



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 22 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). 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
- Amarjit Cheema

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- None.

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

Local Update

- None.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Apley Wood Primary School, Telford and Wrekin, to convert and become an academy and join REAch2 Academy Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Apley Wood Primary School, Telford and Wrekin is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to strengthen its capacity to develop at a greater pace and provide more opportunities for children and staff.
- REAch2 Academy Trust consists of 60 academies across East of England, West Midlands, South East and London regions.
- The cluster model operated by REAch2 will strengthen Apley Wood’s collaboration with other local schools, within the cluster 1 area of Telford, Cannock, Wolverhampton and surrounding areas.
- Overall, the relationship between the trust and the school is developing well and the foundations for a successful conversion are in place.
- The board discussed performance data and sought reassurances around the trust finances.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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 Weston-Under-Penyard CofE Primary School, Herefordshire, to convert and become an academy and join Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Weston-Under Penyard CofE Primary School, Herefordshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to provide opportunities for strong leadership and staff development, allowing school staff to place a greater focus on teaching and learning.
- Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust consists of 15 academies across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.
- Whitchurch CofE Primary School is currently federated with Weston-under-Penyard CofE Primary, within the River Wye Federation. Both schools are keen to academise, with the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust as their preferred choice as the schools have previously worked with other VA schools already in the trust and see this as a natural progression to their existing collaboration.

- In joining the trust, Weston-under-Penyard CofE Primary will benefit from the trust's economies of scale, both financially and from a school improvement perspective.
- There were discussions around outcomes and pupil numbers, and the resources and experience to support this.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Whitchurch CofE Primary School, Herefordshire, to convert and become an academy and join Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Whitchurch CofE Primary School, Herefordshire is an Ofsted "Outstanding" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to provide opportunities for strong leadership and staff development, allowing school staff to place a greater focus on teaching and learning.
- Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust consists of 15 academies across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.
- Whitchurch CofE Primary School is currently federated with Weston-under-Penyard CofE Primary, within the River Wye Federation. Both schools are keen to academise, with the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust as their preferred choice as the schools have previously worked with other VA schools already in the trust and see this as a natural progression to their existing collaboration.
- In joining the trust, Whitchurch and Weston-under-Penyard CofE Primary will benefit from the trust's economies of scale, both financially and from a school improvement perspective.
- There were discussions around outcomes and pupil numbers, and the resources and experience to support this.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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 Goodrich CofE Primary School, Herefordshire, to convert and become an academy and join Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Goodrich CofE Primary School, Herefordshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to join a trust which will provide further challenge, consistency and support for both staff and pupils.
- Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust consists of 15 academies across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.
- The Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust is the preferred choice as Goodrich CofE Primary School has previously worked closely with existing schools and leaders in the trust.
- The trust is continuing to grow its Hereford hub and is experienced in supporting primary schools with a pupil population similar to Goodrich’s.
- There were discussions around outcomes and pupil numbers, and the resources and experience to support this.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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 Newfield Park Primary School, Dudley, to convert and become an academy and join Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, Sandwell.

AB discussion:

- Newfield Park Primary School, Dudley is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust consists of 10 academies across Sandwell and Dudley.
- They believe that their values and ethos align and that the high academic standards and expectations set by the trust will provide opportunities for their pupils, staff and wider community.
- There was a discussion around governance at the trust.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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 Westlands Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join Staffordshire University Academies Trust, Staffordshire.

AB discussion:

- Westlands Primary School, Staffordshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust to develop a support network with the other primary schools within the trust that are across the Staffordshire region.
- Staffordshire University Academies Trust consists of 20 academies across Staffordshire.
- There is already a school-trust relationship and there have been several visits with SUAT, and senior leaders of the school involved.
- The hub of SUAT which is a Staffordshire University is 5 miles away from Westlands and the closest school in the trust is 8.7 miles away.
- There was a discussion around performance outcomes.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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 Onny CofE (A) Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Onny CofE (A) Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust consists of 15 academies across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.
- Onny CofE Primary School is currently federated with Lydbury CofE Primary School. The Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust is the preferred choice for both schools as they have longstanding relationships with a number of other local schools already in the trust. In joining the trust, this would allow the federated schools to build upon existing collaboration with schools in the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust.
- The trust has experience in supporting rural schools of a similar size and nature to both Onny CofE and Lydbury North CofE. Both schools have positive working relationships with many of the existing trust academies in the local area and are keen to build upon these following conversion.
- There were discussions around outcomes and pupil numbers, and the resources and experience to support this.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

