



Notes of Meeting: South West

31 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

- Hannah Woodhouse

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Mark Ducker
- Jennifer Blunden
- Margaret Simmons-Bird
- Adele Haysom
- Jackie Fieldwick
- Adele Haysom
- Rachel Howie
- Stuart Ingram

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Steve Savory

DfE senior civil servants

- Lucy Livings
- Matthew Stevenson

Representations received

- One representation received for Corfe Hills School (SAT), trust change transferring to Initio Learning Trust.
- Four representations received for Countess Wear Community School, sponsored route joining Cornerstone Academy Trust.
- Three representations received for Venturers Trust, trust change transferring to E-ACT.
- One representation received for Malmesbury Church of England Primary School (SAT), significant change to increase capacity from 420 places to 630 places.

These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

Regional Director Update

- AB members shared local intelligence and provided insight on the challenges being faced by the sector.
- Ofsted inspection outcomes from the start of this academic year were shared.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss St Mary's CofE School, Truro, **Cornwall** converting to academy status and joining The Rainbow Multi Academy Trust.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the case and did not raise any concerns with the proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust and Diocese.

Project: To discuss Ash Church of England Primary School, **Somerset** converting to academy status and joining Preston Primary Academy Trust.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the case and did not raise any concerns with the proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust and Diocese.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss the following eight academies from Venturers Trust, **Bristol** transferring to E-ACT:

- Montpelier High School, Bristol
- Merchant's Academy, Bristol
- The Dolphin School, Bristol
- Bannerman Road Community Academy, Bristol
- The Kingfisher School, Bristol
- Fairlawn Primary School, Bristol
- Barton Hill Academy, Bristol
- Venturers' Academy, Bristol

Points raised in Discussion:

Representation:

The representations received were discussed and assurances were given that the Regions Group team will continue to work closely with E-ACT and Venturers Trust.

Strategy:

- Venturers Trust (VT) is made up of eight academies that primarily serve deprived communities in the South and East of the City of Bristol. The trust is jointly sponsored by the University of Bristol and the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV).
- School performance is mixed; some schools have been on an improving trajectory but in others, the trust's impact has been less clear. Two schools in the trust are currently subject to intervention (Montpelier High School and Barton Hill Primary) and performance at a third (Merchants' Academy) is of concern to trust leaders.
- The board voted on E-ACT as the preferred partner:
 - E-ACT has a presence and good knowledge of the Bristol context, specifically South Bristol, where they have experience of improving primary schools that feed into Merchants Academy.
 - E-ACT have a structure that means there will be a viable hub in Bristol as a result of the merger.
 - E-ACT represents a strong cultural fit for the values and ethos of the Venturers Trust schools.
 - E-ACT has a track record of improving schools and outcomes for pupils.

Governance:

- The diversity and experience of the E-ACT Trust Board, in relation to the communities served by the Venturers Trust schools, was discussed. The Regions

Group team will continue to discuss this with the trust, specifically their plans to address this through future recruitment and the need for local expertise on the board.

School Improvement (SI):

- E-ACT have a well structured central team including a National Director of Primary and a National Director of Secondary alongside three Education Directors for Primary and Secondary schools respectively.
- The trust has SI capacity which it deploys to schools based on level and area of need.
- The vulnerable schools in VT will be able to access the leadership and school improvement support they need on transfer to E-ACT.

Finance:

- There are no financial concerns with the trust.

Other:

- AB members commented on the diverse community across the schools and asked about the plans of the Trust to connect with the local community. Assurances were given that the Trustees and Governors know the local communities and are active in their engagement and this will continue to be discussed with the Trust.
- The isolation of the special school in VT was acknowledged. Regions Group and E-ACT will discuss partnerships here.
- The trust relationship for E-ACT is held by the South West Region and there will be ongoing and regular contact with the trust to review the support available and progress made on the above areas.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Project: To discuss Corfe Hills School (SAT), **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole** transferring to Initio Learning Trust.

