



## Notes of Meeting: South West

22 January 2024

### 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
- Steve Savory
- Jackie Fieldwick
- Adele Haysom
- Rachel Howie
- Stuart Ingram

### Guests

- None

### Apologies

- None

### DfE senior civil servants

- Lucy Livings
- Matthew Stevenson

## Representations received

- Four representations were received for Marpool Primary School.

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 Milton Abbot School, **Devon** converting to academy status and joining Dartmoor 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 with conditions

- For the trust board to commission an external review of governance on the impact of leadership, the trust development plan and school improvement with a specific lens on the secondary phase. For the trust board to consider potential partners to undertake the review, and share with Regions Group. The review to be completed by the end of April.
- For the trust board to set up a formal partnership with a high-quality trust to work with Dartmoor MAT with a specific focus on further strengthening the school improvement approach and outcomes in the trust. Proposed partner to be discussed with Regions Group. This partnership should consider the external review findings.
- To engage with an SRMA (School Resource Management Advisor) following on from the restructuring in 2022/23
- To recruit a fifth Member preferably with trust educational experience.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

**Project:** To discuss Clyst Heath Nursery and Community Primary School, **Devon** converting to academy status and joining Cornerstone Academy Trust.

**Points raised in Discussion:** \*\* This project was discussed together with Marpool Primary School, **Devon** joining Cornerstone Academy Trust.

**RD decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

**Project:** To discuss Northway Infant School, **Gloucestershire** converting to academy status and joining Gloucestershire Learning Alliance

**Points raised in Discussion:** \*\* This project was discussed together with Carrant Brook Junior School, **Gloucestershire** joining Gloucestershire Learning Alliance.

**RD decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** Steve Savory was formerly the CEO of Gloucestershire Learning Alliance hence did not receive the papers and was not present for the discussion.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

**Project:** To discuss the following schools converting to academy status and joining Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi Academy Trust:

- Mells Church of England First School, **Somerset**
- Beckington Church of England First School, **Somerset**
- Kilmersdon Church of England Primary School, **Somerset**

**Points raised in Discussion:** \*\* This project was discussed together with Beacon Education MAT Ltd, **Somerset** transferring to Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi Academy Trust:

**RD decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

## Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

**Project:** To discuss the following academies from Acorn Multi Academy Trust, transferring to The First Federation Trust (FFT):

- Axminster Community Primary Academy, **Devon**
- Mrs Ethelston's CofE Primary Academy, **Devon**
- St Andrew's CofE Primary Academy, **Devon**
- Membury Primary Academy, **Devon**
- Marshwood CofE Primary Academy, **Dorset**
- Loders CofE Primary Academy, **Dorset**

- Thorncombe, St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy, **Dorset**

### **Points raised in Discussion:**

#### **Strategy:**

- Acorn Multi Academy Trust is a trust of 7 primary schools, in East Devon and Dorset.
- The First Federation Trust (FFT) currently has 21 primary academies in Devon, Dorset and Plymouth with a good record of improving vulnerable schools.
- FFT is considered a good fit for the Acorn schools, the trust has a focus on market town, rural and coastal primary schools with a strong church school culture.

#### **Governance:**

- The educational expertise of the trust board was discussed and the Regions Group team will raise this with the trust.

#### **School Improvement (SI):**

- The trust's SI model and capacity was discussed as well as KS2 performance. The trust will invest in raising standards and this will be reviewed with the trust and the Regions Group team, to ensure expected standards are met and outcomes are consistently improved, for all pupils.

#### **Finance:**

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have been working supportively with the trust to look at budgets. The ESFA have no concerns currently around the financial health of FFT and they will continue to engage with the trust.

#### **Other:**

- FFT will have seen significant growth this academic year, with 10 schools joining including the schools from Acorn. The trust has provided assurances to Regions Group that they have capacity to support these schools, and further growth. This will be reviewed with the trust and the Regions Group team.

#### **RD decision:** Approve with conditions

- The trust reviews the educational experience on the Board and considers adding a further individual with trust level experience.

**Conflicts:** Steve Savory, was formerly CEO of Gloucestershire Learning Alliance (retired August 2023), he provides 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, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

**Project:** To discuss Wyvern Academy (SAT), **Dorset** transferring to The Delta Education Trust.

### **Points raised in Discussion:**

### **Strategy:**

- Wyvern Academy is a main provider of places for pupils with profound SEND needs in Dorset.
- Delta has provided the school with Trust and School Improvement (TSI) support and has developed a strong working relationship with the academy.
- Wyvern joining Delta is a good fit geographically and educationally and will also strengthen and broaden the overall capacity of SEND provision within Delta.

