



Notes of Meeting: North East Advisory Board

21 November 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

- Katherine Cowell (RD)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Dame Maura Regan (AB)
- Jo Heaton (AB)
- Colin Lofthouse (AB)
- Dame Nicola Stephenson (AB)
- Jason Brine (AB)
- Anita Bath (AB)
- Christina Jones (AB)

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Jane Wilson (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- None

Representations received

- Four representations were received for St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon.

When received in time, representations are shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees, who considered them alongside the corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

RD welcomed board members to the meeting and invited them to share their views on the current challenges.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, Gateshead to acquire an additional (satellite) site.

Representations received:

The representations were considered alongside the corresponding item.

AB Discussion:

- This proposal is for St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon to add a satellite at St Joseph's Catholic Middle School, Hexham for Year 9 pupils.
- The board discussed recent, current and projected future demand for places, secondary provision in the local area and the wider strategic context.
- Formal consultation has been carried out and representations were received by the department: concerns about the proposal, including about the impact on other existing provision, were raised by the Local Authority, a neighbouring school and local academy trusts, all of whom did not support the proposal.
- The board agreed that there was no evidence to support the need for this additional site.
- The RD declined this decision.

RD decision: Declined

Conflicts: Anita Bath did not receive any papers or provide any advice on this project due to a conflict of interest; Anita has a professional connection as CEO of a trust within the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Vicariate of Education

Maura Regan did not receive any papers or provide any advice on this project due to a conflict of interest; Maura has a personal connection with the trust.

Further actions required:

Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Ushaw Moor, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, County Durham to amalgamate with Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Esh Winning

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project

AB Discussion:

- This is a proposal to amalgamate Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Primary School and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.
- The board was advised that if the amalgamation is agreed then the two schools will become one, the plan is to rebuild on the St Joseph's site under the existing URN of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs and close St Joseph's.
- The board was informed that both school buildings are old and have significant issues, Our Lady Queen of Martyrs has been approved for a rebuild under the Schools Rebuilding Programme.
- Formal consultation has been carried out; the trust has held several meetings to help address any parental concerns. This has been positively received by parents.
- The board agreed that the trust needs to consider the implications of the wider community, and how they are going to engage with them. They need to have a robust plan in place to help manage this effectively throughout the period of change.
- The board discussed the risks associated with the predicted decline nationally in pupil numbers. The trust is aware and strongly believes that this proposal, if approved, will achieve their forecasted pupil numbers.
- Both schools are currently Ofsted 'Requires Improvement' the board agreed that it is imperative that the amalgamation doesn't set back their improvement journey.
- The RD approved this decision and agreed to share advice regarding the following challenges: pupil numbers, culture, curriculum and managing the wider community with the trust.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: Anita Bath did not receive any papers or provide any advice on this project due to a conflict of interest; Anita has a professional connection as CEO of a trust within the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Vicariate of Education

Maura Regan did not receive any papers or provide any advice on this project due to a conflict of interest; Maura has a personal connection with the trust.

Further actions required:

Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision.

Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to another trust.

Project: To discuss the transfer of Mowden Infant School and Mowden Junior School from The Federation of Mowden Schools Academy Trust, Darlington, joining Northern Arch Learning Partnership.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project

AB Discussion:

- Northern Arch Learning Partnership currently contains one primary school, two secondary schools and a sixth form college.
- The board was advised that the addition of the Mowden schools will formalise existing links and will strengthen the trust by adding strong primary capacity.
- The board discussed the trust governance structure and recommended that the current trustee vacancy should be recruited from the education sector.
- The board agreed that the transfer of the Mowden schools to Northern Arch is a good match and will strengthen the trust and build capacity.
- The board discussed the trust/school finances.
- The RD approved this decision with recommendation that the trust reviews its governance structure and considers appointing additional educational expertise at trustee level.

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

- Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision.

Decisions taken between AB meetings.

List of decisions taken outside of AB meetings

Project: To discuss Corpus Christi RC Primary School, retrospective application to change the age range and add a nursery.

Decision Type: Significant Change

RD Decision: Approve

Conflicts: Maura Regan did not receive any papers or provide any advice on this project due to a conflict of interest, which is Consultant for Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust.

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

Project: To discuss St Gerard's RC Primary School, retrospective application to change the age range and add a nursery.

Decision Type: Significant Change

RD Decision: Approve

Conflicts: Maura Regan did not receive any papers or provide any advice on this project due to a conflict of interest, which is Consultant for Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust.

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

Project: To discuss Hetton Lyons Primary School to add a 16 place ASD resourced provision.

Decision Type: Significant Change

RD Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open the following month.

Project: Acklam Whin Primary School, Middlesbrough

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

Proposed opening date 1 December

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

Project: St Hild's College Church of England Aided Primary School, County Durham

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

Proposed opening date 1 December

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

- None