



## **Joining a Multi-Academy Trust Guidance**

### **The Process**

Given the diverse nature of our diocesan family of schools, there is no longer a single process for schools to follow. For instance, the school may be maintained by the Local Authority (LA) or a Single Academy Trust (SAT) and considering joining a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

Within this context, schools are asked to contact the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) at the earliest opportunity to discuss the various options which are being considered. This includes when schools/MATs are considering forming a [Trust Partnership](#) as a precursor to joining a MAT. The DDE will provide bespoke advice and guidance as to the options available and the process required.

Once the school/trust has received advice from the DDE about the available options, broadly speaking, the process will involve a decision taken by the Governing Body of the school along with a decision by the MAT that the school wishes to join. The school and MAT then seek formal consent from the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) before an application is made to the Department for Education (DfE).

**There will be instances where a maintained school or SAT decides that it wishes to join the MAT identified within the Diocesan Board of Education's (DBE) MAT Strategy as the most suitable partner. The DDE will inform the school/SAT and MAT whether a consent meeting is required in these cases.**

### **Guidance for Multi-Academy Trusts: seeking DBE consent for schools to join the trust**

On an annual basis, representatives from each MAT named in the DBE's MAT Strategy, will meet with representatives from the DBE. During this meeting, the following areas will be reviewed:

- performance of schools (standards, Ofsted, SIAMS)
- financial sustainability
- governance at all levels
- estates management
- school improvement plans and capacity
- leadership development
- significant achievements
- development areas
- plans for growth

**The DBE and each MAT will, in partnership, agree in principle the number and profile of schools which the DBE may consent to joining the MAT over the next 12-24 months.** This will not be a fixed decision but will enable the DDE to advise schools appropriately and will inform discussions between MATs and schools about potential partnerships. The agreed approach will be regularly reviewed and adjusted as required by the DBE and MAT in mutual agreement. There will be a

variety of contextual factors which may initiate a review or adjustment and so the DBE and MAT will maintain routine dialogue through their respective executive officers.

Community schools do not require the consent of the DBE to join a MAT. However, the DBE and MAT will work in partnership to review any proposals for community schools to join the academy trust.

The DBE will consider each MAT's growth plans both individually and as part of the whole Diocesan MAT Strategy. The DBE's aspiration is for all its Church school family to be part of a strong and sustainable trust.

### **Guidance for Individual Church of England schools: seeking DBE consent to join a MAT**

Once a school and MAT have agreed that they wish for the school to join the trust, a meeting will be arranged for school/MAT representatives to meet with some members of the DBE. At this meeting, school/MAT representatives will share a brief presentation about their request for consent to join the MAT.

#### **Attendance**

The DBE will meet with the **Chair of Governors**, the **Head Teacher** and a **representative of the Multi-Academy Trust**. Substitutes should be avoided where possible.

#### **Presentation**

Presentation arrangements will vary according to each proposal. Each presentation will include time to present its case and for questions and answers from DBE members.

The presentation should include the following issues in terms of its proposals:

#### *'Diocesan Family of Schools'*

The school/trust will be joining a MAT– how does it envisage relating with other schools in the partnership to effect school improvement?

How will it relate to other Church of England and Community schools within its locality and the wider diocese?

How will the school's Christian vision and values be strengthened?

What has been the outcome of consultation with other stakeholders?

#### *Governance*

Why have governors reached this decision? What do they believe will be different and better?

What does the governing body understand to be the future arrangements as an academy within a MAT to be?

How have governors assessed the financial implications?

#### **What happens next?**

The DBE will come to a decision which will be communicated to the school and MAT. If the DBE is in agreement with the proposal, a Conditional Consent letter will be issued to the school and MAT. This will enable an application to be submitted to the DfE for consideration. Consent from the DBE does not confer approval from the DfE.

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