



Manchester Diocesan Board of Education Academy Strategy

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Our Diocese

Manchester Diocese is organised into 7 deaneries with 33 Mission Communities. Across the diocese there are 320 churches served by approximately 252 clergy. 192 Church of England schools make up the Board of Education's family of schools, with around 64,000 children and young people attending daily. There are 12 Local Authorities within Manchester Diocese with 7 being identified by the Regional Director as Education Investment Areas as well as 5 being identified as Priority Areas. To date there are 11 CE Multi Academy Trusts with church majority articles as well as two CE Multi Academy Trusts with church minority articles (VC model) that are recommended by MDBE (See appendix 1 for full list). There remain two CE Single Academy Trusts in existence within the diocese. Several CE MATs contain previously VA, VC and community schools. Several MATs also work across a range of Local Authority areas, both within and outside of MDBE. MDBE has considered its strategy for academisation through analysis of the context across Manchester Diocese. It is MDBE's considered view that there is capacity within the current MAT system across MDBE for growth, enabling all CE schools to join an already established CE MAT.

Introduction

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) recognises and supports the Department for Education's (DfE) aspiration and vision for every school to be part of a family of schools in strong academy trusts. This vision is to be found in the Government's White paper, 'Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child' (2022) and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was agreed between the National Society and the Department for Education (DfE) in 2016. The DBE has also considered its statutory role in line with the legislative framework outlined in the DBE Measure 2021.

In light of the DfE's vision and policy for academisation as well as the establishing of strong Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), MDBE has reviewed and reflected on the current status of its schools and academies and its approach to academy conversion. Through its academy strategy the DBE's intent is to continue to support a cohesive family of schools working in a covenant relationship with the DBE to transform the lives of children and young people across the Diocese of Manchester.

Vision and Theological Underpinning

The vision of the Diocese of Manchester is to be a worshipping, growing and transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community. The desire is to be a church for a different world.

Church schools are places where Christian vision, values and practices are at the centre of all that happens there. Christian worship takes place, children and adults are encouraged and given opportunities to grow in their chosen faith and by supporting members of local communities, lives are transformed. It is the role of the DBE to work in partnership with schools and churches to enact the vision and support the principles of growing, nurturing and serving.

Growing: We want to grow in relationship with each other across the family of church schools. As we share expertise, experience and encourage one another across church and school we strengthen each other. The desire is for relationships that are mutually reciprocal for both schools and churches, with both giving and receiving for the benefit of all concerned. We can all delight in such partnerships.

Nurturing: We believe, as Christians, that God nurtures His relationships with His children. The most effective nurturing takes place when schools and churches are seen to be working together alongside one another and with each child or young person, from early years through to sixth form; walking with them during transition points, through academic experiences and community events. As school leaders, staff, governors and clergy teams are united they are able to lift up the children and young people we all serve.

Serving: All of us involved in and with schools and churches seek to serve with love, kindness and action, enacting the commandment to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.' (Luke 10:27). We work in communion with people, children and families from all faiths and backgrounds, celebrating the diverse landscape of this great city and region and the communities that come together within it.

MDBE's overarching aim is for Church of England schools to be places where all involved can be introduced and supported to reflect on Jesus' promise in John 10:10 that He 'came so that you might have life in all its fullness.' The DBE believes that this can be best achieved where our schools are working with each other in effective collaborations and formal partnerships, creating school communities that are loving in relationships, ambitious in aspirations and bold in actions.

Statutory Role of the DBE

The work of Manchester Diocesan Board of Education reflects the Diocesan Board of Education Measure 2021.

The Board:

- Equips schools to provide excellent education reflecting Church of England practices and beliefs which is distinctive, inclusive and transformational in line with a school's trust deed.
- Is responsible for ensuring high quality school leadership and governance and supports the development of such leaders and governors.
- Works in partnership with a range of individuals and bodies, including but not restricted to governing bodies, trustees, members, clergy, local authorities, multi-academy trusts, the Regional Director, Department of Education and CE Education Office.
- Is the 'Foundation Body' which
 - (1) holds statutory responsibilities to:
 - Appoint foundation governors
 - Inspect the Christian Distinctiveness of CE schools
 - Provide conditional consent for academy conversion
 - Sponsor schools receiving an academy order
 - (2) Provides advice and guidance on:
 - School admissions
 - Land and buildings
 - Partnerships/federations
 - Alterations to schools
 - Collective worship
 - New schools

Key Priorities 2023-24

- Develop ministry to/for/with children and young people in both churches and schools.
- Develop the distinctive Christian character of CE schools across the diocese.
- Develop leaders in CE schools across the diocese.
- Develop governance across maintained and academy schools across the diocese.
- Develop a racial justice strategy for the Diocesan Board of Education.
- Develop a net zero carbon strategy for the school estate.

