

Notes of Meeting: East of England

Date of meeting – 29/02/2024

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

- Jonathan Duff (RD)

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Al Kingsley (AB)
- Tim Coulson (AB)
- Mark Farmer (AB)
- Clare Flintoff (AB)
- Lawrence Chapman (AB)
- Sarah Skinner (AB)
- Josephine Valentine (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- Maureen Boston (DD), Regions Group National Directorate, (observing)

Representations received

- One received about the project; 'To discuss Alban Academies Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of seven academies), **Hertfordshire**, merging with Atlas Multi-academy Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of three academies) **Hertfordshire**, to form the Ambition Educational Trust.
- This representation was shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

- The RD gave some general national and regional updates and invited feedback from the board.
- The board heard from the Ofsted Regional Director for East of England and East Midlands, Mike Sheridan, about Ofsted in the region. The board members gave feedback to Mike Sheridan about their experiences of Ofsted inspections.
- The board considered Ofsted judgement outcomes for the previous month.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss Alban Academies Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of seven academies; Ridgeway Academy, Sandringham School, Verulam School, Garden Fields JMI School, Wheatfields Infants' and Nursery School, Skyswood Primary and Nursery School, and Wheatfields Junior Mixed School), Hertfordshire, merging with Atlas Multi-academy Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of three academies; St Albans Girls' School, Beech Hyde Primary and Nursery School, and The Adeyfield Academy) Hertfordshire, to form the Ambition Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- This is a returning item; the project was initially discussed at the January Advisory Board.
- The board heard that the new name for the proposed trust is the Ambition Education Trust.
- The board heard that, if approved, this merger would happen from September 2024.
- The board considered the finances of both trusts and their financial forecasts.
- The board discussed how the governance of the schools would change if the trusts merge. The board considered the governance arrangements for the proposed new trust and highlighted the need to have a strong executive leadership.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the trusts of the decision. Delivery Officer to deploy an SRMA for the new trust after the merger.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss Windhill Academy Trust (single-academy trust consisting of one academy; Windhill21), Hertfordshire, joining Ivy Learning Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of fourteen academies; The Wroxham School, Crabtree Infants' School, Crabtree Junior School, Lavender Primary School, Brimsdown Primary School, Churchfield Primary School, Eastfield Primary School, Larkspur Academy, Walker Primary School, Walker Primary School, Woodside Primary School, Peartree Primary School, Round Diamond Primary School, Martins Wood Primary School, and Watchlytes Primary School), Enfield.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this proposal is for a single academy trust, Windhill Academy Trust, to transfer to a multi academy trust, Ivy Learning Trust.
- The board heard about the latest Ofsted judgement for Windhill21, trends in education performance outcomes at the academy, and the benefits that Ivy Learning trust would be expected to bring to Windhill21.

- The RD requested that the governance structure of Ivy Learning Trust is clarified before the transfer is completed.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the trusts of the decision. Delivery Officer to discuss the benefits of an External Governance Review with Ivy Learning Trust.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Helena Romanes School (Saffron Academy Trust), Essex, increasing the size of its sixth form from 250 to 350 pupils.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that Helena Romanes School has been approved to go through a rebuild and that it predicts future growth in its sixth form numbers.
- The board heard that the school recently received a 'Good' Ofsted judgement and the report stated that the sixth form was friendly, supportive and offered a range of subjects.
- The board considered the performance outcomes for the school.
- The board asked for further information about future pupil numbers going on into the sixth form and the anticipated increased demand for places in the local area, given planned housing development. The board also asked whether the planned new secondary school would include a sixth form.
- The board also discussed the effect that this expansion would have on other sixth forms in the area and concluded this would be minimal.

RD decision: Defer pending additional information. RD to make final recommendation to Minister on receipt of this information.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school, the trust, and the local authority of the decision. Delivery Officer to find out more information about areas listed.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss The Sixth Form College Colchester, Essex, and Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridgeshire, converting and becoming academies and forming The Sixth Form Colleges Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this project proposes The Sixth Form College Colchester and Long Road Sixth Form College converting to academy status and forming a new multi-academy trust.
- The board heard that these two FE colleges already have an established working relationship, for example they are both members of the peer support partnership of sixth form colleges CENBASE. The proposed new multi-academy trust will embed

the joint working between the colleges and students in both colleges will benefit from this.

- The board heard about the performance outcomes of both colleges.
- The board considered the governance and finance arrangements for the proposed new multi-academy trust.
- The board discussed the future growth plans for the proposed multi-academy trust.
- The board considered the distance between the two colleges.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the schools of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Edward Worlledge Ormiston Academy (Ormiston Academies Trust), Norfolk, expanding its specialist resource base to create a 16-place provision.

AB discussion:

Please note the wording of this project has changed since it was published in the draft agenda, from 'creating a specialist resource base' to 'expanding its specialist resource base'.

