

Diocesan Board of Education Academy Strategy

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to propose a DBE strategy on academies for discussion and approval. The Education and Adoption Act became law on 18 April 2016. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretary of State for Education and the National Society was published on the DfE website on 18 April and provides a framework for addressing the various issues that may arise with academisation of church schools, based on key principles. The recent White Paper sets out the government's aim that all schools become academies by 2022.

2. Aims

The DBE strategy aims to:

- enable all pupils in Church of England schools to achieve their full potential, putting their interests first
- provide a clear and consistent framework for schools considering their future
- respond appropriately to the government's policy on academies and in particular the Education and Adoption Act and White Paper
- secure good governance for all schools for the long term, which reflects their status as C of E schools.

3. Context

At present there are 88 church schools in the Diocese, made up of:

- three stand-alone convertor academies
- 15 voluntary aided schools
- 63 voluntary controlled schools
- three former VC schools in a local MAT with a community school
- one sponsored academy in the Diocesan MAT
- three convertor academies in the Diocesan MAT.

The DBE has previously agreed that:

- it will not normally support applications from church schools seeking to join existing multi-academy trusts with non-church schools and that
- church schools seeking academy status will normally be expected to join the Diocesan MAT.

It is appropriate therefore to re-evaluate our approach in the light of the Education and Adoption Act and the recent White Paper.

4. Policy

- Schools requiring sponsorship should normally be sponsored by the Diocesan MAT or a suitably strong church school- led MAT.
- Church school- led MATs should be encouraged to sponsor under- performing schools.
- Voluntary aided (VA) schools should normally be in a VA style of governance structure.
- The Diocesan MAT continues to seek to attract good and outstanding schools as well as schools judged to require improvement and in special measures.

- The Diocesan MAT is increasing its capacity as it grows.
- Church schools may join the Diocesan MAT singly or as part of a group or hub. The level of delegation to local governing bodies will reflect the latest Ofsted judgement, with maximum autonomy for good and outstanding schools.
- Schools wishing to form their own MAT should first discuss their plans with the DDE. The DBE will normally only consent to local MATs using Articles of Association which involve a Church majority at member level (a VA model). This enables VA, VC and community schools to join.
- VC local MATs will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Church schools seeking to join existing multi-academy trusts with non-church schools (e.g. high schools) will be considered on a case by case basis. Such a MAT would have to amend its Articles of Association to adopt the Church of England model and include the appropriate ratio of Foundation Members and Trustees.
- Collaboration between schools and school- to-school-support is key to success.

Jane Sheat
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