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# **Manchester Diocesan Board of Education**

## **Service Level Agreement April 2025/26**

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## Our Vision

The vision of the Diocese of Manchester is to be a worshipping, growing and transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community. Church schools are central to this vision as they seek to be places where Christian values and practices are at the centre of all that happens there. The Manchester Diocesan Board of Education (MDBE) fully supports this vision through its work with church schools, across the diverse landscape of Greater Manchester and Rossendale.

The vision has three fundamental principles; growing, nurturing and serving, as we strive every day in our local ministry to be a Church for a Different World. MDBE works in partnership with schools and churches to enact and support these principles.

**Growing:** MDBE grows and cultivates healthy relationships with staff and governors across the family of church schools. We encourage good leadership through providing training and advice in areas such as mental health and wellbeing, admissions, Head Teacher recruitment and induction, staff development as well as effective management of school buildings.

**Nurturing:** MDBE strives to nurture its relationships with schools, just as, we believe, God nurtures His relationships with His children. We support schools in the journeys they have with each of their children, from early years through to sixth form; walking alongside schools during transition points, academic experiences and community events. We work across churches and schools to establish reciprocally beneficial relationships. We communicate with school leaders, staff, governors and clergy teams, uniting us as we work together to lift up the children and young people in schools and churches.

**Serving:** MDBE seeks to serve schools 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 our great city and region and the communities that come together within it. We help to maintain the Christian distinctiveness of Church of England schools through the facilitation of training and resourcing in the areas of vision and values, Religious Education, Collective Worship and the requirements of SIAMS.

MDBE's overarching vision 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 Importance of Partnership**

This Service Level Agreement represents the partnership between MDBE and the 192 Church of England schools within the diocese. The concept of partnership or covenant relationship is one that resounds throughout the Bible. In Genesis we see how the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, to bless his descendants, and to give them a land. This covenant resulted in Moses, then Joshua leading the People of Israel to the promised land. In the New Testament through the life of Jesus we see him in relationship with the 12 disciples as He taught about the Kingdom of Heaven.

The idea of partnership is especially important as we seek to:

- Retain and strengthen the family of Church of England schools ensuring a Christian presence in all communities.
- Prioritise the distinctive Christian character of Church of England schools to support their inclusive yet distinctive nature.
- Enable the flourishing of all connected with Church of England schools so that all can experience 'life in all its fullness.'
- Strengthen covenant relationships between the Diocesan Board of Education and schools with the relationship resulting in reciprocal benefits.

Through the Service Level Agreement, Church of England schools and the Diocesan Board of Education demonstrate a working partnership based on a covenant relationship. We are committed to each other and our actions testify to this. The relationship is not transactional in that it is not about what one party can do for another. It is a commitment to working together, to supporting together, to celebrating together, to flourishing together.

## **What do we do?**

Manchester Diocesan Board of Education (MDBE) exists to support and serve the 192 Church of England schools across the diocese. We are privileged to serve VA, VC, Foundation, SATs and MATs across the school estate. We continue to prioritise and develop a programme of support that best meets the needs of school leaders, staff and governors, whilst placing the wellbeing and care of those leading in schools at the heart of our provision in order to support the nurturing of healthy resilient leaders. Our board and its officers also work with external partners such as Local Authorities, and both local and national government as appropriate. The Board's statutory functions are set out legally through 'The Measure' (2021). However, there are also aspects of our work, in particular concerning children's and youth ministry, that sit within the department's remit at the request of the Board. This is a strength of MDBE in that explicit links are recognised and supported between the ministry and work of both schools and churches.

## How do we do this?

### **Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)**

#### **Person Responsible: Diocesan Director of Education**

Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 sets out the legal framework and scope of inspections for all schools with a religious character. The current schedule for CE schools is based on the Church of England's Vision for Education (2016) 'Deeply Christian, serving the Common Good.' The evaluation schedule has 7 inspection questions that seek to evaluate how a school's vision is lived out to enable adults and pupils to flourish. SIAMS includes academic standards, wellbeing, local, national and international partnerships, inclusion and diversity, spiritual development, Religious Education and Collective Worship. The school's vision is to pervade all areas. MDBE has developed a comprehensive suite of training and support for schools that focusses on Christian vision and distinctiveness as well as the requirements of the SIAMS framework. The diocesan SIAMS lead is the Diocesan Deputy Director of Education (DDDE) who oversees support for schools as well as ensuring delivery of training to staff and governors. Schools expecting SIAMS within 12 months receive a visit from either the DDDE, Assistant Director or a Diocesan Schools Adviser. This visit takes the form of a professional dialogue/constructive conversation with school leaders in preparation for a school's SIAMS inspection. During each SIAMS inspection a member of the Board of Education team will speak to the inspector as required as part of the inspection process. A Diocesan representative will attend the feedback session as support for schools. Following inspection support is offered in addressing any areas of development.