- The board heard that this specialist resource base is for children with autism and is the only primary autism base in the east of the county.
- The board heard this project is to add 6 places to the specialist resource base and, if approved, this expansion will be in place from September 2024.
- The board discussed the Ofsted judgements and performance outcomes for the school.
- The board considered the demand for places in this autism base and the RD agreed that the expansion of this specialist resource base will help address the need in the area.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school, the trust, and the local authority of the decision.

Sponsored Route

Project: To discuss sponsor options for St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Suffolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this project was discussed at December's Advisory Board and the decision was deferred. Since then, a review of sponsor options has been undertaken.
- The board heard that the diocese works with a number of academy trusts that could potentially sponsor the school and discussed the offers of support received for St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School.
- The board heard that the recommended proposed trust, Elveden Schools Trust, has been working with the school already, particularly by providing leadership support to the school.
- The board discussed the leadership and school improvement capacity of the recommended proposed trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school and the trust of the decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss closing the sixth form at Bury St Edmunds County High School (Unity Schools Partnership), Suffolk, and moving all years onto one site.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this project would change the age range of Bury St Edmunds County High School from 11-18 to 11-16.
- The board heard that the school has seen declining admission numbers in the sixth form.
- The board heard that there are other sixth forms in the area with capacity to take in the pupils.
- The board discussed what the unused site will be used for.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Tim Coulson, Chief Executive of Unity Schools Partnership, was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: Delivery officer to inform the school, the trust and the local authority of the decision.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss SENDAT (multi-academy trust consisting of five academies; Priory School, Stone Lodge Academy, Chalk Hill, Duke of Lancaster School, and Sunrise Academy), Suffolk, and Suffolk Academies Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of two academies, One

Sixth Form College and Abbeygate Sixth Form College), Suffolk, merging and forming The Eastern Education Trust.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss Exning Primary School, Suffolk, converting and becoming an academy and joining Suffolk Academies Trust, which will be renamed The Eastern Education Trust.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that SENDAT is a specialist trust of SEND and AP schools and SAT is a sixth form only trust.
- The board considered that by merging, these trusts could share their expertise and experience. In particular, this trust would seek to offer improved post-16 pathways for SEND pupils and a focus on school improvement which will benefit pupils in all schools.
- The board heard that Exning Primary School, judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, would add capacity to the proposed new trust. The board considered that the proposed new trust would have primary, AP and post-16 provisions and hope to expand into secondary.
- The board discussed the governance and leadership of the proposed new trust.
- The board discussed the finances of both trusts.

RD decision:

Approve the project, 'To discuss SENDAT (multi-academy trust consisting of five academies; Priory School, Stone Lodge Academy, Chalk Hill, Duke of Lancaster School, and Sunrise Academy), Suffolk, and Suffolk Academies Trust (multi-academy trust consisting of two academies, One Sixth Form College and Abbeygate Sixth Form College), Suffolk, merging and forming The Eastern Education Trust.

Approve the project, 'To discuss Exning Primary School, Suffolk, converting and becoming an academy and joining Suffolk Academies Trust, which will be renamed The Eastern Education Trust'.

Conflicts: Lawrence Chapman, Chief Executive of SENDAT, was not present for this item and did not receive the papers.

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the trusts and the school of the decision. Academy Order to be issued and LA to be informed of the decision.

Decisions escalated

List of decisions that have been escalated to the Minister.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy (The Diocese of Ely Multi-academy Trust), Norfolk, merging with Hilgay Riverside Academy (The Diocese of Ely Multi-academy Trust), Norfolk.

AB discussion:

- The board heard that this project proposes to merge two small rural schools, which will result in the closure of the site at Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy from September 2024.
- The board heard that an initial proposal to close the school was put to consultation in 2017, but the decision was postponed.
- The board heard that the pupil numbers are declining, and it is not viable to keep Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy open.
- The board discussed how the closure of Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy would affect the local community.
- The board heard that this merger would create a three-class structure at Hilgay Riverside Academy, which would benefit the pupils from both schools, particularly by enabling effective curriculum teaching.
- The board heard that the trust will provide transport for pupils travelling from Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy to Hilgay Riverside Academy.
- The board discussed the performance outcomes for schools within the trust.

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Delivery Officer to inform the schools and the trust of the decision. This decision is escalated for final ministerial approval because it involves the closure of a school.

List of projects listed on the published draft agenda, but were removed before the meeting

List of projects that were on the published draft agenda but not discussed at the AB meeting.

Project: To discuss sponsor options for Forres Primary School, Hertfordshire.

Type of decision: Sponsored Route

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Further information requested to make an informed decision.

Project: To discuss Mousehold Infant and Nursery School (Inclusive Schools Trust), Norfolk, lowering its age range from 3-7 to 2-7.

Type of decision: Significant Change

Reason for why it was taken off agenda: Further information requested to make an informed decision.