right decision for the children, staff and community.
- The trust also advocates for school individuality which was a selling point, they won't look to change the name or other individual qualities of the school. The school are also keen to start tapping into the trust's central functions to allow them to focus more on school improvement.
- Comments were addressed on governance at the trust.
- The board supported the recommendation of a School Resource Management Adviser.

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 Gig Mill Primary School, Dudley, to convert and become an academy and join Hales Valley Trust, Dudley.

AB discussion:

- Gig Mill Primary School, Dudley is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Hales Valley Trust consists of 5 academies across Dudley.
- During the last 12 months, Gig-Mill Primary School has benefitted from the growing collaboration with Hales Valley Trust and found the trust to be a supportive and

forward-thinking environment for school leaders and a trust which shared their values and ethos.

- Gig-Mill staff have had the opportunity to work alongside the trust. This has enabled the school's leadership team to get to know the trust and understand how they operate.
- The trust also advocates for school individuality which was a selling point, they won't look to change the name or other individual qualities of the school. The school are also keen to start tapping into the trust's central functions to allow them to focus more on school improvement.
- Comments were addressed on governance at the trust, finances and school outcomes.
- The board supported the recommendation of a School Resource Management Adviser.

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.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: To discuss a sponsor for Talbot First School, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Talbot First School, Staffordshire is an Ofsted rated "Requires Improvement" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- The Moorlands Primary Federation consists of 7 schools placed across Staffordshire.
- The Moorlands Primary Federation is a suitable fit as the Trust has had progressive conversations with the school and LA is also supportive of this trust.
- Trust expertise lies specifically in small rural mixed aged schools, and they already have one school within the Trust which is similar in structure, religious denomination, and demographic to the Talbot First School.
- The board sought assurances on the trust finances and capacity. The West Midlands Regions Group team and the board discussed school outcomes and the support in place.
- 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 Bicton CofE Primary School and Nursery, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Bicton CofE Primary School and Nursery, Shropshire is an Ofsted rated "Requires Improvement" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- The Diocese of Lichfield and Diocese of Hereford have jointly developed a new MAT (Two Cathedrals Multi Academy Trust) to support schools in Shropshire and potentially North Herefordshire.
- Following an appraisal of suitable sponsor options, Regions Group recommend that Two Cathedrals is still the most suitable trust for Bicton.
- A member of the board commented that this is a way for smaller CofE schools to benefit from structural collaboration and efficiencies. There were also discussions around the trusts governance and the capacity to support the trust, along with the school improvement strategy.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve with the conditions that the interim CEO post needs to be made full-time and governance needs to be secure prior to the schools converting.

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

Further actions required: To inform the School and Sponsor.

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

AB discussion:

- Broadmeadow Infant School, Birmingham is an Ofsted rated “Inadequate” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Robin Hood Multi Academy Trust consists of 5 schools placed across Birmingham and Solihull.
- Following a sponsor options review, Robin Hood Multi Academy Trust (MAT) was identified as a strong primary sponsor.
- Robin Hood MAT has a strong Ofsted profile in the West Midlands. Three schools have improved from Ofsted ‘Requires Improvement’ to ‘Good’ since joining the trust. Geographically, the trust has four schools all within a 7-mile radius of Broadmeadow.
- Robin Hood MAT has experience of working with schools with high levels of disadvantage not too dissimilar from Broadmeadow. It also has experience of working with schools with a high proportion of pupils who require SEND support.
- Updates were given on the trusts performance data. Board members agreed that Robin Hood would be a strong sponsor for the school.
- 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 Yorkswood Primary School, Solihull.

AB discussion:

- Yorkswood Primary School, Solihull is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Robin Hood Multi Academy Trust consists of 5 schools placed across Birmingham and Solihull.
- All of Robin Hood’s schools are within 8 miles of Yorkswood.
- Robin Hood has a strong track record of school improvement, both with their own schools, often providing intensive support to schools prior to joining which has led to schools receiving improved Ofsted judgements before conversion, and other schools. They are a trust used frequently for TSI support, and as NLE support.
- The addition of Yorkswood would further grow Robin Hood’s presence in Solihull, something outlined in their growth plans.
- 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 Holywell Primary and Nursery School, Worcestershire.

