



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands 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

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Dame Mo Brennan
- Mike Donoghue
- Sarah Finch
- Dan Parkes
- Guy Shears
- Amarjit Cheema

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Tom Leverage.

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 St Paul's CofE (C) Primary School, Staffordshire, to convert and become an academy and join St Bartholomew's CE MAT, Wolverhampton.

AB discussion:

- St Paul's CofE (C) Primary School, Staffordshire is an Ofsted "Outstanding" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- St Bartholomew's CE MAT consists of 9 academies across Staffordshire, Wolverhampton and Dudley.
- St Paul's is a 4-11 voluntary controlled school based in Stafford, Staffordshire.
- The school has CE status so needs to join a trust with majority CE articles. Working with the LA the Interim Executive Board identified St Bartholomew's as a local trust, with the required articles that does have capacity to take on the school. The IEB have developed a relationship with the trust who are now already supporting the school.
- St Bartholomew's has experience of schools with a similar demographic,
- The board sought assurances around trust articles, performance data and leadership.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Amarjit Cheema, CEO Perry Hall MAT professional connection, was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

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 Paget Primary School, Birmingham, to convert and become an academy and join The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Paget Primary School, Birmingham is an Ofsted "Requires Improvement" school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust as they believe that the additional capacity skills and expertise of the trust will bring further benefit to the school and its community.
- The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership consists of 21 academies across Birmingham, Staffordshire, Coventry and Warwickshire.
- The school wishes to join a strong MAT which has local connections. The school has looked at a number of other trusts and has chosen to apply to join The Arthur Terry

Learning Partnership seeing the benefits of their school improvement capacity and the trusts support services.

- The trust has an in-depth knowledge of the local community with schools with a similar proportion of disadvantaged pupils as well as similar sized schools.
- The board discussed school outcomes and performance data, as well as capacity with Paget Primary School joining 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 Director of Children's Services to be informed of the decision.

Sponsored Route

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

Project: To discuss Hawbush Primary School, Dudley, to be sponsored by drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Hawbush Primary School, Dudley is an Ofsted rated "Requires Improvement" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust consists of 10 schools across Birmingham and Dudley.
- drb Ignite MAT has a strong track record for improving weak schools and has the expertise needed to support Hawbush Primary School. Since joining the trust, 3 schools have improved their Ofsted rating to 'Good'.
- The trust has the expertise and capacity to make a positive contribution to Hawbush Primary and is providing school improvement support through the Trust and School Improvement offer.
- Dudley LA is supportive of Hawbush Primary joining drb Ignite MAT.
- There were discussions around the schools finances, performance data and school outcomes, and governance at the trust.
- The board supported the recommendation of an External Review of Governance.

RD decision: Approved

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Deykin Avenue Junior and Infant School, Birmingham, to be sponsored by The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership.

AB discussion:

- Deykin Avenue Junior and Infant School, Birmingham is an Ofsted rated "Inadequate" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership consists of 21 schools across Birmingham, Staffordshire, Coventry and Warwickshire.
- The trust has a strong track record of school improvement. Of those schools who have been inspected since joining the trust, all have been judged Good or better aside from one. The trust has successfully led improvements in schools in challenging circumstances, including those serving communities with a high level of disadvantage.
- The board discussed school outcomes, performance data and capacity.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss George Dixon Primary School, Birmingham, to be sponsored by Prince Albert Community Trust.

AB discussion:

- George Dixon Primary School, Birmingham is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Prince Albert Community Trust consists of 6 schools across Birmingham.
- All schools within the Trust have undergone a transformation from "Special Measures" to a "Good" rating,
- The Prince Albert Community Trust has successfully navigated a four-year period characterised by consolidation and stabilisation, and all schools within the Trust have undergone a transformation from "Special Measures" to a "Good" rating except one.
- The trust has significantly bolstered its capacity to support teaching and learning, extending its assistance to numerous schools across Birmingham.
- There were discussions around finance, school improvement and governance.
- The board supported the recommendation of a Schools Resource Management Advisor.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Benson Community School, Birmingham, to be sponsored by Oasis Learning Community Trust.

