



Draft Memorandum of Understanding

Between Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education and (Name of MAT)

Date:

Parties:

1. Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education, referred to in this Memorandum as 'the CDBE', and
2. (Name of MAT), referred to in this Memorandum as 'The Trust'.

1. Purpose of this Memorandum

This Memorandum of Understanding sets out the shared expectations between the CDBE and the Trust in relation to the care, development and flourishing of Church of England schools within the Diocese of Chelmsford.

The purpose of the Memorandum is to provide a clear framework for partnership, governance, engagement and accountability. It supports the shared commitment of the CDBE and the Trust to promote high-quality education rooted in Christian distinctiveness, so that children and young people may experience life in all its fullness.

This memorandum applies to all Church schools within the Trust and forms part of the CDBE's wider approach to supporting a coherent and sustainable diocesan system of Church schools.

2. Status of this Memorandum

This Memorandum is intended to support constructive partnership working between the CDBE and the Trust. It does not replace or override any statutory responsibilities, governance documents, funding agreements, Articles of Association, Church Supplemental Agreements, site trustee arrangements or legal duties.

Where formal consent, consultation, advice or approval is required from the CDBE, CDET, the Department for Education, site trustees or any other body, those arrangements remain in place.

The Memorandum should be read alongside:

- the Trust's Articles of Association
- the relevant Church Supplemental Agreement
- the Trust's funding agreements
- the CDBE Academisation Strategy
- the CDBE Partnership Agreement
- relevant Department for Education guidance
- relevant Church of England and National Society guidance.



3. Shared Principles

The CDBE and Trust agree to work together in a spirit of transparency, mutual respect and shared responsibility for the flourishing of Church schools.

The shared principles underpinning this Memorandum are:

- the preservation and development of the Christian character and ethos of Church schools
- the promotion of high-quality education for all pupils
- the protection of appropriate church governance arrangements
- effective, transparent and accountable governance
- strong partnership between schools, parishes, the Trust, CDBE and CDET
- sustainable school improvement and organisational capacity
- proactive engagement with diocesan processes, training and strategic dialogue
- decision making informed by evidence, local context and the long-term flourishing of Church schools

The CDBE will support the Trust through the provision of advice, guidance and professional expertise and opportunities for collaboration. The CDBE will seek to engage constructively with the Trust, providing clarity, transparency and timely input to support effective decision making.

4. Christian Character and Church of England Vision

The Trust will demonstrate a clear commitment to the Church of England's Vision for Education and to the Christian character of each Church school within the Trust.

This includes ensuring that:

- the Christian character of each Church school is protected and developed
- school vision and values reflect the principles of the Church of England's Vision for Education
- Religious Education and Collective Worship are given appropriate priority
- school development planning includes clear priorities for Christian distinctiveness
- Trust leaders engage appropriately with the SIAMS inspection process
- relationships between Church schools and local churches are actively supported and developed.

The trust will ensure that decisions affecting Church schools are made with proper regard to their Church foundation, ethos and community context.

5. Governance

The Trust will maintain governance arrangements appropriate to Church of England schools.

The Trust will ensure that:

- governance reflects the requirements of its Articles of Association

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- local governance reflects VA/VC foundation arrangements appropriately
- CDBE/CDET appointment processes are followed where required
- governance records are accurate and up to date
- appropriate governance professional support is in place
- conflicts of interest are actively managed and recorded
- local governing structures support accountability and engagement

The Trust will engage with the CDBE and CDET where governance changes are proposed.

6. Engagement with the Diocese

The Trust will demonstrate active and sustained engagement with the Diocese.

This includes participation in:

- diocesan training and networks
- governance processes and appointments
- admissions engagement where appropriate
- strategic dialogue regarding academisation and sustainability
- leadership discussions where diocesan involvement is required
- regular strategic engagement with the CDBE and other Church MAT leaders to inform diocesan growth planning and system development

The CDBE will define and monitor expectations for engagement as part of its partnership working. A lack of engagement may be considered for future decision making. The CDBE will facilitate this engagement through the provision of relevant training, networks, guidance and opportunities for collaboration.

7. School Improvement

The Trust will demonstrate its ability to support and improve Church schools effectively.

This includes providing evidence of:

- its school improvement model
- impact across schools
- capacity to support schools facing challenge
- monitoring of standards and outcomes
- integration of Christian distinctiveness into improvement planning

The CDBE will support this through advice, professional input and, where appropriate, engagement of diocesan school improvement expertise. The Trust will work in partnership with the CDBE where concerns arise.



8. Financial and Operational Sustainability

The Trust will demonstrate financial and operational sustainability by:

- robust strategic planning
- effective financial oversight
- compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook
- sufficient central services capacity
- careful consideration of school-level sustainability
- transparent communication of risks

Growth must not compromise quality, governance or sustainability.

9. Admissions

The Trust will work with the CDBE in relation to admissions arrangements for Church schools.

The Trust will ensure that admissions arrangements:

- reflect the Church foundation and legal status of each school
- comply with statutory requirements and the School Admissions Code
- are developed with appropriate diocesan engagement
- support the school's role in serving its local community
- are consistent with the Christian character and ethos of Church schools

The Trust will ensure that:

- the CDBE is engaged at an appropriate stage where changes to admission arrangements are proposed
 - relevant advice from the CDBE is considered in decision-making
 - admissions arrangements are communicated clearly and applied consistently
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10. Leadership Appointments

The Trust will engage appropriately with the CDBE and/or CDET in relation to leadership appointments affecting Church schools.

