



Notes of Meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 18 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

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Dame Mo Brennan
- Mike Donoghue
- Sarah Finch
- Amarjit Cheema
- Tom Leverage
- Steve Taylor
- Dan Parkes

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- Guy Shears

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy, Deputy Director, West Midlands Region
- Parminder Garcha, Deputy Director, West Midlands Region

Representations received

- No representations were made for any items discussed at this meeting.

General Discussion Points

- The RD and AB members discussed the current climate in schools across the West Midlands region.

Local Update

- None.

Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to Court Farm Primary School, Birmingham, to convert and become an academy and join Broadleaf Partnership Trust, Birmingham and Sandwell.

AB discussion:

- Court Farm Primary School, Birmingham is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Broadleaf Partnership Trust consists of 4 academies across Birmingham and Sandwell.
- The school requires support from a strong trust and has considered several options before deciding to apply to join Broadleaf. Broadleaf works with two schools in the same School Improvement partnership as Court Farm, and the school believes the trust has similar vision and values to it.
- The trust has previously highlighted that working cross-phase has allowed primary and secondary to capture the expertise at all levels and contextualise it for their setting.
- The board discussed performance and leadership and staffing across the schools, as well as the trusts governance and finances.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Mo Brennan and Steve Taylor did not receive any papers and did not participate in discussions or provide advice on this project due to a professional connection.

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.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to New Invention Junior School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Primary Learning Trust, Walsall.

AB discussion:

- New Invention Junior School, Walsall is an Ofsted “Outstanding” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The Primary Learning Trust (PLT) is proposing the formation of a 2 school MAT. This will consist of Ryders Hayes Academy Trust (SAT) and the conversion of New Invention Junior School. The schools are 4 miles apart, and the trust will have its footprint in the Walsall area.
- New Invention Junior School’s governing board has spent a significant amount of time researching options for academisation before proceeding with the option to form a new MAT named Primary Learning Trust by joining with the SAT Ryders Hayes Academy Trust.

- As part of a new homegrown primary MAT formation for Walsall, New Invention Junior School will benefit from existing central services and the central team of Ryders Hayes, which will continue to develop and formalise as the Primary Learning Trust develops the initial 2 school model with a coherent and realistic growth plan.
- The board discussed the Walsall Local Authority strategy and the trusts growth plans, along with its leadership and governance.

RD decision: Approve.

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.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to St Luke's Catholic Primary School, Telford and Wrekin, to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.

AB discussion:

- St Luke’s Catholic Primary School, Birmingham is an Ofsted “Good” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust consists of 9 academies across Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.
- St Luke’s is a small Catholic Primary school in Telford which is under the auspices of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. St Luke’s is part of a two school Federation, Our Blessed Saints Federation with St Peter and St Paul Catholic Primary School (SPSP) which was judged as Outstanding (Ofsted December 2012). SPSP is 7 miles away and has applied to join the same Trust.
- The proposal is supported by the Diocese and is in line with the Diocesan Plan established by the Bishop.
- The school has already established a good working relationship with the CEO of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust (OLHOC). St Luke’s will add capacity to the growing hub and will also benefit from OLHOC’s central service support.
- There were discussions around trust capacity with the addition of the two new schools, School Improvement and leadership.

RD decision: Approve.

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.

Project: To discuss issuing an Academy Order to St Peter and St Paul Catholic Primary School, Telford and Wrekin, to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.

AB discussion:

- St Peter and St Paul Catholic Primary School, Birmingham is an Ofsted “Outstanding” school who have requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust consists of 9 academies across Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.
- St Peter and St Paul (SPSP) is a small Catholic Primary school in Newport which is under the auspices of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. SPSP is part of a two school Federation, Our Blessed Saints Federation with St Luke’s Catholic Primary School (Good – Ofsted December 2023). St Luke’s is 7 miles away in Telford and has applied to join the same Trust.
- The proposal is supported by the Diocese and is in line with the Diocesan Plan established by the Bishop.
- The school has already established a good working relationship with the CEO of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust (OLHOC). SPSP will add capacity to the growing hub and will also benefit from OLHOC’s central service support.
- There were discussions around trust capacity with the addition of the two new schools, School Improvement and leadership.

RD decision: Approve.

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 Grove Primary School, Worcestershire, to be sponsored by Mercian Educational Trust.

