

Academy Conversion Policy

A framework for church schools in the Diocese of Chester

Overview

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) is committed to maintaining the status and governance structure of its church schools across the Diocese and wishes to continue to work in partnership in striving to achieve and sustain the very highest standards of education for all children in our schools.

The DBE has adopted the framework for schools wishing to become an academy and join a Multi-Academy Trust as laid down in the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Society and Department for Education. This clarifies how Church of England schools may become academies through conversion and sponsorship. It states;-

Our shared expectation is that, in the vast majority of cases, 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. (page 6)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517423/Memorandum_of_understanding_between_the_National_Society_and_DfE.pdf

Applications from Voluntary Aided schools

Consent will only be considered for Voluntary Aided (VA) school applications to join Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) or create, join or form an academy trust (members and directors) where conversion is on majority articles (VA model). The model requires 75% of members to be appointed by the DBE with the members appointing the majority of directors. This reflects the existing governance structures of VA schools¹. Model majority articles can be accessed [here](#).

Such Multi-Academy Trusts may also include Voluntary-Controlled (VC) and/or community schools, known as a mixed MAT. These schools would convert on majority articles, whilst retaining their existing character (VC / Community) as reflected in the supplemental funding agreement (SFA).

Applications from Voluntary Controlled/ schools

Consent will only be considered for Voluntary Controlled school applications to join Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) or create, join or form an academy trust that is formed on the church articles. This could either be one based on the voluntary aided model with overall CE majority at Member level (as above) or an academy Trust with 25% of Members and 25% of

¹ The Memorandum states that only where 'very exceptional circumstances can be shown to exist' then the DBE may agree to VA schools joining a non-majority MAT with appropriate safeguards in place. It would be understood by the DBE that such circumstances would only be the case in a very small minority of schools.

directors appointed by the DBE (VC model). This reflects the existing governance of Voluntary Controlled schools. Model articles can be accessed [here](#).

Such Multi-Academy Trusts may also include community schools. These schools would convert on the church minority papers whilst retaining their exiting character as reflected in the Supplemental Funding Agreement.

Applications for Academy Orders (ie to become an academy)

The DBE will hear requests from schools, under the Academies Act 2010 Section 3 iv, for consent to apply for an Academy Order. The Diocese will only hear such a request following a resolution of the governing body and the consent to apply from any other foundations (ie usually the PCC). The DBE will need to be reassured that the governing body have considered all of the options and that the proposal is designed to secure the future of the school as a church school and will be in the best interests of its children.

Once the application has been received, representatives from the school will be invited to present their application to a panel of the Board who will make a decision as to whether to support the application and give conditional consent.

Steps towards academy conversion

Application process

1. Governing body researches academy status and possible Multi-Academy Trusts
2. Headteacher/Chair of Governors contacts the Diocesan Director of Education to discuss possibilities and plans
3. Governing body decides to move towards academy status and minutes this resolution
4. Governing body consults with Stakeholders (this is not required by the DfE prior to application but the DBE recommends that it is done at this stage)
5. Application form completed and returned to the DBE
6. School representatives (usually the headteacher and chair) present case to DBE panel
7. If agreed the DBE gives conditional consent using the DfE model letter
8. If not agreed the school may appeal the decision and the appeal will be heard by DBE members not involved in the initial panel. The decision of this body is final.
9. Legal work is undertaken and final approval of documentation given by the DBE.

Please note that DBE members are not based at Church House and so at least one week's notice will need to be given with regards to obtaining signatures and we would advise that your legal firm prepare counterparts so that signatures can be obtained more easily.

To access an application form and for further information please contact Sue Noakes on 01928 718834 or sue.noakes@chester.anglican.org