



Notes of meeting: South West Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 22 April 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

- Lucy Livings, Regional Director, South West Region

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Steve Savory
- Rachel Howie
- Stuart Ingram
- Adele Hayson
- Jennier Blunden
- Jackie Fieldwick
- Mark Ducker
- Margaret Simmons-Bird

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Matthew Stevenson, Deputy Director, South West Region
- Jessica Trahar, Interim Deputy Director, South West Region

Representations received

- 87 representations were received for the significant change application for Selwood Academy (SAT), **Somerset**, to change the age range from 9-13 to 9-16.
- These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General discussion points

- Regions Group presented to AB members on SEND strategy.
- 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 Christchurch Infant School, **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole** to convert to academy status and join Twynham Learning.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss the following five academies to convert to academy status and join Link Academy Trust:

- Branscombe Church of England Primary School, **Devon**
- Broadhembury Church of England Primary School, **Devon**
- Farway Church of England Primary School, **Devon**
- Woodbury Salterton Church of England Primary School, **Devon**
- Honiton Primary School, **Devon**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion:

- Honiton Primary School and the Jubilee with Pebblebed Federation schools have all applied to voluntarily convert.
- Honiton Primary School is a 3-11 Primary school in Honiton, Devon. The Jubilee with Pebblebed Federation consists of four primary schools, Branscombe CofE Primary School, Broadhembury CofE Primary School, Farway CofE Primary School, and Woodbury Salterton CofE Primary School, which are all in the East Devon area.
- Link Academy Trust has the experience, capability, and capacity to drive improvements for the schools and the wider area.
- 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.
- The growth strategy of the trust was discussed with a period of consolidation recommended. Regions Group will continue to discuss growth plans with the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss the following three schools to convert to academy status and join Ventrus Limited:

- South Molton United Church of England Primary School, **Devon**.
- St Mary's Church of England Primary School, **Devon**.
- St Martin's CofE Primary and Nursery School, **Devon**.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Cullompton Community College, **Devon** to convert to academy status and join Blackdown Education Partnership.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: ** all projects for Blackdown Education Partnership were discussed together.

- Cullompton Community College (CCC) is a 11-16 Secondary School in Devon. This is a voluntary conversion.

- Blackdown Education Partnership has been supporting CCC through a management partnership and with TSI support.
- CCC will be the sixth secondary school within Blackdown and is geographically close to all other schools in the trust.
- Bishops Hull Primary School is a 4 -11 primary school located in Taunton, Somerset. This is a voluntary conversion.
- There has been a partnership agreement in place for the last 12 months between Bishops Hull Primary School and Blackdown.
- AB Members commented on the outcomes for disadvantaged learners and Regions Group have sought assurances from Blackdown Education Partnership.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Hampreston CofE Voluntary Aided First School, **Dorset** to convert to academy status and join Hamwic Education Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss the following three schools to convert to academy status and join Primary Quest Multi-Academy Trust:

- Tibberton Community Primary School and Early Years, **Gloucestershire.**
- Bromesberrow St Mary's Church of England (Aided) Primary School, **Gloucestershire.**
- Hope Brook CofE Primary School, **Gloucestershire.**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss the following three schools to convert to academy status and join The Academies for Character and Excellence:

- Millborne Port Primary School, **Somerset**.
- Baltonsborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, **Somerset**.
- Stoberry Park School, **Somerset**.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Elmhurst Junior School, **Somerset** to convert to academy status and join Wessex Learning Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion:

- Elmhurst Junior School is a community school in Street, Somerset, which received a Good Ofsted judgement in November 2023, after a second Requires Improvement (RI) judgement in January 2020.
- Elmhurst has gone through significant school improvement since receiving the RI judgement in 2020. The school is looking for the support and backing of a strong, local trust.
- Wessex Learning Trust (WLT) was set up in June 2016, as a sponsor trust and has 17 schools, in Somerset and North Somerset. The trust has experience working with small schools and their communities.
- It was discussed that the Trust Board has recently gone through a period of recruitment and an external review of governance (ERG) should therefore be undertaken. Regions Group will work with the trust on this.
- It was noted by AB members that the CEO is the School Improvement lead and that the trust should consider its leadership structure given the size of the trust. This will be raised by Regions Group.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

