



Department  
for Education

## Notes of meeting: East Midlands Advisory Board.

25 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

Nigel Minns.

### Advisory Board (AB) members

- Sian Hampton.
- Paul Heery.
- Ash Rahman.
- Mark Thomas.

### Guests

- None.

### Apologies

- Julian Scholefield.
- Chris Wheatley.

### DfE senior civil servants

- Kelly Hughes, Deputy Director.

### General discussion points

- No discussion points were raised.

## Decisions

### Derbyshire

#### Trust Changes

**Project: A proposal for Stubbin Wood School (URN:147627), Derbyshire, to transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Nexus Multi Academy Trust.**

#### **Representations received:**

- No representations were made for this project.

#### **AB discussion:**

Stubbin Wood School, a large all-through special school in Derbyshire, is proposed to transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Nexus Multi Academy Trust following a special measures judgement from Ofsted. The school operates across several satellite sites within Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

T.E.A.M Education Trust has since decided to dissolve, and both Derbyshire County Council and the department have worked closely with the trust to secure appropriate long-term arrangements for Stubbin Wood. In exploring options, Nexus Multi Academy Trust emerged as the strongest fit due to its experience running large, multi-site special schools that serve a wide-range of SEND needs. The trust has already been providing interim support, including the deployment of an experienced executive leader with a track record of improving similarly complex settings.

Nexus Multi Academy Trust's broader record in supporting schools with significant SEND needs, coupled with its capacity to provide consistent leadership, curriculum improvement and safeguarding oversight, makes it well-placed to meet Stubbin Wood's pressing priorities. The transfer would provide the school with the specialist expertise and organisational stability required to address the weaknesses identified by Ofsted and secure sustained improvement for pupils across all its sites.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to Nexus Multi Academy Trust, as outlined in the High-Quality Trust Framework, was considered against the strategic needs of the schools.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Chris Wheatley was not in receipt of related project papers; nor was he in attendance for this discussion.

**Further actions required:** Feedback decision to the school/trusts and Derbyshire County Council.

**Project: A proposal for Model Village Primary School (URN:147625), Derbyshire, to transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Learners' Trust.**

**Representations received:**

- No representations were made for this project.

**AB discussion:**

Model Village Primary School, a mainstream primary school in Mansfield for pupils aged 2 to 11, is a proposed voluntary transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Learners' Trust as part of T.E.A.M's decision to dissolve. The school joined T.E.A.M Education Trust with a good Ofsted judgement and its November 2024 monitoring inspection confirmed it had taken "effective action to maintain the standards." Model Village Primary School serves a disadvantaged community, with 46.5% of pupils eligible for free school meals, and while reading is well-established, Ofsted identified variation in foundation subjects and the need for more precise support for disadvantaged pupils.

T.E.A.M Education Trust identified Learners' Trust as their preferred destination for Model Village Primary school. Following a high-quality trust assessment the department supports this proposal. The trust has a strong record of improving primary schools in similarly disadvantaged areas and offers established strengths in curriculum sequencing, targeted intervention and leadership development to meet the school's needs.

The proposed transfer is expected to provide Model Village Primary School with greater curriculum consistency, stronger support for disadvantaged pupils and a more coherent professional development model. With T.E.A.M Education Trust no longer able to provide long-term oversight, joining Learners' Trust offers a stable and experienced trust environment capable of sustaining the school's strengths while addressing its remaining improvement needs.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to Learners' Trust, as outlined in the High-Quality Trust Framework, was considered against the strategic needs of the schools.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Chris Wheatley was not in receipt of related project papers; nor was he in attendance for this discussion.

**Further actions required:** Feedback decision to the school/trusts and Derbyshire County Council.

**Project: A proposal for Whaley Thorns Primary School (URN:147626), Derbyshire, to transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Learners' Trust.**

**Representations received:**

- No representations were made for this project.

## **AB discussion:**

Whaley Thorns Primary School, a mainstream primary school in Langwith for pupils aged 3 to 11, is a proposed voluntary transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Learners' Trust following the trust's decision to dissolve. The school joined T.E.A.M Education Trust after 3 consecutive requires improvement judgements, and although its October 2024 Ofsted inspection showed improvement, the quality of education remained requires improvement. Whaley Thorns Primary School serves a highly disadvantaged community, with 62.8% of pupils eligible for free school meals, and continues to face challenges in attendance, attainment and consistency of teaching.

T.E.A.M Education Trust identified Learners' Trust as their preferred destination for Whaley Thorns Primary school. Following a high-quality trust assessment the department supports this proposal. The trust has a strong presence in Derbyshire and a track record of improving schools with similar levels of disadvantage and historical instability. Its experience in strengthening leadership, embedding consistent teaching approaches and improving early reading closely aligns with the school's ongoing priorities.

The proposed transfer is expected to provide Whaley Thorns Primary School with more stable leadership, clearer curriculum expectations and stronger support in SEND, early reading and attendance.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to Learners' Trust, as outlined in the High-Quality Trust Framework, was considered against the strategic needs of the schools.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Chris Wheatley was not in receipt of related project papers; nor was he in attendance for this discussion.

