



Considerations for Church Schools in Lichfield Diocese – Initial Starting Points

HM Government's white paper [Opportunities for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child](#) sets a clear expectation for all schools:

- **By 2030, all children will benefit from being taught in a family of schools, with their school in a strong multi academy trust or with plans to join or form one**

As headteachers and governing bodies reflect on their own contexts and formulate appropriate actions to fulfill the expectation above, this paper seeks to provide a starting point to support headteachers, leaders and governors in their decision-making processes. A number of documents are embedded, to signpost leaders to the depth of information that underpins this brief paper.



LDBE Policy

The LDBE policy on Academy Conversion of Church Schools, which sets out the context, the policy and process for schools seeking to academise can be found [here](#).

Relevant documents to support thinking

[Memorandum of understanding between the National Society and the Department for Education \(MOU\)](#)

Key principles in brief:

- ⊕ This document applies to all Church of England Schools taking on academy status.
- ⊕ Secretary of State values and is committed to sustaining the formal and statutory partnership between the Church of England and the State in education.
- ⊕ The Secretary of State recognises the responsibility of DBEs to all the church schools within their diocese and the children in those schools whether these are maintained schools or academies.
- ⊕ The Secretary of State also acknowledges and accepts that it is for DBEs to plan strategically for the exercise of this responsibility, including in relation to school improvement and to work closely with the RSCs in doing so.
- ⊕ The RSC* is responsible for making the majority of decisions relating to academy conversion, intervention and sponsorship in each region, on behalf of the Secretary of State.
- ⊕ The relationship between the RSC and DBE** relies on both parties' ongoing commitment to consistency and transparency in its decision making. The MOU is intended to guide and support RSCs and DBEs in fulfilling that commitment.
- ⊕ It is recognised by the department that any judgements as to the religious character of church schools and the sufficiency of any protection of that character are solely for the DBE.
- ⊕ The expectation is that model documentation (articles of association, the church supplemental agreement and special clauses for the funding agreement and supplemental funding agreement) agreed between the National Society and the department will be used.

*RSC – Regional Schools Commissioner

** DBE – Diocesan Board of Education

Schools converting to academy status:



Key message: The DBE's and the RSC's expectation is that the governing body of any maintained Church of England school wishing to become an academy will approach the Diocesan Director of Education, (DDE), as early as possible to discuss their options for conversion, and agree the process for securing the consent of the DBE.

There are currently 32 Multi-Academy Trusts (see Appendix A) that which include Lichfield Diocesan Church of England Schools. Applications to join existing academy trusts which include Lichfield Diocesan CE schools will be considered on the performance of the trust in meeting the obligations of the current agreements.

As governing boards explore their structural options, the DBE requests schools explore the benefits of joining the existing Diocesan MATs:

- 🔗 St Chad's Academy Trust: <https://www.stchadsacademiustrust.co.uk/>
- 🔗 Three Spires Trust: <https://threespirestrust.org/>

All VA schools must either join a Diocesan MAT or A MAT with majority VA Articles of Association (listed in Appendix A).



Academy Trusts without existing CE Schools

Applications to join existing or new academy trusts without Lichfield Diocesan CE schools already in the trust will be declined.

Governance – Articles of association

The shared expectation of the DfE and LDBE is that Church schools that wish to convert will do so as part of a MAT with governance arrangements that reflect, at member and director level, no dilution of the level of church governance and involvement as it was immediately prior to conversion.

The model of governance is considerably different to that of a single maintained school. The [Academy Trust Governance – Structures and Roles Descriptors](#) provides a useful high-level overview on this subject. The terminology specific to academies with religious character may be particularly helpful.

Implications for Voluntary Controlled (VC) Schools

Where a maintained VC school becomes an academy [The Church of England Academies Model Articles of Association: Minority Version](#) explains that Dioceses and Trustees have a duty to ensure the effective (not merely nominal) continuance of the Church of England character of the Academy/ Academies, thus enabling the Trustees to show that they continue to carry out their trust and are providing their land for that purpose.

Appointment of Members: The members appointed to represent the interests of the Church of England should not exceed 25% of the total number of members. Membership of the Company shall include the Diocesan Corporate Member.

Appointment of Directors: The Diocesan Corporate Member shall appoint at least two Directors, ensuring that the total number of Directors appointed does not exceed 25% of the total number of directors.