Points raised in Discussion:

Representation:

The representations received were acknowledged.

Strategy:

- Corfe Hills School (CHS) is a single academy trust.
- Regions Group and the ESFA have worked closely with the trust to find a suitable MAT. Initio Learning Trust (ILT) has been identified as a good strategic fit.

- ILT has already developed a strong working relationship with CHS and the headteacher is working closely with the senior leadership.
- CHS is seen as adding capacity to ILT, with an experienced Leadership Team, bringing subject specific knowledge and experience to secondary provision and supporting the delivery of ILT's strategic plan.

Governance:

- The diversity of the Trust Board and the need to strengthen the education expertise at secondary level was discussed.

School Improvement (SI):

- ILT has identified the educational areas that will require support, and will work closely with CHS on their SI planning.

Finance:

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have worked closely with both CHS and ILT to review the financial position and identify appropriate funding support.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

- Strengthen secondary educational expertise on the trust board.
- Conduct an external review of the secondary SI strategy.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Project: To discuss Chickerell Primary Academy (SAT), **Dorset** transferring to The First Federation Trust.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the case and did not raise any concerns with the proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: Steve Savory offers support to the CEO of First Federation Trust hence did not receive the papers and was not present for the discussion.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Project: To discuss Pen Mill Infant and Nursery Academy (SAT), **Somerset** transferring to Preston Primary Academy Trust.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the case and did not raise any concerns with the proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Sponsored Route

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

Project: To discuss Countess Wear Community School, **Devon** joining Cornerstone Academy Trust.

Points raised in Discussion:

The representations received were acknowledged.

Strategy:

- Countess Wear (CW) is a 2-11 mainstream community primary school located in Exeter, Devon and is part of the three school Exe Estuary Federation.
- The school was inspected by Ofsted in January 2019 and received a requires improvement judgement. On being reinspected in October 2022 they received a consecutive RI judgement.
- The Cornerstone Academy Trust (TCAT) as the proposed sponsor represents an opportunity to grow a small trusted MAT that can bring capacity and choice to the central Exeter area.
- Cornerstone's vision is that the Trust has "has high-expectations, builds children's confidence, and ensures success for all" and that children are inspired to "achieve high standards and become lifelong learners"
- Cornerstone has three strong primaries in close proximity of CW and has a good record of rapid school improvement.

Governance:

- The governance structure of the trust was discussed, it was recommended that an external review of governance would be beneficial. This was acknowledged by the Regions Group team and will be reviewed with the trust to discuss the options of support.

School Improvement (SI):

- The leadership structure at the trust manage the schools efficiently and effectively with a clear school improvement focus.
- The Head of Education works closely with the Head of Curriculum and Subject Leads, to ensure the curriculum is well designed, well planned and staff are well trained.
- It was recommended that as the trust grows they consider a review of the SI model and how to develop the model in line with trust growth.

Finance:

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have no concerns currently around the financial health of Cornerstone however they will continue to monitor with the trust.

RD decision: Approve with conditions

- Trust to undertake a review of the current school improvement structure.
- Refer with the Confederation of Schools Trust (CST) or the National Governance Association (NGA) to consider whether the current governance structure is in line with best practice.
- CEO to have a mentor or coach to provide positive and constructive support as the trust grows.
- Engagement of a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Project: To discuss Bovey Tracey Primary School, Devon joining Learning Academy Partnership (South West).

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the case and did not raise any concerns with the proposal.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Project: To discuss Littleham Church of England Primary School, Devon joining Link Academy Trust.

Points raised in Discussion:

Strategy:

- Littleham is part of a 5-school federation (The Jubilee with Pebblebed).
- Littleham received a 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgement in June 2019. On being reinspected in May 2023 they received an inadequate judgement which highlighted that senior leaders had not addressed the significant issues at the school.
- The Local Authority and Diocese are supportive of academisation.
- There is a management partnership with First Federation Trust that has been well-received by the school and Federation.
- Link Academy Trust operates 17 small, rural primary schools. Two of the strongest schools are geographically within 30-minutes of Littleham.
- Link is a well-established and recognised for ensuring the sustainability of small schools within village communities in Devon, balancing a clear local identity and consistent trust wide standards.