**Further actions required:** Feedback decision to the school/trusts and Derbyshire County Council.

**Caveat:** The Sheffield and Rotherham T.E.A.M. projects were jointly handled with the **Yorkshire and Humber RD, Alison Wilson, and Y&H AB members**. Their full support was provided, and no concerns were raised.

## **Sheffield**

### **Trust Changes**

**Project: A proposal for Willow Park School, (URN:151377), Sheffield, to transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Nexus Multi Academy Trust.**

**Representations received:**

- No representations were made for this project.

### **AB discussion:**

Willow Park School, a special school in Sheffield for pupils aged 7 to 16, is a proposed voluntary transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Nexus Multi Academy Trust as part of the trust's wider dissolution. The school has faced longstanding improvement challenges, having received 3 consecutive requires improvement judgements before joining T.E.A.M Education Trust in January 2025, and Ofsted's 2023 inspection identified inconsistencies in curriculum planning and staff subject knowledge. Willow Park School serves a highly disadvantaged cohort, with 86.8% of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Sheffield City Council has confirmed its support for Nexus Multi Academy Trust as the incoming trust, reflecting the need for a strong and locally established SEND provider. Nexus Multi Academy Trust already operates several special schools in Sheffield and has a strong working relationship with the local authority, giving it a clear understanding of the city's SEND pressures and strategic priorities.

Nexus Multi Academy Trust's experience in strengthening curriculum implementation, developing middle leadership and supporting schools with complex SEMH and SEND needs positions it well to provide the sustained capacity Willow Park School requires. Their established track record in improving similar specialist settings, coupled with existing relationships in the local area, gives confidence that the school will benefit from stronger leadership, more consistent teaching practice and clearer progression pathways for pupils. The proposed transfer is therefore expected to provide the stability and specialist expertise needed to secure long-term improvement for Willow Park School.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to Nexus Multi Academy Trust, as outlined in the High-Quality Trust Framework, was considered against the strategic needs of the schools.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Chris Wheatley was not in receipt of related project papers; nor was he in attendance for this discussion.

**Further actions required:** Feedback decision to the school/trusts and Sheffield City Council.

## **Rotherham**

### **Trust Changes**

**Project: A proposal for Newman School, (URN:151166), Rotherham, to transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Venn Academy Trust.**

**Representations received:**

- No representations were made for this project.

**AB discussion:**

Newman School, a special school in Rotherham for pupils aged 2 to 19, is a proposed voluntary transfer from T.E.A.M Education Trust to Venn Academy Trust following the trust's decision to dissolve. Ofsted's October 2022 inspection judged the school requires improvement. A monitoring visit in January 2024 noted progress, but further improvement was still required. The school operates across 2 sites and serves pupils with a wide range of complex needs, including physical disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, social, emotional and mental health needs and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council supports the transfer to Venn Academy Trust. Venn Academy Trust already works closely with the local authority.

Venn Academy Trust has a track record of securing improvement in specialist settings facing safeguarding, attendance, curriculum and leadership challenges, and its due diligence at Newman School has confirmed similar needs. Their recent experience improving complex special schools, combined with their capacity to support major capital works, positions the trust well to provide the strengthened leadership and specialist oversight Newman School requires. The transfer is therefore expected to secure greater stability, clearer strategic direction and improved provision across both of the school's sites.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to Venn Academy Trust, as outlined in the High-Quality Trust Framework, was considered against the strategic needs of the schools.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Steve Hodsman (Yorkshire and Humber Advisory Board member) was not in receipt of related project papers; nor was he in attendance for this discussion. Chris Wheatley was not in receipt of related project papers; nor was he in attendance for this discussion.

**Further actions required:** Feedback decision to the school/trusts and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

## **Academy opening approved in principle**

List of academies approved to open the following month.

### **Project: Buxton Infant School.**

**Points raised in discussion:** Proposed school opening date – 1 April 2026.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further action required:** No action required.

### **Project: Buxton Junior School.**

**Points raised in discussion:** Proposed school opening date – 1 April 2026.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further action required:** No action required.

### **Project: Farmilo Primary School and Nursery.**

**Points raised in discussion:** Proposed school opening date – 1 April 2026.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further action required:** No action required.

### **Project: Orston Primary School.**

**Points raised in discussion:** Proposed school opening date – 1 April 2026.

**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: An application for Southfield School for Girls, (URN:136976), Orbis Education Trust, North Northamptonshire, to make the following change: increase the capacity of the school from 1123 to 1359 (increase of 236 places).**

**Representations received:** N/A.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Project: An application for The Giles Academy, (URN:148185), South Lincolnshire Academies Trust, Lincolnshire, to make the following change: to permanently close the sixth form.**

**Representations received:** N/A.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Project: An application for Spalding Academy, (URN:144488), South Lincolnshire Academies Trust, Lincolnshire, to make the following change: to permanently close the sixth form.**

**Representations received:** N/A.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Project:** An application for Samuel Barlow Primary Academy, (URN:144611), Diverse Academies Trust, Nottinghamshire, to make the following change: to establish an integrated resource unit for up to 24 primary-aged pupils with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs).

**Representations received:** N/A.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Project:** An application for Westbury Academy (URN:144320), Raleigh Education Trust, Nottingham, to make the following change: To retrospectively increase the planned number of pupils from 67 to 120 from September 2025.

**Representations received:** None.

**Decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

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