

*White Paper ‘Opportunity for All’*  
**DBE Policy**

**White Paper ‘Opportunity for All’  
The Diocesan Board of Education  
Policy  
September 2022**

The Diocesan Board of Education recognises that within its 137 schools and academies, views about the future of educational provision differ widely. Following the publication of the DfE White Paper, ‘Opportunity for All’, the Board of Education met on 25<sup>th</sup> May and 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022 to agree a statement which would outline its intentions in relation to the DfE’s express desire to see all schools within strong Multi-Academy Trusts by the end of 2030.

Following these meetings, it published the following statement on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

*‘The St Albans Diocesan Board of Education is committed to working in partnership with its schools, academies, local communities for the good of local pupils. Having considered the White Paper ‘Opportunity for All’ proposals at its meetings of 25<sup>th</sup> May and 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022, the Board of Education determined that the following guidelines be issued to church schools across the Diocese.*

*Using our established email address, [schools@stalbans.anglican.org](mailto:schools@stalbans.anglican.org), for any queries or requests for conversations with members of the Schools Team will be the fastest way for schools and academies to access support and advice, as proposals and plans are developed at a local level.*

**(i) The basics**

- The DBE’s primary aim is to ensure the flourishing of all its schools, maintained or academies
- The DBE will retain its neutral policy on academisation. This has seen 31 schools convert to academy status since 2010. The DBE will actively support schools wishing to explore conversion. It will equally support maintained schools as they consider the implications of conversion
- As relevant religious authority, the DBE will pro-actively engage with regional partners to ensure there is sufficient capacity within the system for all diocesan schools to be placed within a Church of England-governed MAT

- Across 2022-23, the DBE will provide a safe space for schools to evaluate the impact of conversion on their community, briefing them on all aspects of the conversion process and facilitating relationship-building sessions with regional CofE MATs.

## **(ii) The detail**

- All CofE schools must join appropriately governed CofE provision
- The DBE is committed, as a priority, to supporting the growth of existing CofE MATs within the Diocese and would expect maintained schools to initiate discussions with their local trust as part of any academisation planning
- No new CofE MATs will be approved by the DBE unless there is a clear local rationale to do so and it aligns with DfE and LA planning
- The DBE will continue to support federation as a means of retaining small rural schools
- The DBE is planning to build capacity to enable up to 10 academy conversions per year from 2024
- The DBE is considering adopting a wider range of model articles to enable schools, especially those in Hertfordshire, to retain strong local relationships with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Herts for Learning (HfL). More details will follow
- The DBE intends to form a new CofE diocesan-sponsored MAT in central and south-east Herts in 2023-24 (funding dependent)
- The DBE invites interest from schools wishing to be part of the formation of this new trust.

All plans are subject to change and modification as government policy develops. The DBE will issue additional briefings to schools as required and hold further webinars if there are major changes to policy.

The following examples were shared at the diocesan-wide webinars on 15<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 to support governing bodies in their decision making.

## **Examples**

### **(i) Example 1**

CofE School A expresses an interest in joining a non-Church of England trust. What would the response of the DBE be?

*The DBE, in its role as Religious Authority, would decline such a request unless there were exceptional circumstances (these being defined as the school being subject to a Directive Academy Order and no other CofE alternative being available)*

**(ii) Example 2**

CofE School B is located less than 10 miles from CofE Trust B. Would School B be compelled to join Trust B if its preference was to join another CofE trust more distant to it?

*The DBE is fully committed to growing its existing CofE trusts. Therefore, the DBE would expect to see, within any application submitted, a clear rationale for why a school could not join its closest CofE trust. The DBE will provide a framework to support schools in making this analysis.*

**(iii) Example 3**

A cluster of church schools agree amongst themselves that they wish to convert to academy status and form a CofE MAT. Would the DBE support this?

*This is more complex and the answer related to local capacity and the MAT growth strategy of both the DBE and the DfE.*

*In an area with existing CofE provision, it is highly unlikely that the DBE would support the creation of new, small CofE MATs. The perceived risks are too high and it is almost inevitable that such a trust would have to merge with another CofE trust in the medium term.*

*In an area with no existing CofE provision, for example, Central and East Hertfordshire, the DBE is likely to support the creation of smaller CofE MATs, especially if proposals build capacity in the short term. However, it remains the case that these small MATs are likely to need to merge with other CofE MATs in the medium to long term.*

**(iv) Example 4**

Relationships with HCC and HfL are very strong in Hertfordshire. Will any future provision enable schools to retain these beneficial relationships?

*In proposing to form a second DBE-sponsored MAT in Central/East Hertfordshire, the DBE has expressed a preference to do this in partnership with other regional partners capable of working together to establish and resource a MAT able to admit CofE schools. This will require significant work to bring to fruition, but the DBE is committed to exploring it fully as a way forward.*

**Please contact the Schools Team for advice on any of the above by emailing [schools@stalbans.anglican.org](mailto:schools@stalbans.anglican.org)**