



Department
for Education

Notes of meeting: South West Advisory Board

Date of meeting: 23 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

- Lucy Livings - Regional Director, South West Region

Advisory Board (AB) members

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

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Rachel Howie

DfE senior civil servants

- Jessica Trahar – Deputy Director, South West Region

General discussion points

- Lucy Livings, RD, expressed gratitude to the Advisory Board members for their support and valuable contributions to the South West Regions Group over the past few years.

Decisions

Gloucestershire

Trust Changes

Project: A proposal for St Peter's Catholic High School and Sixth Form Centre (URN 136982), Gloucestershire from St Peter's Catholic High School and Sixth Form Centre (SAT) to transfer to Little Way Catholic Educational Trust

Representations received: ** both projects for transfer to Little Way Catholic Educational Trust were discussed together

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

- This is a voluntary proposal for St Peter's Catholic High School and Sixth Form Centre and St Joseph's Catholic College to transfer to Little Way Catholic Educational Trust (LWCET).
- The proposal aligns with the Clifton Diocese's plan for all Catholic schools to operate within a MAT. It creates opportunities for closer, more formal collaboration between the two Catholic secondary schools and supports an 'all-through' approach to Catholic education across Gloucestershire and Swindon. The arrangement also strengthens trust-wide capacity and supports the diocese's long-term strategic vision.
- LWCET was established in January 2024, it is made up of six Catholic primary schools in Gloucestershire, St Catharine's, St Joseph's, St Peter's, St Thomas More, St Gregory the Great, and The Rosary, all of which are rated Good by Ofsted and this proposal would represent the trust's first secondary schools.
- The structure and diversity of the trust board was discussed and the value of including members with secondary educational expertise to enhance both support and the ability to provide effective challenge. Regions Group will recommend that the trust commission an external governance review.
- Whilst the CEO has strong experience within primary education, the expansion of the trust to include secondary schools led to a discussion about the Chair having a mentor to offer positive, constructive support as the trust grows.
- The Trust's financial position was discussed. Schools Financial Support and Oversight (SFSO) has been supporting the Trust through the deployment of a Schools Resource Management Adviser (SRMA) and through financial planning for growth. The two SATs joining the Trust are expected to have a positive impact on incoming reserves. SFSO and Regions Group will continue to work with LWCET.

- 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.

Decision: Approve with conditions

- Little Way Catholic Educational Trust to provide quarterly management accounts for academic years 2026/27 and 2027/28.
- Pairing/mentoring from a CEO of a high-quality trust that has grown from primary to secondary or led by a CEO from a primary background.

Conflicts: None

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

Swindon

Trust Changes

Project: A proposal for St Joseph's Catholic College (URN 136980), Swindon from St Joseph's Catholic College (SAT) to transfer to Little Way Catholic Educational Trust

Representations received: ** both projects for transfer to Little Way Catholic Educational Trust were discussed together

- No representations were made for this project.

AB Discussion:

- Refer to the notes for St Peter's Catholic High School and Sixth Form Centre.

Decision: Approve with conditions

- Little Way Catholic Educational Trust to provide quarterly management accounts for academic years 2026/27 and 2027/28.
- Pairing/mentoring from a CEO of a high-quality trust that has grown from primary to secondary or led by a CEO from a primary background.

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: East Wichel Primary School & Nursery, Swindon (LIFT Schools)

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

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: North Bradley CofE Primary School, Wiltshire (Equa Mead Learning) to make the following change:

- to change the age range from 4-11 to 2-11

RD decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

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

Project: Othery Village School, Somerset (PPAT Education) to make the following change:

- to change the age range from 4-11 to 2-11

RD 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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