This includes appointments to roles such as:

- CEO
- Headteacher
- Executive Headteacher
- Head of School



The Trust will ensure that recruitment processes are:

- robust and transparent
- appropriate to the significance of the role
- inclusive of suitable assessment processes that allow candidates to demonstrate their leadership, vision and capacity.

The Trust will ensure that:

- the CDBE is informed at an appropriate early stage in the recruitment process
- diocesan recruitment guidance is followed, or any alternative Trust processes are agreed with the CDBE in advance
- there is appropriate opportunity for CDBE engagement throughout the recruitment process
- candidates are assessed for their understanding of, and commitment to, the Christian character of Church schools

The Trust will work in partnership with the CDBE to ensure that leadership appointments support the long-term flourishing and distinctiveness of Church schools.

11. Land and Buildings

The Trust will work with the CDBE, its Buildings Officer, site trustees and relevant partners in relation to Church school sites and buildings.

This includes engagement regarding:

- land and buildings
- capital works
- occupation arrangements
- significant changes to school premises
- academisation or transfer between trusts
- proposals affecting the use or development of Church school sites

The Trust will ensure that:

- the CDBE and its Buildings Officer are kept appropriately informed of proposed changes to buildings and estates
- engagement takes place at an early stage in planning processes, not solely at the point of formal approval
- relevant advice is sought where changes may affect the long-term use, sustainability or Church foundation of the site

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- the Christian character of the school is protected in relation to the use and occupation of Church school properties

12. Partnership Agreement

The trust will ensure each Church School signs and maintains the CDBE Partnership Agreement.

The Trust will actively support and enable schools to engage with the opportunities, guidance and support provided through the CDBE.

The Trust will ensure that Church schools:

- engage actively in the life of the diocesan family of schools
- participate in relevant diocesan training, networks and events
- engage with opportunities for professional development, collaboration and shared learning
- contribute to the collective development and improvement of Church of England education across the Diocese.

Engagement in diocesan activity is an important part of sustaining strong relationships, supporting school improvement and maintaining the distinctiveness of Church schools within the Trust.

The CDBE will support this through the provision of relevant training, networks, guidance and opportunities for collaboration across the diocesan family of schools.

13. Trust Readiness and MAT Growth

The CDBE expects all MATs serving Church Schools to operate within this Memorandum. However, not all MATs will have the capacity or strategic alignment to support further growth within the Diocese.

Where the Trust seeks to admit additional Church schools, the CDBE will consider the Trust's readiness to grow, taking into account the Trust's capacity, capability and alignment with diocesan strategy. This will be informed by Trust Readiness Criteria, including evidence of:

- sustainable leadership capacity
- effective governance and accountability
- school improvement capacity
- financial and operational sustainability
- central services capacity
- effective support for Christian distinctiveness
- active engagement with the CDBE and CDET
- appropriate local governance arrangements
- ability to support additional schools without destabilising provision
- alignment with the wider diocesan strategy, including geography, capacity and school sustainability



The CDBE will use the Trust Readiness Criteria to inform its decision making in relation to:

- MAT Growth
- admission of Church schools
- transfer of Church schools between MATs
- support for seeking an appropriate MAT home
- wider diocesan system planning

The Trust will provide evidence requested by the CDBE to support readiness assessment. The CDBE will ensure decision-making in relation to Trust readiness is transparent, proportionate and informed by clear criteria.

14. Geographical Coherence and System Sustainability

The CDBE and the Trust will work together to support a coherent and sustainable diocesan system of Church schools.

In considering growth, the CDBE and the Trust will take account of:

- geographical context
- meaningful collaboration between schools
- MAT capacity
- local community identity
- sustainability of small and rural schools
- avoidance of over-concentration of schools facing challenge within any single trust
- opportunities for cross-diocesan partnership where appropriate
- the long-term flourishing of Church education across the diocese

Growth should be purposeful, sustainable and aligned with the needs of Church schools and their communities.

15. Information Sharing and Review

The Trust will share information with the CDBE, where appropriate and proportionate, to support effective partnership working and strategic planning.

This will include information relating to:

- governance arrangements
- school improvement priorities
- leadership changes
- financial or operational risks affecting Church schools
- admissions matters
- proposed growth or restricting

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- significant changes affecting Church schools
- SIAMS and Christian distinctiveness

The CDBE and the Trust will review this Memorandum regularly to ensure it remains current and effective.

16. Working Through Concerns

Where concerns arise about the Trust's engagement, governance, readiness, capacity or support for Church schools, the CDBE will seek to address these through constructive dialogue in the first instance.

Where concerns persist, the CDBE may take these into account when considering:

- whether to support further growth
- whether to support the admission of further Church schools
- whether to recommend the Trust as an appropriate MAT for schools seeking a MAT home
- any advice given to schools, governing boards, the Department for Education or other partners

The purpose of this approach is to support improvement, accountability and the long-term flourishing of Church schools.

17. Duration and Review

This Memorandum will take effect from

It will be reviewed:

- annually; or
- sooner if there are significant changes in national policy, diocesan strategy, Trust governance, MAT growth plans or statutory requirements.

Either party may request a review of the Memorandum were circumstances change.

18. Signatures

Signed on behalf of Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education:

Name:

Role:

Signature:

Date:

Signed on behalf of (name of MAT)

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Name:

Role:

Signature:

Date: