



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of
Rochester

Board of Education

Bishop's Officer & Director of Education
Mr. Alex Tear MA(Ed) (Hons)

Email: alex.tear@rochester.anglican.org

Our Ref: AT/SJC

Your Ref:

3rd September 2013

To: Headteachers, Chair of Governors and Incumbents.

Dear Colleague

A warm welcome back to the start of the academic year and I hope that you and your staff enjoyed a good break and a settled start to the new term.

In previous letters, I have written about the changing educational landscape and the need to look for the opportunities that come as the education system both at national and local level continues to be reformed.

Although we are still in the midst of change, I believe it is now possible to see an emerging pattern beginning to develop where schools and educational organisations will have to operate in a landscape characterised by greater levels of autonomy, competition and accountability.

For many of us, some of these characteristics can feel counter-cultural to what we are trying to achieve for our schools through working together in closer collaboration. As a family of Church schools we have been used to emphasising the need for greater interdependence and closer working through partnerships, networks and clusters.

As Director, I believe that our Church schools, through their Christian ethos, offer an additional distinctive dimension which goes beyond what others expect education to provide. Our focus on the spiritual development of children and young people in our care allows us to offer something special which enhances the learning experiences for our pupils and students, develops their gifts and talents and celebrates their uniqueness in the eyes of God.

The Education Team have been busy over the summer on planning new developments and thinking about new ways in which we can support you in school.

Rochester Diocesan Academy Trust

The Rochester Diocesan Academy trust is a new initiative by the Diocesan Board of Education which extends the work of the diocese with our Church primary schools. The new multi-academy trust (MAT) will provide stability and support for Church primary schools wishing to become academies with strong governance from the Trust's experienced team of Directors.

We are already in conversation with a number of Church primary schools about joining the trust and are looking to some of our stronger Church primary schools to bring their expertise and additional capacity to

support the work of the trust with those Church schools who will become sponsored academies this academic year.

There will be many advantages to those schools who make a decision to join the trust at an early stage including the opportunity to work with the trust directors on the future direction of the trust as it develops and significant savings on services procured on behalf of schools by the trust.

Enclosed with this letter is a brochure which gives details of the new multi-academy trust with some information about how the trust will operate once it begins to sponsor Church schools in the coming year.

In response to enquiries about the new trust, we will be running a series of three briefings this term for head teachers and governors who are interested in finding out more:

- **Tuesday 1st October, 6.30 – 7.30pm - Diocesan Offices, Rochester**
- **Wednesday 2nd October, 6.30 – 7.30pm - Churchill CofE Primary School, Westerham**
- **Thursday 3rd October – 6.30 – 7.30pm - St George's CofE Primary School, Wrotham, Sevenoaks**

We would encourage your attendance at these briefings and ask you to confirm your attendance with Teresa Spearink in the Diocesan office so we can cater for refreshments on arrival.

Further details on the multi-academy trust including a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section can be found on the MAT's new website www.rdat.org.uk

School Improvement Advisory Group (SIAG)

We have now set up a new advisory group as part of the DBE's structure which will monitor the performance of all our Church schools and offer appropriate school improvement support through our network of Diocesan Associate Consultants. The group is Chaired by Sue Mordecai (former Head of School Improvement with Bromley LA) and also supported by Caroline Crofts, an independent education consultant who already works in some of our Church schools in Kent. Sue and Caroline will be explaining the work of SIAG at this term's Heads & Chairs briefings.

New RDBE Website

We are delighted to inform you that we have a new website and a new simpler web address: www.rdbe.org.uk

Apart from a 'new look' the website offers some new functionality including an interactive schools map of every Church school in the diocese. Enclosed with this letter is a quick start guide to help you get up and running.

For those schools which have subscribed to this year's SLA, we will be sending out a password reminder so you can access the schools login area and book courses online.

As part of the new website we will be providing a facility to advertise Headteacher and senior leadership vacancies on a diocesan micro-site hosted by our partners Emmaus Education. A separate letter accompanies this letter with details of the scheme.

SIAMS Self-Evaluation Workshops & Materials

Over the course of the coming year, we are offering regular opportunities to work together to develop effective self evaluation for SIAMS. We will look at the requirements of the new SIAMS evaluation schedule and share good practice and how to embed this in the life of your school, whilst also discussing how best to reflect this in your school's self evaluation.

Three development sessions will be held at the Diocesan Office in Rochester on the following days – you are invited to attend either the morning session from 9-30am to 12 noon or the afternoon session from 1-30pm to 4pm.

These sessions, designed for Headteachers and Senior Managers, will take place on:

- **Friday 18 October: Collective Worship**
- **Tuesday 11 February: Distinctive Christian Character**
- **Tuesday 20 May: Leadership and Management**

There will be a small charge of £40 (+vat) for up to 2 representatives from schools. Please let Teresa know if you will be attending as space in the meeting room at Diocesan House is limited (teresa.spearink@rochester.anglican.org)

There will also be sessions for Governors which also look at these aspects of being a Church school – on Thursday 24 October, Thursday 13 February and Monday 9 June from 4-30pm to 6-30pm. Further details will follow. Please note that there is a £25 plus VAT charge per person for this.

For ease of access, we have given you a copy of the latest SIAMS self-evaluation review materials on a RDBE memory pen however these materials will get updated as we go through the year so do download the latest documents from the new RDBE website if you are informed of a SIAMS inspection during the year.

ASPIRE Leadership Programme Cohort 3

We are pleased to inform you that we will be running a third cohort of this popular leadership programme designed specifically for aspiring leaders of Church schools in conjunction with the NCTL and Canterbury Diocese. The programme will start in October and there will be 15 places available for middle leaders of Church schools in the Rochester Diocese and you can book a place using the RDBE website or phoning Teresa in the Diocesan office. More details to follow shortly.

Heads & Chairs Briefings

Once again we will be running these network briefings this term on the following dates:

- **Wednesday 18th September, 1.30 – 4pm, - St John's CEP School Tunbridge Wells TN4 9 EW**
- **Thursday 19th September, 1.30 – 4pm – Bishop Justus CofE School, Bromley BR2 8HZ**
- **Friday 20th September, 1.30 – 4pm, Diocesan Office, Rochester ME1 1SL**

The costs of these briefings are free to those schools subscribing to the SLA and for non-subscribing schools there will be a small charge of £60 for three meetings across the year.

Annual Data Return 2013-14

Once again we will be asking you to complete a short data return for your school which allows us to update our own database with changes which have taken place in your school since last September.

This data return also allows you to upload your current admissions policy and over-subscription criteria which is a statutory requirement to consult annually with the diocese.

The data return takes only 10 minutes to complete and can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/rdbe-2013>
Access to the survey is given through the password: rochester2013

We would be grateful if you could complete the return by the deadline: Friday 27th September

Leadership Conference

Finally, advance notice that we will be holding our third annual leadership conference on Friday 7th March 2014.

Do make a note in your diary and we will be providing more details of keynotes speakers later this term.

On behalf of the Education Team, we look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Tear". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Alex Tear
Director of Education