



## Leicester Diocesan Board of Education's Academisation Strategy

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) has agreed the following strategy in partnership with diocesan Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and in light of the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) 2023](#) which has been agreed between the National Society and the Department for Education (DfE). The DBE has considered the government's [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) and its statutory role in line with the [DBE Measure 2021](#).

The principles underlying this strategy are in relation to the DBE's intent to maintain a ***cohesive diocesan family of schools*** which will effectively deliver the vision to transform the lives of children and young people. The DBE's aspiration is that all schools are academies within MATs. The DBE supports the principle that governing bodies determine if joining a MAT is the right approach in discussion with the academy trust and the DBE.

Leicester DBE has considered various MAT strategies adopted by other DBEs. Leicester DBE has determined this strategy based on its analysis of its context with significant consideration of the strategic needs of its family of schools. The DBE's aim is to protect, preserve and promote the Christian character of church schools and so requires MATs to *adopt model articles of association without variation*.

***Majority MATs<sup>1</sup> have been established in the diocese which any of the church school family along with community schools may join. Maintained schools that wish to convert, and Single Academy Trusts (SATs) that wish to join a MAT will only be given consent to join an agreed established church majority MAT within the Diocese of Leicester.***

The DBE supports the growth of the following trusts which are best placed to enable a sustainable and secure future for its church school family:

*Embrace Multi Academy Trust*  
*Learn Academy Trust*  
*Discovery Schools Academy Trust*  
*Rise Multi Academy Trust*

All the diocesan trusts are underpinned with vision and ethos which resonates with the Church of England's vision for education.

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<sup>1</sup> A Church majority MAT does not require a majority of church schools but describes a MAT which can incorporate VA, VC and Community schools. Local governance arrangements reflect the previous status of the school and academy trusts will be expected to maintain Local Governing Bodies. Academy Trusts are governed by a board of directors who are appointed by members. In a majority MAT, the Church of England will have a majority of members. Directors are appointed based on skills and commitment to the diocesan vision.

- The DBE's expectation is that all Church of England schools in Leicester Diocese will be part of a MAT in the future.
- The decision to join a MAT is made by the governing body of each school (*unless it is subject to statutory intervention by the Secretary of State*) with the consent of the DBE and agreement of the MAT and Regional Director.
- The DBE and diocesan MATs have organised schools into clusters which are aligned with a named trust.
- Maintained schools and Single Academy Trusts (SATs) are encouraged to work collaboratively with the trust identified.
- Collaborative working will enable both the school and MAT to assess whether vision, values and culture are a good 'fit'.
- If the school or trust decides that the proposed MAT would not be suitable, the DBE will explore alternative diocesan trusts with the school for further consideration.

This approach facilitates strong trusts consisting of 7,500 pupils. The greatest benefits from a MAT partnership can be achieved once a certain size (pupil numbers) has been reached. Therefore, the DBE aims for each of the trusts to have a broadly similar number of pupils, although the number of schools may vary.

- The Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) will work in close partnership with the Regional Director (RD) to develop a shared understanding of the DBE's Academisation Strategy and the DDE will always work constructively with the RD.
- The DDE will support schools by ensuring that they are 'connected' and working in partnerships which are maintaining and developing school effectiveness. The trajectory is for academisation within MATs and so the DDE will, on behalf of the DBE, encourage schools and academies to consider seriously their response to this agenda.
- All church schools beginning to consider their MAT option must, in the first instance, contact the DDE to discuss the options available to them.
- Schools within the Diocese of Leicester may join the diocesan MAT identified by the DBE/diocesan MATs as the most suitable partner. The DBE has indicated the preferred choice of MAT for each school having reflected on a range of considerations, including geography and capacity.
- If a school/diocesan MAT does not wish to pursue a partnership, the DDE will provide further advice and guidance.
- The DDE will work together with MAT leaders to ensure that they are connected and supported in their system leadership capacity.
- The DBE continues to welcome community schools into diocesan MAT partnerships and believes that many will be attracted to the Church of England's proven track record and ethos. The DDE will support schools to understand the role of members as distinct from directors.
- In line with the MoU, schools requiring sponsorship should be sponsored by a MAT with appropriate Church of England governance. Issues relating to current capacity will be at

the forefront of such decisions. The DDE will work with the RD to determine the most appropriate solution.

