



SDBE Trust Support Strategy

In line with the Church of England Education Office national Vision for Education and our own Diocesan Board of Education vision, our objective is to ensure the full flourishing of every child and adult by showing in all our work, compassion, speaking truth and offering hope.

Where issues or concerns emerge, the strong relationships between SDBE and trust partners ensure a trust led response.

It follows that, when trusts which include Church of England schools are identified as needing support, we have a responsibility to walk alongside the trustees to help them to prevent crisis and support them in providing for our church schools a secure system of school improvement within the shortest timeframe possible.

The 5 principles which underpin the Trust Support Strategy recognise that:

- Each trust is unique and a bespoke approach will be gifted with the intent to provide early support and where possible to act preventatively, so that a trust receives this additional support for the shortest period possible
- The SDBE values and proactively pursues a close relationship and partnership work with all trusts which are homes for its church schools. It does so alongside a range of organisations, including the Regions Group (RG), believing that this leads to effective improvement
- Our Christian ethos supports a moral imperative for good outcomes for all children, transforming their lives
- The SDBE assumes trusts are safe places for church schools, with an effective improvement plan and a long term plan for sustainability
- For reasons of confidentiality, the SDBE will not name trusts to external partners which are within stage 1 of this strategy

A trust may be identified as needing additional support when one or any combination of the below are identified:

- a) A trust has concerns about its capability to deliver improvement and is therefore causing itself concern and brings this to the attention of the SDBE
- b) The vision and practice of the trust, or that of an academy within the trust, may be failing to maintain and develop its deeply Christian character and ethos and/or leaders are not ensuring that the requirements of the SIAMS judgement 1 are fully met
- c) Ofsted inspection outcomes or pupil outcomes are of concern for an individual school or a group of schools
- d) The agreements and expectations within the Articles and associated Memorandum of Understanding (Church School Covenant) with the SDBE are not being met
- e) The trust has chosen not to engage with the SDBE's Flourishing in Trust programme or the recognised equivalent from another diocese or partnership
- f) A trust identifies concerns about its capability to sustain or fully embed the Flourishing in Trust programme



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- g) Trust leaders, or central team officers, are reluctant to engage with the SDBE in strategic conversations
- h) There are significant concerns regarding the trust's ability to meet the DfE's descriptors of high quality Trusts [[Commissioning high-quality trusts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-high-quality-trusts)] and the trust appears to lack the capacity and leadership to progress the situation within an appropriate time
- i) There are significant safeguarding concerns
- j) The Regions Group has identified the trust as one which will not be supported to grow and is instead required to transfer its school(s) into an alternative trust home
- k) The Regions Group has instigated a phase of fact finding before endorsing additional trust development
- l) There are SDBE concerns about the trust's capacity, at trustee level or from officers within the central team, to enable all of its academies to flourish, including academies with no religious designation
- m) The trust is not engaged in self-improving sector networks and programmes, including the use of approved assurance frameworks
- n) The findings in an external review of trust governance or a peer review are of concern
- o) Strategic governance and expert ethical leadership are not evident

Strategic Approach

Part 1 Support for all Trusts

- The SDBE Corporate Member representative is positioned to be the voice of the SDBE within the trust. Annual one to one conversations occur with the Senior Advisor for Trusts (SAFT) which include an evaluation of the status of the trust as a secure home for church schools
- The Foundation Trustees and Foundation Members are appointed by the SDBE to provide ongoing support and challenge to governance for the flourishing of effective church schools. An annual communication is sent to this group regarding their role as guardians of the Anglican foundation, alongside an offer to meet to discuss their responsibilities and to share any emerging concerns.
- Regular talks between the SDBE CEO/ Diocesan Director of Education and trusts
- The SAFT provides ongoing support to governance of/in trusts with CPD, liaison with clerks and Chairs, and advice.
- Access to the SDBE's Flourishing in Trust programme providing CPD and the nurturing and further growth of wisdom and expertise for trust leaders in professional learning networks for Church School Flourishing, Christian Character, SIAMS, recruitment, governance, RE and Collective Worship.
- SDBE accreditation and ongoing validation as evidence of the trust being a strong home for church schools
- Continued support with recruitment of HTs, their line managers and CEOs, new HT visits and adviser visits through the PSA until the trust has completed the Flourishing in Trust programme modules and achieved Trusted Partner Status
- Regular contact with the SCC lead until schools which have recently joined a trust are no longer causing concern
- A regular meeting for trust leaders to discuss the development of the trust with the SDBE