Permissions

Church schools that wish to convert to academy status must have the approval of the DBE and an approval process has been developed by the DBE to support this. The DBE and the Regional Director's (previously Regional Schools Commissioner) expectation is that the governing body of any maintained Church of England school wishing to academise and become part of a CE MAT will approach the DBE as early as possible to discuss their options for conversion and agree the process for securing the consent of the DBE. Schools with historical/associated foundation trust involvement, such as the Henshaw Trust, must also gain trust approval to convert to an academy. MDBE requires that a statutory transfer of school sites is completed prior to conversion to an academy. The Director of Education will work with the Local Authority as well as legal counsel to ensure this process takes place.

MDBE will hold a termly Academy Committee for schools seeking Board's permission to convert and become part of a CE MAT. Such committees will directly follow Board of Education meetings. Extra meetings will be arranged as necessary in order to support schools wishing to convert as we would not wish this to cause any delay with conversion. During an academy committee the Chair of Governors, Head Teacher and CEO of the MAT the school is hoping to join should be in attendance.

Alignment with MDBE Academy Policy is a prerequisite for permission to convert to an academy and join a MAT.

Definition of a strong MAT in Manchester Diocese

A strong MAT is one which is able to evidence itself against the DfE's Quality Trust descriptors

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168190/Annex A -
_Trust Quality Descriptions July 2023 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168190/Annex_A_-_Trust_Quality_Descriptions_July_2023_.pdf)

Within MDBE a strong MAT is also one which can demonstrate:

- A commitment to Manchester Diocese vision as well as the Church of England Vision for Education
- A trust wide Christian vision
- Proven school improvement capacity
- Appropriate governance arrangements in line with national MoU
- Financial and Operational sustainability
- Policy and practice for the wellbeing of the whole school community
- Service to the most disadvantaged children, families and communities within Manchester Diocese
- Collaborative working with MDBE to support the wider system and sharing of best practice
- Sharing and agreeing its growth plan with the DDE as well as Regional Director's office
- Has membership of the risk protection arrangements (RPA) scheme for schools.

The DBE's expectation is to protect, preserve and promote the Christian character of church schools. For example, academies will adopt the model Articles of Association (2023) without variation and a Church Supplemental Agreement as well as accept any conditions of conversion as specified by the DBE. Such conditions will include but are not limited to:

- a. the school's continued membership of the Diocesan Service Level Agreement at the academy rate;
- b. invitation to the Diocese to advise on the appointment of future senior school leaders;
- c. the school to encourage Primary Chaplaincy across any trust it may join;
- d. subject to the provisions of the Trust Deed in relation to the land.

The DBE will:

- Provide information, advice and support to schools via the DDE and Assistant DDEs.
- Decide whether to consent, give conditional consent, withhold consent or defer, pending further information and inform the Headteacher and Chair of its decision after the Academy Committee meeting.
- Provide a letter of conditional consent once approved.

The DBE's decision will be final and is not open to appeal.

The DBE will need to satisfy itself that:

- Due process has been carried out.
- The proposal is supported by the Headteacher and Governing Body.
- The school has fully consulted staff and parents.
- 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.

Over-arching Strategy

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.
- Secure good governance for all schools for the long term, which reflects their status as C of E schools.

MDBE academy strategy provides a framework for schools to consider options regarding academisation and to work within. It does not prescribe any individual MAT, however MDBE is mindful of the Regional Director's commitment to MATs working within specific geographical areas. The choice of which specific MAT a school may prefer to join is for governors and school leaders to make following a process of due diligence. In such cases where an academy order has been established, MDBE will continue to work with the Regional Director, the school

and MATs in order to agree the preferred and most appropriate option in order to support and move the school forward.

MDBE recognises the importance of local links, especially those between CE schools, churches and Mission Communities. Reciprocal relationships are to continue to be encouraged, further developed and sustained both on a day to day basis, as well as through MATs and school governance structures. Churches and schools remain integral to the mission of Manchester Diocese working closely together to ensure effective local Christian communities. This strategy recognises the importance of partnerships and reflects governance as set out within the MoU (2023). In short when selecting a MAT, it is important that the governance structure (VA/VC) reflects the current school status, as in there must be appropriate CE representation.

Strong relationships between MAT CEOs, the Board of Education and its officers remain a priority. Such relationships will continue to be nurtured and developed in order to actively support and sustain the Christian distinctiveness of all CE MATs and individual schools. MDBE continues to be represented at member level within all CE MATS working across the diocese. The make-up of trustees and Local Governing Boards must continue to reflect the Church majority or minority Articles of Association agreed when the MAT was established.

Information for CE Schools within Manchester Diocese

- Any CE school wishing to convert must join a CE MAT already operating within the Diocese of Manchester, from the list recommended by MDBE. (See Appendix 1).
- MDBE's Academy Policy continues to be applied in all cases of requests for conversion. It maintains that all CE schools across the diocese join either a CE majority or CE minority Multi Academy Trust, depending on their current VA/VC status in line with the National Memorandum of Understanding between the National Society and the Secretary of State for Education (See Appendix 2).
- MDBE will continue to work with the Regional Director supporting their vision for the Education Investment Areas (EIAs) and Priority Areas.

Schools within EIAs will be encouraged to seriously consider academy options. Within MDBE these are: Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford and Tameside.

