



Notes of meeting: London Advisory Board

24 October 2024

Attendance

Regional Director (RD) chair

- Alan Parnum (Deputy Director)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Rama Venchard
- Susan Douglas
- Emma Bradshaw
- Penny Barratt
- Cassie Buchanan
- Vanessa Ogden

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Claire Burton
- Lee Mason-Ellis

DfE senior civil servants

- None

General discussion points

- AB members reflected on the general mood of the education sector.
- Positive feedback on the scope of discussion and the opportunity to engage with ministerial teams. There has been increased engagements through broadcasts, webinars and school visits which have been received well.

- Members acknowledged that there is optimism, but also expectation, particularly around SEND, which could bring challenges if there are resource constraints.
- Members discussed concerns regarding increased mental health issues and supporting the most vulnerable.
- Feedback on departments communication with schools and best timing to land messages.

Barnet

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from St Mary's and St John's CofE School, Barnet, to convert and become an academy and join Wren Academies Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

St Mary's and St John's CE School (SMSJ) is an all through mixed VA school (ages 4-18) in the Hendon part of the London borough of Barnet, with a capacity for 1780 pupils

Wren Academies Trust (WAT) is currently made up of two schools: an all through school, Wren Academy Finchley in Barnet; and a mainstream secondary free school, Wren Academy Enfield, in the neighbouring Borough of Enfield.

SMSJ have been benefiting from WAT's leadership from January 2023 following the departure of the schools Executive Principal.

Members heard the rationale behind the proposal including shared ethos between SMSJ and WAT, school improvement opportunities, and geographical proximity.

AB members discussed potential risks and challenges including finance and governance, and the implication of the proposal on the trust's capacity.

The Board recommends an SRMA visit for the trust and a discussion on the department's recommended governance model.

RD decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feed back decision to the schools, trust and local authority, and for the Delivery Officer to discuss the recommendations with the trust.

Enfield

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from Eversley Primary School, Enfield, to convert and become an academy and join Connect Education Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

Eversley Primary School is a three-form entry primary school in Enfield.

Connect Education Trust is formed of six primary schools and one special school.

Members discussed risks and challenges including trust's financial position, high staffing costs, the trust's school improvement strategy and the RI school at the trust.

RD decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feed back decision to the schools, trust and local authority. Delivery Officer to discuss points raised by AB members with the trust with regard to staffing costs and school improvement model.

Camden, Tower Hamlets, Croydon

Trust changes

Project: A proposal for the two T4 Trust schools to transfer to The Beckmead Trust:

- **The ArtsXchange, Camden**
- **Ian Mikardo School, Tower Hamlets**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

The Beckmead Trust has seven special schools (KS1- KS5) who have a range of special educational needs, but mainly those with SEMH, with 2 PRUs (KS1- KS4).

This is a voluntary merger. T4 Trust have been working closely with Beckmead at an operational level for some time and Beckmead Trust's CEO is currently the interim CEO of T4.

Members discussed the risks around the rapid growth of the Beckmead Trust; the capacity of the central team to onboard these schools; and the lack of clarity over the future growth strategy including how the Trust assures itself that growth opportunities are the right fit for them.

Since the meeting, the RD has received the necessary assurances in respect of the above

points and is therefore content to approve the transfer.

RD decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feed back decision to the schools, trust and local authority, and for Delivery officer to ask the trust to send details of their trust board and reassurance on their central capacity.

Richmond upon Thames, Surrey

Trust changes

Project: A proposal for the two ElmWey Learning Trust schools to transfer to Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust:

- **Heathside School, Surrey**
- **Heathside Walton-on-Thames, Surrey**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

ElmWey Learning Trust (ELT) is proposing that its two academies, Heathside School and Heathside Walton-On-Thames, transfer to Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust (ECED) and consolidate into one larger MAT, following the retirement of ELT's founding CEO.

ECED is a three-school secondary MAT: Grey Court School, in Richmond-Upon-Thames; Hollyfield School and Sixth Form, in Kingston; Chessington School, a mixed secondary school.

The combined governance model will draw on the strengths of both trusts.

The Board were interested in the trust's broader strategic plan.

RD decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feedback decision to the schools, trust and local authority, and for Delivery Officer to have a discussion with the trust regarding their broader strategic plan.

Wandsworth

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from Fircroft Primary School, Wandsworth, to convert and become an academy and join Wandle Learning Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

Fircroft Primary School is a two-form entry primary school based in Tooting with 339 pupils currently on roll.

Wandle Learning Trust (WLT) is a trust of five schools all based in South-West London.

The Board heard that a good working relationship has already been established and Fircroft is benefitting from school improvement support from WLT.

No risks identified.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feedback decision to the schools, trust and local authority.

Bexley

Trust changes

Projects: A proposal for Burstled Wood Primary School (SAT), Bexley, to change from a SAT to a MAT (Learning Trust).

A proposal for Sherwood Park Primary School (SAT), Bexley, to transfer to the new MAT formed by Burstled Wood Primary School

An application from Danson Primary School, Bexley, to convert and become an academy and join the new MAT formed by Burstled Wood Primary School.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

The Board heard that the intended MAT will consist of Bursted Wood Primary School and Sherwood Park Primary School, currently SATs, and Danson Primary School, an LA-maintained school that wishes to convert to academy status. The MAT will operate in the Bexley area, consisting of primary schools, with a view to grow where there is need within neighbouring boroughs. Bursted Wood and Danson Primary are already working together and have formed the vision of the trust collaboratively.

