

Notes of Meeting: South East Advisory Board

Thursday 25 May 2023

Attendance

Attendance data is published annually on the GOV.UK website.

AB members who sent their apologies for the meeting have, where possible, been consulted on all projects before the meeting. Their views are reflected in the discussion at the meeting (where appropriate). This excludes items where that member declared a conflict of interest.

Regional Director (RD) chair

- Dame Kate Dethridge

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Sarah Bennett
- Dame Yasmin Bevan
- Sarah Brown
- Sir Andrew Carter
- Paul James
- Claire Lowe
- Sue Samson MBE
- Stuart Gardner

DfE senior civil servants

- Paul Schofield – Deputy Director, South East Regions Group

Representations received

- Representations were received in relation to Bolnore Village Primary School (BVPS) joining Hurst Education Trust (HET).

General Discussion Points

- Conflict of interest were noted for Paul James, Sue Samson, Dame Yasmin Bevan and Sir Andrew Carter. These are indicated against the projects to which they relate. These members were not present for the items when discussed.
- AB members confirmed they were happy with the minutes of April Advisory Board.

Items for discussion in the meeting

West sub-region

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Grendon Underwood Combined School, **Buckinghamshire**, to convert and join Warriner Multi Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the proposed growth and actions the trust are taking to ensure the success of schools that join.
- AB members discussed the financial positions of the trust and the school.
- AB members spoke about the vulnerability of small schools and the risks associated with taking them into a MAT.
- AB members discussed the school improvement track record of Warriner MAT.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school and trust of the decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Fritwell Church of England Primary, **Oxfordshire**, to convert and join Eynsham Partnership Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the financial position of Eynsham MAT and their approach to risk and compliance.
- AB members spoke about the current governance structure and the overlap between trustees and members.
- AB members discussed the capacity of Eynsham MAT to take on and improve schools.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

1. Eynsham trust review their governance arrangements to ensure that they are compliant with the Academy Trust Handbook.
2. Future growth will be dependent on the trust's governance arrangements being compliant with the Academy Trust Handbook.

Conflicts: Paul James

Further actions required: Inform the school and trust of the decision.

Kent, Medway & Surrey sub-region

Sponsor Application

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Xavier Education Trust, **Surrey**, to become a sponsor.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the composition of the trust board and the need to appoint an education expert independent of the trust.
- AB members spoke about the leadership structure of the MAT.
- AB members discussed the lack of educational expertise on the trust board and recommended that the trust to appoint an individual to the trust board with educational experience, who is independent of the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the trust of the decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, **Surrey**, to convert and join Xavier Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- Having discussed the sponsor application for Xavier Education Trust (previous item), AB members were reassured that St Joseph's Catholic Primary School would receive adequate support and challenge.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school and trust of the decision.

South Coast sub-region

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Bolnore Village Primary School, **West Sussex**, to convert and join Hurst Education Trust Limited.

AB discussion:

- AB members acknowledged the representations received in relation to this item.
- AB members discussed the schools that are already part of Hurst Education Trust Limited.
- AB members spoke about the affordability of the proposed model and how the MAT will develop to become financially self-sustaining.
- AB members spoke about the future growth plans of the MAT and the role it could play in supporting the local education system.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

1. The Regional Director requires reassurance that the proposed operating model has been fully costed and is affordable for the MAT.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform school and trust of outcome.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Glebe Primary School, **West Sussex**, to convert and join United Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the benefits to Glebe Primary School joining United Learning Trust.
- AB spoke about the school improvement track record of United Learning Trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Dame Yasmin Bevan

Further actions required: Inform the school and the trust of outcome.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss and consider Schoolworks Academy Trust as a sponsor match for Hawthorns Primary School, **West Sussex**.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the school improvement track record of the trust.
- AB members discussed the composition of the trust board at Schoolworks Academy Trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school and the trust of outcome.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss and consider sponsor match options for Field Place Infant School, **West Sussex**.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the longer-term growth plans for the sponsoring MAT.
- AB members spoke about the benefits of Field Place Infant School joining the proposed sponsor.
- AB members discussed the financial position of the sponsor.
- AB members spoke about the performance of the of the school in the sponsoring MAT.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school and the trust of outcome.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss and consider Sussex Education Trust (Chichester Free School), **West Sussex**, to join Sussex Learning Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the potential for Sussex Learning Trust to grow in the future, specifically around Chichester.
- AB members questioned how the coming together of Sussex Education Trust and Sussex Learning Trust will be handled.
- AB members spoke about the school improvement strategy of Sussex Learning Trust.
- AB members discussed the school improvement track record of the trusts.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

1. Sussex Learning Trust to submit a summary of their school improvement plan to be submitted and reviewed by a member of the AB before the Trust Change is actioned.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the trusts of the outcome.

Sponsor Application

Project: To discuss and consider the application from South Downs Education Trust, **West Sussex**, to become a sponsor.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the school improvement model of the trust and their track record of improving schools.
- AB members spoke about the skillset of the trust board and their capacity to support and challenge the executive.
- AB members discussed the future growth plans of the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the trust of the outcome.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss and consider the application to move St Joseph's Infant School, **West Sussex**, to adjacent site, where St Joseph's CE Junior School sits (another school within Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust).

AB discussion:

- AB discussed the future of the unused building.
- AB members acknowledged the effort it had taken to get this point.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the trust of the outcome.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss and consider application to close the sixth form provision at Gildredge House Free School, **East Sussex**.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the skillset and composition of the trust board.
- AB members spoke about the future of this Single Academy Trust.
- AB members discussed the difficulties associated with operating a sixth form with low pupil numbers.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

1. That the trust undertake an external review of governance and take appropriate action based on the feedback.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the trust of the outcome.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss and consider the University of Chichester (Multi) Academy Trust as a sponsor for Woodlea Primary School, **Hampshire**.

AB discussion:

- This was a returning item.
- AB members were reassured by the information presented to them.
- AB members spoke about the benefits of Woodlea Primary School joining the University of Chichester Academy Trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sue Samson MBE and Sir Andrew Carter.

Further actions required: Inform the trust of the outcome.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

Project: Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Faversham.

Decision type: Significant Change - physical expansion and capacity increase

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school of the RD decision.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open in June 2023.

- Brighton Hill Community School, **Hampshire**, South Farnham Educational Trust
- Heene CofE Primary School, **Hampshire**, Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust
- Woodgate Primary Academy, **Hampshire**, Sussex Learning Trust