



Notes of meeting: West Midlands Advisory Board

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

- Andrew Warren

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Mike Donoghue
- Dan Parkes
- Maureen Brennan
- Sarah Finch
- Steve Taylor
- Amarjit Cheema
- Tom Leverage
- Guy Shears

Guests

- None.

Apologies

- None.

DfE senior civil servants

- Dawn Dandy, Deputy Director.
- Parminder Garcha, Deputy Director.

General discussion points

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

Birmingham

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from The Meadows Primary School, Birmingham, to convert and become an academy and join Excelsior Multi Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- The Meadows Primary School, Birmingham is an Ofsted “Requires Improvement” school which has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Excelsior Multi Academy Trust consists of 7 academies across Birmingham and Dudley.
- The trust has an existing relationship with the school as it has been approved to provide TSI support from September 2024.
- The trust has had a positive impact on every joining school. 5 of the 7 Primary schools currently in the Trust are either good or outstanding. 3 of which have converted in the last 2 years (and have not been inspected since). 2 have moved up at least 1 OFSTED ‘rating’ and the remaining schools staying Good and Outstanding respectively.
- The board discussed performance data, governance and leadership, growth plans and finances.
- The board agreed on a recommendation of School Resource Management Advisers.

Decision: Approve.

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

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Walsall

Trust change

Project: A proposal for Joseph Leckie Academy Trust, Walsall, to change from a SAT to a MAT (Broadway Family Multi Academy Trust).

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- The proposal would see Joseph Leckie, a secondary SAT, becoming a MAT with the addition of the four converter primary schools - Delves Infant School, Delves Junior School, Hillary Primary School and Palfrey Infant School. This proposal builds on the existing, well-established relationship between the schools, who have worked together as The Broadway Cluster for several years. Delves Infant and Junior Schools are also in federation with each other (the Delves Federation, established April 2018). The parties have been developing the proposal for over a year through the Trust Establishment Working Group.
- The schools involved in the proposal are geographically close (all within 2 miles of each other) and serve similar catchment areas and communities.
- All of the schools share the same values of equity, inclusion and opportunity and believe that there is a level of trust between existing leaders and staff that has developed over time and underpins collective working.
- Links and working relationships are already very well established and the new MAT will therefore be built upon an existing, collaborative, foundation. The schools meet regularly both formally and informally, and systems, projects and agreed ways of working are already in place.
- The board discussed the trusts growth plans, Ofsted, MAT experience and finances.
- The board agreed to a recommendation of School Resource Management Advisers.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from Delves Infant School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Broadway Family Multi Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- Delves Infant School, Walsall, is an Ofsted “Outstanding” school which has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The proposal would see Joseph Leckie, a secondary SAT, becoming a MAT with the addition of the four converter primary schools - Delves Infant School, Delves Junior School, Hillary Primary School and Palfrey Infant School. This proposal builds on the existing, well-established relationship between the schools, who have worked together as The Broadway Cluster for several years. Delves Infant and Junior Schools are also in federation with each other (the Delves Federation, established April 2018). The parties have been developing the proposal for over a year through the Trust Establishment Working Group.

- The schools involved in the proposal are geographically close (all within 2 miles of each other) and serve similar catchment areas and communities.
- All of the schools share the same values of equity, inclusion and opportunity and believe that there is a level of trust between existing leaders and staff that has developed over time and underpins collective working.
- Links and working relationships are already very well established and the new MAT will therefore be built upon an existing, collaborative, foundation. The schools meet regularly both formally and informally, and systems, projects and agreed ways of working are already in place.
- The board discussed the trusts growth plans, Ofsted, MAT experience and finances.
- The board agreed to a recommendation of School Resource Management Advisers.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Project: An application from Delves Junior School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Broadway Family Multi Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- Delves Junior School, Walsall, is an Ofsted “Good” school which has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The proposal would see Joseph Leckie, a secondary SAT, becoming a MAT with the addition of the four converter primary schools - Delves Infant School, Delves Junior School, Hillary Primary School and Palfrey Infant School. This proposal builds on the existing, well-established relationship between the schools, who have worked together as The Broadway Cluster for several years. Delves Infant and Junior Schools are also in federation with each other (the Delves Federation, established April 2018). The parties have been developing the proposal for over a year through the Trust Establishment Working Group.
- The schools involved in the proposal are geographically close (all within 2 miles of each other) and serve similar catchment areas and communities.
- All of the schools share the same values of equity, inclusion and opportunity and believe that there is a level of trust between existing leaders and staff that has developed over time and underpins collective working.
- Links and working relationships are already very well established and the new MAT will therefore be built upon an existing, collaborative, foundation. The schools meet regularly both formally and informally, and systems, projects and agreed ways of working are already in place.