AB discussion:

- Grove Primary School, Worcestershire is an Ofsted rated "Inadequate" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Mercian Educational Trust consists of 5 schools across Worcestershire.
- Mercian Educational Trust has a strong understanding of the specific needs of the local community having originated in Malvern with 4 school sites in the area.
- MET's Malvern schools are within 2 miles of Grove Primary, providing the opportunity for enhanced collaboration and sharing of good practice and benefits.
- MET has a strong track record of improvement for schools. On conversion, Grove Primary School would be linked with Great Malvern Primary School an Ofsted good school, 1 mile from Grove. This would support curriculum development and monitoring, allowing shared responsibility for specific areas across both schools. This would support Grove through increased access to expertise and a workload reduction for a small school staff.
- The board sought assurances around viability, the School Improvement strategy and trust finances. The West Midlands team discussed attainment standards and the plans in place.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: To discuss Beaufort School, Birmingham, to be sponsored by Central England Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Beaufort School, Birmingham is an Ofsted rated "Inadequate" school who require a sponsor to develop improved school outcomes.
- Central England Academy Trust consists of 3 schools across Nuneaton and Warwickshire.
- In joining Central England Academy Trust (CEAT), Beaufort will benefit from the trust's quality assurance procedures including, a review of the school development plan and action plans led by senior and middle leaders.
- CEAT, which is providing outreach support for Beaufort, has a deep understanding of the community east of Birmingham city centre, which is marked by high levels of deprivation. The LA is supportive of this sponsor match.

- There were discussions around the trusts School Improvement activity and its capacity. The board also sought assurances around leadership and staffing, governance and trust finances.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Tom Leverage did not receive any papers and did not participate in discussions or provide advice on this project due to a professional connection.

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

Significant Change

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

Project: To discuss adding a specialist autism resource base at Albert Bradbeer Primary Academy, Birmingham.

AB discussion:

- Albert Bradbeer Primary Academy is Ofsted rated 'Good' in all areas, following inspection in October 2019.
- This significant change is to add a 30-place specialist autism resource base to Albert Bradbeer Primary Academy, from September 2024.
- The Birmingham City Council SEND strategy highlights a need to increase the sufficiency of specialist places for children with additional needs by 2028.
- Greenheart Learning Partnership already has a successful resource base within Woodhouse Primary Academy in Birmingham. The school has been awarded a flagship Inclusive School Award, which references the quality of the specialist provision.
- The school is already working closely with Birmingham Communication and Autism Team to ensure there is sufficient capacity and expertise in place.
- The board discussed the Birmingham Local SEND Strategy, leadership and governance, performance data and finances.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school.

Project: To discuss the relocation of the 'Cedars' Additionally Resourced Provision to Tudor Grange Primary Academy Langley, Solihull, and a physical expansion/ increase of capacity.

AB discussion:

- Tudor Grange Primary Academy Langley is Ofsted rated 'Good', following inspection in February 2023.
- This significant change is for the expansion and relocation of an SEMH ARP base ('Cedars') from Tudor Grange Primary Academy Yew Tree to Tudor Grange Primary Academy Langley (TGPA Langley), and the construction of a new building at TGPA Langley and the increase of places for SEND pupils from 8 to 16. TGPA Langley's capacity will increase from 450 to 466.
- TGPA Langley is a 3 to 11 Academy in Solihull with a capacity of 450. It is part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust and opened in September 2023. Solihull LA works closely with the 'Cedars' SEMH ARP site, which is situated at Tudor Grange Primary Academy Yew Tree.

- This change will meet SEND sufficiency requirements for the LA. Expansion would also prevent further demand on costly private placements and reduce delay times for pupils on waiting lists for ARP.
- There were discussions around the trusts governance, the strategy of the expansion at the school, High Quality and inclusive education and the geographical spread of the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss the application for the transfer of Triumph Multi Academy Trust, Coventry, to Learning Today Leading Tomorrow (LT2).

AB discussion:

- Triumph Multi Academy Trust consists of two primary schools based in Coventry. Triumph has been working in close alignment with Learning Today Leading Tomorrow (LT2), a two-school trust based in Rugby, Warwickshire. The governing boards for Triumph MAT and LT2 have voted to apply to merge into a single, unified trust, via transfer of the two Triumph schools into LT2, to form a four school MAT.
- The two trusts have been working together in partnership for 18 months, and now see a merger as natural, strategic progression. All schools hold Good / Outstanding Ofsted judgements, three of which have been secured within the current academic year.
- Both trusts recognise the limitations of operating as smaller entities and consider a merger as an opportunity to broaden their influence and community, to the benefit of all schools, pupils, and staff. The merger will also allow for more efficient use of resources, streamlined services, and provide more opportunities for staff retention and professional growth.
- Learning Today Leading Tomorrow (LT2) consists of two Free Schools, based in Rugby, Warwickshire.
- The board discussed leadership and governance at the trust, finances, School Improvement capacity and Ofsted outcomes.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Guy Shears and Steve Taylor did not receive any papers and did not participate in discussions or provide advice on this project due to a professional connection.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss the application for the transfer of The Aspire Academy, Worcestershire, to Esteem Multi-Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- Esteem MAT has been developing a close working relationship with The Aspire Academy for more than a year. The trust currently provides school improvement support for the academy via the SI Team's AP specialist leader.
- Esteem MAT has developed a strong contextual school improvement offer which takes account of the nuances of alternative provision settings. The MAT's approach

enables academies to have a shared sense of purpose and benefit from alignment whilst maintaining a level of individuality that reflects specific needs. Aspire Academy already benefits from this offer.

