



## Notes of meeting: East of England

Date of meeting: 24 April 2025

### Attendance

AB members who sent their apologies for the meeting but sent 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

- Jonathan Duff

### Advisory Board (AB) members

- Lawrence Chapman
- Tim Coulson
- Mark Farmer
- Clare Flintoff
- Al Kingsley
- Adrian Rogers
- Sarah Skinner
- Josephine Valentine

### Guests

- None

### Apologies

- None

### DfE senior civil servants

- Becky Taylor (acting Deputy Director)

## General discussion points

- The Regional Director gave some general national and regional updates and invited feedback from the board.
- The board heard an update on the establishment of the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams.

## Decisions

### Cambridgeshire

#### Trust Changes

**Project: An application for Crosshall Infant School Academy Trust [URN: 136332], Cambridgeshire, to transfer from Crosshall Infant School Academy Trust to Meridian Trust.**

**Project: An application for Crosshall Junior School [URN: 136339], Cambridgeshire, to transfer from Crosshall Junior School Limited to Meridian Trust.**

#### Representations received:

- No representations were made for these projects.

#### AB discussion:

- Crosshall Infant School Academy Trust and Crosshall Junior School Limited are both single academy trusts (SATs) located in St Neots, Cambridgeshire. Both schools were judged 'Good' by Ofsted under the previous reporting system.
- The board heard about the voluntary applications to close Crosshall Infant School Academy Trust and Crosshall Junior School Limited and to transfer each academy to the Meridian Trust.
- The board heard that each SAT undertook systematic due diligence on potential multi academy trusts (MATs) by creating a working group and visiting prospective MATs.
- The board heard about the challenges both SATs face around finances, resources, curriculum and operational support.
- The board heard about the benefits of having the infant school and junior school together under one responsible body, such as economies of scale and enhanced continuing professional development (CPD).

**Decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform trusts of the decision.

## Norfolk

### Significant changes to an open academy

**Project:** An application for Brancaster CofE Primary Academy [URN: 148821] to merge with Docking Church of England Primary Academy and Nursery [URN:148822], both of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust, Norfolk.

#### **Representations received:**

- Two representations were received for this project
- Both representations were received in time to be shared with the RD and AB members, who considered them in providing their advice.

#### **AB discussion:**

- The board heard about the application to merge Brancaster CofE Primary Academy with Docking Church of England Primary Academy and Nursery, which will result in the closure of Brancaster's site.
- The board heard that both academies have been federated since 2015 and are part of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT).
- The board heard that there are currently only 24 pupils on roll in Brancaster CofE Primary Academy and this number is expected to decline further due to changing demographics.
- The board heard that both schools recently had Ofsted inspections, and both continued to maintain the standards identified at their previous inspections.
- The board discussed the challenges of maintaining schools facing falling rolls in Norfolk.
- The board discussed the consultation completed by the trust and the contents of the two representations received.

**Decision:** Escalate to Minister

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform the trust that the decision is to be escalated to the Minister.

**Project: An application for Great Dunham Primary School [URN: 148668] to merge with Beeston Primary School [URN: 144317], both of Unity Education Trust, Norfolk.**

**Representations received:**

- No representations were made for this project.

**AB discussion:**

- The board heard about the application to merge Great Dunham Primary School with Beeston Primary School, which will result in the closure of Great Dunham's site.
- The board heard both academies are part of Unity Education Trust and were each recently inspected by Ofsted. Great Dunham Primary School was rated "Requires Improvement" in two categories: 'Quality of Education' and 'Behaviours and Attitudes', whereas Beeston Primary School maintained the standards identified at its previous inspection.
- The board heard that Great Dunham is experiencing a declining number of school age children, impacting on the viability of the school.
- The board heard that the trust has an action plan to support families who have confirmed they do not want to transfer to Beeston.
- The board heard about the consultation and responses received.

**Decision:** Escalate to Minister

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery Officer to inform the trust that the decision is to be escalated to the Minister.

## Decisions taken outside of AB meeting

List of decisions taken outside of AB meetings.

### Converter academy orders

**Project:** An application from Nazeing Primary School [URN: 114972], Essex, to convert and become an academy and join Scholars' Education Trust.

**Decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

**Project:** An application from Honington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School [URN:124702], Suffolk, to convert and become an academy and join All Saints Schools Trust.

**Decision:** Approve with conditions

- The trust to agree to the deployment of a school resource management advisor (SRMA) in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of autumn term.

**Conflicts:** None

**Further actions required:** Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision setting out the condition. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

### Significant changes to an open academy

**Project:** An application for St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy [URN: 150063], The Diocese of Norwich St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust, Norfolk, to change its age range from 4-11 to 2-11 and add a nursery.

**Decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

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

**Project:** An application for Shoeburyness High School [URN: 137733], Southend East Community Academy Trust, Southend, to make the following change:

- Adding a 21-place SEN unit or resourced provision

**Decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

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

**Project: An application for Thorpedene Primary School & Nursery [URN: 143336], Southend East Community Academy Trust, Southend, to make the following change:**

- **Adding a 14-place SEN unit or resourced provision**

**Decision:** Approve

**Conflicts:** None

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

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