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 Lydbury North CofE (A) Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Lydbury North CofE (A) Primary School, Shropshire is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust consists of 15 academies across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.
- Onny CofE Primary School is currently federated with Lydbury CofE Primary School. The Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust is the preferred choice for both schools as they have longstanding relationships with a number of other local schools already in the trust. In joining the trust, this would allow the federated schools to build upon existing collaboration with schools in the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust.
- The trust has experience in supporting rural schools of a similar size and nature to both Onny CofE and Lydbury North CofE. Both schools have positive working relationships with many of the existing trust academies in the local area and are keen to build upon these following conversion.
- There were discussions around outcomes and pupil numbers, and the resources and experience to support this.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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 Peterbrook Primary School, Solihull, to be sponsored by The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust (TEFAT).

AB discussion:

- Peterbrook Primary School, Solihull is an Ofsted rated "Requires Improvement" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust consists of 33 schools across West Midlands, London and East of England.
- A national trust, TEFAT is steadily growing in the West Midlands and has been in conversation with Peterbrook Primary for several months. Although school leaders have made some progress to improve Peterbrook, joining TEFAT will provide the capacity required to fully realise school improvement plans.
- The board sought assurances around governance and had a discussion around school outcomes and next steps.
- The board supported the recommendation of a School Resource Management Adviser deployment.

RD decision: Approved

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School, Sponsor and DCS.

Project: To discuss Aqueduct Primary School, Telford and Wrekin, to be sponsored by REAch2 Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Aqueduct Primary School, Telford and Wrekin is an Ofsted rated "Requires Improvement" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- REAch2 Academy Trust consists of 60 academies across East of England, West Midlands, South East and London regions.
- REAch2 has a strong Ofsted profile in the West Midlands region. 7 academies have improved from Ofsted 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate' to 'Good' or better since joining the trust.
- Aqueduct would be joining Cluster 1, an established cluster within the trust making it a cluster of 7 schools. Academies in the cluster have a tight-knit network and work collaboratively.
- The board discussed performance data and sought reassurances around the trust finances.

- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School, Sponsor and DCS.

Project: To discuss Wilmcote CE (VA) Primary School, Coventry, to be sponsored by The Stour Federation.

AB discussion:

- Wilmcote CE (VA) Primary School, Coventry is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- The Stour Federation consists of 4 schools across Warwickshire.
- The trust has a Trust Board Sustained Improvement Plan, and each school then has their own individual action plan. An external SIP visits each school three times per year.
- The trust has experience with small, rural South Warwickshire schools.
- There were discussions around performance data, governance and school improvement.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School, Sponsor and DCS.

Project: To discuss St Luke's CofE First School, Worcestershire, to be sponsored by Endeavour Schools Trust Ltd.

AB discussion:

- St Luke's CofE First School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Endeavour Schools Trust Ltd consists of 3 schools across Worcestershire.
- All three schools in the trust are under two miles away from St Luke's.
- One of the two sponsored schools has been judged as ‘Good’ since joining the trust. The other is yet to be inspected.
- There were discussions around governance, performance data, finance and capacity.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School and Sponsor.

Project: To discuss Aylestone School, Herefordshire, to be sponsored by Heart of Mercia.

AB discussion:

- Aylestone School, Herefordshire is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Heart of Mercia consists of 5 schools across Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Dudley.
- Heart of Mercia have already been collaborating with Aylestone School.
- Aylestone School backs onto one of the trust’s colleges, Hereford Sixth Form College, where the trust executive team are based. This makes the drive to the school less than two minutes away.
- There were questions around school improvement capacity and finances.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Sarah Finch, trust partnership with Aylestone Federation, was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: To inform the School, Sponsor and DCS.

Project: To discuss St Peter's CofE (VA) Primary School, Staffordshire, to be sponsored by The Key Educational Trust.

AB discussion:

- St Peter’s CofE (VA) Primary School, Staffordshire is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- The Key Educational Trust consists of 3 schools across Staffordshire.
- St Peters as a Voluntary Aided (VA) Church of England Primary School has majority articles and the Diocese requests that VA schools join MATs that have majority articles.
- The Trust has experience in working with small schools, that match the size and demographic of the school.
- This match is supported by the Diocese of Lichfield, LA and the School.
- There were discussions around governance and performance and progress data.
- The board supported the recommendation of a School Resource Management Adviser.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School, Sponsor and DCS.