## Contact Details

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## **Appendix A:**

### **Brief Overview of the Powers and Functions of the DBE under the 2021 Measure**

#### The religious authority

The religious authority for Church of England schools is the DBE for the diocese in which the school is located<sup>7</sup>. The work of the DBE is governed by the [Diocesan Board of Education Measure 2021](#). The Measure provides the legal framework within which the DBEs engage and work with church schools.

The Measure confers functions and powers on DBEs, for example it:

- confers power on the DBE to provide advice on matters affecting church schools;
- lists the situations in which the governing body/board, and also the site trustees of a school site must obtain the DBE's advice;
- outlines where the site trustees or DBE's consent is required (for example capital works);
- requires those to whom the DBE gives advice to have "due regard" to that advice. This means they would have to demonstrate good reasons for not following it;
- sets out the circumstances in which a church school must obtain the prior written consent of the DBE (for example prior to seeking an academy order);
- sets out when and how the DBE may give directions to church schools and trustees and requires those receiving a direction to comply with it; an example is to direct a church school to permit an inspection of the religious education or collective worship in that school, should the DBE have concerns as to its quality or content.

#### The role of the Site Trustees and the Trust Deed

Church of England school sites (including academies) are generally held on educational endowments, known collectively in education law as the "Trust Deed", which establishes the charitable objects and the purposes for which the site can be used. The governing documents of the school will reflect those parameters within which the church school is to be conducted which must be compatible with the Trust Deed. The school occupies the site at the will of the site trustees, for the furtherance of the object of the Trust Deed. Control of the site is always retained by the site trustees of the educational endowment, and that is reflected in the way in which schools occupy the site on a bare licence (the school has implied permission to occupy the site but does not have any legal or equitable interest in the site).

## **Appendix B:**

### **Key aspects of a strong MAT for consideration by the DBE:**

- Commitment to the Diocesan and Church of England Vision for Education
- School Improvement capacity – transformation
- Inclusivity
- Governance and Leadership
- Sustainability – Finance and Operations
- Wellbeing of the whole school community
- Serving the disadvantaged
- Serving the diocesan family of schools

## **Appendix C:**

### **Key DBE requirements for academy governance structures within church MATs**

- MATs should publish a Scheme of Delegation (SoD) which should reference the operation of the academy as a church school
- MATs should establish a Local Governing Body (LGB) for a church academies
- MATs should appoint LGB members with the agreement of the DBE

Other conditions may be set from time to time and will be agreed with each MAT.

## **Appendix D:**

### **Lists of clusters/schools**

#### *North: Embrace MAT*

Barrow, Hall Orchard CE Primary School  
Cossington CE Primary School  
Quorn, St Bartholomew's CE Primary School  
Rothley, CE Primary School  
Swithland, St Leonard's CE Primary School

#### *Northwest 1: Rise MAT*

Appleby Magna, Sir John Moore CE Primary School  
Ashby-de-la-Zouch CE Primary School  
Coalville, All Saints CE Primary School  
Ibstock St Denys CE Infant School  
Newbold CE Primary School  
Packington CE Primary School  
Whitwick St John the Baptist CE Primary School

*Northwest 2: Rise MAT*

Belton CE Primary School  
Breedon-on-the-Hill, St Hardulph's CE Primary School  
Castle Donington, St Edward's CE Primary School  
Diseworth CE Primary School  
Hathern CE Primary School  
Long Whatton CE Primary School  
Shepshed, St Botolph's CE Primary School

*Northeast: Learn AT*

Harby CE Primary School  
Hose CE Primary School  
Leicester, St Barnabas' CE Primary School  
Long Clawson CE Primary School  
Old Dalby CE Primary School  
Thurmaston Church Hill CE Junior School

*South: Embrace*

Thurlaston CE Primary School

*Southwest: Discovery Trust*

Barwell CE Academy  
Burbage CE Infant School  
Earl Shilton, Townlands CE Primary School  
Hinckley St Mary's CE Primary School  
Sheepy Magna CE Primary School  
Witherley CE Primary School

*Southeast: Learn AT*

Billesdon CE Primary School  
Fleckney CE Primary School  
Great Glen, St Cuthbert's CE Primary School  
Hallaton CE Primary School  
Kilby St Mary's CE Primary School  
Leicester St John the Baptist CE Primary School