

# Board of Education

*Serving children, schools and young people*



## Suite of Academy Information Documents

### Exploring Academy Status

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### Joining the Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Governing Bodies across the Diocese of Canterbury are, quite astutely, keeping the options for school status and structure under regular review, responding to both local context and national policy adjustments.
- 1.2 Many good or outstanding schools are seeking academy status, building on what they do best and taking advantage of academy freedoms. However, they also recognise the value of remaining in a professional, collegiate relationship with a larger group, using this network as a source of strength for improving outcomes, sharing practice and securing value for money from a range of services.
- 1.3 Through this paper we aim to provide information about DCAT, what would happen if you joined and the reasons to do so. It should answer initial questions about the contribution retained to fund services and what joining means in terms of governance structures and delegated powers, therefore the level of autonomy enjoyed.

#### 2. WHAT IS THE DIOCESE OF CANTERBURY ACADEMIES TRUST?

- 2.1 The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust (DCAT) is the Diocese of Canterbury's Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), incorporated as a company in May 2014. It has been imagined and planned to enable flexibility and responsiveness to local context and needs; organisational substructures will evolve as appropriate, influenced by geography, existing collaborative networks and the pace of academy conversions.
- 2.2 Our Company Articles support a model which can unleash potential, enabling us to:
  - deliver positive, immediate support and interventions through our own expertise and established consultant partners, as well as wider regional connections
  - enhance learning and teaching by engaging in collaborative pedagogical projects, action research and professional development with Christ Church University
  - encourage and nurture the dissemination of good practice and promote mutual accountability
  - enable focused, effective local governance and secure options for centralised functions and economies of scale
  - incorporate community as well as church schools

- 2.3 DCAT will include schools at different stages of development, with different needs. Some will be sponsored, where we are working closely to achieve rapid improvements and then sustain high performance. Others will be good and outstanding, using Trust personnel and services to achieve continued improvement within a supportive network.

### **3. WHAT IS THE VISION OF DCAT?**

- 3.1 We aim to promote distinctive, inclusive communities of learning that seek to be underpinned by Christian values sourced in the Gospel narrative, enriching the whole educational experience. We aspire to excellence; to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people, enabling them to fulfil their potential and make a worthwhile contribution to our diverse, dynamic society.
- 3.2 Where Community Schools join the Trust we will respect and uphold their pre-conversion status, reflecting this in the Local Governing Body representation and the individual academy's mission statement.
- 3.3 In seeking to achieve the vision outlined in 3.1 the Trust has clear aims; it will want to ensure that schools:
- strive towards ambitious and challenging goals, determining provision that stems from Christian principles
  - serve children and young people in ways that relate to their humanity in all its fullness
  - acknowledge and confront their responsibility to safeguard the vulnerable and reach those marginalised by society
  - model healthy, holistic relationships and engage in partnerships that operate for the benefit of the whole community
  - appoint and equip determined, high quality staff and nurture teachers and school leaders, mindful of their vocation and well-being
  - encourage and nurture the dissemination of good practice, enhance learning and teaching by engaging in collaborative pedagogical projects, action research and professional development and promote mutual accountability

### **4. WHAT ARE THE KEY ADVANTAGES OF JOINING DCAT?**

- 4.1 On joining the Trust each individual academy benefits from:
- statutory infrastructure services including finance and audit to ensure compliance with academy requirements
  - services relating to standards and improvement, with proportional quality assurance that will ensure continued progress and accountability to key stakeholders
  - support with innovation, taking advantage of academy freedoms
  - access to a range of services to purchase on a best value basis
  - the freedom to develop the Christian character and ethos of the school, sharing ideas and drawing on support from the diocesan team, drawing into a deeper relationship with the Diocese and contributing to its wider mission
  - adopting a local, skills-based governance model that is able to focus on the things that matter
  - career development opportunities across the Trust for staff
  - knowing the safety net of the Trust is available should school circumstances change in the future

- 4.2 All Church of England Schools continue to benefit from the Board of Education's Core Services Agreement, which focuses on statutory duties but also provides a link to our wider involvement in ministry with children and young people, as well as providing guidance on vocation and access to pastoral support.

