



Department
for Education

Notes of meeting: South West Advisory Board

Date of meeting: 22 October 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
- Margaret Simmons - Bird

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Jennifer Blunden
- Stuart Ingram
- Rachel Howie

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

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from Mudeford Community Infants' School (113738), Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, to convert and become an academy and join Hamwic Education Trust.

Project: An application from Somerford Primary School (113736), Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, to convert and become an academy and join Hamwic Education Trust.

Representations received:

- Two representations were received for this project.
- Representations were shared in advance with the Regional Director for Regions Group South West and Advisory Board members for consideration.

AB discussion:

- There was discussion of Hamwic Education Trust's outcomes, school improvement track record, and school improvement model.
- Overall it was felt that the quality of the trust's KS2 outcomes is not strong enough.
- The discussion then moved onto geography and the trust not having any schools in the Christchurch area. There was agreement that geography must be taken into consideration, but whilst Hamwic Education Trust is not the closest trust it does still have schools that are not too far away.
- The Regional Director for Regions Group South West outlined that any decision should be rooted in the DfE's High Quality Trust Framework and a regard for ensuring decisions are underpinned by consideration of both quality and geography.
- At the end of the discussion the Regional Director for Regions Group South West requested the views of those Advisory Board members who could not attend. Those views were subsequently received.
- The Regional Director for Regions Group South West consequently outlined the view that geography could potentially be surmountable should the trust demonstrate improved quality of outcomes. However, there would need to be sustained improvements in KS2 outcomes across the trust to consider these two schools again.

Decision: Defer

Conflicts: None

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

Dorset

Converter academy orders

Project: An application from Cranborne Middle School (113853), Dorset, to convert and become an academy and join Hamwic Education Trust.

Representations received:

- Two representations were received for this project.
- Representations were shared in advance with the Regional Director for Regions Group South West and Advisory Board members for consideration.

AB discussion:

- There was discussion of Hamwic Education Trust's outcomes, school improvement track record, and school improvement model.
- The existing relationship between Cranborne Middle School and Hamwic Education Trust was also acknowledged.
- Overall it was felt that the quality of the trust's KS2 and KS3/4 outcomes is not strong enough.
- The discussion then moved onto geography. Concerns were raised about Hamwic Education Trust not having any KS3/4 provision local to Cranborne Middle School with the closest KS3/4 provision being the trust's two secondary schools in Southampton.
- The Regional Director for Regions Group South West outlined that any decision should be rooted in the DfE's High Quality Trust Framework and a regard for ensuring decisions are underpinned by consideration of both quality and geography.
- At the end of the discussion the Regional Director for Regions Group South West requested the views of those Advisory Board members who could not attend. Those views were subsequently received.
- The Regional Director for Regions Group South West consequently outlined the view that Hamwic Education Trust is not a good match for Cranborne Middle School on both the counts of quality and geography.

Decision: Decline

Conflicts: None

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

Devon

Trust Changes

Project: A proposal for the following five academies from Alumnis Multi-Academy Trust to transfer to The Academies For Character And Excellence:

- Bampton Church of England Primary School (URN 145762), **Devon**
- Burlescombe Church of England Primary School (URN 149055), **Devon**
- Combe Martin Primary School (URN 145764), **Devon**
- Webber's Church of England Primary School (URN 149056), **Devon**
- Woolacombe School (URN 145765), **Devon**

Project: A proposal for the following four academies from Alumnis Multi-Academy Trust to transfer to Learning Academy Partnership (South West):

- Clawton Primary School (URN 147492), **Devon**
- Dolton Church of England Primary School (URN 145770), **Devon**
- St Helen's Church of England School (URN 145769), **Devon**
- The Clinton Church of England Primary School (URN 145844), **Devon**

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

The two proposals listed were discussed together

- Alumnis Multi-Academy Trust was founded in 2018 and has nine primary schools in Devon.
- Alumnis has decided to proceed with a voluntary trust transfer, its nine schools will transfer to two well-established and high-performing trusts. It is proposed that five schools will transfer to The Academy for Character and Excellence (ACE), and four will join the Learning Academy Partnership South West (LAP).
- The proposed transfer of Alumnis schools to LAP and ACE is a direct response to the urgent need for swift support and improvement across the trust's nine schools.
- The four schools to transfer to LAP are well-situated within the trust's existing geographical footprint. Each is located within reasonable proximity to several LAP primary schools.
- The five schools to transfer to ACE, two support ACE to establish a presence in North Devon and the other three are well positioned to several ACE schools located across the Exeter and Somerset regions, ensuring strong local connectivity and support.
- Learning Academies Partnership South West and The Academy for Character and Excellence have a strong track record of supporting schools and delivering improvement.
- The structure and diversity of the ACE Trust board was discussed, regarding the current composition of the ACE board, which consists of five trustees, including the

CEO. The size and scope of experience, particularly in education and primary standards were noted as areas needing consideration to ensure robust oversight and challenge.

Decision: Approve with conditions

- ACE to provide a written update outlining the current position and plans for board development and to clarify how the transferring schools will transition to ACE's Local Governing Board Model.

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 have been given agreement in principle to open.

Project: Butleigh Church of England Primary School, Somerset (Preston Primary Academy Trust)

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

Opening date 1 November 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: Windmill Hill Academy, Cornwall (An Daras Multi Academy Trust) to make the following change:

- To extend Windmill Hill Academy's age range from 4-11 to 2-11, by incorporating Launceston Pre-School into Windmill Hill Academy.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Project: Nailsea School, Somerset (Wessex Learning Trust) to make the following change:

- To increase the capacity of the resource base from 10 place age range 7-9 to 26 place through years 7 - 11.

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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