



Notes of meeting: East of England

26 March 2026

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

- Jonathan Duff

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Lawrence Chapman
- Mark Farmer
- Clare Flintoff
- Alistair Kingsley
- Adrian Rogers
- Sarah Skinner
- Josephine Valentine

Guests

- None

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- None

General discussion points

- The Regional Director gave some national and regional updates and invited feedback from the board.
- The Regional Director thanked Board members and the East of England team for their work over the years, as this was the last Advisory Board meeting.
- Members reflected on their time at the board.

Decisions

Essex

Trust Changes

Project: A proposal for the schools in Compass Education Trust Ltd [TR00199], Essex, to transfer from Compass Education Trust Ltd and join Harris Federation.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

- The Board heard a proposal for the schools in Compass Education Trust Ltd to transfer and join Harris Federation.
- Board members discussed the trust's finances and governance.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts:

- Alistair Kingsley did not provide advice on this project due to a conflict of interest, as he is a Trustee of Compass Education Trust.
- Adrian Rogers did not provide advice on this project due to a conflict of interest, as he is a Trustee of Compass Education Trust.
- Sarah Skinner did not provide advice on this project due to a conflict of interest, as she was the off-payroll CEO for Compass Education Trust for a time.
- Josephine Valentine did not provide advice on this project due to a conflict of interest, as she is a Trustee of Compass Education Trust.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision.

Norfolk

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: An application for Corpusty Primary School [145299] to amalgamate with Reepham Primary School [143053], both in Synergy Multi Academy Trust, Norfolk.

Representations received:

- Representations were received from the local MP and members of the public.

AB discussion:

- The Board heard an application from Corpusty Primary School to amalgamate with Reepham Primary School.
- The Board was given a summary of the representations received.
- The Board discussed the trust's finances and governance.
- The Board also discussed the LA's views and the falling pupil numbers in the local area.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Recommend approval to the minister.

Decisions taken outside of AB meeting

List of decisions taken outside of AB meetings.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: An application for St Nicholas Church of England Primary School [149617], Berlesduna Academy Trust, Essex, to expand its capacity from 145 to 210 and change the age range from 4-11 to 2-11 to enable the opening of a nursery.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision setting out the conditions.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: An application for Samuel Ward Academy [136322], Unity Schools Partnership, Suffolk, to add a communication and interaction SEN unit for 18 pupils.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision setting out the conditions.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: An application for Churchill Special Free School [139732], Unity Schools Partnership, Suffolk, to reduce the age range from Year 4 - 13 to Year 7 - 13 through a phased reduction.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision setting out the conditions.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: An application for Stowmarket High School [145055], Kingfisher Schools Trust, Suffolk, to increase its capacity from 900 to 1200 places and, additionally, close the sixth form.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision setting out the conditions.

Significant changes to an open academy

Project: An application for The Bridge School [147162], Unity Schools Partnership, Suffolk, to increase pupil numbers from 216 to 273.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform school / trust of the decision setting out the conditions.

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