School Improvement (SI):

- AB members commented on the strength of the trust's SI model, which includes annual reviews of attainment, progress and attendance.
- At school level, individual SI plans are in place to address the areas of focus set out within the trust improvement plan.
- A strong level of support will be available for Littleham, with coaching and mentoring that will play a significant role to facilitate improvement via academy head networking.

Finance:

- There are no financial concerns.

Other:

- Link have expertise in improving small, rural primary schools which will continue to be reviewed with the trust and the Regions Group team.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust and Diocese.

Decisions escalated

List of decisions that have been escalated to the Minister.

Project: To discuss a significant change application for Malmesbury Church of England Primary School (SAT), **Wiltshire** to increase capacity from 420 places to 630 places.

Representation:

The representations received were acknowledged.

Points raised in Discussion:

Strategy:

- Malmesbury Primary School (MPS) is a two form entry primary school and Single Academy Trust in Malmesbury, Wiltshire. In 2012 it received an outstanding Ofsted judgement.
- The school sits next to land owned by a housebuilding company that is under a Section 106 agreement with Wiltshire County Council, meaning it is reserved for school expansion if additional school places are required.
- The James Dyson Foundation has offered a £6million grant for MPS to fund an expansion, building 7 new classrooms and 2 rooms for STEAM activities. The ambition of the James Dyson Foundation is to develop a first-class STEAM facility with purpose-built rooms equipped for design, technology, art, science, and mathematics-based activities to inspire the engineers of the future.

- This would mean that MPS would incrementally expand year by year for 7 years, from 420 places to 630 places, between September 2027 and 2033.
- There are two primary schools in Malmesbury: MPS and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. Lea and Garsdon CofE Primary is just over 3 miles away (10 minutes), to which some pupils are bussed to / from Malmesbury.
- There are currently 110 places per year group across the three schools. The Local Authorities data suggests that there are sufficient places in these schools to cater for the expected demand, and that a 210 place expansion would create surplus places at all three local schools and would have a detrimental impact on both St Joseph's and Lea and Garsdon.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Escalated to ministers for a decision

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open.

All of the projects have gone through previous Advisory Board meetings for consideration and discussion. These projects are checked for any legal inconsistencies to ensure they are in line with departmental requirements and that all conditions are met.

Project: Covingham Park Primary School, **Swindon** (The Blue Kite Academy Trust)

Points raised in discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Opening date 1 November 2023.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Oaktree Nursery and Primary School, **Swindon** (The Blue Kite Academy Trust)

Points raised in discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Opening date 1 November 2023.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Horwood and Newton Tracey Community Primary School, **Devon** (TEAM Multi-Academy Trust)

Points raised in discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Opening date 1 November 2023.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Pilton Infants' School, **Devon** (TEAM Multi-Academy Trust)

Points raised in discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Opening date 1 November 2023.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Wolborough Church of England (Aided) Nursery and Primary School, **Devon** (Link Academy Trust)

Points raised in discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Opening date 1 November 2023.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: To discuss a significant change for Lytchett Matravers Primary School, **Dorset** (Hamwic Education Trust) to change the age range from 4-11 to 2-11 to incorporate pre-school provision.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Project: To discuss a significant change for Bibury Church of England Primary School, **Gloucestershire** (The Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust) to change the age range from 4-11 to 2-11 to incorporate pre-school provision.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and trust.

Conflicts: None.

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 a significant change application for Lavington School, **Wiltshire** (Equa Multi Academy Trust) to change its age range from 11-16 to 11-18 to add sixth form provision.

Type of decision: Significant change

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Necessary papers were not ready.

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