### **Governance:**

- The structure and diversity of the trust board was discussed and the level of SEND expertise, the number of members and the former CEO as a member. The Regions Group team will review this with the trust.
- Trust to continue strengthening existing governance arrangements to ensure sufficient operational scrutiny as more schools join them over time.
- The Trust is open to facilitate a conversation with another system leader that has experience of a similarly growing a trust and one that has changed its governance accordingly.

### **School Improvement (SI):**

- The SI model for the trust was discussed and the need to develop this further. This will be raised with the trust and the Regions Group team.

### **Finance:**

- No concerns. Wyvern joining Delta will create financial efficiencies.

### **Other:**

- Future longer-term growth plans of the trust will be reviewed with the Regions Group team.

**RD decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the school, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

**Project:** To discuss the following academies from Beacon Education MAT Ltd, Somerset transferring to Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi Academy Trust (BWMAT):

- Minehead Middle School, **Somerset**
- Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community Middle School, **Somerset**
- Old Cleeve Church of England First School, **Somerset**
- St Peter's Church of England First School, **Somerset**

- Minehead First School, **Somerset**
- St Michael's Church of England First School, **Somerset**

**Project:** To discuss the following schools converting to academy status and joining Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi Academy Trust (BWMAT):

- Mells Church of England First School, **Somerset**
- Beckington Church of England First School, **Somerset**
- Kilmersdon Church of England Primary School, **Somerset**

**Points raised in Discussion:** \*\*all projects for Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi Academy Trust (trust change and converter academy orders) were discussed together.

### **Strategy:**

- Beacon Education MAT (formerly West Somerset Academies Trust) is a small MAT of six academies operating in and around Minehead, Washford and Williton in West Somerset. It is made up of two middle schools and four first schools.
- Ofsted outcomes for schools within the trust are poor.
  - Minehead First School, Ofsted outcome June 2023, the school received a judgement of Requires Improvement.
  - Danesfield Middle School has received successive Requires Improvement judgements the latest in June 2023.
  - Minehead Middle School, Ofsted outcome January 2023, the school received a judgement of Inadequate (Serious Weaknesses).
- Beckington and Mells are two federated voluntary controlled first schools in Frome. This is a voluntary conversion with the schools seeking to join a MAT to benefit from the trust's central services. The Christian visions and ethos of The Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (BWMAT) align well with the schools values.
- Kilmersden is a voluntary aided primary between Frome and Radstock. This is a voluntary conversion, the Diocesan links and the benefit for the school being in a family of similar schools is key for seeking to join BWMAT.
- The Bath and Wells Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust is a large primary trust operating across Somerset, North Somerset and BANES. It is made up of 39 schools and has significant experience in supporting underperforming schools.

### **School Improvement (SI):**

- The trust has a centralised school improvement approach that has delivered a strong Ofsted profile.
- It was noted that whilst Ofsted outcomes are good, this is not always reflected in KS2 outcomes.

### **Finance:**

- The financial sustainability of BWMAT and pupil numbers across the schools was discussed. This will be reviewed with the ESFA and Regions Group as part of the regular strategic conversations held with the trust.
- Due diligence has identified capital needs at Beacon schools, to support these needs an application will be made to the Strategic School Improvement Capital Budget (SSICB).

## Other:

- BWMAT and Regions Group have agreed a growth strategy for the trust in the areas of West Somerset and Frome. In taking on these schools, further imminent growth outside these areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and to focus on Good and Outstanding schools which will add capacity to the trust. This will be reviewed as part of the regular strategic conversations held with the trust.
- AB members commented to be mindful that the transfer of Beacon does not take precedent over the three voluntary conversions.

**RD decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

## Sponsored Route

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

**Project:** To discuss Marpool Primary School, **Devon** joining Cornerstone Academy Trust (TCAT).

**Project:** To discuss Clyst Heath Nursery and Community Primary School, **Devon** converting to academy status and joining The Cornerstone Academy Trust (TCAT).

**Points raised in Discussion:** \*\*all projects for the Cornerstone Academy Trust (sponsored route and converter academy orders) were discussed together.

