



Notes of meeting: North East

12 December 2024

Attendance

AB members who sent their apologies for the meeting but sent in their comments on agenda items, are listed under the apologies section. These members' views are reflected in the discussions below, unless the AB member(s) 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)
- Christina Jones (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- None

General discussion points

RD welcomed board members to the meeting and invited them to share their views on the current challenges. RD thanked Advisory Board members for their ongoing support and wished them well for the Christmas break.

Sunderland

Trust Change

Project: To discuss the transfer of Barnes Infant Academy from Barnes Academy Trust, Sunderland, joining Vision Learning Trust Ltd (VLT).

Representations received:

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

AB Discussion:

- Barnes Academy Trust is a single academy trust (SAT) consisting of one large infant school and has operated as a standalone since opening in 2014.
- The board discussed the governance structure at Barnes Academy Trust and was advised that the trust has appointed an experienced chair who has brought some valuable expertise and leadership to the board. Improvements have already been made and better align to the Academy Trust Handbook.
- The board was advised that Barnes Academy Trust is already receiving leadership and governance support from VLT, they have developed good working relationships, and this proposal will formalise links that have already been made.
- The board discussed VLT's financial position. A recommendation was made that a SRMA deployment would be beneficial once Barnes Academy Trust has transferred.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

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

Gateshead

Trust Change

Project: To discuss the transfer of Riverside Primary Academy, Gateshead, joining Oak Learning Trust (OLT)

Representations received:

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

AB Discussion:

- Riverside Primary Academy has operated as a single academy trust (SAT) since opening in 2012.

- The board was advised that Riverside Primary would like to join an academy trust and have considered a number of options.
- Riverside and OLT have developed a strong relationship, and this proposal will formalise links that have already been made.
- The board discussed the governance structure at OLT. Based on previous advice, OLT has appointed a further 2 members and are in the process of recruiting 2 additional trustees.
- The board discussed OLT's recent growth, the RD suggested identifying a trust that has undergone similar expansion to offer support to OLT.
- The board discussed the financial position of both the school and trust, no concerns were raised.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

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

Northumberland/ North Tyneside

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from the following schools, to convert and become an academy and join Pele Trust.

- Swansfield Park Primary School, Northumberland
- Longhoughton CE Primary School, Northumberland
- Embleton Vincent Edwards CE Primary School, Northumberland
- Seahouses Primary School, Northumberland
- Shilbottle Primary School, Northumberland
- Branton Primary School, Northumberland
- Ellingham CE Primary School, Northumberland
- George Stephenson High School, North Tyneside

Representations received:

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

AB Discussion:

- This is a proposal for 8 schools to convert and join Pele Trust.

- The board was advised that 7 of the schools have previously worked together within the Alnwick Partnership. The schools have already been collaborating with Pele, this proposal will formalise links that have already been made.
- If approved, the schools will be able to share their expertise, and it will allow the schools to strengthen an Alnwick cluster of the trust.
- The board discussed the trust /schools' financial position and were advised that Pele Trust received an SRMA deployment in May 2024. The trust is currently working towards implementing the recommendations.
- The board discussed the predicted decline in pupil numbers due to low birth rates and the impact this will have on small rural schools. The trust is aware and is confident that good outcomes and building community confidence will be key to the future success of the schools.
- The board discussed the size and complexity of this proposal and suggested that Pele should access some support from a trust that has undertaken a similar growth project.
- A recommendation was made that the trust accepts the offer to learn from another more experienced trust and that the DfE continues to work closely with the trust throughout the next stage of growth.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required:

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

Decisions taken between AB meetings.

List of decisions taken outside of AB meetings

Project: Skerne Park Academy, Advance Learning Partnership, Darlington

Decision Type: Significant change application to change the age range and add a nursery.

RD Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Project: St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, County Durham.

Decision Type: Retrospective significant change application to change the age range and add a nursery.

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 RD decision.

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open the following month.

Project: Chaloner Primary School, Redcar & Cleveland

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

Proposed opening date 1 January

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

Project: Copeland Road Primary School, County Durham

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

Proposed opening date 1 January

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

Project: Hunwick Primary School, County Durham

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

Proposed opening date 1 January

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

Project: Roseberry Primary School, Stockton on Tees

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

Proposed opening date 1 January

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

Project: Wallsend St Peter's CofE Aided Primary School, North Tyneside

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

Proposed opening date 1 January

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

Project: Woodhouse Community Primary School, County Durham

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

Proposed opening date 1 January

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No further action required.

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