Significant Change

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

Project: To discuss Opening a SEND unit on site at The Bromley-Pensnett Primary School, Dudley.

AB discussion:

- The Bromley-Pensnett Primary School, Dudley, received an inspection September 2018 and was judged as Good. The school wishes to open a SEND unit on site. A new SEND unit will offer additional provision for children with SEND meeting the needs of pupils with complex communication and cognition barriers. In the first year, the unit would host 8 children increasing to 12 in the second year.
- This project is in line with the aims of Dudley LA's strategy to increase SEND units within the borough to aid the delivery of better educational outcomes for SEND pupils.
- The board discussed trust performance and the support in place and sought assurances around governance and finance.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: To discuss adding a Dudley Local Authority commissioned SEND base for twelve pupils at Rufford Primary School, Dudley.

AB discussion:

- Rufford Primary School, Dudley, Ofsted Overall Effectiveness is 'Requires Improvement' (Rating was pre-joining trust on 27 March 2019. Joined trust on 01 September 2021 as a double RI school). The school wishes to add a Dudley Local Authority commissioned SEND base for twelve pupils to Rufford Primary School.
- The SEND Unit will primarily be for children with needs in cognition and learning and communication and interaction.
- Project is in line with the aims of Dudley LA's strategy to increase SEND units within the borough to aid the delivery of better educational outcomes for SEND pupils.
- LA place planning concluded that there is a high need in this area for the extra places for children with EHCPs.
- The board sought assurances around leadership and staffing.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: To discuss opening a SEND Resource Provision on site for 12 pupils at The Crestwood School, Dudley.

AB discussion:

- The Crestwood School, Dudley, Ofsted Overall Effectiveness is 'Good' (September 2018). 'Behaviour' judged Outstanding, and all other sub-categories judged to be 'Good'. A Short inspection on 22 March 2023 stated the school continues to be 'Good'. The school wishes to open a SEND Resource Provision on site for 12 pupils.
- The Resource Provision will meet the needs of young people with emotional based school avoidance, high functioning ASD and anxiety and trauma triggered emotional and mental health needs.
- Project is in line with the aims of Dudley LA's strategy to increase SEND units within the borough to aid the delivery of better educational outcomes for SEND pupils.
- LA place planning concluded that there is a high need in this area for the extra places for children with EHCPs.
- The board sought assurances around leadership and staffing.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Hamstead Hall Academy, Birmingham

Decision type: Significant Change - request to expand school capacity to 1,100 based upon being oversubscribed (with waiting lists) for all year groups. Birmingham LA have approached Hamstead Hall Academy to request additional spaces. Hamstead Hall Academy are proposing to increase pupil numbers by 20 each academic year until 2026-27. They are requesting to change their PAN from 190 to 210.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Tilstock CE Primary School, Shropshire

Decision type: Significant Change - to lower the age-range of the school from 3 to 11, to 2 to 11.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Grange Primary School, Shropshire

Decision type: Significant Change - to lower the age-range of the school from 3 to 11 years old, to 2 to 11 years old.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school of the decision.

Project: Haberdashers' Adams, Telford and Wrekin

Decision type: Significant Change - to become fully co-educational, commencing with Year 7 Admissions from September 2024.

RD decision: Approved.

- The decision on Haberdashers' Adams proposed significant change (to become fully co-educational, commencing with Year 7 Admissions from September 2024) was escalated to the Minister as the RD considered it to be a sensitive matter.

- The Minister has considered the matter and her decision is to approve the significant change request and associated variation to admissions arrangements with effect for new admissions from September 2024.
- The decision reflects the Minister's wish in this case to be supportive of the promotion of academy freedoms, within the Significant Change framework. The Minister considered the equality impacts in accordance with the Public Sector Equalities Duty and supports the Trust's wish to provide fully co-educational provision and its view that it will create benefits for their pupils, of both sexes.

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 Shottery St Andrew's CE Primary School, Warwickshire, to be sponsored by Fosse Multi-Academy Trust.

Type of decision: Sponsored Route

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Project has been deferred.

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