



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

Thursday 16 November 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 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)
- Jason Brine (AB)
- Anita Bath (AB)
- Elizabeth Horne (AB)

Apologies

- Dame Nicola Stephenson (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- Matt Beer (Deputy Director, North East Regions Group)

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

The RD welcomed board members to the meeting and introduced a presentation from the Teacher Flexible Working Team.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: Sponsor match discussion for Fellgate Primary School, South Tyneside

AB discussion:

- This is a proposal to seek a decision in principle on the preferred sponsor for Fellgate Primary School to enable the trust to undertake due diligence.
- Fellgate was judged 'Requires Improvement' in October 2017 and September 2021 and therefore meets the definition of coasting as a school not making the necessary improvements. Following consideration of progress including representations made by the school an Academy Order was issued.
- The board was advised that Fellgate includes a specialist primary ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) unit, and the local authority would like to increase provision at this unit from 50-55 places due to rising demand.
- Fellgate has received support from the preferred sponsor since February 2023 through the Trust and School Improvement Offer (TSI), the trust is fully aware of the support required and if this decision is approved, they will work with the school to ensure improvements to educational standards are made.
- The preferred sponsor currently has 4 schools, 3 primaries which are all judged to be Ofsted 'Good' and a special school which is judged 'Outstanding'.
- The board raised concerns about the falling pupil numbers within the mainstream provision at Fellgate and was advised that there is potential to attract new pupils as future housing developments are expected.
- The board discussed the proposed expansion of the resource provision at Fellgate and was advised that demand for places in the area is high. The board was informed that the preferred trust will work with Fellgate and South Tyneside Local Authority to ensure that that this specialist provision is funded appropriately.
- The board discussed the trust governance structure and agreed that further strengthening was needed at member level.
- The RD noted the board's view about the financial challenges in sponsoring this school and agreed to commission an SRMA to help support the trust and mentoring support for the CFO if the formal sponsor match is approved.
- The RD approved the preferred sponsor option in principle, and agreed they can now commence due diligence.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school and trust.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: Emily Wilding Davison School, Northumberland, to be sponsored by River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT)

AB discussion:

- This is a proposal to approve the sponsor match for Emily Wilding Davison School, a special school which caters for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.
- Emily Wilding Davison School was inspected in January 2023 and was judged to be 'Inadequate'.
- The board was informed that the school has some complex land issues which they are working with the local authority to resolve.
- The board was advised that RTMAT has undertaken due diligence at the school and has identified key areas for improvement.
- The board was advised that RTMAT has experience of driving educational improvement, all 4 of its AP settings are Ofsted 'Good' and a school sponsored by RTMAT improved its judgement to 'Good' at its first inspection.
- The board asked for assurances on how RTMAT will provide support if approved as sponsor. They were informed of plans to deploy from capacity within its Gateshead setting, alongside executive trust staff.
- The board discussed the recent governance review at RTMAT which confirmed robust processes are already in place. The board suggested some further clarity of the current governance arrangements at local governing body level.
- The RD approved the proposal for River Tees MAT to sponsor Emily Wilding Davison School.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school and trust.

Sponsored Route:

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

Project: Sponsor match discussion for Carville Primary School, North Tyneside

AB discussion:

- This is a proposal to discuss the sponsor match options for Carville Primary School, a foundation school situated in Wallsend.
- Carville Primary School was inspected by Ofsted in July 2023 and was judged to be 'Inadequate'.
- Performance results are significantly below national average.
- The RD confirmed that consideration has been given to several trusts as potential sponsors, taking into account performance, trust capacity, geography, future growth plans and percentages of pupil demographic.
- The board discussed the proposed sponsor options and agreed that further consideration is required to ensure the right sponsor is selected.
- The RD considered the feedback and agreed that further work and discussion is required before a final decision is made.

RD decision: Defer

Conflicts: Dame Nicola Stephenson was not present and did not receive papers for this item.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school and final sponsor match decision to be agreed by the RD at a future AB.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

Project: St Helen Auckland Community Primary School, County Durham

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/12/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

Project: The Duchess's Community High School, Northumberland

AB discussion: Proposed opening date 01/12/2023

Further actions required: No further action required.

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

Project: Thornley Primary School, County Durham to convert and join WISE Academies

Type of decision: Academy Order

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Rescheduled for a future AB meeting.