

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). This guidance is relevant for school leaders, governors, multi-academy trust leaders and directors. The guidance should be read alongside the Diocesan Board of Education's MAT Strategy.

Within this context, schools are asked to contact the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) at the earliest opportunity to discuss which options may be 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 option/s 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/Trust Board and then seeking formal consent from the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE). The DBE will expect that each school/trust will have consulted various stakeholders to inform their decision-making.

Guidance for Multi-Academy Trusts: DBE/MAT 'Keeping-in-Touch' Meetings

On an annual basis, representatives from each MAT named in the DBE's MAT Strategy, will meet with representatives from the DBE. This meeting enables the DDE to advise schools when considering MAT options.

This meeting will usually be during the autumn term. During this meeting, the performance of the MAT will be reviewed covering the following areas:

- performance of schools (standards, Ofsted, SIAMS)
- financial sustainability
- governance at all levels
- estates management
- school improvement plans and capacity
- leadership development
- staff recruitment and retention
- safeguarding
- 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. The view of the Regional Director is an important factor in this discussion. This will not be a fixed decision but will enable the DDE to advise schools appropriately. 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: Consent Meetings

Attendance

The DBE will meet with the chair of governors, the headteacher and a representative of the MAT. 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.

Content

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 agrees 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 Department for Education (DfE) for consideration. Consent from the DBE does not confer approval from the DfE.