- The trust to undertake an external review of governance.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Bishops Hull Primary School, **Somerset** to convert to academy status and join Blackdown Education Partnership.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: **all projects for Blackdown Education Partnership were discussed together - please refer to notes under Cullompton Community College.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Haydonleigh Primary School, **Swindon** to convert to academy status and join Grove Learning Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Chiseldon Primary and Nursery School, **Swindon** to convert to academy status and join Brunel Academies Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Jackie Fieldwick did not receive the papers and did not participate in discussions or provide advice on this project due to a connection as CEO of Brunel Academies Trust.

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

Sponsored academy orders:

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

Project: To discuss St Barnabas Church of England Multi Academy Trust to sponsor St Germans Primary School, **Cornwall**.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion:

St German's is a 3-11 primary school in Cornwall. At the last Ofsted inspection in November 2023 the school was judged Inadequate with serious weaknesses across safeguarding, leadership and management, and early years.

- St Barnabas has extensive experience of improving schools. The trust runs primarily small, rural schools. There is confidence in St Barnabas' capacity to secure rapid and sustained improvement at St Germans.
- An External Review of Governance found that trustees have the relevant skills and experience and that the trust vision is strong.
- All schools currently in St Barnabas are Church of England schools, St Germans will be its first community school. Regions Group are assured that the trust will manage this successfully.
- It was recommended that the trust considers a review of the SI model within the next 12 months and how to develop the model in line with trust growth.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Severn Federation Academy Trust to sponsor Rangeworthy Church of England Primary School, **South Gloucestershire**.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion:

- Rangeworthy CofE Primary is a 5-11 Church of England (VC) primary school which at its last Ofsted inspection in September 2023 was judged Inadequate.
- Severn Federation Academy Trust (SFAT) are based in the Forest of Dean. AB Members discussed Rangeworthy being isolated from other schools within the trust. However, SFAT has given assurances it has the capacity to deploy personnel from the school improvement team to meet the needs of the school.

- SFAT have a recent track record of improving small rural schools and making rapid improvements. SFAT have been actively engaged, already working with a cluster of schools in South Gloucestershire.
- It was recommended for the CEO to have a mentor to provide positive and constructive support as the trust grows.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Significant changes to an open academy

Points discussed in relation to significant change application(s).

Project: To discuss a significant change for Selwood Academy (SAT), **Somerset**, to change the age range from 9-13 to 9-16.

Representations received:

- 87 representations were received in relation to this proposal.

Points raised in Discussion:

- The delivery team outlined the Academy's proposal. Selwood Academy is a middle-deemed secondary SAT in Frome. It currently serves pupils aged 9-13 and is applying to extend its age range to 9-16. Since becoming an academy, Selwood has been rated Ofsted Good at full inspections in 2012 and 2022. Selwood is proposing to extend its age range from Years 5-8 to an extended middle school serving Years 5-11. The change would be phased and would involve reducing PAN at Y5. The project is fully budgeted and would be managed using the Academy's reserves.
- The delivery team outlined the Academy's arguments for the change, highlighting:
 - They argue that a disproportionate number of Frome-resident children are educated outside of the town – 1,000 pupils, and 1-in-3 by Y11.
 - There is a significant demand from the parent community to have their children educated at Selwood for their whole secondary career.
 - There is demand from the local community for the option of a secondary Church school in the town.
 - The project will not require any external funding.
 - The head teacher has previously led and improved secondary schools, and many academy staff are secondary trained or have secondary experience.
- The delivery team outlined concerns related to the project, highlighting:
 - There is no demographic need for more places in the Frome secondary phase. Departmental guidance advises against creating surplus places unless in exceptional circumstances. The figure of 1,000 Frome pupils being educated outside of the town could not be substantiated using available data.
 - This is a proposed unilateral change in the context of recent conversations on changes to the three-tier structure in the town. Many schools in the town have voted to join multi-academy trusts since the academy's consultation.