- Esteem MAT has a clear understanding of the commissioning of AP places and the necessity for a partnership approach with mainstream schools and local authorities. This supports a return to mainstream, other specialist settings or positive post-16 destination which aligns with Aspire Academy's approach.
- Staff will benefit from professional development opportunities across the trust and from the opportunity to contribute to the school improvement team.
- Esteem MAT has 4 existing Alternative Provision academies in addition to 7 Academy Special Converters. Esteem specialises in AP and SEND. The SAT feels that this is important to them. They are already working with the MAT. The transfer aligns with current departmental strategy to increase SEND and MAT capacity within Worcestershire.
- The board discussed the plans to formalise a hub and the geographical spread of the trust, Ofsted outcomes, governance and growth plans.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss the application for the transfer of All Saints Multi Academy Trust, Birmingham, to Fioretti Trust.

AB discussion:

- This project is part of Birmingham Diocese's MAT development strategy, where transfer of St Thomas CofE Academy and St Peter's & St John's CofE Academy to Fioretti trust will see All Saints MAT, Birmingham close. The diocese is committed to encourage all of their schools to develop a plan to join a Church School MAT. This project sits within the diocese's current development plan to increase capacity within church article MATs in Birmingham. This transfer will strengthen Fioretti MAT, particularly regarding the development of their central team and operational processes.
- Fioretti Trust has been chosen as the incoming trust due to the strong working relationships between the two trusts, especially regarding providing school improvement and safeguarding practices. All Saints MAT also have a well-developed central team, and established operational systems that will add capacity to Fioretti's longer term strategy of growth. All schools are strong Church of England schools who already share a Christian ethos and a values-based learning environment. Birmingham Diocese are fully in support of this project. This transfer aligns with current departmental and diocesan priorities and fits into the strategic plan for Birmingham, supporting trust growth.

- There were discussions around School Improvement, leadership, school outcomes, finances and the geographical spread of the trust. The board also discussed the Birmingham Diocese's MAT development strategy.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Guy Shears did not receive any papers and did not participate in discussions or provide advice on this project due to a professional connection.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss the application for the transfer of John Henry Newman Catholic College, Solihull, to Our Lady and All Saints Catholic MAC.

AB discussion:

- John Henry Newman Catholic College (JHN) is an Ofsted 'Good' Single Academy Trust that opened as an academy in January 2011. It has a Roman Catholic religious character, and its relevant diocese is the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- The transfer of John Henry Newman into Our Lady and All Saints Catholic MAC is aligned with the diocesan strategy for their schools to be a part of strong MACs. OLAAS sees JHN as a capacity giver to the trust, due to be their second secondary, which will allow the trust to address weak and poor performance at a quicker pace and build upon central team areas such as finance, HR, and estates. Secondary school improvement will also develop significantly, with JHN working with the Ofsted Outstanding St Peter's Catholic School.
- Our Lady and All Saints Catholic MAC is a new trust that opened in April 2021 with 12 primary schools and 1 secondary. The schools are located in Birmingham, Solihull and Warwickshire.
- OLAAS see the addition of John Henry Newman Catholic College as a milestone in their ambition to build a flourishing Catholic education system in Solihull and for their academies. They also see the addition of JHN as a key step in the MAC being able to develop a stronger secondary school improvement offer, working with their existing secondary, St Peter's Catholic School, to develop strong working partnerships around curriculum development, recruitment of staff and best practice.
- The board discussed the diocesan strategy, leadership, performance and trust finances.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Project: To discuss the application for the transfer of Ryders Hayes Academy Trust, Walsall, to Primary Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- Ryders Hayes has a strong reputation in the Walsall area as a first wave teaching school and through its work on numerous education projects (including being lead school for North Midlands Maths Hub, a Primary Science CPD lead, regional Primary lead for workload reduction and accreditation as an Early Years Stronger Practice Hub among others) showing a track record of local and regional school improvement work at its core.
- As part of a new homegrown primary MAT formation for Walsall, New Invention Junior School will benefit from existing central services and the central team of Ryders Hayes, which will continue to develop and formalise as the Primary Learning Trust develops the initial 2 school model with a coherent and realistic growth plan to build capacity and support struggling schools in Walsall.
- As part of the HQTF assessment, trusts of statistical neighbours to New Invention Junior School were explored. The existing Ryders Hayes Academy Trust was identified as one of three suitable trusts in the local area and is the school's preferred trust to join and form a new MAT.
- The board discussed the Walsall Local Authority strategy and the trusts growth plans, along with its leadership and governance.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: To inform the Trusts.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

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

Project: Holyhead Primary Academy, Sandwell

Decision type: Significant Change - Lowering age range of nursery provision from 3-11 to 2-11.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Lawley Village Academy, Telford and Wrekin

Decision type: Significant Change - A change to include, with effect from September 2024, the physical expansion of Lawley Village Academy from a current 1FE (210) to a 2FE (420) and an age range change from 4-11 to 2-11.

RD decision: Approve.

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: None.

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