## 5. WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THE TRUST'S MODEL AND HOW DOES IT OPERATE?

- 5.1 The Trust's model offers:
- Meaningful help and assistance in achieving goals and improving school effectiveness
  - Well planned, sustainable engagement
  - Independence and interdependence
  - A focus on vocation, well-being and ministry to and among children and young people
- 5.2 ***'Meaningful help and assistance in achieving goals and improving school effectiveness'*** means that all academies receive powerful school improvement support, detailed further in document ACMAT.3 'School Improvement'. The Trust will assign a consultant to support, develop and challenge the school improvement planning process and leadership and management actions. They are supported by senior colleagues and our Standards and Intervention Board and will provide, or help to broker, effective school improvement services. The Trust also has links with the National College of Teaching and Leadership, Canterbury Christ Church University, the National Society, Kent Association of Headteachers, regional Teaching Schools and local collaborations.
- 5.3 ***'Well planned, sustainable engagement'*** indicates that our engagement with the academy agenda has been reflective, well-researched and deliberate. We have established excellent capacity within our core team, developed a business plan that enables steady growth without compromising quality and mapped out a realistic conversion and personnel timeframe to ensure effective support is maintained during the growth period.
- 5.4 ***'Independence and interdependence'***. The Trust recognises that academies will wish to sustain and develop existing relationships, as well as exploring other collaborative projects and options. We fully support this independence, recognising the depth of experience and skills within schools, but also encourage a state of interdependence, where they might seek fulfilling partnerships that enhance their community and others. We have pioneered the creation of collaborative companies, offering sharing of resources with strong accountability; establishing a framework that enables choice for those with independent minds, whilst also giving the security of a known 'brand' and the assurance of quality.
- 5.5 ***'A focus on vocation, well-being and ministry'***.
- 5.5.1 We know that school leadership is an absorbing and rewarding vocation that requires vision, determination and the courage to make complex decisions. Through personal contact and hearing or sharing stories we are continually reminded of the pressures faced by staff in supporting the most vulnerable and troubled children. Academies in the Trust will receive termly in-school well-being sessions for senior leaders, which are offered to enhance a school's overall strategy.

5.5.2 In addition, we recognise that all leaders in church schools undertake further responsibilities related to their school's distinctiveness; fostering a Christian ethos that permeates school life, enriching relationships and providing spiritual nourishment for the whole community. We are also proactive in liaising with local clergy and the Board of Education organises retreats for headteachers; these are structured around reflection and teaching in the context of Christian leadership and provide time for re-engaging, relaxing and being refreshed.

## **6. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOUR SCHOOL JOINED DCAT?**

6.1 The most significant elements of your school would continue unchanged; its individual character, name, uniform, existing strengths (whether in pupil achievement, learning environment, Christian distinctiveness, curriculum or leadership) would remain and the Trust would work in partnership to develop these further. The needs of your own pupils would remain paramount and the ethos, character and culture of your own school would be unaffected. Your school's partnership with parents and membership of local networks of schools and other organisations would stay the same.

6.2 Life would be different in three key areas:

- DCAT is directly accountable to the Department for Education (DfE) for the performance of your school. You would therefore be required to submit standard returns about pupil outcomes and financial performance to the Trust, which would monitor and audit the information through officers and/or the Board of Directors, taking any action necessary if a concern was flagged up. The model of governance under which your school operated would reflect both your most recent inspection position and current progress, recorded through a Scheme of Delegation.
- Your school would be outside Local Authority control; in addition to your existing relationships we expect that, where possible and appropriate, you would become both a contributor and receiver within the Trust and the wider diocesan family of schools.
- There will be some central policies and common (mandatory) infrastructure services which require a contribution

## **7. SHAPING THE LEVEL OF CONTRIBUTION TO THE TRUST**

7.1 Local Authorities have 'retained duties' with regard to schools and academies; details specifically relating to the Education Services Grant can be found in the Department for Education document DFE-00518-2014, 'Annex A Clarification of local authority statutory duties relating to services relevant to the Education Services Grant'. On conversion to academy a number of functions which are currently performed by Kent LA will still need to be carried out and the responsibility of these passes to the Trust; indeed some DfE demands actually increase when a school converts to academy status.

