

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Director of Education
Mr. Alex Tear MA(Ed) (Hons)

10th March 2016

Dear Colleague

RDBE Academy Policy and Conversion Criteria for Church of England Schools in the Diocese of Rochester

As the new Education and Adoption Bill has now been passed in Parliament, I thought this was an appropriate opportunity to write to you to outline the Diocesan Board of Education's policy relating to academy conversion and the revised academy conversion criteria which was put in place in June 2015.

The Rochester Diocesan Board of Education is the legally responsible organisation for Church of England Schools within the Diocese of Rochester as set out in the DBE Measure (1991).

It also acts as the Diocesan Authority for its Church schools and as such, has to be consulted and give its approval before any Church of England school can become an academy.

On 1st June, the Diocesan Board of Education approved the formation of a 'Diocesan Strategic Partnership' (DSP), comprised of representatives of the school-led Church of England Multi-Academy Trusts which operate and sponsor Church schools across the diocese.

This new group is now working closely with the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) and other DBE officers to act as a conduit between the Department of Education (DfE) and the Regional Schools Commissioner for the South-East and South London (SESL) region to support the co-ordinated approach to sponsorship of Church schools across the diocese.

The Diocesan Board of Education also approved a new policy which stated that it will:

- **Prioritise its resources towards supporting and facilitating the growth of Church of England MATs across the diocese**
- **Adopt a more pro-active, positive stance towards the academy programme, encouraging the development of the existing Church of England Multi-Academy Trusts and supporting the creation of new primary Church of England school MATs across the diocese**

The Regional Schools Commissioner is supportive of the strategic direction and policy of the diocese.

We are working closely with him and he has indicated that he will support the growth of the existing strong Church of England MATs already established across the diocese as well as considering the formation of new strong primary Church of England MATs.

Since September, both myself and John Constanti (The Lead Officer for Academy conversions) have been working with groups of Church of England Primary schools who are looking to form new Church of England MATs in parts of the diocese where there is not already an existing Church of England MAT for these schools to join.

These discussions have been very helpful and gaining momentum and we are encouraged by the conversations amongst schools that we have been part of and able to facilitate.

We have however, been made aware of a small number of our Church of England schools who have already engaged in conversations with other community schools without consulting with the Diocesan Board of Education or talking to the diocese about their future plans or arrangements.

In order that the diocese is able to give its consent for Church of England schools to become academies and form Multi-Academy Trusts, it is important that DBE officers are aware of these developments so they can provide the necessary advice and guidance to our Church schools in this area in order that any initiative or development will meet the DBE's academy conversion criteria.

I would draw your attention specifically to the requirement:

“That the converting school’s governing body obtains the agreement of the RDBE on the membership (Members) of the Academy Trust/Company and the appointment of directors.

Any MAT comprising of Church of England schools should include Church Corporate bodies as their Members

There is a presumption that Church schools wishing to convert to Academy status will join an existing local Church of England MAT, providing they have sufficient capacity.

The Directors, in consultation with the RDBE, appoint the Local Governing Body, the composition of which should reflect the current arrangements of the converting school”

If your school or governing body is considering academy status or joining a Multi-Academy Trust it is critical that you consult with the diocese **before** you begin discussions with other schools within your local area **especially** if these schools are community schools that do not have Church of England status.

This will help us to support your school in avoiding any potential difficulties which may arise from agreements that do not satisfy the DBE's academy conversion criteria. The new academy conversion criteria can be found on the RDBE website here:

<http://www.rdbe.org.uk/schools/academies/conversioncriteria>

If you have any queries in relation to this letter or the policy of the RDBE in relation to academy conversion, please do contact the Diocesan office to arrange a time to speak to John Constanti or myself.

Yours sincerely,



Alex Tear

Director of Education
Diocese of Rochester

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