## Representation:

The representations received were discussed and assurances were given that the Regions Group team will continue to work closely with The Cornerstone Academy Trust.

## Strategy:

- Marpool Primary School is a 3-11 Primary school in Exmouth, the school is a foundation school, part of The Avocet Learning Trust, and part of the Exe Estuary Federation. Ofsted outcome June 2023, the school received a judgement of Inadequate.
- Clyst Heath Nursery and Community School is a 3-11 Primary school in Exeter, the school is part of the Exe Estuary Federation, this a voluntary conversion. The school's last Ofsted inspection, July 2023 the outcome was Good.
- The Cornerstone Academy Trust (TCAT) has the capacity to improve the quality of education and leadership at the Exe Estuary schools.
- Digital technologies underpin the operation of the Trust and the collaboration between staff, teaching and learning. The use of IT and digital media is integrated into the delivery of a broad and balanced project based curriculum.

## 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):**

- 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) continue to monitor the financial health with the trust. The trust has engaged with the offer of a School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA).

### **Other:**

- Conditions for the trust were agreed at the October Advisory Board (refer to the published notes), based on how the school improvement model might scale, leadership capacity, and the trust's governance structure.
- It was recommended that, if not already considered, the Chair of Trustees considers avenues for support amid growth of the trust.
- That the trust considers its workforce strategy, staff feedback and staff wellbeing. and continues to engage and build relationships with relevant stakeholders.

### **RD decision:** Approve with conditions

- The trust considers and reviews governance and trust board structures in relation to educational leadership experience.

### **Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

**Project:** To discuss Carrant Brook Junior School, **Gloucestershire** joining Gloucestershire Learning Alliance (GLA).

**Project:** To discuss Northway Infant School, **Gloucestershire** converting to academy status and joining Gloucestershire Learning Alliance (GLA)

**Points raised in Discussion:** \*\*all projects for Gloucestershire Learning Alliance (sponsored route and converter academy orders) were discussed together.

### **Strategy:**

- Carrant Brook Junior School is a two form entry junior school in the Tewkesbury area. The school has received two successive Requires Improvement Ofsted inspections in February 2018 and January 2022.



- Northway Infant School feeds to Carrant Brook Junior School, and currently has a two form entry intake, it was rated as Outstanding November 2011.
- With the intervention for Carrant Brook, Northway was invited to consider converting in line with the principle to keep Infant and Junior Schools in the same trust, where appropriate.
- The pupil focused ethos, goals and values of Gloucestershire Learning Alliance (GLA) aligns well with those of Northway Infant School. GLA will be able to support future financial decisions, admissions and processes effectively, securing long term security.
- GLA is a primary only MAT based in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire with nine schools and approval to open a primary school in Bishops Cleeve, September 2025.

#### **Governance:**

- AB members positively commented on the structure and range of experience of the trust board.

#### **Finance:**

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to work closely with GLA to review the financial position.

#### **Other:**

- GLA is working closely with both schools on stakeholder engagement, to put in place clear expectations and next steps for joining the MAT.
- The trust have managed communications carefully with the school community.

**RD decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** Steve Savory was formerly the CEO of Gloucestershire Learning Alliance (retired August 2023) hence did not receive the papers and was not present for the discussion.

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

## **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:** Kingsbridge Primary School, **Devon** (Education South West).

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

Opening date 1 February 2024.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** No action required.

**Project:** Milton-on-Stour Church of England Primary School, **Dorset** (Pickwick Academy Trust).

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

Opening date 1 February 2024.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** No action required.

**Project:** St George's Church of England School, Bourton **Dorset** (Pickwick Academy Trust).

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

Opening date 1 February 2024.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** No action required.

**Project:** St Gregory's Church of England Primary School, Marnhull, **Dorset** (Pickwick Academy Trust).

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

Opening date 1 February 2024.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** No action required.

**Project:** Wyke Primary School, **Dorset** (Pickwick Academy Trust).

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

Opening date 1 February 2024.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** No action required.

**Project:** Queen Margaret Primary School, **Gloucestershire** (Cabot Learning Federation).

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

Opening date 1 February 2024.

**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 Glendinning Academy. **Devon** (Wave Multi Academy Trust) to change the age range from 7-19 to 7-16 to remove the sixth form provision.

**Decision type:** Significant Change.

**RD decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

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

## **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.

None

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