



Department
for Education

Notes of meeting: South West Advisory Board

Date of meeting: 22 September 2025

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

- Lucy Livings – Regional Director, South West Region

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Steve Savory
- Adele Haysom
- Mark Ducker
- Jackie Fieldwick
- Jennifer Blunden
- Rachel Howie
- Margaret Simmons-Bird
- Stuart Ingram

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Jessica Trahar, Deputy Director, South West Region
- Matthew Stevenson, Deputy Director, South West Region

General discussion points

- Lucy Livings, RD presented to the board on the Regions Group and government priorities.
- AB members shared local intelligence from the sector at this time and provided insight into the challenges being faced.

Decisions

Cornwall

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from Burraton Community Primary School (URN 111972), Cornwall to convert and become an academy and join Westcountry Schools Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in discussion:

- The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: Jennifer Blunden was not present for the discussion and did not receive the project papers.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Gloucestershire

Establishing a new academy through the free school presumption route

Project: A proposal for a sponsor for a new presumption special free school for children and young people aged 4-16 years with Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD), Gloucestershire.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in discussion:

- Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) has identified the need to establish a new 200-place special school for pupils aged 4-16 years with Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD) to open in January 2027.
- In April 2025, GCC launched a free school presumption competitive process, seeking

a strong suitably experienced and inclusive academy sponsor to open and operate a new special free school.

- It was concluded that Enable Trust was strong and well prepared. The trust is likely to command the confidence of parents, the local community and partner schools therefore should be recommended to the Secretary of State as the preferred sponsor for the new school.
- Enable has experienced SEND expertise across all levels, using a therapeutic, multidisciplinary approach and delivering an ambitious, well-designed curriculum.
- The trust has a strong understanding of the complex needs of its pupils, including awareness that some may have experienced extended periods out of school.
- The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Plymouth

Trust Changes

Project: A proposal for the following four academies from Transforming Futures Multi Academy Trust Limited to merge with Reach South Academy Trust:

- ACE Schools Plymouth (URN 142835), **Plymouth**
- Courtlands School (URN 144009), **Plymouth**
- Mount Tamar School (URN 149391), **Plymouth**
- ACE Tiverton Special School (URN 147064), **Devon**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in discussion:

- Transforming Futures Multi Academy Trust Limited (TFT) is a multi-academy trust comprising four specialist schools: Courtlands School, Mount Tamar School, ACE Tiverton, and ACE Schools Plymouth. The trust provides Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) across Plymouth and Devon, with additional satellite provision in Cornwall.
- In March 2024, Courtlands School received an Ofsted judgement of Inadequate across all areas, including safeguarding.
- Following the general election, a Termination Warning Notice (TWN) was issued. As part of the TWN process, the trust was requested to reassess the strategic direction of all its schools. TFT ultimately decided to pursue a whole trust merger, as it was considered a more sustainable solution than the standalone removal of Courtlands School.
- TFT has decided to proceed with a full trust transfer to Reach South Academy Trust (RSAT).

- RSAT currently oversees 16 academies located across Plymouth, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP), Wiltshire, Devon, and Gloucestershire. The trust encompasses a broad range of educational settings, including 10 primary schools, 2 all-through schools, 1 University Technical College (UTC), and 3 special schools and has a proven track record of working with challenging schools.
- RSAT shares a closely aligned vision and set of values with TFT's vision and values, recognising the benefits of collaboration especially in Plymouth, where the proximity of schools offers strong potential for partnership and resource sharing.
- RSAT and TFT leaders meet regularly to plan the transition, supported by a central project manager. RSAT has already provided support with communications, finance, HR, and consultation.
- AB members highlighted the importance of maintaining focus on the reasons behind the merger with RSAT.
- The trust's growth strategy was discussed, with a recommendation that any future growth will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and focus on existing hubs, and align with the High-Quality Trust Framework, which will guide future decisions by Regions Group.
- Regions Group will discuss growth plans with the trust and recommend an early strategic conversation to set expectations and outline ambitions for improving secondary outcomes and attendance.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Somerset

Trust Changes

Project: An application from Selwood Academy Trust (URN 137741), Somerset to transfer Selwood Academy (SAT) to Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in discussion:

- Selwood Academy is a middle school located in Frome, Somerset. The school received an overall Good judgement from Ofsted in June 2022 with Good across all sub judgements.
- Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership (MNSP) has a strong track record of supporting schools and delivering improvement.
- With four other schools already established in the town, the addition of Selwood would strengthen opportunity to reshape the local education system and support the development of new special and alternative provision. Becoming part of the Frome Hub within MNSP would also enable Selwood to contribute to a more unified and strategic approach to school improvement and educational planning across the area.
- Selwood and MNSP believe that joining a larger organisation will offer significant advantages for the SAT. This includes access to MNSP's expertise in school

improvement and broader support structures, as well as the opportunity to benefit from economies of scale.

