



# **RCAOS ACADEMISATION PRINCIPLES AND OVERSIGHT**



## 1. Introduction

The Education Commission has been collaborating with schools for some time in preparation for the much anticipated white paper outlining the Government's proposal for all schools to be part of Multi Academy Trusts (MAT), becoming a family of school support. Within the Diocese, there are currently 23 Single Academy Trusts, with most schools being VA schools under the guidance of the Local Authority. Schools have been coming forward with proposals to form MATs but as the diocese looks towards the full academisation of its schools there is a need to provide a framework and expectations of all MATs so that no area or school is disadvantaged. The MATs must clearly be distinctively Catholic and have a strong focus on continuing to serve our Catholic families.

The White Paper was formally published in March 2022, and has outlined a number of key objectives including:

- 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.
- The best trusts in the system will work where they are needed most, levelling up standards, and transforming previously underperforming schools.
- Local authorities will have the opportunity to establish MATs in their areas.
- There will be new powers to intervene in underperforming MATs
- MATs will be subject to new statutory standards and inspection
- SATs to merge, creating MATs comprising 10 schools or more

All this is a notable change compared to the original idea of MATs proposed and accepted by Bishops in 2010. Those MATs already established and especially those that are to be formed in the Archdiocese, must be implemented in such a way as to maximise success as a Catholic MAT and minimise the risks of underperforming and receiving directed intervention. The CES have been involved in the drafting of the Bill and have included as many protections for church schools as possible, but the best protection is to ensure as far as possible that every school in the Archdiocese has a successful and distinctively Catholic MAT to join. The Education Commission is committed to supporting Southwark schools in achieving the white paper objectives and using our current successful MATs as a template for success. In accordance with previous Trustee papers and reflecting the direction of travel set out in the Education Strategy it is proposed to work with all Southwark schools to create a family of sustainable Catholic MATs serving local communities within the timeframe proposed by government.

Schools within Southwark have been encouraged to develop partnerships, and following the publication of the White Paper, a number of groups of schools have proposed creating MATs. There is a danger that some schools not actively engaged in the conversion discussions will find themselves in a difficult position and not have an obvious family to join, leaving them at risk as the rest of the educational landscape changes significantly. Schools have also been approaching the Commission seeking guidance on the proposed strategic approach to support their decision making. As local authorities look to use their new powers to establish MATs this leaves Catholic schools on their own. This paper will support those schools unclear of next steps, to seek support in their areas and discuss the next steps with their neighbouring schools.

The approach of allowing schools to convert if and when they want is no longer a strategy fit for the new landscape and now needs to be changed. Consequently, this paper outlines the proposed



oversight and strategy of the Southwark Academisation Programme and a set of principles by which the academisation programme will operate.

Whilst schools have been encouraged to form their own groups, consistency and oversight has so far been reliant upon individual relationships with the Education Commission. There are currently no formal approved principles in place, and no consistent oversight. This can pose some risks, including:

- Schools forging ahead with plans to create a MAT without relevant approvals from the Diocese (e.g., name, development plans etc.)
- Some schools falling outside of established groups
- Southwark MATs operating independently of each other and possibly competing for the same schools as part of their growth plans
- Schools initially looking towards LA MAT organisations (they are aware this is not an option)

It is important to note that the White Paper states: “We expect that most trusts will be on a trajectory to either serve a minimum of 7,500 pupils or run at least 10 schools”. Being a smaller trust will be possible but will be subject to scrutiny in terms of growth and development.

### **School Condition Allowance (SCA)**

To date the diocese through its schools has received SCA (previously LCVAP) funding to allow for the maintenance of the diocesan education estate. This has allowed the majority of schools to manage their buildings even though it is recognised that the amounts in recent years have been insufficient. SCA will cease as full academisation is achieved so the capital funding stream becomes that available to academies. In small MATs this would require schools to bid for funds with a point scoring system determining their position nationally as to whether the bid is successful. Larger MATs receive an annual capital allocation based on pupil numbers to spend as the MAT decides. The Diocesan Trustee would prefer the reassurance of a regular capital income stream to fund routine maintenance and refurbishment over one based on bidding. This is another reason for developing a diocesan framework for MATs.

## **2. Academisation Principles**

A list of principles has been adopted for all Diocese MAT projects. It is recognised that with existing MATs and some groups of schools preparing to convert that there may now be work to do to deliver on these aspects. MAT development plans should ensure the relevant aspects are incorporated to be implemented in the next couple of years whereas MATs not currently established may look to completing most of the work prior to conversion.

Every MAT will need to draft a development plan setting out their plans for the MAT in the short to medium term, specifically highlighting how they will comply with any of the principles that need to be addressed but also explicitly setting out the intentions of the MAT board in respect of becoming a ‘Strong Catholic MAT’.

A further document will be the growth strategy for the MAT setting out how many academies it will take on (subject to due diligence) and when it hopes to do this. It would also be hoped that all MATs will gain sponsor status in case it is required to support a school in need. The RSC preference is



always for schools to join in small tranches of 5-6 schools, that become established before a further trench joins. Although there are some issues with this model it is the most secure way forward.

The conversion system pertaining to Church schools is similar to that of community schools but there are several significant differences, so the models are not necessarily transferable. There are specific articles relating to Catholic schools, different requirements on property, protections regarding the rights that Catholic schools have in place such as Catholic staff for reserved posts. In addition, the Memorandum of Understanding<sup>1</sup> between the Catholic Church and the Secretary of State for Education requires all communication to go between RSCs and the Trusts through the Diocesan Schools Commissioner. This role of go-between also protects Catholic MATs in the event there is a challenging outcome around an academy and a system of monitoring MATs is required of the diocese.