AB discussion:

- Holywell Primary and Nursery School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Stour Vale Academy Trust consists of 9 schools placed across Sandwell and Dudley.
- Stour Vale Academy Trust has sponsor status. The trust is expanding its executive team to create further capacity for pipeline and potential future projects. It will bring much needed additional MAT capacity within this educational area.
- Stour Vale Academy Trust has an existing relationship with Holywell, and it is located near several of Stour Vale’s Good schools.
- The board supported the recommendation of a School Resource Management Adviser.

RD decision: Approve.

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

Further actions required: To inform the School and Sponsor.

Significant Change

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

Project: To discuss the changes affecting provision reserved for pupils with SEND (8 places) and the introduction of a Mainstream Autism Base (MAB) at St Weonard's Academy, Herefordshire.

AB discussion:

- St Weonard's Academy, Herefordshire, last full OFSTED inspection at St Weonards Primary School (former establishment) was Outstanding in November 2017. There is no available data for recent educational performance at St Weonards Academy after conversion in October 2019 due to the covid-19 pandemic.
- There is a need for an expansion in the number of specialist primary MAB places in Herefordshire. The Local Authority only has two existing MABs.
- This new MAB, in addition to the three other schools which will accommodate MABs, will allow a better geographical spread within Herefordshire meaning travel distances for pupils can be reduced.
- The new MABs will create an ethos of inclusion throughout the schools concerned. The extension of the network of MABs will be highly beneficial to the whole of the community in Herefordshire.
- Comments were picked up on the leadership team.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss Esprit MAT, Stoke-on-Trent, to transfer to Co-op Academies Trust, Manchester.

AB discussion:

- Esprit Multi-Academy Trust has been looking to merge with a larger trust for some time. Following a consideration of 15 trusts, including visits and presentations, Esprit identified Co-operative Academies Trust as the most suitable choice.
- Esprit's schools will benefit from joining Co-op AT, particularly Grove school, which will be in close proximity to two of Co-op's strongest schools, in Friarswood (Good Ofsted) and Glebe (Outstanding). Co-op AT has a track record of school improvement, recently demonstrated by five schools within the last 12 months moving from RI to good, with two of the schools having never received a good rating in their history.
- Comments were picked up around finance, pupil numbers and trust performance. The board also discussed 2023 outcomes.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss The Telford Priory School, Telford and Wrekin to transfer to Learning Community Trust, Telford and Wrekin.

AB discussion:

- LCT is an 11 school MAT with sponsor status, based predominantly in Telford and Wrekin, with one special school in Shrewsbury. It comprises of five primaries (including Allscot Meads, an LA presumption primary school that opened in September 2023), three secondary, two special schools and a 14-16 AP academy.
- LCT has an impressive track record of school improvement. Six of the trust's eleven academies have been inspected since joining the trust. In 2022 three of the trust's academies were rated as Good by Ofsted.
- LCT has an effective SI strategy and has and continues to increase its capacity alongside its planned growth to meet current and future needs.
- Updates were given on 2023 data, and the trust's plans around pupil numbers. There were questions on the trust capacity and finances.
- The board supported the recommendation of a School Resource Management Adviser.

RD decision: Approve.

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

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss The Telford Park School, Telford and Wrekin to transfer to Amethyst Academies Trust, Wolverhampton.

AB discussion:

- Amethyst Academies Trust is a four school MAT based in Wolverhampton. It comprises of two 'Good' secondary schools and two special schools.
- Although Amethyst is a small MAT it has a strong track record and has significantly grown their central team capacity in preparation for growth.
- Amethyst has already completed due diligence on Telford Park and has a clear action plan that addresses the areas of concern on the Ofsted report.
- Updates were given on 2023 data, and the trusts plans around pupil numbers. There were questions on the School Improvement capacity and a discussion on land issues.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sarah Finch 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: Seva School, Coventry

Decision type: Admission Variation - Reception in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to be reduced from 60 pupils to 30 pupils (1 form entry) and Year 7 (2024/25) to be reduced from 120 pupils to 90 pupils (3 form entry).

RD decision:

- Approve - Reduction in Reception PAN
- Decline – Reduction in Year 7 PAN

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 issuing an Academy Order to Norton-in-Hales CofE Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and form a new Multi-Academy Trust.

Type of decision: Converter Academy Order.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Norton-in-Hales CofE Primary School withdrew their application.

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