



Notes of Meeting: East of England

Date of meeting – 28/03/2024

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

- Jonathan Duff (RD)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Al Kingsley (AB)
- Mark Farmer (AB)
- Clare Flintoff (AB)
- Lawrence Chapman (AB)
- Sarah Skinner (AB)

Guests

- Adrian Rogers, Chiltern Learning Trust (Observing)
- ESFA Representative

Apologies

- Josephine Valentine (AB)
- Tim Coulson (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- N/A

Representations received

- One received about the project; 'To discuss Ashtree Primary School and Nursery, **Hertfordshire**, joining Future Academies'.
- One received about the project; 'To discuss Forres Primary School, **Hertfordshire**, joining Danes Educational Trust or Spiral Partnership Trust'.
- These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

- The RD gave some general national and regional updates and invited feedback from the board.
- The RD updated the board on upcoming changes to the converter process.
- The board considered Ofsted judgement outcomes for the previous month.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss Watford St John's Church of England Primary School (single-academy trust), Hertfordshire, joining Poppy Academy Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of two academies; Fair Field Junior School and St John's Church of England Infant and Nursery School), Hertfordshire.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Watford St John's Church of England Primary School has been receiving support from Poppy Academy Trust and how the school would benefit from membership of the multi-academy trust.
- The board discussed the school's scheme of delegation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school and the trusts of the decision.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss Ashtree Primary School and Nursery, Hertfordshire, joining Future Academies.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Ashtree Primary School has received two consecutive 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgements.
- The board considered the governance structure, the financial context and school improvement offer of Future Academies.
- The board heard about the capacity that Future Academies Trust could offer the school if it is approved as the sponsor multi-academy trust.
- The board heard about the contribution of Future Academies to school improvement amongst Hertfordshire schools already in the multi-academy trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss Forres Primary School, Hertfordshire, joining Danes Educational Trust or Spiral Partnership Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Forres Primary School has received two consecutive 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgements.

- The board discussed the leadership and school improvement capacity of the trusts under consideration to sponsor Forres Primary School and the school improvement offer already underway at the school.

RD decision: Approve, Spiral Partnership Trust.

Conflicts: Josephine Valentine, Chief Executive of Danes Educational Trust, was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trusts of the decision.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss Thorley Hill Primary School, Hertfordshire, converting and becoming an academy and joining Ivy Learning Trust.

Project: To discuss Richard Whittington Primary School, Hertfordshire, converting and becoming an academy and joining Ivy Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that both schools had submitted voluntary applications to convert to academy status and to join Ivy Learning Trust.
- The board heard about the benefits both schools could bring to Ivy Learning Trust, with reference to their 2023 KS2 outcomes, and the benefits the schools considered would come from being approved to join the multi-academy trust.

RD decision:

To approve the project; 'To discuss Thorley Hill Primary School, Hertfordshire, converting and becoming an academy and joining Ivy Learning Trust'.

To approve the project; 'To discuss Richard Whittington Primary School, Hertfordshire, converting and becoming an academy and joining Ivy Learning Trust'.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools and the trust of the decision. Academy Orders to be issued and local authority to be informed of the decisions.

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss Lealands High School, Luton, converting and becoming an academy and establishing the Lumen Education Trust.

Project: To discuss Leagrave Primary School, Luton, converting and becoming an academy and establishing the Lumen Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that both schools had submitted voluntary applications to convert to academy status, which, if approved, would establish a new multi-academy trust in Luton.
- The board discussed the proposal and its potential to drive school improvement as well as the potential of the trust to grow in the future.
- The board heard how the schools had considered whether to apply to join already existing multi-academy trusts and had opted for the establishment of a new trust.

RD decision:

To defer the project; To discuss Lealands High School, Luton, converting and becoming an academy and establishing the Lumen Education Trust’.

To defer the project; ‘To discuss Leagrave Primary School, Luton, converting and becoming an academy and establishing the Lumen Education Trust’.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools of the decision and to discuss the potential of additional schools joining the proposed Multi-Academy Trust. This should also include plans to support and secure improved outcomes at the secondary school.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss The Shared Learning Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of five academies; The Chalk Hills Academy, The Stockwood Park Academy, The Linden Academy, The Vale Academy and The Rushmere Park Academy), Luton, joining Advantage Schools (multi-academy trust consisting of five academies; Queen’s Park Academy, Bedford Free School, Elstow School, Houstone School and Laburnum Primary School), Bedford

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this proposal is for the Shared Learning Trust to join Advantage Schools.
- The board discussed the history of school improvement of schools within Advantage Schools.
- The board noted that this project would add capacity to Advantage Schools.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the trusts of the decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Castle Newnham School, Bedford, converting and becoming an academy and joining Bedfordshire Schools Trust Ltd.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Castle Newnham is a federation which consists of two schools located on two separate sites.
- The board discussed Bedfordshire Schools Trust Ltd's ability and capacity to improve performance outcomes at these two schools.
- The RD requested that further information was required before a decision could be made.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the schools and trust of the decision. Delivery Officer to request a full school improvement plan for both the primary and secondary sites of Castle Newnham School.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss the Davenant Foundation School (Davenant Foundation School), Essex, being given a faith designation.