- Schools currently graded as Requires Improvement, as well as CE Single Academy Trusts, will also be encouraged to seriously consider academy options and look to join an established CE MAT within MDBE.
- In line with the MoU, schools requiring sponsorship will 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 Regional Director to determine the most appropriate solution to best meet the needs of the school and its community.
- MDBE encourages those schools with 'Good' and 'Outstanding' judgements to join established CE MATs. Such schools have much to offer CE MATs in terms of expertise, wisdom and knowledge. Such a move not only builds MAT capacity to support schools within or wishing to join the MAT but also strengthens MAT growth, capacity to improve and further develop. It also gives schools the opportunity to impact on others as well as contributing to retention of staff who otherwise may seek promotion elsewhere.
- Groups of schools wishing to convert together and establish a geographical/local hub model within a MAT will be encouraged and such an approach is fully supported by MDBE.

Information for CE Multi Academy Trusts within Manchester Diocese

- MATs will be encouraged and supported to work across several local authority areas within the Diocese of Manchester in order to support the family of CE schools. It is expected MATs will look favourably on all CE schools wishing to join them as a reflection of the vision of 'flourishing for all' as well as demonstrating servant leadership for our diocesan family.
- MDBE recognises the strong working relationships that have existed for many years between CE and community schools. Several CE MATs within MDBE already contain a mixture of CE and community schools. MDBE expects MATs to continue to welcome community schools into CE majority and minority MAT partnerships.

- MDBE will work with MATs to ensure their growth strategies support the needs of all CE schools across MDBE and understand the needs of the diocese.
- MDBE will continue to support schools and MATs to understand the role of members, trustees/directors and the Local Governing Board. Training will be offered bi-annually for diocesan members and trustees as well as bespoke training for all members, trustees and LGBs, as appropriate, delivered on request from MATs.
- MDBE will encourage MATs with two or fewer than two schools currently, to consider transferring into a larger CE MAT to further develop strength and capacity.
- MDBE will be involved as a diocesan member in all CE MATS with the Director of Education filling this role where possible.
- MATs will ensure a Scheme of Delegation is agreed with all schools within the MAT and clear Terms of Reference are in place for any committee with delegated authority concerning the functions of a church academy.
- The DBE will be represented at all stages of CEO and Head Teacher/ Head of School recruitment processes.

To support schools through the journey to academisation MDBE has produced and makes the following guidance documents available to schools:

1. MDBE Academy Policy
2. MDBE Academy Strategy
3. Academies Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) 2022
4. Guide for Governing Bodies when considering Academy Conversion
5. Guidance on presenting to BOE Academy Committee

New schools

As part of its commitment to education, the DBE is keen to promote more opportunities for children and young people across Manchester Diocese to have access to a Church of England education. Where there is a need for a new school within the area, as identified by the appropriate Local Authority/County Council, the DBE is committed to considering whether it will be possible to establish a new CE school. Church MATs must comply with the requirement to obtain the DBE's consent to establish a new school with a religious (CE) designation.

Conclusion

The Chair of the BOE and Director of Education hosted a series of Academy Roadshows throughout January - February 2023. Such meetings provided a forum for thoughtful conversations to take place as all continue to work effectively together to best support the needs of children, schools and their communities across MDBE.

MDBE recognises the changing landscape of education nationally. To that end the Diocesan Director of Education continues to work in partnership with the CE Education Office, ensuring up to date education policy, direction and strategy is reflected locally. As well as this the needs of MDBE schools are shared within the national community of Diocesan Directors of Education. Upcoming discussions during 2023 involve devising a set of principles for what constitutes a strong CE MAT.

This strategy will be reviewed and updated annually as appropriate.

Appendix 1 Church of England Multi Academy Trusts approved by Manchester Diocesan Board of Education

Archbishop Temple CE MAT (previously Bolton and Farnworth CE MAT)
<https://www.archbishoptempletrust.co.uk/>

Cranmer Education Trust <https://www.cranmereducationtrust.com/>

Crompton House CE MAT <https://www.cromptonhousetrust.org/>

Forward as One CE MAT <https://www.forwardasone.uk/>

Leverhulme Academy CE and Community Trust
<https://www.leverhulmeacademytrust.org/>

The Bishop Fraser Trust CE MAT <https://www.thebishopfrasertrust.co.uk/>

The Quill CE Primary MAT (previously St Bede's CE MAT)
<https://www.stbedeprimarymat.org/>

The Sycamore CE MAT (Previously Christ Church CE MAT)
<https://www.thesycamoretrust.co.uk/>

The Watergrove CE/Community MAT <https://www.watergrovetrust.co.uk/>

The Wings CE MAT <https://thewingstrust.org.uk/>

Thrive Church of England Academy Trust (previously St James and Emmanuel CE MAT) <https://www.stjeat.co.uk/>

Vantage CE MAT <https://vantageacademies.co.uk/>

Appendix 2 National Memorandum of Understanding between the National Society and the Secretary of State for Education

The above document can be accessed by: [Memorandum of understanding between the National Society and DfE \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)