



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

Diocesan Board of Education Academy Strategy

1. The role of the DBE

The DBE is a statutory body with responsibilities for church schools in each diocese, and for RE and collective worship. The Board consists of members nominated by the Bishop, elected members of the Diocesan Synod, and people with experience of church schools in the diocese. It includes ordained clergy, lay people, Headteachers and education professionals from across the diocese. The board meets four times a year. The Academies Act 2010 requires church schools to obtain consent from those who appoint foundation governors before they may apply to the DfE to become academies, This means the Bishop, the DBE and the PCC.

2. Before seeking consent

Before the DBE's consent is sought, schools should ensure that they:

- Have sought advice from the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) or Deputy Director.
- Have considered thoroughly the pros and cons of becoming an academy, familiarised themselves with the process involved and researched all the information available. Useful links include the DfE website, which includes model documentation for church schools, and the diocesan website.
- Have passed a governing body resolution to apply for academy status, not simply discussed the matter, but resolved that it is in the best long-term interests of the school to proceed.
- Have, ideally, already sought and obtained the informed consent of the PCC.
- Have consulted as fully as possible.
- Complete a declaration, and any supplementary information, in good time for the papers to be circulated in advance of the DBE meeting. Templates are available from the DDE. This will include assurances about RE and collective worship.

3. The DBE

The DBE will:

- Provide information, advice and support via the DDE and Deputy DDE.
- Normally invite the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to attend the DBE meeting.
- Decide whether to consent, give conditional consent, withhold consent or defer, pending further information.

The DBE will need to satisfy itself that:

- Due process has been carried out.
- The proposal is fully supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body.
- The issue has been fully consulted upon.
- The school has sufficient capacity to become an academy.
- The decision is in the best interests of the children who attend (or who will attend) the school.

4. 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.
- Provide choice to church schools.
- Manage risk.
- Recognise the ambition of good and outstanding schools to form MATs.
- Secure good governance for all schools for the long term, which reflects their status as C of E schools.

5. Policy

- The DBE respects the decision-making powers of governing bodies to make informed decisions in the best interests of their pupils, whether to remain as a maintained school, federate or become an academy.
- The DBE recognises the importance of schools working together across a reasonable geographical area.
- The DBE will normally decide on granting consent once a MAT has completed its due diligence and agreed to accept a school.
- Decisions will be made by the full Board. In exceptional circumstances, consent may be sought by electronic approval between meetings.
- The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will normally be invited to attend a DBE meeting for that item.
- Church schools wishing to become academies will be encouraged to join one of these four MATs: Diocesan MAT, Thedwastre, Tilian or All Saints Schools Trust.
- The Diocesan MAT is now close to capacity whilst Thedwastre, Tilian and the All Saints Schools Trust all have capacity to grow.
- Given the size of the diocese, the DBE wishes to encourage the appropriate growth of the existing MATs.
- The DBE continues to have a role in both maintained schools and academies in relation especially to RE, collective worship and SIAMS inspections.
- Voluntary aided (VA) schools should normally be in a VA style of governance structure.
- 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.
- The DBE will not normally support applications from church schools seeking to join existing multi-academy trusts with non-church schools, other than in exceptional circumstances.
- The DBE will review its strategy in the light of any changes in DfE policy or other circumstances.

Jane Sheat
Diocesan Director of Education
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Approved by the Diocesan Board of Education on 15 September 2021