

## ***‘Shaping Our Future Together to 2030’***

### **A strategy for academisation for Church of England Schools in the Diocese of Guildford**



**Guildford Diocesan Board of Education (GD BE)**

**September 2022**

## Education in the Diocese of Guildford – At a Glance

£254K of Heat  
Carbonisation  
funding for  
environmental  
projects

23 Church  
academies

22,000 children  
educated in Church  
of England schools in  
the Diocese of  
Guildford

83 Church of  
England Schools  
43 VA Schools  
17 VC Schools

5 multi-  
academy  
trusts

91% schools  
judged  
'Good' or  
better by  
SIAMS

86% schools  
judged  
'Good' or  
better by  
Ofsted

Diocesan Board of  
Education  
3 sub-committees  
14 members

3 Local  
Authorities  
Surrey,  
Hampshire &  
Kingston-Upon-  
Thames

£1.6 million of  
public funding  
for school  
capital building  
projects (SCA)

One R.E.  
Syllabus  
for Church  
schools

## *'Shaping Our Future Together to 2030'*

# **A strategy for academisation for Church of England Schools in the Diocese of Guildford**

*"I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness." (John 10 vs 10)*

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to set out the direction of the Diocesan Board of Education's academy strategy in an education landscape which going forward, will predominantly consist of multi-academy trusts (MATs).

The DBE is committed to working in partnership with partners and stakeholders to promote distinctive and inclusive high-quality education for all children and young people who attend our Church schools in the Diocese of Guildford.

The DBE intends to provide clear strategic leadership, working closely with all of its Church school governing bodies and multi-academy trusts, to ensure that its Church of England schools make sound strategic decisions which secure their future so they can continue to serve their communities.

The DBE is the religious authority for all Church of England schools in the Diocese and acts as the legally responsible body for Church schools and academy trusts under the DBE Measure 2021.

### **Our missional imperative**

The Church of England has set out its vision for education '[Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good](#)' which is underpinned by the four elements of Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity. The DBE has embraced the vision for education and is committed to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional and moral development of all children and young people in all of its Church schools and academy trusts across the Diocese.

The DBE shares in the wider mission of the Diocese of Guildford and its mission strategy '*Transforming Church, Transforming Lives*'. As part of this commitment, the DBE works in partnership with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) on supporting its work on Growing Discipleship, Growing Diversity and Growing Community.

The DBE is committed to the nurturing of all those involved in education in our diocese and promotes the flourishing of children and young people. As part of this strategic work, the DBE recognises the importance of collaboration between Church schools and their local churches and

sees this as a mutually beneficial relationship which helps to support the wider mission and ministry to children and young people in the local communities in which they live.

### **The direction of government policy**

The government has set out its ambition for all schools to become academies and be working towards joining a multi-academy trust (MAT) by 2030 and the Church of England has committed to helping all of its Church schools to meet this objective within the eight year period from 2022 to 2030.

The ambition for all schools to become academies and join multi-academy trusts (MATs) is set out in Chapter 4 of the current White Paper 'Opportunities for All' and all dioceses and local authorities have been asked to formulate strategic plans to share with the DfE in the autumn term.

### **The Church of England position and context**

Since the publication of the White Paper, the Church of England Education Office (CEEEO) and the National Society (the body responsible for Church of England Education) have confirmed its intention to embrace the government's intentions outlined in the White Paper to move to a single education system where all schools, regardless of sector or religious designation) join a multi-academy trust (MAT).

The Chief Education Officer, Nigel Genders, has confirmed that the CEEEO see this as an opportunity for the Church of England to maintain its position as a key partner in state education and to secure the Church of England school estate for future generations of children and families.

To that end, the CEEEO have indicated that they intend to work with the Secretary of State and Ministers to ensure that all Church of England schools are able to join a MAT with the appropriate Church of England governance structures and these protections for Church schools will be written into the new Schools Bill so that the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Society and the Department of Education continues and is updated to reflect some of the new legislation in the Schools Bill.

