



Notes of meeting: South East 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

- Kate Dethridge

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Sue Samon
- Paul James
- Stuart Gardner
- Claire Lowe
- Sarah Bennett

Guests

- None

Apologies

- Sarah Brown

DfE senior civil servants

- Paul Schofield

General discussion points

- No discussion points were raised

Decisions

Coastal

Sponsored academy orders

Project: A proposal for Greenshaw Learning Trust to sponsor The Clere School, Hampshire.

Representations received:

- Two representations were received for this project.
- When received in time, representations are shared in advance with the RD and the AB members, who considered them when providing advice to RDs.

AB discussion:

- The board discussed the background and context of this application.
- There was a discussion on the impact on the local authority and nearby schools.
- The board discussed the feedback and representations received from stakeholders on the proposal, including school staff and the local councillor.
- Falling pupil numbers in the local area was discussed, alongside proposed housing developments. It was agreed that these new dwellings are unlikely to lead to a large increase in pupil numbers.

Decision: Defer

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Inform the school, trust and local authority

Kent, Medway and Surrey Sub Region

Trust Changes

An application from Learning Partners Academy Trust, Surrey, to merge with Learning Partners Church Academy Trust and Enlighten Learning Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

- The board discussed the impact on the internal structure of the trust's board.
- The School Improvement Plan was discussed, with the trust focusing on a hub model and inclusive education.
- There was agreement that this was a strong application.

- There was discussion about whether the current number of church multi academy trusts in Surrey remains sufficient for the area.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Inform the school, trust and local authority

An application for Bluebell Federation, Medway, to convert all schools and form a MAT.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

- The proposal for a deputy CEO was discussed by the board.
- The board considered what the local area looked like in terms of existing MATs.
- Medway's strategy on conversions to academy status was highlighted to the board.
- The readiness of the federation was discussed and whether initial support should be provided.

Decision: Approve with conditions

1. School Improvement Plans - The trust is to submit school improvement plans for Burnt Oak Primary School and report progress against the objectives before the end of the 2025/26 academic year.

2. Trustee Appointments - the three current trustee vacancies must be filled before signing the funding agreements.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Feedback decision to the school/trust and local authority setting out the conditions

An application for Weald of Kent Grammar School, Kent, to join Girls' Learning Trust.

Representations received:

- No representations were made for this project.

AB discussion:

- Finance – the board discussed the issues affecting grammar schools in general.
- The local map of girls' schools was discussed and whether the trust had considered any of these.
- Girls' Learning Trust's recent history and plans were discussed.
- The admissions criteria of Weald of Kent Grammar School were discussed.

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Inform the school, trust and local authority

Decisions taken outside of AB meeting

List of decisions taken outside of AB meetings.

Converter Academy Order

Project: St Mark's Church of England Primary School, Kent, to convert and join The Tenax Schools Trust

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Inform the school/trust, diocese and local authority.

Project: Downs View Infant School, Kent, to convert and join The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Inform the school/trust, and local authority.

Project: Bridge and Patricbourne Church of England Primary School, Kent, to convert and join The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Inform the school/trust, diocese and local authority.

Significant Change

Project: Pond Meadow School, Pond Meadow Academy Trust, Surrey, to make the following changes:

- Acquiring an additional (satellite) site

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school/trust and local authority.

Project: Farnborough Grange Infant and Nursery School, The Good Shepherd Trust, Hampshire, to make the following changes:

- Removing a SEN unit or resourced provision

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school/trust and local authority.

Project: Lift New Forest, Lift Schools, Hampshire, to make the following changes:

- Adding a SEN unit or resourced provision
- Change of age range (including adding or removing a nursery or sixth form provision)

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school/trust and local authority.

Project: Deer Park School, Raise Education Trust, Hampshire, to make the following changes:

- Adding a SEN unit or resourced provision

Decision: Approve

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school/trust and local authority.

Academy opening approved in principle

List of academies approved to open the following month.

Burford School, Marlow Education Trust, Buckinghamshire.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust and local authority.

Compton C.E. Primary School, Summit Education Trust West Berkshire.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust, diocese and local authority.

Guston Church of England Primary School, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust, Kent.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust, diocese and local authority.

John Watson School, The Propeller Academy Trust, Oxfordshire.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust and local authority.

Minster Church of England Primary School, EKC Schools Trust Limited, Kent.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust, diocese and local authority.

Monkton Church of England Primary School, EKC Schools Trust Limited, Kent.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust, diocese and local authority.

Spinfield School, Marlow Education Trust, Buckinghamshire.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust, and local authority

Teynham Parochial Church of England Primary School, EKC Schools Trust Limited, Kent.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust, diocese and local authority.

The Downs School, Summit Education Trust, West Berkshire.

Points raised: N/A.

Conflicts: None.

Further action required: Inform the school/trust, and local authority