AB discussion:

- Benson Community School, Birmingham is an Ofsted rated “Inadequate” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Oasis Community Learning consists of 54 schools across West Midlands, South West, London, North West, Yorkshire & Humber and South East region.
- Oasis is a national sponsor but is looking to grow in the west midlands and Birmingham area, already having 7 primary schools.
- All schools in the Birmingham cluster are primaries and within 9 miles of Benson with the closest 0.6 miles away. Many of the schools in the trust have pupils from a similar demographic as Benson.
- The board discussed school outcomes, leadership, school improvement and faith designation.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the School and Sponsor.

Project: To discuss Wattville Primary School, Birmingham, to be sponsored by Oasis Learning Community Trust.

AB discussion:

- Wattville Primary School, Birmingham is an Ofsted rated “Inadequate” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Oasis Community Learning consists of 54 schools across West Midlands, South West, London, North West, Yorkshire & Humber and South East region.
- Oasis is a national sponsor but is looking to grow in the west midlands and Birmingham area, already having 7 primary schools.
- All schools in the Birmingham cluster are primaries and within 15 miles of Wattville with the closest one mile away. Many of the schools in the trust have pupils from a similar demographic as Wattville.
- The board discussed school outcomes, leadership, school improvement and faith designation.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Guy Shears, Central Regions School Trust a sponsor option, 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 Summerfield Junior and Infant School, Birmingham, to be sponsored by Leigh Trust.

AB discussion:

- Summerfield Junior and Infant School, Birmingham is an Ofsted rated “Requires Improvement” school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Leigh Trust consists of 5 schools across Birmingham.
- Leigh Trust has a strong record of successful school improvement work. All 5 schools within the trust are in a very strong position and have been judged as ‘Good’ or better by Ofsted.
- The board sought assurances around performance and trust finances.
- The board supported the recommendation.

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 the closure of Bridgnorth Sixth Form at Oldbury Wells School, Shropshire.

AB discussion:

- Oldbury Wells School, Shropshire received a short inspection in 2018 and continued to be Good, and Section 8 inspection on 25/04/2023 and was judged as continuing to be Good. The trustees of TrustEd Schools Alliance MAT wish to close the Bridgnorth Sixth Form at Oldbury Wells School from 1st September 2025, and to remove all sixth form arrangements in the school's admissions policy for 2024-25.
- The Trust states that a significant number of Bridgnorth-based young people seek 16-19 provision outside the town, resulting in Bridgnorth Sixth Form only being able to offer a limited number of A-level courses and a falling number of vocational subjects.
- Alongside the consultation, the school has engaged with all the major post-16 providers who have previously worked with students from Oldbury Wells School to ensure that they have a good awareness of the range of qualifications available to them.
- Questions were asked about responses around the closure and future plans, and also finances at the trust.
- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Project: To discuss removing the Visual Impairment Unit at Smestow School, Wolverhampton.

AB discussion:

- Smestow School, Wolverhampton was rated Inadequate in September 2022, prior to joining Matrix Academy Trust with 2 out of 5 categories rated inadequate. The trust wishes to remove the Visual Impairment Unit at the school and the LA supports the proposal.
- The unit currently has no pupils and the LA states that there are currently no known children and young people who require a resource base for this purpose for the next 5 years. The proposed closure of the unit at Smestow will allow for the funds currently used to commission those spaces to be better deployed where children and young people want to be educated.
- There was a discussion around governance at the trust and capacity.

- The board supported the recommendation.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: Mo Brennan, Smestow School an academy with Matrix Academy Trust (previous CEO), was not present and did not receive the papers for this project.

Further actions required: To inform the school.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Woodseaves CE Primary Academy, Staffordshire

Decision type: Significant Change - To lower the age range of the school from 4 to 11, to 3 to 11. This would allow for the provision of a school-led nursery on site.

RD decision: Approved.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Tudor Grange Primary Academy, Langley, Solihull

Decision type: Significant Change - To permanently lower the age-range of the school from 3 -11 years to 2 -11 years

RD decision: Approved.

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.