The DBE in Guildford will continue to be the statutory and responsible body for developing the academy strategy on behalf of its Church of England schools and MATs in our diocese based on our own context, our geography and the needs of our Church schools.

### **Growing Academy Capacity**

The DBE's current school organisation strategy 'Shaping Our Future 2022' identifies the growth of academy capacity as a key strategic priority:

*“To actively support and promote the growth of Church MATs across the Diocese to provide Church schools with the opportunity to join and experience the benefits of working collaboratively within a MAT”*

Following the publication of the White Paper, the DBE Executive reviewed its strategy and considered the different options that it could pursue to increase academy capacity. It has identified three routes to grow academy capacity which are set out below in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>Routes to growing academy capacity</b>	
1.	Support the growth of our existing Church of England MATs to achieve scale, through incremental academy conversions or by merger with other MATs if necessary.
2.	Support our Church of England schools to join Community (Secular) MATs ensuring that the appropriate legal protections are in place to protect and maintain the Christian character of Church schools
3.	Support our Church of England schools to form new Church MATs which fulfil the DBE’s academy criteria set out in the DBE academy policy (see below)

Route 1 clearly aligns with this strategic priority although it is now recognised that growth of our MATs will be likely to be achieved through merger as well as through the incremental growth of single Church schools joining our Trusts.

Route 2 will involve negotiations with Community MATs to allow Church of England schools to join these trusts. This could be a significant missional opportunity provided that the Christian character and Church of England designation of our Voluntary Aided (VA) and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools can be protected through the adoption ‘Majority’ Articles of Association (see appendix 1)

Route 3 will require the DBE to give its consent for a new group of Church schools to come together to form a new Church MAT which would provide further choice and capacity for the remaining 60 Church schools who are yet to convert to academy status.

A combination of the three different routes will deliver an increase in academy capacity although pursuing routes 2 and 3 could have implications for the growth of existing MATs in route 1 and this will need to be managed carefully by the DBE to ensure that these Church MATs can grow to a scale which ensures their sustainability.

A key consideration for the DBE is whether we have enough MATs to provide a home for the 60 Church of England schools which remain in the Local Authority sector and whether our existing MATs will be able to provide the academy capacity which the DBE will need to fulfil the ambition of the White Paper (all schools in a MAT by 2030).

### Local Authority capacity

In addition to the capacity of our own Church MATs, the DBE recognises that the number of Church school academy conversions will also be limited by the capacity of the Local Authority, the capacity of the DfE and the DBE, who are required to ensure that the land and legal issues are all resolved before a Church school can join a MAT.

Surrey CC has indicated that it only has the capacity for 30 academy conversions per year and there are 201 (52%) of schools in Surrey that will need to convert to academy status and join a MAT which will take 6 years (2028) for all Surrey schools (including our own Church schools) to become academies in Surrey. Hampshire have not indicated their capacity however, a much larger number of Hampshire schools have remained in the Local Authority sector with only a very small number of schools converted to academy status. Complete academisation in Hampshire could take much longer unless the Local Authority decides to form its own LA MAT to sponsor its community schools.

### Current metrics for Church schools

Local Authority	Voluntary-Aided (VA)	Voluntary-Controlled (VC)	Academy
Surrey	38	13	23
Hampshire	4	4	0
Kingston-upon-Thames	0	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>

### MAT academy capacity

There are currently 5 Trusts which have the appropriate governance structures to be able to take Voluntary Aided (VA) and Voluntary Controlled (VC) Church of England schools in our diocese.