### **Collective Worship**

#### **Person Responsible: Deputy Director of Education**

All schools are legally required to provide an act of worship for all pupils each day that is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.' In VC and VA schools such arrangements are made by governors in line with the school's trust deed. In academies arrangements are agreed with trustees. In Church of England schools this means Collective Worship must reflect the Anglican status of the school. This can be achieved through celebrating the Church year as well as including liturgy and Christian symbols for the Trinity within Collective Worship. Church school worship should be 'inclusive, invitational and inspiring.' It is central to the life of the school, with all being invited to take part.

MDBE supports schools to develop their understanding of the requirements for Collective Worship, offers professional development sessions, regular resources as well

as support for planning and delivery. This work involves a team of diocesan officers who are involved in regular visits to schools to support and deliver Collective Worship. A programme of resources, including videos and activities, are available for all schools. Wiggle Worship training is also available for schools and churches alike.

## **Religious Education**

### **Person Responsible: Deputy Director of Education**

Within Church of England schools Religious Education is viewed as a core element of the curriculum. It should enable every child to flourish and to live life in all its fullness (John 10:10). It is intrinsic in the outworking of a Church school's Christian vision. It also supports schools to educate for dignity and respect through encouraging all to live well together. Central to Religious Education in Church schools is the study of Christianity as a living and diverse faith, focused on the teaching of Jesus and the Church. MDBE has responsibility to promote, or assist in the promotion of, religious education in schools in the diocese. MDBE has developed a bespoke RE syllabus for all schools, launched in September 2024. VC schools wanting to use the syllabus must seek permission from the local SACRE.

MDBE offers advice, support, training and resources to enable Church of England schools to provide a rich, inspirational RE curriculum. Regular visits are made to schools by the Deputy Director of education evidencing the high priority MDBE places on RE. A wide-ranging programme of Continuous Professional Development sessions are provided to support teachers' subject knowledge, theological understanding and pedagogy appropriate to RE. The Understanding Christianity resource is recommended alongside the Diocesan Syllabus. Local RE hubs are also in place to support RE leaders in schools. These meet termly as a means of offering additional advice and guidance as well as sharing good practice. Policy guidance on withdrawal issues and the relationship between Christian and British values is also provided.

## **Governor support and development**

### **Persons Responsible: Diocesan Director of Education, Deputy Director & Administrator**

MDBE is committed to offering rigorous support, advice, guidance and training to governing bodies so that leaders can work together for the flourishing of all. All governors of a Church of England school commit to and work collaboratively to ensure the effectiveness of the school where a Christian vision is established and all are supported to 'live life to the full' (John 10:10).

MDBE supports the appointment of PCC and Diocesan appointed Foundation Governors and seeks to address vacancies in a timely, efficient manner. All MATs have diocesan members appointed too. Guidance for recruitment and induction is made available to all governing bodies. An annual programme of training is delivered and is



open to all governors/trustees/members as well as governor conference as appropriate. Details of the training programme are available via the termly schools newsletter.

Recognising the value of the Chair of Governors and responsibilities associated with this role, support and good practice is shared. Chairs of Governors are also invited to a termly Head Teacher and Chair of Governor Diocesan briefings to ensure updates are received, as well as providing further opportunity for learning from and supporting each other as a family of church schools.

Advice is provided on an individual basis on a range of contextual issues to support the functioning of effective governing bodies. Where a governing body has a particular need for enhanced support, a Diocesan Schools Adviser can be commissioned, in agreement with the Director, to the role of Associate Member for up to 12 months. Such a role is reviewed annually in response to school needs.

### **Recruitment and development of School Leaders**

**Person Responsible: Assistant Director (Leadership and Development)**

VA schools are required to invite the Diocesan Director of Education or Assistant Director to offer advice and support regarding securing school leadership in the form of appointment of Head Teachers/Heads of School as appropriate. This is particularly important if a representative of the Local Authority has been invited. For VC schools and academies MDBE provide the same level of support throughout the process.

The Director should be informed, by the Chair of Governors, of a Head Teacher vacancy as soon as a resignation is received by a governing body. Support will be provided throughout the process. This begins with discussions regarding options for future school leadership, to supporting the production of recruitment documents, advising on interview process, providing appropriate resources through to the appointment offer being made. Guidance documents are also provided as a means of informing governors of the process, considerations and legal requirements. Where a school requires support for Deputy Head Teacher appointments MDBE will seek to provide this in line with school needs.