7.2 The Trust commits to dialogue with each school exploring academy status, examining financial implications in a balanced and transparent manner and providing business models using the most up-to-date advice and legislation available. This process will be led by the Head of Finance and Business Services for the Trust.

7.3 The Trust will be mindful and prudent when assessing the needs of converting schools. An individual school's success in terms of performance will mean that it could enjoy and exercise greater autonomy by leaders and governors; other schools may require tighter scrutiny and greater support.

7.4 The Trust therefore proposes a model of contribution consisting of two elements; a variable Central Services contribution and a Common Infrastructure Services contribution. This is consistent with its stance on a differentiated model of governance predicated on school performance, whilst enabling it to fulfil statutory functions and provide certain services helpful to the whole group. The final total contribution figure for a school will be tailored and should be between 3-6%.

7.5 The differentiated Central Services contribution is straightforward and depends on the current OfSTED judgement of a setting:

<i>Outstanding</i>	<i>1% of General Annual Grant</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>2% of General Annual Grant</i>
<i>RI</i>	<i>3% of General Annual Grant</i>
<i>Category</i>	<i>4% of General Annual Grant</i>

This enables the Trust to provide immediate support to each school, fulfil statutory and other duties and ensure appropriate accountability to the DfE, Local Authority (which still carries statutory responsibility for education outcomes for children and young people residing in Kent), the Charity Commission and other relevant bodies.

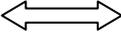
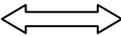
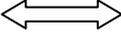
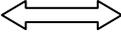
7.6 The Common Infrastructure Services contribution exists to ensure best value as well as consistent reporting and relates to specific external services and internal management systems; these include Personnel/HR support, Payroll, Insurance and property, Legal Advice and Information Management Systems (including pupil tracking and performance).

7.7 The Trust will also organise:

- An initial finance set-up to ensure compliance with statutory requirements
- Access to additional services where it has already undertaken due diligence, including IT and recruitment specialists
- Opportunities to access coaching for leadership and other training
- Training for Local Governing Bodies
- Model statutory policies and guidance/principles for others
- The opportunity to commission pedagogical action research projects through Canterbury Christ Church University at preferential rates

## **8. A DIFFERENTIATED MODEL OF GOVERNANCE**

8.1 DCAT believes that the best possible relationship with a Local Governing Body (LGB) and school leadership team recognises strengths, capacity and vision, evolving a level of responsibility and autonomy appropriate to its specific circumstances. The following table indicates the framework in which the Scheme of Delegation will be negotiated; an example Scheme can be provided on request.

	<b>OfSTED judgement</b>		
	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good/Outstanding
<b>Governing Body</b>	Locally representative, supporting Head but strong direction from Trust		Locally representative, nominates members to Trust for ratification, develops school in partnership with Head
<b>Budget</b>	Trust sets total size of budget, prepares detailed budget including staffing structure in collaboration with LGB and Head		Trust sets total size of budget, LGB (in collaboration with Head) decides priorities, staffing structure and detail, Trust sign-off
<b>School Improvement</b>	DCAT will monitor data from each school on a seasonal cycle, or termly where required		
	DCAT consultant takes the lead role, working directly with the Head, LGB shadows  Targets set by Trust in collaboration with LGB and Head  School Improvement Plan developed by Head and DCAT consultant with input from LGB		DCAT consultancy time allocated, assists Head in identifying and securing support. LGB lead role in evaluation.  Targets set by GB and Head, Trust sign-off  School Improvement Plan developed by LGB and Head, with DCAT consultant sign-off
<b>Policies</b>	Trust provides model statutory policies and guiding principles for others		
	Trust sign off all policies		LGB may tailor model statutory policies to reflect local needs and circumstances (within given parameters)  LGB responsible for all non-statutory policies
<b>Headteacher Performance Management</b>	Led by DCAT consultant, Chair of LGB in attendance	LGB and DCAT consultant agree panel of reviewers, must be DCAT representation	Led by LGB, DCAT consultant in attendance

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