Name of Trust	Type	Current No. of Schools
The Alliance Multi-Academy Trust (TAMAT)	Church Minority (VC schools only)	5 (1 Church school)
Enlighten Learning Trust (ELT)	Church Majority (VA & VC schools)	4
The Good Shepherd Trust (GST)	Church Majority (VA & VC schools)	16 (15 Church schools)
The Prospect Trust (TPT)	Church Minority (VC schools only)	3 (1 Church school)
Newark Trust	Church Majority (VA & VC schools)	1
Esher Church School	Single Academy Trust (SAT) – Church Majority	1
<b>Total number of Church School academies</b>		<b>23</b>



## **Growth through incremental academy conversions**

Each of these Church MATs have a growth trajectory and pipeline of schools (both Church and Community schools) except for Newark Trust and Esher Church School who are both effectively operating as 'stand-alone' or Single Academy Trusts (SATs).

The growth trajectories of these MATs are dependent on several factors, some which are outside of the Trust's control including:

- The DFE Regional Director's (formerly the RSC) view of the school improvement capacity of the MAT informed by the Ofsted inspection report for each school in the MAT
- The financial position of Church schools wishing to join the MAT
- The fall in the demographic of primary pupils across the south-east which may mean that some small schools will not be sustainable as they are currently structured
- The view of governing bodies who make the decision to join a Trust
- The capacity of the Local Authority (see above) and the capacity of the DBE
- The DBE's consent for the MAT to take more Church schools

## **Principles to guide the DBE's decision making**

The DBE Executive has identified a set of principles which they will use when reviewing proposals from Church schools wishing to become academies and join a MAT.

- **Christian Character**

The Christian character of our Church schools and the religious denomination status is sacrosanct; the DBE will only approve academy conversions of its Church schools where it has absolute confidence that the Christian character of the school will be protected, developed and enhanced by MATs who fully understand and respect this. Going forward, the DBE will only give its consent for Church schools to become academies of MATs with 'Majority' Articles of Association.

- **Quality of Education & School Improvement capacity**

The DBE will always consider the quality of education offered to pupils (especially those children who are most disadvantaged) within their school and local communities as a key aspect of its decision-making; Church schools and MATs seeking academy status must be able to demonstrate that educational outcomes will improve for all children as a result of the change to join a MAT

- **Commitment to mission**

The DBE is committed to the wider missional objectives of the diocesan strategy '*Transforming Church & Transforming Lives*'. It will consider the location of its Church schools and the impact of a Church school joining a MAT on the wider community and parishes that the school serves. The DBE will want to ensure community cohesion amongst and between its Church schools and MATs

wherever possible

- **Sustainability**

Proposals from Church schools to become academies and join a MAT must be able to demonstrate that the future of the school in the parish/community is sustainable in the long term; MATs will also be required to demonstrate that their growth strategy and business plan enables the MAT to get to a sustainable position in the longer term (within 8 years)

- **Serving the disadvantaged**

The DBE will consider the impact of any proposal of a Church school to become an academy and join a MAT on the approach to tackling disadvantage and vulnerable groups of pupils; our Church schools should be '*scandalously inclusive*' offering high quality education within a Christian ethos to all children regardless of their background, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity

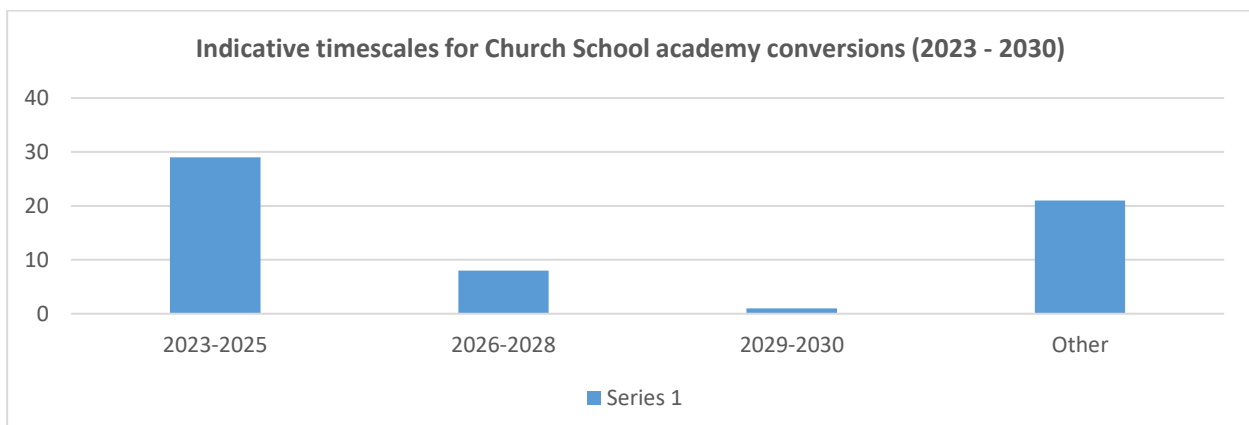
- **Subsidiarity**

The decision to become an academy remains with the Governing Body of our Church schools unless, the school is required to become an academy through the direct intervention of the Regional Director due to an inspection judgement/s

These principles will be used by the DBE to guide its decision making alongside the DBE's existing criteria for academy trusts seeking to admit Church schools in appendix 1.

## DBE Academy policy

The DBE has published its academy policy (enclosed) which has been developed following a consultation with its Church of England schools and MATs already established in the Diocese. Our own White Paper online survey of Church schools has confirmed that most Church school governing bodies now understand that they need to join MATs and they wish to become academies in the next three years.





The DBE understands that even with its existing Church MATs growing at a steady rate over the next three years, it will still require additional academy capacity to ensure that all of its Church schools are able to convert to academy status and join a MAT within timescales that do not disadvantage Church schools as the educational landscape develops toward the final period leading up to 2030.

The DBE recognises that there will be a strategic advantage to its Church schools completing their academisation in the first three years as the number of schools left in the local authority sector after this time will be significantly reduced to the extent that all Local Authorities will find it difficult to provide school improvement support in the final three years leading to 2030.

The DBE academy strategy and academy policy will ensure that all Church schools have the option to convert to academy status if they wish and can join a MAT that has sufficient school improvement capacity and scale to take small Church schools which may find themselves isolated and vulnerable.

## **Next Steps**

The DBE recognises its responsibility to set a clear strategic direction on behalf of all its Church schools and MATs in the Diocese.

To implement its academy strategy, the DBE will now do the following:

- Consult with its Church schools and MATs through a series of workshops in the Autumn term and publish the results of the White Paper Survey
- Engage with the DfE's new Regional Director and the three Local Authorities to clearly communicate its academy strategy and academy policy to all its stakeholders
- Publish its new academy policy to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the DBE's position in relation to academy conversion and proposals from groups of schools wishing to form new Church MATs
- Review the Church of England's position in relation to national policy as the Schools Bill progresses through Parliament and becomes legislation

**Alex Tear**

**Diocesan Director of Education**

**September 2022**

## Appendix 1

### DBE criteria for academy trusts seeking to admit church schools

The following criteria form the basis of the DBE's approval in principle (its conditional consent) which will become final when the DBE is satisfied that all the correct legal documentation is in place and it executes the Church Supplemental Agreement (CSA) with the Department of Education (DFE).

The criteria apply both to academy trusts which already have Church of England character and those which are currently constituted as community (secular) MATs.

#### a) Model academy documentation for church schools

All Church schools must join a MAT which has 'Majority' Church of England Articles of Association agreed by the National Society and the Department of Education. Examples can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/church-academies-model-documents>

Specifically, a MAT seeking to take Church schools should

- Already have/be prepared to adopt model 'Majority' Articles of Association in one of the versions agreed between the Church of England and the DfE (ie majority or minority) and
- Adopt the agreed form of the Church Supplemental Agreement in respect of any church school in the trust
- If currently constituted as a community MAT, adopt a Members' agreement confirming the role and powers of the diocesan corporate member(s) to enshrine the Christian character of Church of England schools for the long term.