### **Leadership Training/Continuous Professional Development**

**Person Responsible: Assistant Director of Education (Leadership Development)**

MDBE supports the induction and ongoing professional development of school leaders in various ways. All new Head Teachers are invited and expected to be part of Diocesan led Head Teacher induction sessions throughout their first year of the role. The Director visits all new Head Teachers as a welcome to the role and the wider family of diocesan schools.

Professional training for leaders/aspiring leaders is provided through the Christian Leadership Programme, run in collaboration with Blackburn, Carlisle, Chester and Liverpool Dioceses. For information contact the Director/Assistant Director.

Ongoing support is provided through termly Head Teacher and Chair of Governor briefings. The Director also provides and facilitates professional and pastoral support for serving Head Teachers through a programme of visits to schools.

Further support by Diocesan Schools Advisers (DSA) can be arranged following such visits in response to need. For schools involved in additional support/monitoring from their LA a DSA is also invited to attend meetings as diocesan support.

### **Premises and Capital Projects Management**

#### **Persons Responsible: Diocesan Capital Buildings Officer**

Governors and trustees of Church of England schools/academies are legally required to take note of diocesan advice and guidance prior to making or agreeing to make any alterations to school estate/premises. MDBE is classified as a 'responsible body' by the DfE to manage and deliver the School Condition Allowance (SCA) fund for VA schools. MDBE also oversees and administers the school maintenance scheme. These processes involve inviting and prioritising school capital work proposals, advice and support for bid applications, project delivery, processing capital bids as well as administration of payment for building projects. MDBE also works in partnership with DBE Services and individual building consultants to ensure services to schools are of a high standard and in line with MDBE policy. Training is made available to school leaders and governors to support their understanding of school buildings management.

Within the area of estate management MDBE also advocates for schools with external partners, such as the 12 Local Authorities within the diocese, as well as the DfE to ensure School Condition Surveys reflect the school estate and support development of said estate. MDBE liaises with the DfE/EFSA regarding any queries related to estate management guidance and legislation ensuring schools are fully supported.

Site visits are undertaken as a means of supporting school building projects by the Diocesan Capital Buildings Officer and members of DBE Services as appropriate. DBE Services also offers Total Property Management (TPM) and compliance management. MDBE is pleased to recommend both of these to its schools.

### **Admissions**

#### **Person Responsible: Deputy Director of Education**

In accordance with the legal framework for school admissions set out in the School Admissions Code (2021) schools are required to consult MDBE, before public consultation, regarding proposed changes to their admissions arrangements. For VC

schools the Local Authority are responsible for ensuring this happens. For VA schools and academies this remains the responsibility of governors and academy trustees.

MDBE provides advice and support to schools on all aspects of admissions, including an annual briefing open to all. Guidance is provided to ensure all school policies remain code compliant and access to the Church of England School Admissions Builder is made available. MDBE responds to queries from the Schools' Adjudicator, assisting schools as necessary. MDBE represents the needs of schools on various admissions and school place planning groups involving partners such as LA admission committees, school place planning forums and the National Diocesan Admissions Group.

### **Support for schools wishing to convert to Academy status**

#### **Persons Responsible: Diocesan Director of Education**

MDBE recognises the changing educational landscape and is committed to supporting schools wishing to convert to an academy and join a Church of England Multi Academy Trust. Church of England schools are required to obtain consent of the DBE before applying for an Academy order under section 3 of the Academies Act 2010.

The Diocesan Director of Education provides support at all stages. Governing bodies who are at the initial stages of considering the pros and cons of academisation can expect the DDE to attend a relevant governing body meeting to support discussions and deliberations. Guidance is also offered regarding the process to academisation.

Within Manchester Diocese there are a number of Church majority and minority MATs. MDBE works to support and represent the family of church schools across the diocese through being represented at member level within each Multi Academy Trust. Various officers of MDBE are also either members of local governing boards or trustees within Church of England MATs across the diocese.

Where a Single Academy Trust wishes to become part of a Multi Academy Trust or two MATs wish to merge/transfer they must first obtain MDBE consent. MDBE will consider all such requests carefully and with consideration for all children and families involved before liaising with representatives of the Regional Commissioner's Office to support such requests.

MDBE will work with the school academy trust, legal teams and DfE throughout the conversion process.

