



Trust Readiness Criteria for MAT Growth

1. Purpose

This document sets out the Trust Readiness Criteria used by the CDBE to inform decision-making in relation to MAT Growth.

It is designed to:

- support structured dialogue between the CDBE and MATs
- provide clarity about the areas considered in assessing growth
- enable proportionate and evidence informed decision-making

The CDBE does not require completion of a formal self-assessment. These criteria are used to guide professional discussion, with evidence provided as appropriate.

2. Scope

These criteria apply where a MAT seeks to:

- admit additional Church of England schools
- expand its geographical or organisational footprint
- be considered as a preferred MAT for schools

All MATs are expected to operate within the MOU. These criteria apply only where growth is proposed.

3. Approach

The CDBE will use these criteria to inform professional judgement.

Decisions will take account of:

- the Trust's capacity and capability
- alignment with Diocesan strategy
- the wider Diocesan system
- local context and need
- relevant information or views from the Department for Education, including the Regional Director where appropriate

Evidence will be requested proportionately and in line with the proposed scale of growth. These criteria are intended to support consistent and transparent decision making rather than operate as a checklist.



4. Trust Readiness Areas

4.1 Leadership Capacity

The Trust demonstrates sufficient leadership capacity to sustain and support growth.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- How is leadership structured across the Trust?
- How are executive leaders deployed across schools?
- What capacity exists to support additional schools?
- How will leadership scale if the Trust grows?
- How is succession planning addressed?

The Trust may be asked to demonstrate:

- a sustainable executive leadership structure with capacity for growth
- effective deployment of leaders across schools
- clear plans for supporting additional schools without reducing capacity elsewhere
- succession planning for key leadership roles

4.2 Governance and Accountability

The Trust demonstrates strong and effective governance.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- How effective are governance arrangements at all levels?
- How do local governing bodies support accountability?
- How are Church governance requirements fulfilled?
- How are conflicts of interest managed?
- Is governance professional support sufficient?

The Trust may be asked to provide:

- governance structures, terms of reference and board membership information
- evidence of effective local governance arrangements and accountability
- evidence of governance review, external review or ongoing governance development



- information on how Church governance requirements are fulfilled, including the appointment and support of foundation governors/trustees
- evidence of governance professional support and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements
- examples of how conflicts of interests are identified, managed and monitored

4.3 School Improvement Capacity

The Trust demonstrates the ability to improve and sustain high standards across its schools.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- What is the Trust's school improvement model?
- What evidence demonstrates impact across schools?
- How are schools facing challenge supported?
- How will improvement capacity be maintained with growth?
- How is Christian distinctiveness integrated into improvement?

The Trust may be asked to provide:

- evidence of improved pupil outcomes and school performance over time
- examples of support provided to schools, including those facing challenge
- evidence of impact of the Trust's school improvement model
- information on how school improvement capacity will be maintained as the Trust grows
- examples of how Christian distinctiveness is supported through school improvement activity

4.4 Financial and Operational Sustainability

The Trust demonstrates financial and operational stability.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- Is the Trust financially sustainable?
- Are central services sufficient and scalable?
- How are risks identified and managed?
- What is the impact of growth on sustainability?

The Trust may be asked to provide:

- financial information, including evidence of sustainability and future planning



- an overview of central services and organisational capacity
- evidence of risk management processes and strategic risk oversight
- information on how proposed growth will be supported and funded

4.5 Christian Distinctiveness

The Trust demonstrates a clear commitment to the Church of England Vision for Education.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- How is Christian character developed across schools?
- How are SIAMS expectations understood and supported?
- How are relationships with parishes maintained?
- How do leaders demonstrate commitment to Church school distinctiveness?

The Trust may be asked to share:

- examples of how Christian character is developed across its schools
- evidence of leadership commitment to the Church of England Vision for Education
- SIAMS outcomes and how inspection findings have informed improvement
- examples of support provided for RE, collective worship and Christian leadership
- evidence of engagement with parishes and church communities

4.6 Engagement with the Diocese

The Trust demonstrates active and sustained engagement with the Diocese.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- How actively does the Trust engage in diocesan activity?
- Participation in training, networks and events
- Engagement in governance and leadership processes
- Openness to advice and collaboration

The Trust may be asked to provide:

- evidence of participation in diocesan training, networks and events
- examples of engagement with diocesan governance and leadership processes
- evidence of collaborative working with the CDBE, CDET and other church school partners
- examples of how diocesan advice and guidance have informed trust decision-making



The CDBE will also take account of its own experience of working with the Trust.

4.7 Supporting Schools Facing Challenge

Where relevant, the Trust demonstrates the ability to support schools facing challenge.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- What experience does the Trust have in supporting schools facing challenge?
- What capacity exists to take on additional challenge?
- How are resources deployed to support improvement?

The Trust may be asked to provide:

- examples of support provided to schools facing challenge
- evidence of the impact of that support
- examples of sustained improvement over time
- information on the capacity available to support additional schools

4.8 System Alignment, Geography and Capacity

The Trust demonstrates alignment with the diocesan strategy and system.

In considering this, the CDBE may explore:

- How does proposed growth align with geographical context?
- Does growth support a coherent and sustainable system?
- How does the Trust work with other MATs and partners?
- Are there risks of over-concentration of need?

The Trust may be asked to provide:

- information on how proposed growth aligns with the geographical context of the Diocese
- evidence of how growth supports a coherent and sustainable Church school system
- examples of collaboration with other MATs and system partners
- evidence that proposed growth will not create unsustainable concentrations of schools facing challenge
- information on how growth proposals align with the CDBE Academisation Strategy

Decisions will take account of system-wide considerations, not solely Trust readiness.



5 Decision-Making

The CDBE will use these criteria to inform decisions relating to:

- MAT growth
- admission of Church schools
- transfer and re-brokering decisions
- identification of appropriate MATs

Decisions will be based on:

- evidence and discussion with the Trust, along with diocesan knowledge and where relevant information from the DfE
- alignment with diocesan strategy
- the long-term flourishing of Church schools

The CDBE will seek to ensure that decision-making is:

- transparent
 - proportionate
 - consistent
 - in line with the CDBE's agreed governance processes
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6 Review

This document will be reviewed periodically to reflect:

- changes in diocesan strategy
- national policy developments
- system capacity and need