

Academy Strategy

April 2026



Inspiring schools to demonstrate the love of Christ as they educate for life in all its fullness

1. Core principles

- The Diocese of Coventry Board of Education (DBE) welcomes the government commitment in the February 2026 whitepaper "Every Child Achieving and Thriving" to all schools being members of a strong high performing multi-academy trust. The Government has not yet set a timescale for this but the DBE would like maintained school governing bodies to review their academy position by the end of 2027.
- The DBE is responsible for CofE schools within the diocese (as outlined in the [DfE Memorandum of Understanding](#) and the DBE Measure 2021) and will work with the Department for Education (DfE) to ensure all of its schools are effectively supported, both those within Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and those currently within other structures.
- CofE schools in MATs must remain rooted in their Christian foundation, and future structural changes should support the preservation and growth of their Christian mission.
- When considering changes to school structures the DBE will make decisions in the best interests of all the children in the Diocese and to ensure that each child in a CofE school receives a high quality Christian education.
- The DBE will only provide permission for its CofE schools to join a trust which operates under majority church articles where Coventry DBE, The Bishop of Coventry and one other person appointed by virtue of a Church Office are corporate members. This document refers to these as 'diocesan MATs'.
- The DBE will not support the further creation of standalone academies as it believes that the best structure for schools is to be within a collaborative multi-academy trust.
- The DBE will not support the creation of additional MATs as the 6 diocesan MATs have sufficient capacity to accommodate all remaining maintained schools.
- The DBE will not provide permission for Coventry Diocese schools to join a local authority or education partnership MAT.
- The DBE will not support the creation of further federations because MATs with a retained local level of governance for each school best supports the unique Christian Foundation of each school.
- Schools wishing to convert to academy status will be encouraged by the DBE to prioritise joining a geographically close diocesan MAT; this is in order that they are part of a local network.
- Governing bodies wishing to convert to academy status must firstly have a discussion with the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE). The DDE will identify the most appropriate MAT with capacity to support the school and invite them to present to governors. If the DBE accepts the governors have good reasons to disagree with the suggested MAT the DDE will use these objections to identify another MAT and the process will begin again.

2. Support for school improvement

- The DBE asserts the Christian and civic responsibility the diocesan MATs have to all children within the diocese. Diocesan MATs are encouraged to collaborate to support 'struggling' schools in the Church of England 'family' that are not part of a trust or a member of a different trust, ensuring joint efforts to address challenges effectively.
- If a Local Authority (LA) CofE school requires support the DDE will initiate discussions with school leaders, the DfE and the LA to identify appropriate support from within the diocesan family.
- If a maintained CofE school or CofE academy is eligible for targeted RISE intervention the DDE will work with governors, local authority, the Diocesan MATs, and officials from the DfE in finding the best improvement partner(s) for the school. The DBE preference is for the improvement to be led by an experienced Church school system leader.
- If an academy order is issued by the DfE, the DDE will use powers under the DBE Measure and the DfE MOU to ensure that the school is placed in an appropriate diocesan MAT.

3. Addressing geographical challenges

- Where a CofE academy within one of the diocesan MATs is geographically isolated, the DBE may recommend the academy is given the choice of transferring to a more local diocesan MAT.
- Unless there is a reciprocal transfer from the other diocesan MAT, or another maintained school wishing to join the MAT, the DBE accepts that transfers may not be possible immediately. However, the DBE may encourage the current MAT to seek support for the school through a partnership agreement to enable local collaboration..
- Consultation undertaken by the transferring MAT should demonstrate that leaders, governors and land trustees of the school to be transferred are supportive of the transfer, before it is formally proposed to the DBE. Once the DBE have provided their consent, the DDE and the MAT CEOs of both trusts will approach the DfE for consent to transfer together.

4. Opening future Free Schools

- Any trust interested in opening a Church of England Free School within the Diocese must first seek permission from the DBE.
- In cases where multiple diocesan trusts propose bids for the same school, the DBE will establish an internal process to support one bid.

5. Long-term vision for MATs within the diocese

- The DBE will actively promote the further expansion of diocesan MATs in order to help them deliver economies of scale and effectively support their pupils / students and staff.

- The DBE may use powers within MAT Articles and the DBE Measure to require Directors to consider mergers or transfers in the following specific circumstances:
 - Consistent negative SIAMS reports of church schools within the MAT.
 - Feedback from a significant number of school leaders to the DDE / DBE indicating better support might be available in another MAT.
 - The MAT no longer being financially viable.
 - Significant financial mismanagement leading to DfE intervention.
 - Consistent poor performance across a significant number of schools within the trust (Ofsted outcomes and academic indicators).
 - A serious incident which brings the name of the MAT, DBE, Diocese, or Church of England into disrepute.
 - A CEO resignation / retirement.

6. Process for Academy Conversion

Once an appropriate MAT has been identified, a school seeking to become an academy and join a diocesan MAT must obtain formal consent from:

- the Diocesan Board of Education;
- the Bishop;
- the Trustees of the school land.

The process for obtaining formal consent is outlined below.

1. The DBE will request minutes confirming the governing body has agreed to pursue the academisation process.
2. The DBE will ask the proposed MAT to work with the governing body to complete due diligence and create a timeline for conversion.
3. The DBE will have an informal discussion with the Local Authority and Regional DfE team to seek their agreement to the chosen destination MAT, timescale, and potential forms of additional funding.
4. The DBE will request approval from the DBE for conversion into the identified MAT.
5. The DBE will request approval from the Bishop and Land Trustees for the school to convert.
6. The DBE will issue a letter of consent to the Chair of Governors when all approvals have been received. Consent will be given subject to:
 - i. the chosen MAT using the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) or an alternative insurance policy which protects the interests of the Land Trustees to the satisfaction of the DBE,
 - ii. the MAT will enter into a Church of England Supplemental Agreement with the Secretary of State, the DBE and the Land Trustees to protect the Church of England Foundation of the school and the rights of the school to continue to occupy the land;
 - iii. the LA will execute a statutory transfer of any land within their ownership now occupied by a school building to the DBE;
 - iv. the supplementary funding agreement for the school will contain the mixed MAT governance clause;

- v. the MAT will maintain a local level of governance within its scheme of delegation, which meets the DBE minimum requirement, with sufficient foundation governors to reflect its historic VA (all except elected staff and parents) or VC (25%) status, nominated by the parish, using the agreed DBE process;
- vi. the academy will continue to take a full and active role within the family of Diocesan schools including subscription to the Diocesan Service Agreement.

7. Costs

In deciding to pursue conversion, the school/MAT partner agrees to meet all costs (legal and otherwise) relating to the conversion to an academy. Costs incurred by Land Trustees and the DBE in supporting conversion will be re-claimed from the school/MAT partner.