



Notes of Meeting: South East Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 14 December 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

- Dame Kate Dethridge

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Sarah Bennett
- Dame Yasmin Bevan
- Sarah Brown
- Sir Andrew Carter
- Stuart Gardner
- Paul James
- Claire Lowe
- Sue Samson MBE

DfE senior civil servants

- Paul Schofield, Deputy Director South East Regions Group

Representations received

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

General Discussion Points

- Conflicts of interest were confirmed for Paul James. These are indicated against the projects to which they relate. This member was not present for the item when discussed and were not sent the papers for the conflicting item.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Hangleton Primary School, Brighton and Hove, to convert and join Eko Trust.

Project: To discuss Benfield Primary School, Brighton and Hove, to convert and join Eko Trust.

AB discussion:

- The AB discussed both Hangleton Primary and Benfield Primary items together.
- AB members were informed of the trust's intention of creating a network of strong, sustainable hubs across 3 locations.
- AB members discussed the distance between the schools and EKO Trust due to the trust being primarily London based.
- AB members discussed the trust's finances, capacity and governance structure.
- The RD requested further assurances from the trust in order for the project to return to a later AB. The RD would like more information on their central team structure and their school improvement approach.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the schools, local authority and trust of the RD decision.

Sponsored Route:

Project: To discuss Hailsham Community College (SAT), East Sussex, to be sponsored by Mark Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the finances of both the SAT and Mark Education Trust. The RD suggested deployment of a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).
- AB members discussed the need for primary experience on the trust board.
- AB members discussed the need for a more detailed school improvement plan, specifically in terms of capacity for primary expertise.

RD decision: Approve with conditions:

- Trust to accept deployment of School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the trusts and Local Authority of the RD decision.

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

Project: To discuss Hampshire County Council's preferred sponsor for the Eastleigh, Hampshire free school project.

AB discussion:

- AB members were content with Solent Academies Trust as the sponsor for this SEN presumption free school.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the trust and local authority of the RD decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss Felbridge Primary School, Surrey, to convert and join Tandridge Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the capacity of Tandridge Learning Trust and its growth, noting the other schools in the pipeline to join the trust.
- AB members discussed the schools currently within the trust.
- The RD requested to see an updated school improvement plan in respect of Felbridge Primary School.

RD decision: Approve with conditions:

- Trust to provide detailed school improvement plan for Felbridge Primary School.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school, local authority and trust of the RD decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Burstow Primary School, Surrey, to convert and join Everychild Partnership Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the finances, governance and capacity of Everychild Partnership Trust.
- AB members discussed the trust's school improvement strategy and felt the need to see more detailed information about its model to improve its current schools.
- The RD requested the trust accept the deployment of a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

RD decision: Approve with conditions:

- Trust to accept the deployment of a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).
- Trust to provide a more detailed school improvement strategy for the schools in the trust.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school, local authority and trust of the RD decision.

Discussion on Academy, Free School, UTC and Studio School Performance (not for decision)

Case listed here are not discussed with a view to make a decision.

Project: To discuss the proposal to establish two new secondary academies on the footprint of Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey, Kent.

AB discussion:

- The AB were asked for their views on the project risks and suggested mitigations.
- AB members discussed the need for a new AP provision and the practicalities of establishing that.
- AB members felt that an ongoing collaborative relationship between Leigh Academies Trust and EKC Schools Trust would be important to ensure the success of the proposed two new secondary academies.
- AB members discussed the state of the buildings to gauge capital funding needs.
- AB members queried the first-year capacity for the proposed EKCST secondary school. Officials clarified the school would not include year 11 pupils in its first year of operation. To ensure consistency during the crucial GCSE year, the proposal is for all pupils entering year 11 in September 2024 to be able to take up a place at the LAT school.
- AB members discussed the financial viability of the proposed EKCST secondary school, EKCST's readiness to take on its first secondary school, the make-up of the EKCST board and the support that the wider EKC Group might provide to the new school.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Provide feedback on the discussion to LAT and EKCST.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Snowfields Academy, Kent, to add a new satellite school provision (related to above item).

AB discussion:

- AB members were supportive of the proposal for Snowfields Academy to increase its capacity by opening a satellite provision on the site of what is currently the Minster campus of Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey.
- AB members discussed the funding support needed for the proposal.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school, local authority and trust of the RD decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Hagbourne CofE Primary School, Oxfordshire, to convert and join Ridgeway Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed that Ridgeway Education Trust (RET) may find it helpful to receive a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).
- AB members queried the trust's capacity to deliver robust school improvement in its primary phase given the proposed expansion.
- AB members discussed the governance of the trust.
- AB members discussed whether RET should have a period of consolidation, given recent growth.