These documents, alongside the DfE's Funding Agreement for the school, will ensure that:

- The Objects of the trust protect the Church of England character of any church school
- The Church of England character of both our VA and VCs schools are protected by using 'Majority' Articles of Association
- The Directors appoint the Trust's CEO 'with the involvement and consent of the Diocesan Corporate Member'
- The Directors appoint the headteacher of any formerly voluntary controlled school 'with the involvement and consent of the Diocesan Corporate Member'
- Arrangements for RE and collective worship must be subject to the advice and directives of the DBE
- The school's occupation of the site, which continues to be held by the site trustees, is dependent on the trust ensuring that its Christian character is protected. The SIAMS inspection process is used to judge whether the trust has been successful in discharging this responsibility.

## **b) Christian Distinctiveness**

GDBE expect any academy trust seeking to admit church schools **either** to have a Church of England character already **or** already to have a trust wide vision, values and culture which are congruent with the Church of England's Vision for Education.

With regard to any church schools a trust might admit, the trust should demonstrate that it is fully committed to developing and enhancing their Christian distinctiveness. The DBE will seek assurances that:

- The principles of the Church of England's Vision for Education will be integrated into the school's vision and values
- The school's development plan will include a plan to develop Christian distinctiveness based on the SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) framework
- The academy trust's monitoring and evaluation frameworks will incorporate review of the Christian distinctiveness of the school

With regard to a trust which currently has a community ethos, the DBE will seek assurances that:

- The academy trust will change or adopt the Church of England 'Majority' Articles of Association which allows both community and church schools to join and draws on the strengths of both in its overarching character and practice (rather than as a 'community MAT which includes a church school')

The DBE will continue to make available a wide range of support, training and resources to both church schools and academy trusts in support of Christian distinctiveness.

## **c) Quality of education**

The DBE will expect an academy trust to be able to demonstrate a track record of improved outcomes for pupils in its schools as a result of the trust's work and to provide evidence of school improvement capacity which will improve the quality of provision in the church school. In addition, the DBE will seek the view of the Regional Director (RD) (formerly the RSC) to ensure that the DFE is satisfied with the school improvement model of the trust/group of schools and has capacity to improve schools

## **d) Business planning**

The DBE will expect the trust to demonstrate a clear strategic plan which evidences how it will develop its capacity and capability to deliver its strategic objectives. The DBE would require re-assurances that every Church school that seeks to join a MAT will be in sustainable position for the next 3 years and that their school budgets take into account the fall in primary pupils and rising costs related to energy and staff pay awards.

In addition, the DBE would expect to see a long term business plan for the groups of schools becoming a MAT, which demonstrates that when the budgets of the schools are aggregated together, the MAT can

afford to continue to run each of the schools in a sustainable way – the business plan would need to demonstrate how each school will meet the challenge of reduction in pupil numbers as well as showing how individual school costs could be reduced by central commissioning/provision of services such as school improvement, HR, finance and governance/clerking support with an indicative top slice contribution from each school (normally a percentage of each school's budget allocation once they become an academy and leave the Local Authority)

**e) Financial sustainability and good governance**

The DBE will expect the trust's annual report and accounts to demonstrate its capacity to operate on a financially sustainable basis and that the trust's operations meet the DfE's expectations as set out in the Academies Financial Handbook.

**f) Commitment to the Diocesan Family of Church schools**

Relationships are at the heart of the family of Church schools so Church MATs must:

- Protect local governance arrangements through Articles of Association
- Commit to ongoing engagement with the GDBE through the use of the GDBE Elevate services
- Commit to developing collaborations with other Church MATs
- Commit to the ongoing development of relationships between churches and schools which are supportive, sustainable and mutually beneficial for learning
- Are outward looking, working with other stakeholders whenever it benefits children