



Notes of Meeting: London Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 22 February 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

- Claire Burton

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Rama Venchard
- Vanessa Ogden
- Gill Bal
- Cassie Buchanan
- Penny Barratt
- Lee Mason-Ellis
- Emma Bradshaw
- Susan Douglas

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

Alan Parnum

Representations received

- One received regarding the item 'To discuss the conversion of Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School, Islington - to join The Cardinal Hume Academies Trust, Westminster', which is a Converter Academy Order project.

This representation was shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

Attendance

- AB members discussed regional and London LAs absence data for Autumn and Spring terms 2016/17 to 2022/23.

Local Update

- A brief overview of the Islington LA was provided, highlighting social contrasts across the borough, school attendance, and the challenges posed by demographic changes (surplus places).

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss the conversion of Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School, Islington - to join The Cardinal Hume Academies Trust, Westminster

AB discussion: Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School is a Voluntary Aided school with 76 pupils on roll (as of 11 January 2024) operating under the Diocese of Westminster. The school was rated 'Good' by Ofsted (October 2018).

Blessed Sacrament has applied to convert to academy status and join The Cardinal Hume Academies Trust (CHAT). CHAT is a secondary MAT with three secondary academy converter schools across three local authorities.

AB members noted that Islington was currently undertaking formal consultation on closing the school. AB considered representations from the LA, emphasising the challenges posed by surplus primary places in the area.

AB discussed the challenge of surplus places and Islington's plan to manage this issue.

AB discussed the financial challenges and academic outcomes of the school as well as the low pupil numbers.

AB members noted the Archdiocese of Westminster's desire to keep the Blessed Sacrament open, and their concern around the lack of faith-based provision in the area.

Given the contentious nature of the issues around the school's future, the Regional Director determined that the application should be escalated to the Minister for decision.

RD decision: N/A

Conflicts: Penny Barratt, CEO of The Bridge MAT, was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: To be sent to ministers for final decision. Stakeholders will receive communication when a final decision has been taken.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Hatchside Special School, Redbridge - Physical Expansion

Decision type: Significant Change - New satellite site to extend the age range from 2-7 to 2-11.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

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