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- The SDBE will seek to sustain its knowledge and understanding of effective trusts through its partnerships with system leaders such as: Confederation of School Trusts, the Regions Group, SW Trust Leaders’ Network, Team SW, Teaching School Hubs
- The SDBE offers a range of provision and tailored work, bespoke to the needs and context of each trust

Part 2 Action Around Trusts Requiring Additional Support

We recognise that some circumstances lead to trusts needing more than the SDBE’s universal offer through our sustained relationship. The nature of the concern will lead to bespoke actions taken by the SDBE to further enable the flourishing of the church academies concerned. The SDBE will seek to align its response to that of the Regions Group. The SDBE will enact the strategy at the most appropriate stage, e.g. it may be appropriate to move directly to stage 3.

Informal

Stage 1 – Fact finding

- The SDBE will share any initial low-level concerns in a discreet and confidential way with those in the SDBE team who are directly linked to working alongside the trust. SDBE will then identify a lead officer for the trust who will act as the single point of contact whilst it sits within this strategy.
- There may be informal talks between the SDBE and people within or linked to the trust to establish whether there is a need for support/intervention, such as drawing alongside the SDBE Corporate Member representative, Foundation Members and Foundation Trustees to receive their reflections. This can happen alongside offering support to help them carry out their role effectively.
- There may be a review of trust board minutes by the lead officer.
- The SDBE may recommend an external review is undertaken, such as of its governance or recruitment processes.
- The SDBE may bring trusts needing support together with those which have the capacity to support them, or may signpost to other support.
- Schools within a trust may sit within the SCC strategy and this will be delivered in close partnership with the trust.
- The SDBE team conversation and monitoring may not lead to further actions but lead the trust to remain under review.

Formal

Stage 2

If significant concerns are raised from any of the above, the trust will be identified as a Trust Needing Support and the SDBE will discuss these concerns with key members of the trust leadership group e.g. CEO, Chairs of Trusts, SDBE Corporate Member Representatives, other Corporate Members, which could be from both or either of the executive and non-executive groups.*

A meeting with members from the trust leadership group is likely to be required. The purpose of the meeting is to;

- 1) establish and evaluate:



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- the trust’s awareness of the position and to hear the perspective of the trust on the factors identified
- the impact of the strategies employed to date to respond to these factors
- the short-term and long-term capacity to respond
- the impact on people and the well-being of individuals
- 2) describe and articulate:
 - SDBE expectations upon the trust
 - the proposed next steps
 - the support which the trust requires to make an appropriate and timely response
 - a timeframe to review impact of the planned actions and offer further support if needed
 - the action points to be shared with the Regions Group, and with the relevant Archdeacon**

Trusts which are participating in the Flourishing in Trust programme, will have additional support from the SDBE whilst they remain within this strategy.

If stage 2 has been effective, stage 4 is moved to.

Stage 3

If the SDBE is satisfied that the planned actions may still deliver the anticipated outcome but further time is needed, then the timeframe will be extended.

If the concern has escalated, further events have occurred or additional support is required, then the SDBE may:

- seek to ensure the trust receives additional support, using networks in place to identify and introduce the trust to other system leaders which the trust may find helpful, such as interim executive and non-executive capacity or peer support
- instigate a Members’ intervention, which could also include consideration of the appropriateness of skill set of the usual Corporate Member representative and whether this needs to be supplemented or substituted and supported
- evaluate the impact of the actions taken, with the SDBE CEO setting additional expectations, which are likely to include role descriptions for key leaders and timescales for actions
- inform the Regions Group if the SDBE evaluates the Members as being incapable of delivering the required outcome, and work within structured processes to coordinate and instigate appropriate and necessary actions

Stage 4

The actions and dialogue between the SDBE and the trust will always continue, however the closer relationship initiated by this strategy will continue until a period of stability and confidence has been achieved.

**It may not always be possible for the detail of any conversations that included mention of them to be shared with a particular trust in advance, however the SDBE will strive to ensure that any such sharing occurs in an appropriate and timely way with trusts.*

***The SDBE and RG work within the protocols of the "Memorandum of understanding between the National Society and the Department for Education" 2023 which details how both parties are expected to seek to share information about church schools and academies*