The proposed principles will ensure that consistency is apparent across MATs, as well as a strategic oversight being available to the Diocese and the Education Commission. Part of this is to ensure that key strategic activities are given the appropriate scrutiny.

<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/517424/Memorandum\\_of\\_understanding\\_between\\_the\\_Catholic\\_Church\\_and\\_DfE.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517424/Memorandum_of_understanding_between_the_Catholic_Church_and_DfE.pdf)



<p>1. No school is left behind</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The aspect of family is at the core of Catholic education relationships where we support and look after each other.</li> <li>• As MATs are developed, the Education Commission will work with MATs to ensure that each and every Catholic school across the Diocese is included – either on implementation of a MAT or as part of a MAT growth plan. MATs are expected to engage with schools on an ongoing basis.</li> <li>• The Education Commission may request a specific MAT for a school to join in the event of being excluded from any implementation or growth expectations.</li> <li>• A school may feel it is suited more to joining a specific MAT in the interests of its pupils and families, in such situations the school may make a case to be considered by the challenge group</li> </ul>
<p>2. Promote and Strengthen authentic Catholic Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose of the MAT will be set out in its vision and mission, which must be approved by the Diocese. Just as every school or academy should be distinctively Catholic, so should the MAT itself.</li> <li>• Every MAT should consider how it will promote and strengthen Catholic education working with the young people and families in its parishes</li> <li>• The vision should include not only promotion of Catholic life and RE in its schools but also how it will support the formation of its teachers and their career development in Catholic education.</li> <li>• At all times enable Episcopal oversight of the trust and its academies as required in Canon Law and the MAT will be required to report regularly to the Diocese.</li> <li>• MATS will also work together to deliver effective, cohesive education across the diocese</li> </ul>
<p>3. A sustainable model for its communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MAT must focus on the needs of its communities, ensuring that it supports communities across education phases, easing transition and strengthening Catholic education from Early Years through to Sixth form.</li> <li>• The MAT must demonstrate a positive impact on the enhanced education offer to its pupils, financial sustainability as well as innovation supporting Catholic education as a whole. Vision and Growth plans must be approved by the Diocese before application to the RSC.</li> <li>• Aim to ensure its outcomes are at least as good as those of any other educational establishments in the area as required in Canon Law</li> <li>• The trust should identify its strengths that may be used to support others in its locality if necessary.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Explicit in its aims for Children and Families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MAT must outline its objectives, and how it will support outcomes for children and engage with the families and parishes in the area of the MAT.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ways in which a MAT will engage with its parents as a child progresses through its education both as part of the curriculum but also in providing a range of aspirational opportunities for pupils who may not easily access such events.</li> <li>• This includes wellbeing, mental health support and ensuring every school supports Catholic social teaching.</li> </ul>
5. Inclusion: breadth of opportunity and academic standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MAT must be inclusive - the diversity of our schools is valued and must be encouraged.</li> <li>• Curricula design should ensure the needs of all children are met as far as possible</li> <li>• Schools should seek to offer an enhanced curriculum preparing pupils for their role in society</li> </ul>
6. Trustees/ Directors and Members must be appointed by the Diocese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members will remain consistent across all MATs</li> <li>• Trustees/ Directors will be subject to Diocesan approval (via the proposed MAT Challenge group) through the documented process available from the Education Commission.</li> <li>• At all times trusts must enable Episcopal oversight of the trust and its academies as required in Canon Law.</li> </ul>
7. Model Articles, policies and MoU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilise CES model articles</li> <li>• Abide by the DfE/Catholic Education MoU in dealings with the RSC and ESFA</li> <li>• Must move towards the use of CES policies and contracts of employment to protect the ethos of the academies and trust.</li> </ul>
8. Name to be approved by the Diocese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MATs will be required to have their name approved by the Diocese or a name will be chosen by the Archbishop.</li> </ul>
9. Growth and Development to be approved by the Diocese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All MATs must submit their growth and development plans to the Diocese prior to submission to the RSC. This is to ensure that there is no conflict across geographical areas, consistency of approach and that Principle 1 is achieved.</li> </ul>
10. Use of central buildings and maintenance teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All MATs must use the buildings and maintenance teams from the Diocese, including the use of the Education Commission recommended system for tracking estate management. This is to ensure that consistent approaches are taken to compliance matters across the Diocesan estate.</li> <li>• Where MATS are currently operational (SELCAT and KCSP), existing buildings and maintenance processes continue with reviews in place</li> </ul>



### 3. Governance and Oversight

To ensure consistent decision making across the Diocese, the following is proposed to support this.

The table below recommends where approval/ oversight is required:

#### Implementation Projects

Activity	Approval	Review/ Consult
Name of the proposed Trust	✓	
Vision and Mission of the proposed Trust	✓	
Growth and Development Plans	✓	
Trustee/ Director Appointment	✓	
CEO and CFO Job Description	✓	
CEO and CFO appointment	✓	
Draft application form prior to submission to RSC		✓
Appointment of legal support		✓

#### Operational MATs

Activity	Approval	Review/ Consult
Trustee/ Director change of appointment	✓	
CEO and CFO appointment	✓	
New schools joining the MAT	✓	

Governance and oversight will be via a new 'Challenge Group' that will ensure adherence to the principles and bring oversight to this critical area. This will be chaired by the Episcopal Vicar for Education and include representatives from Education, Property and Finance, as well as a nominee from the Education Committee. This group would also meet with the MATS at least twice a year, ensuring a 'golden thread' between operational management of our schools and the Canon Law



responsibilities entrusted in the Archbishop. This would allow the AGM for MATs to be held with the members present and to celebrate the achievements of the MATs and Catholic education in the Archdiocese in addition to fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. The Terms of Reference for the existing Education Committee will be revised to align to the new MAT Challenge group and its own Terms or Reference developed alongside.