



Notes of Meeting: East of England

Date of meeting – 23 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 discussion at the meeting (where appropriate). Board members with conflicts of interest with an item were not present during the discussion, nor received papers for the item.

Regional Director (RD) chair

- Jonathan Duff (RD)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Al Kingsley (AB)
- Tim Coulson (AB)
- Mark Farmer (AB)
- Clare Flintoff (AB)
- Lawrence Chapman (AB)
- Sarah Skinner (AB)
- Josephine Valentine (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- Emily Williams, Deputy Director (DD), East of England
- Matt Stevenson, Deputy Director (DD), South West (observing)

Representations received

- Two received about the project; 'To discuss Hadleigh Infant and Nursery School, Essex, converting and becoming an academy and joining South Essex Academy Trust.'
- These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

- The RD gave some general national and regional updates and invited feedback from the board.
- The board discussed Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools in the East of England region and the efforts to mitigate its impact.
- The board considered Ofsted judgment outcomes for the previous month.
- The board was given a presentation on KS2 and KS4 performance in the East of England region. The RD invited feedback from the board on the presentation.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss Bedford College Academies Trust (Multi-Academy Trust consisting of Wixams Tree Primary School and Wixams Academy), Bedford, joining Knowledge Schools Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board was reminded that in October's AB, Bedford Road was approved to join Knowledge Schools Trust, thus creating a hub for Knowledge Schools Trust in Bedford.
- The board discussed the governance of the trust.
- The board discussed the benefits that the trust could offer in terms of resources.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the trusts of the decision.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss Laburnum Primary School, Central Bedfordshire, being sponsored by Advantage Schools Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board was reminded that it discussed sponsor options for this project in July's AB.
- The board heard about the school's performance data.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Barnes Farm Infant School and Barnes Farm Junior School, which are both part of The Chelmsford Learning Partnership, Essex, amalgamating.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that these schools both have 'Good' Ofsted judgements and are in the same trust.
- The board heard about the schools' governance and performance data.
- The board noted that the amalgamation would lead to consistency in the curriculum between the two schools which would make the transition for pupils from infant to junior school easier.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Ardleigh St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Essex, converting and becoming an academy and joining Canonium Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard about the performance, leadership and finance of the school and how Canonium Learning Trust could offer support to the school in these areas.
- The board heard about the performance of the schools within Canonium Learning Trust and the governance of the trust.
- The board heard that the trust is keen to expand and noted the geographic hub that the trust is creating.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss Hadleigh Infant and Nursery School, Essex, converting and becoming an academy and joining South Essex Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard about the school's performance data and finances.
- The board discussed the governance of the trust and noted that it was not aligned with best practice, as set out in the Academy Trust Handbook.
- The board noted that trust's 2022 performance data for phonics and key stage 1 is not consistently at and above national averages in all of its schools. The trust's 2023 performance data for key stage 2 is also below national average.
- The board considered that the approval would lead to the Infant and Nursery School and Junior School being part of separate trusts.
- The board considered the two representations that had been received concerning this project and which both opposed this project.

RD decision: Decline.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and trust of the decision.
Delivery officer to discuss this further with the school.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Harston and Newton Community Primary School, Cambridgeshire, converting and becoming an academy and joining The Cam Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard about the school's performance and governance, and its concerns about its finances and reducing pupil numbers.
- The board heard that the trust would give financial stability to the school.
- The board discussed the future of the leadership and governance of the trust.
- The board discussed recent Ofsted inspections and primary performance data of schools within the trust, and their improvement plans.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and trust of the decision.
Delivery Officer to seek clarity about the leadership arrangements for The Cam Academy Trust. Regions Group to carry out a further review of information about the schools in The Cam Academy Trust.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Cambridgeshire, converting and becoming an academy and joining Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, Suffolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard about the track record of high performance at St Alban's Catholic Primary School, with sustained performance above national averages and an 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgement.
- The board heard about the performance data and Ofsted outcomes of schools within the trust.
- The board heard that the school would add capacity to the trust's school improvement strategy by joining the trust.
- The board advised that an SRMA be deployed to clarify the financial position of the school.

RD decision: Approve with conditions. SRMA to be deployed to the school once the school converts and becomes an academy and joins the trust.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision. Delivery officer to arrange for an SRMA to visit the school.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss Burrough Green Primary School, Cambridgeshire, being sponsored by ACT. To discuss Saint Michael CofE Primary School, Peterborough, being sponsored by ACT.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that both these schools had received two 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgements.
- The board heard about the governance of ACT.
- The board heard about the expansion of ACT and how the trust board is supporting its growth.
- The board heard that an SMRA has been deployed along with a full governance review at Saint Michael CofE Primary School.
- The board discussed the financial situations of both schools.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Dersingham Primary School (Voluntary-Aided), Norfolk, converting and becoming an academy and joining the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the trust is in a growth phase, with many new schools joining recently.
- The board heard that the trust offered leadership support to the school.
- The board heard about the capacity of the trust and the steady improvement in performance of schools within the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Mill Mead Primary School, Hertfordshire, converting and becoming an academy and joining Simon Balle Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board considered the case and discussed the finances of the school and trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Hartsbourne Primary School (Bushey St James Trust), Hertfordshire, adding a school-based nursery.

AB discussion:

- The board considered the case and provided no specific comments in relation to the proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school, the trust, and the local authority of the decision.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

List of decisions taken by the RD outside of AB meetings

Project: To discuss Pear Tree Mead Academy (single-academy trust), Essex, changing the age range from 3-11 to 2-11 years and increasing their pupil capacity in Reception from 45 spaces to 60 spaces.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further Actions Required: Delivery officer to inform the school, the trust, and the local authority of the decision.

Project: To discuss Freshwaters Primary Academy (BMAT Education), Essex increasing their pupil admission from 315 spaces to 420 spaces.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further Actions Required: Delivery officer to inform the school, the trust, and the local authority of the decision.

Project: To discuss the addition of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder specialist resource base at Stifford Clays Primary School (South West Essex Community Education Trust Limited), Essex.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further Actions Required: Delivery officer to inform the school, the trust, and the local authority 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 agenda but not discussed at the AB meeting.

Project: To discuss Beecroft Academy, Central Bedfordshire, joining Pyramid Schools Trust.

Type of decision: Trust Change.

Reason for why it was taken off the agenda: Further information requested to make an informed decision.

Project: To discuss Norton Road Primary School, Luton, converting and becoming an academy and joining The Pioneer Learning Trust.

Type of decision: Converter Academy Order.

Reason for why it was taken off the agenda: Further information requested to make an informed decision.