- The board discussed the trusts growth plans, Ofsted, MAT experience and finances.
- The board agreed to a recommendation of School Resource Management Advisers.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Project: An application from Hillary Primary School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Broadway Family Multi Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- Hillary Primary School, Walsall, is an Ofsted “Requires Improvement” school which has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The proposal would see Joseph Leckie, a secondary SAT, becoming a MAT with the addition of the four converter primary schools - Delves Infant School, Delves Junior School, Hillary Primary School and Palfrey Infant School. This proposal builds on the existing, well-established relationship between the schools, who have worked together as The Broadway Cluster for several years. Delves Infant and Junior Schools are also in federation with each other (the Delves Federation, established April 2018). The parties have been developing the proposal for over a year through the Trust Establishment Working Group.
- The schools involved in the proposal are geographically close (all within 2 miles of each other) and serve similar catchment areas and communities.
- All of the schools share the same values of equity, inclusion and opportunity and believe that there is a level of trust between existing leaders and staff that has developed over time and underpins collective working.
- Links and working relationships are already very well established and the new MAT will therefore be built upon an existing, collaborative, foundation. The schools meet regularly both formally and informally, and systems, projects and agreed ways of working are already in place.
- The board discussed the trusts growth plans, Ofsted, MAT experience and finances.
- The board agreed to a recommendation of School Resource Management Advisers.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Project: An application from Palfrey Infant School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Broadway Family Multi Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- Palfrey Infant School, Walsall, is an Ofsted “Requires Improvement” school which has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- The proposal would see Joseph Leckie, a secondary SAT, becoming a MAT with the addition of the four converter primary schools - Delves Infant School, Delves Junior School, Hillary Primary School and Palfrey Infant School. This proposal builds on the existing, well-established relationship between the schools, who have worked together as The Broadway Cluster for several years. Delves Infant and Junior Schools are also in federation with each other (the Delves Federation, established April 2018). The parties have been developing the proposal for over a year through the Trust Establishment Working Group.
- The schools involved in the proposal are geographically close (all within 2 miles of each other) and serve similar catchment areas and communities.
- All of the schools share the same values of equity, inclusion and opportunity and believe that there is a level of trust between existing leaders and staff that has developed over time and underpins collective working.
- Links and working relationships are already very well established and the new MAT will therefore be built upon an existing, collaborative, foundation. The schools meet regularly both formally and informally, and systems, projects and agreed ways of working are already in place.
- The board discussed the trusts growth plans, Ofsted, MAT experience and finances.
- The board agreed to a recommendation of School Resource Management Advisers.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Project: An application from Elmwood School, Walsall, to convert and become an academy and join Matrix Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- Elmwood School, Walsall is an Ofsted “Good” school which has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.

- Matrix Academy Trust (“Matrix”) consists of 7 academies across Walsall, Birmingham, Warwickshire and Wolverhampton.
- Elmwood School is a 67 place 11-16 community special school in the Rushall area of Walsall, specialising in SEMH provision and receiving pupils from across the LA. It is under 3 miles from Matrix which is situated within the heart of Walsall.
- After considering several local MATs, Elmwood School is seeking to strengthen its school improvement capacity, enhance its curriculum provision and secure capital improvement in joining Matrix which it believes has both the capacity and willingness to further drive school improvement.
- Over recent years, Elmwood and Matrix have developed a relationship through several collaborations that have included the partnership with Barr Beacon School and Barr Beacon SCITT, developing a shared vision for SEND pupils and teachers.
- Joining Matrix would provide Elmwood with access to the both the support and expertise of curriculum specialists and school improvement team, and access to the supportive central services offered by Matrix.
- In turn, Elmwood would also be able to improve the SEND capacity of Matrix through sharing its SLE staff and expertise, both at operational and strategic levels in SEND provision particularly focused on SEMH. The experience and expertise of Elmwood School will add capacity to Matrix and its approach to inclusion within its mainstream settings.
- The board discussed governance and leadership, performance data, finances and trust support.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Maureen Brennan did not receive any papers and did not participate in discussions or provide advice on this project due to a conflict of interest, which is as previous CEO of Matrix.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Dudley

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from The Wordsley School, Dudley, to convert and become an academy and join Stour Vale Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- The Wordsley School, Dudley is an Ofsted “Good” school which has requested to convert and join a Multi Academy Trust.
- Stour Vale Academy Trust consists of 12 academies across Sandwell, Dudley and Worcestershire.

- Wordsley School favour SVAT's approach of 'secure autonomy' and that their school improvement model will support Wordsley on its continuing improvement journey. SVAT will also be able to provide additional support in finance, human resources and operations.
- There were discussions around Ofsted, educational expertise, school improvement, finances and staffing.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Steve Taylor.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Shropshire

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from St John's Catholic Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- St John's Catholic Primary School, Dudley is an Ofsted "Requires Improvement" school which has 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 John's Catholic Primary School's governing board has unanimously voted to proceed with academisation, with Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust identified as the school's preferred choice.
- By joining Our Lady Help of Christians CAT, Our Lady and St Oswald's will benefit from the support of a well-established network of Catholic faith schools in the region.
- There were discussions around pupil numbers, Ofsted, governance and performance data.
- The board also discussed the geography of the trust and future plans.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Project: An application from Our Lady & St Oswald's Primary School, Shropshire, to convert and become an academy and join Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust.

Representations received:

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

AB discussion:

- Our Lady & St Oswald's Primary School, Dudley is an Ofsted "Good" school which has 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..
- Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic Primary School's governing board has unanimously voted to proceed with academisation, with Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust identified as the school's preferred choice.
- Joining Our Lady Help of Christians CAT will enable St John's to receive bespoke support from an established geographical network of catholic faith schools.
- There were discussions around pupil numbers, Ofsted, governance and performance data.
- The board also discussed the geography of the trust and future plans.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

List of decisions taken outside of AB meetings.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: King Edward VI Camp Hill Boys School, Birmingham

- To take their secondary capacity from 480 to 750 and their sixth form from 270 to 360 (taking their overall capacity to 1110) through the addition of a new building.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: None.

Project: King Edward VI School, Warwickshire

- Increase in capacity from 850 to 1000 places at King Edward VI School, part of The Grammar School of King Edward VI at Stratford-upon-Avon (SAT).

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: None.

Project: Blackwell First School, Worcestershire

- To increase their age range from pupils aged 3-11 years to 2-11 years. From April 2025, Blackwell intend to offer 10 additional places for 2-year-olds and from September 2025, this will extend further to 15 additional places.

Decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: None.

Cases referred to ministers for a decision

List of decisions that have been made by the Director General of Regions Group and/or ministers.

Project: None

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

Project: None

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