RD decision: Approve with conditions:

- Trust to accept deployment of SRMA.

Conflicts: Paul James, CEO River Learning Trust. CEO of Ridgeway Education Trust works regularly with River Learning Trust.

Further actions required: Inform the school, local authority and trust of the RD decision.

Project: To discuss Badgemore Primary School, Oxfordshire, to convert and join The Circle Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members queried the number on roll at Badgemore Primary School due to it being much lower than capacity.
- AB members discussed the need for support in school improvement at trust level. It was noted there did not seem to be any experience of school improvement on the trust board and so it was recommended that this be explored to strengthen the governance.
- AB members discussed the trust's finances and would like to see them build further capacity before taking on underperforming schools.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Paul James, CEO River Learning Trust. Potential sponsor for project.

Further actions required: Inform the school, local authority and trust of the RD decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Hughenden Primary School, Buckinghamshire, to join Kings Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the governance of King's Education Trust
- AB members commented on the potential financial risks regarding this project but were broadly supportive of the conversion.
- AB members were pleased to learn that a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) was due to be deployed at the beginning of 2024.

RD decision: Approve with conditions:

- Trust to engage with the SRMA to undertake their follow-up deployment.
- Trust to complete an External Review of Governance.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school, local authority and trust of the RD decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss Addington School, Wokingham, to convert and establish the Ascendency Partnership Trust.

Project: To discuss Brookfields Special School, West Berkshire, to convert and establish the Ascendency Partnership Trust.

Project: To discuss Manor Green School, Windsor & Maidenhead, to convert and establish the Ascendency Partnership Trust.

AB discussion:

- The AB members discussed the need for an experienced School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) deployment, to take place in each school before the MAT formation. The SRMA should be the same advisor for each school and have knowledge of special schools.
- AB members discussed finances of the schools and potential risks related to the project. The RD wanted assurance on the viability of their financial model following SRMA reports.
- The RD felt the schools should approach an existing trust with special school experience who could act as a mentor for them.

RD decision (Addington): Approve with conditions:

RD decision (Brookfields): Approve with conditions:

RD decision (Manor Green): Approve with conditions:

- School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) deployment in each school before the MAT formation.
- The schools to link up with a trust with special school experience to act as a mentor.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the schools and the local authorities of the RD 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: Aspire Federation (Kingswood Primary School, Leeds and Broomfield CofE Primary School, Platts Heath Primary School, Ulcombe CofE Primary School), Kent, to form a new MAT with Goodnestone and Nonington CE Schools.

Type of decision: Trust Change.

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Unable to receive all relevant paperwork in time.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Oxfordshire, The Pope Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Company (PFMAC).

Decision type: Significant change - age range. To change the current age limit from 3-11 to 2-11.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: None.

Project: Rivermead School, Medway, Rivermead Inclusive Trust.

Decision type: Significant change – increase PAN and split the pupils between two sites: the existing Rivermead site in Gillingham, and a new site in Stoke.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: None.

Project: Oakmoor School, Hampshire, University of Chichester (Multi) Academy Trust.

Decision type: Significant change – to increase the pupil capacity number from the current 900 to 1200.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sue Samson MBE. Previous CEO of University of Chichester MAT.

Further actions required: None.

Project: Green Ridge Primary Academy, Buckinghamshire, REAch2 Academy Trust.

Decision type: Significant change – to increase in PAN from 60 to 90 by 2025 by a physical expansion to the academy.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: None.

Project: Wheatfield Primary School, Wokingham, GLF Schools.

Decision type: Significant change – to lower the school's age range from 4-11 to 2-11, adding a nursery.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Claire Lowe. Associate Trustee at GLF Schools.

Further actions required: None.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open on 1 January 2023

Project: Fernhill School, Hampshire, Bohunt Education Trust

AB discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Project: Orchards Infant School, West Sussex, Sparkle Multi-Academy Trust

AB discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Project: Lavendon School, Milton Keynes, Inspiring Futures Through Learning

AB discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Project: Walsh CofE Junior School, Surrey, The Good Shepherd Trust

AB discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

Project: Walsh CofE Infant School, Surrey, The Good Shepherd Trust

AB discussion: No questions or concerns were raised.

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