- Key stage 2 outcomes at the academy are below national averages.
 - The proposed change will likely have an adverse impact on Frome Community College (FCC) – with the potential for the upper school to lose up to 360 children across Y9-11 once the change is fully implemented. There is no evidence of a co-ordinated implementation plan involving FCC and other local schools.
- The delivery team noted the large number of representations received and outlined key points in support of the change, particularly from the Academy's parent community, a local school, a local multi-academy trust, and from representatives of the Methodist education community. Representations from those with concerns about the change were also noted, including from local schools, multi-academy trust leaders, the Diocese of Bath and Wells, and a representative of the town council. It was also noted that the local authority conditionally consented to the change, though their strong preference would be for any change to Frome schools to be a part of a coherent, system-wide reconfiguration.
 - The delivery team highlighted a previous local age range change within the three-tier system and set out why the specific context and circumstances of that case was not comparable and did not set a precedent for this proposal.
 - The Regional Director expressed concern around the need for system co-ordination and strong evidence of quality when proposing a change like this.
 - In discussion, Advisory Board members highlighted a number of concerns, namely: a lack of confidence in the academy trust being able to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum and enriching wider educational offer at KS4 based on its current track record and proposed pupil numbers; caution around the unusual 9-16 age range; concerns around the unilateral nature of the change and potential impact on other providers; and concerns around whether the impact of this change, in creating two providers with small KS4 cohorts, would be an efficient use of public money. Advisory Board members also recognised the strength of parental feeling and public demand for a church KS4 provider.

RD decision: Decline.

Conflicts: None.

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

Trust Changes

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss Harrowbarrow School (SAT), **Cornwall** to join Bridge Multi-Academy Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion:

- Harrowbarrow School is a 4 – 11 primary converter which opened in 2012. The school is in the east of Cornwall in Callington.

- The school received a second Requires Improvement Ofsted judgement across all areas in November 2023, the first Requires Improvement Ofsted judgement was received in February 2020.
- The values and ethos of Bridge MAT align with those of Harrowbarrow School, and the trust is already supporting the school. Staff have been offered full access to its CPD offer as well as supporting joint English and Maths moderation.
- Bridge MAT has the capacity to deploy School Improvement support at pace and has a proven track record of improving underperforming schools in the South-East Cornwall area and in rural settings.
- The trust had an External review of Governance (ERG) in December 2023 where it was recommended to remove the overlap of the chair as a member and trustee as well as considering growth of the trust board to strengthen its skill set to include MAT leadership experience. Regions Group will review progress with the trust.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss the following two academies from Venture Multi Academy Trust to join The Rainbow Multi-Academy Trust:

- Trevithick Learning Academy, **Cornwall**
- St Issey Church of England Primary School, **Cornwall**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in Discussion: The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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 the following month.

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: Carrant Brook Junior School, **Gloucestershire** (Gloucestershire Learning Alliance).

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

Opening date 1 May 2024.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: Hatherley Infant School, **Gloucestershire** (The Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust).

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

Opening date 1 May 2024.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School, **Somerset** (Quantock Education Trust).

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

Opening date 1 May 2024.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: No action required.

Project: St James Church of England Junior School, **Gloucestershire** (The Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust).

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

Opening date 1 May 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 Hotwells Primary School, **Bristol** (Cathedral Schools Trust) to change its age range from 3-11 to 4 -11.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss a significant change for Newport Community Primary School, **Devon** (Tarka Learning Partnership) to increase capacity of its Communication and Interaction Needs Resource Base (CAIRB), from 8 to 10 places.

Decision type: Significant Change.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss a significant change for Corfe Castle Church of England Primary School, **Dorset** (Coastal Learning Partnership) to change the age range from 4 -11 to 2 -11 to incorporate pre – school 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:

- None