Appointment of Local Governing Bodies: The Directors may appoint committees known as Local Governing Bodies for each Academy. In respect of any Academy that had previously been a Voluntary Controlled School immediately prior to conversion to Academy status shall have up to 25% of its foundation members appointed by the Directors with the consent of the Diocesan Corporate Member and that all its members shall sign an undertaking to the Diocesan Corporate Member to uphold the designated religious character of the said Academy.

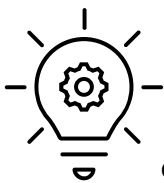
Implications for Voluntary Controlled (VA) Schools

Where a maintained VA school becomes an academy [The Church of England Academies Model Articles of Association: Majority Version](#) explains that Dioceses and Trustees have a duty to ensure the effective (not merely nominal) continuance of the Church of England character of the Academy/ Academies, thus enabling the Trustees to show that they continue to carry out their trust and are providing their land for that purpose.

Appointment of Members: The membership of the Company shall comprise of The Diocesan Corporate Member and further persons (up to 2) appointed by the Diocesan Corporate Member. This is relative to the Department's recommendation that Academy Trust companies should have at least five members, but this is not a legal requirement.

Appointment of Directors: The number of Directors shall be not less than three. The total number of Directors appointed by the Diocesan Corporate Member and Ex-Officio Directors should exceed all directors by 2. The number of Directors shall not be subject to any maximum (unless determined by ordinary resolution).

Appointment of Local Governing Bodies: The Directors may appoint committees known as Local Governing Bodies for each Academy. In respect of any Academy that had previously been a Voluntary Aided School immediately prior to conversion to Academy status shall have all its foundation members (except elected parent and any staff members) appointed by the Directors with the consent of the Diocesan Corporate Member and that all its members shall sign an undertaking to the Diocesan Corporate Member to uphold the designated religious character of the said Academy.



Key Message: As schools engage in formalising their own partnerships with a Multi-Academy Trust, it is imperative that the Articles of Association that the academy trust has adopted reflect the required governance arrangements for the continuance of the Church of England character of the Academy. This ensures young people across the country continue to benefit from the combination of high-quality education, religious ethos and character development provided by Church of England schools. Both now and for future generations.

Academy Trusts with existing Lichfield Diocesan Schools

MAT	Website
MATS with Majority Articles (VA)	
St Chad's Academies Trust	https://www.stchadsacademiestrust.co.uk
Three Spires Trust	https://threespirestrust.org/welcome-from-the-tst-ceo/
St Bartholomew's Multi Academy Trust, Penn.	https://www.stbartsmat.co.uk
MATS with Minority Articles (VC)	
The St Bart's Academy Trust, Belgrave.	https://sbmat.org/academies
Future Generation Trust	https://www.futuregenerationtrust.co.uk/our-academies
Staffordshire University Academies Trust	https://www.suatrust.co.uk
The Key Educational Trust	https://www.thekeyeducationaltrust.org.uk
Empower Trust	https://www.empowertrust.co.uk/
Mid-trent Multi Academy Trust	https://www.mid-trentmat.co.uk/
Manor Multi Academy Trust	Manor Multi Academy Trust
Codsall Multi Academy Trust	http://cmat.academy/our-academies/
John Taylor Multi Academy Trust	https://jtmat.co.uk/
Fields Multi Academy Trust	https://www.fieldsmultiacademytrust.com/
Penk Valley	https://www.penkvalley.co.uk
Marches Academy Trust	https://www.marchesacademytrust.co.uk/
QEGS Multi Academy Trust	https://www.qegsmat.com
St Martins Multi Academy Trust	https://smartmat.org.uk/
St Stephen's Multi Academy Trust	https://www.ststephensmat.co.uk/
The de Ferrers Trust	https://www.deferrerstrust.com/
The Moorlands Primary Federation	http://www.tmpf.staffs.sch.uk/
The Praxis Trust	https://thepraxistrust.org.uk/
The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust	https://www.tssmat.staffs.sch.uk/
The Talentum Learning Trust	https://www.ttlit.org.uk/
Uttoxeter Learning Trust	https://www.ttlit.org.uk/
Woodard Academies	https://www.woodardacademies.co.uk/506/our-academies-2