There was a question on why another MAT is needed in Bexley where there are already twelve based in the borough. The Board heard that the schools have chosen not to join existing MATs, but to form their own MAT due to their shared ethos.

Members discussed risks such as finances, falling rolls, and the challenges of running a small MAT.

RD decision: Approve with condition:

- For Bursted Wood Primary School to submit an updated financial plan for the new MAT.

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feed back decision to the schools, trust and local authority. Delivery Officer to speak to Bursted Wood Primary School seeking assurances on its financial plan.

Bromley, Croydon

Trust changes

Project: A proposal for the seven South Orpington Learning Alliance schools to transfer to Inicio Educational Trust:

- **Tubbenden Primary School, Bromley**
- **Chelsfield Primary School, Bromley**
- **Darrick Wood Junior School, Bromley**
- **Pratts Bottom Primary School, Bromley**
- **The Highway Primary School, Bromley**
- **Green Street Green Primary School, Bromley**
- **Orchard Way Primary School, Croydon**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

South Orpington Learning Alliance (SOLA), a seven primary school trust, has been planning to join a larger trust and towards this they have developed a strong relationship with Inicio Educational Trust. SOLA's CEO and chair of trustees had planned to retire at the end of the 2023/24 school year and Inicio stepped in to cover leadership and governance of the trust, with Inicio's CEO acting as interim CEO of SOLA. He has been involved in the recent Ofsted inspection at Pratts Bottom Primary.

Members discussed the capacity risk at Inicio and were reassured that Inicio has appointed external support (a former trust CEO) to help with the development of the trust.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feedback decision to the trusts and local authority.

Greenwich

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from De Lucy Primary School, Greenwich, to convert and become an academy and join PolyMAT.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

De Lucy Primary School is a two-form entry school with a nursery class.

PolyMAT is currently made up of 3 schools – two secondary schools and one primary school. The schools are: Woolwich Polytechnic School (also known as Woolwich Polytechnic School for Boys) - an 8FE, all boys comprehensive school in Greenwich with a mixed sixth form; Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls - an 8FE, all girls free school, which opened in September 2019; and Bannockburn Primary School - a 4FE mixed primary school in Plumstead, Greenwich.

This is a voluntary conversion. The governing body at the school, while considering the option of academisation, identified PolyMAT as a suitable partner.

Members discussed the deficit position at the school and were reassured that the trust has a plan in place and will be working closely with DfE to resolve this.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feed back decision to the schools, trust and local authority and for Delivery Officer to have a discussion with the trust regarding its strategic plans.

Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich

Trust changes

Projects: An application from St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Southwark, to convert and become an academy and join St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust

A proposal for St Paul's Academy (SAT), Southwark, to transfer to St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust

A proposal for St Matthew Academy (SAT), Lewisham, to transfer to St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

Following Archbishop John Wilson's letter regarding the Southwark Archdiocese's Multi Academy Trust strategy, St Benedict engaged additional schools who wanted to work with the trust to enable it to grow from a federation to a successful Multi Academy Trust. If the proposal is approved the trust will have a period of consolidation for a year.

St Paul's Academy has been receiving significant support from the trust's school improvement team over the last 8 months.

Members discussed the falling roll at St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School and asked regarding strategies of the trust to mitigate this.

Members asked for further assurances to be sought on the financial resilience of the trust.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

- Feed back decision to the schools, trust and local authority. Delivery Officer to seek reassurance from the trust regarding their financial resilience.

Waltham Forest

Trust changes

Project: A proposal for the two Flourish Learning Trust schools to transfer to Learning in Harmony Trust:

- **Joseph Clarke School, Waltham Forest**
- **Whitefield School, Waltham Forest.**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

Flourish Learning Trust is a special school trust of two schools: Whitefield School (a long-established special school for 3-19 year old pupils) and Joseph Clarke (also a special school) - in Waltham Forest.

There have been concerns of the future sustainability of Flourish due to cash flow issues.

The Flourish board have been considering how best to secure the future of their schools and have concluded that transferring all their schools into a larger MAT will provide them with greater access to development opportunities for staff, stronger governance, and the benefit of economies of scale. It is proposed that, following the transfer of Flourish schools into Learning in Harmony Trust (LiHT), the board winds up Flourish's operation. The schools are attracted to LiHT as they are well regarded for their special schools.

Members discussed risks including some historic turbulence at one of the trust's schools. A communications plan is in place to mitigate this. Members also felt reassured that the trust LiHT is drawing on specialist support where it has identified gaps.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts:

Penny Barratt (professional connection) was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required:

- Feed back decision to the schools, trust and local authority.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

Project: Cheam High School (part of Cheam Academies Network), Sutton – removing sixth form provision.

Decision Type: Significant change

RD Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further Actions Required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision.

Project: The Link School (part of Orchard Hill College Academy Trust), Sutton - acquiring an additional satellite site and increasing capacity to 160 places.

Decision Type: Significant change

RD Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further Actions Required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision.

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