- The Diocese of Bath and Wells and the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust support the transition of the academy to MNSP. As a condition of this approval MNSP will adopt the new Model Articles and include a Methodist member in their Trust.
- The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

Decision: Approve with conditions

- On condition of the joint Anglican/Methodist articles agreement with all parties.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Swindon

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from East Wichel Primary School (URN 136068), Swindon to convert and become an academy and join LIFT Schools.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

Points raised in discussion:

- East Wichel Primary School and Nursery is a community primary school, situated in South Swindon. This is a voluntary conversion. The school received an overall Outstanding judgement from Ofsted in December 2022 with Outstanding across all sub-judgements.
- By joining Lift Schools this will allow East Wichel to continue their improvement journey, by accessing high quality school improvement, and collaboration with other ambitious schools.
- The ethos and values of LIFT align with those of East Wichel. On joining, the school will change its name to Lift East Wichel.
- The strategic focus for the LA is to consolidate and strengthen the existing MAT landscape to improve standards. The area will benefit by expanding the reach of LIFT Schools.
- The board members considered the details of the project and did not raise any concerns/comments in relation to the recommendation.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open the following month.

This is a list of schools expected to open on the first of the month following the date of this planned meeting. They must have been given agreement in principle to open.

Project: Abbeyfield School, Wiltshire (The Athelstan Trust)

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

Opening date 1 October 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Project: Haytor View Community Primary School, Devon (Connect Academy Trust)

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

Opening date 1 October 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Project: Kewstoke Primary School, Somerset (Wessex Learning Trust)

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

Opening date 1 October 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Project: Penpol School, Cornwall (Crofty Education Trust)

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

Opening date 1 October 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Project: Five Lanes CofE VC Primary School, Wiltshire (Equa Mead Learning Trust)

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

Opening date 1 September 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Project: Paxcroft Primary School, Wiltshire (Equa Mead Learning Trust)

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

Opening date 1 September 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Project: The Lampard Community School, Devon (Special Partnership Trust)

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

Opening date 1 September 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Project: Urchfont Church of England Primary School, Wiltshire (Equa Mead Learning Trust)

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

Opening date 1 September 2025

Conflicts: None

Further action required: No action required.

Decisions taken outside of AB meeting

List of decisions taken outside of AB meetings.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: Northgate Primary School, Somerset (Futura Learning Partnership) to make the following change:

- To change the purpose of one classroom into an 8 place LA-funded SEN provision

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: St George's Church of England School, Bourton, Devon, (Pickwick Academy Trust to make the following change:

- To change the age range 4 – 11 to 2 -11 years

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: St Matthias Academy, Bristol, City of, (Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership) to make the following change:

- To temporarily move the AP provision of St Matthias Academy from Culverhay to the Abbot Alphege site to allow redevelopment of two new free schools

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: Mountford Manor Primary School, Swindon (The White Horse Federation) to make the following change:

- To add a 24-place SEN resource base

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: Lydford Primary School, Devon (Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust) to make the following change:

- To change the age range 4 – 11 to 3 -11 years

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: Northlew and Ashbury Parochial Church of England Primary School, Devon (Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust) to make the following change:

- To change the age range 4 – 11 to 3 -11 years

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: Hans Price Academy, North Somerset (Cabot Learning Federation) to make the following change:

- To add a 25-place SEN resource base

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: Sennen Community Primary Academy, Cornwall (Truro & Penwith Academy Trust) to make the following change:

- To change the age range 4 – 11 to 3 -11 years

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

Project: All Saints Church of England Primary Academy, North Somerset (Futura Learning Partnership) to make the following change:

- To change the age range 4 – 11 to 2 - 11 years and add a nursery for up to 26 places.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools, trust and Diocese (where relevant).

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

None

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