### **Advocacy**

#### **Persons Responsible: Diocesan Director of Education, Deputy and Assistant Directors of Education, Capital Buildings Officer**

Officers of the Board of Education are involved in advocacy on behalf of church schools across the diocese through communication with various groups. The Director meets



regularly with representatives of 12 Local Authorities as a means of advocating for support where appropriate. Such meetings also involve discussions around school place planning and securing adequate places within CE schools. The Director represents the CE family of schools on other bodies such as the Greater Manchester Learning Partnership, as well as representing the needs of schools and school leaders with such bodies as unions. A proportion of MDBE officer time is spent representing MDBE schools at national as well as local level, ensuring a collective benefit to all MDBE schools.

MDBE also communicates with Ofsted as part of school inspections, emphasising school strengths and practices as a means of supporting schools with external inspections. A Diocesan officer will attend feedback for section 5 graded inspections and is available to attend section 8 feedback sessions at a school's request.

### **Church School Chaplaincy**

**Persons Responsible: Assistant Director of Education (Youth) & Diocesan Children's Officer**

MDBE have a commitment to supporting both Primary and Secondary school chaplaincy through the work of the Diocesan Children's and Youth Officers as well as the Diocesan chaplaincy coordinator. Regular meetings and communications enable the work of chaplains and sharing of local and national practices.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

**Person Responsible: Assistant Director of Education (Youth)**

MDBE recognises the importance of mental health and wellbeing and supports schools to engage with this important area for the benefit of children they serve. A suite of resources to support schools with mental health and wellbeing are provided. Schools are invited to attend half day MWB champions training as well as the 1 day and 2 day Mental Health First Aid training courses. MDBE has added to its training offer and now offer:

- Suicide First Aid (SFAUSI – Suicide First Aid Understanding Suicide Intervention)
- Suicide First Aid (SFAUSI – Children and Young People)
- Suicide Lite (half day)

## **What does this support cost?**

For April 2025 - April 2026 the annual rate (due June 2025) is as follows:

VA schools: £5.30 per pupil

Academies: £4.89 per pupil

Joint Foundation & Joint Diocese academies 50% of academy rate

VC schools: £2.81 per pupil

Joint Foundation & Joint Diocese schools: 50% of VC rate

Costs will be capped at maximum of £6,000 per school.

MDBE remains thankful to the 97% of schools that are positive to the SLA membership.

It is important to note even if 100% of CE schools across the diocese were involved in this SLA the true costs of diocesan support would remain not fully covered. MDBE offers a subsidised service to schools for support due to various other income streams, such as investment income, as well as a synodical grant from Manchester Diocesan Board of Finance to support Diocesan Children's Officer and Youth Officer posts. We very much value those schools who support the partnership financially as it means all schools can benefit.

For schools not financially committing to the SLA partnership charges may be applied for various activities and will be discussed as and when they are commissioned. These include, but are not limited to, a professional conversation visit prior to SIAMS inspection, site consultancy regarding buildings developments, attendance at meetings to support school improvement, associate member support, consultancy advice regarding ethos, worship and SIAMS, admissions support. Such services will incur costs of £250 per half day/twilight.

## **What support does MDBE offer to schools through events/ communications?**

- Annual Schools conference
- Year 6 Leavers Services and Beyond Year 6 transition sessions
- Head Teacher and Chair of Governors briefings
- Meetings with MAT and Academy CEOs
- RE hub meetings
- New Head Teacher Commissioning service and Evensong
- Retiring Head Teacher Evensong
- Termly school newsletter and half termly update
- Eco Schools information and Plant Savers Award
- MWB resources for Primary and Secondary Schools
- RE Syllabus

## Who are we?

**Diocesan Director of Education (DDE):** Deborah Smith

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**Assistant Director of Education (Leadership Development):** Louise Morley

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School support also involves a team of Diocesan Schools Advisers who are commissioned for individual pieces of work by the Director of Education, specific to school need.

## What enhanced services do we offer?

### Head Teacher Performance Management

MDBE can provide an external adviser to support Head Teacher Performance Management. Several DSAs are recently retired Head Teachers who are well placed to support governors throughout the process.

### Partner services

#### Total Property Management (TPM)

DBE Services offers a comprehensive support package for schools for all aspects of school maintenance. The service is well established and currently serves over 300 schools across several dioceses. MDBE is pleased to recommend the service to schools and can arrange for a representative to visit or for a contact with a school already being supported by the service to be provided.

<https://tpm4.com/information-about-our-total-property-management-scheme/>

#### School Improvement Service

DBE Services has developed a School Improvement Service that, although a relatively new service, having been established in 2021, continues to receive wide acclaim. By January 2022 102 schools across several North West dioceses and LAs were benefitting from the service. We are delighted to recommend this service to you. Schools can purchase the full package and have the option of purchasing bespoke options according to need.

<https://dbeservices.co.uk/school-improvement/>