AB discussion:

- The board heard the Davenant Foundation School has been operating as a non-denominational church school since 1980 and has been an affiliated member of the Church of England since 2016.
- The board heard that there would be no changes to the faith-based admissions criteria as part of the proposed change.
- The board heard that the school is considering joining an existing multi-academy trust.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

- The RD requested that the governance structure is brought into line with best practice as a condition of the approval of the significant change.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, the trust and the local authority of the decision. Delivery Officer to request that an update of Davenant Foundation School's governance structure occurs within the next 6 months.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Buttsbury Junior School (Buttsbury Junior School), Essex, forming a primary by lowering its age range from 7-11 to 4-11.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Buttsbury Junior School is currently a single-academy trust.
- The board heard that Buttsbury Junior School has an 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgement and has strong performance outcomes.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

- A consultation needs to be undertaken with all stakeholders as a condition of the approval of the significant change. The results of the consultation need to be presented to the board.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the schools, trust and local authority of the decision.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss Newborough CofE Primary School, Peterborough, being sponsored by Peterborough Diocese Education Trust

AB discussion:

- The board heard that there are only 13 church schools in Peterborough which have not converted to become academies.
- The board heard that Peterborough Diocese Education Trust has a strong track record of improving school performance and Ofsted outcomes.
- The board heard that the trust has an established relationship with the school and is well-sighted on the improvements needed.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school and trust of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss St Laurence Catholic Primary School (Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Trust), Cambridgeshire, opening an enhanced resource provision.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this proposal is to open an enhanced resource base for up to 8 primary-age children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), where Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) is the primary designation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, the trust and the local authority of the decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Ravenswood Community Primary School, Suffolk, converting and becoming an academy and joining EKO Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Ravenswood has been working with EKO Trust since 2017.
- The board heard that the school believes that EKO Trust's strategy aligns with their improvement needs.
- The board discussed the potential of this project to increase capacity for the trust in Suffolk.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school and trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and local authority to be informed of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Langer Primary Academy (Unity Schools Partnership), Suffolk, adding a specialist resource base.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this proposal is to establish a specialist resource base for 12 children in Reception and KS1 with severe learning difficulties.
- The proposed base would open in September 2024.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Tim Coulson, Chief Executive of Unity Schools Partnership, was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, the trust and the local authority of the decision.

Decisions escalated

List of decisions that have been escalated to the Minister.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss the amalgamation of Greenfield CofE VC Lower School (Greenfield & Pulloxhill Academy), Central Bedfordshire, and Pulloxhill Lower School (Greenfield & Pulloxhill Academy), Central Bedfordshire.

AB discussion:

- This is a returning item; the project was initially discussed at the October 2023 Advisory Board.
- The board discussed the new information presented to the board, which included the sustainability of the project, the capacity of the schools, and travel options if this project is approved.
- The board considered the finances and the financial forecasts of the trust.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the schools and trust of the decision. This decision is escalated for final ministerial approval because it involves the closure of a school.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss The Open Academy (The Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust), Norfolk, being given a faith designation.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that The Open Academy has been operating with a Christian ethos since it opened in 2008.
- The board heard that there would be no changes to the admissions criteria as part of this change.
- The board heard that the Minister would make the final decision on this request.

Conflicts: Jonathan Duff, personal connection, was not present for this item and did not receive the papers. This item was chaired by another DfE official.

Further actions required: This decision is escalated for final ministerial approval.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Icen Academy (Academy Transformation Trust), Norfolk, de-amalgamating from an all-through school into separate primary and secondary schools.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that the school operates over two different sites, which are six miles apart, and do not share staff or resources.
- The board heard that the trust delivers school improvement on primary and secondary performance separately.
- The board heard that, if approved, there will be no change to admission policies.
- The board heard that the local authority is supportive of the de-amalgamation and that the trust would enact the change from September 2024.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the school, the trust and the local authority of the decision. This decision is escalated for final ministerial approval.