

Report to: DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Date: 28th September 2016

Subject: DIOCESAN ACADEMIES POLICY Briefing Paper

"This is GOD's Word on the subject: "I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for."
Jeremiah 29: 10-11, The Message

Bigger Church, Bigger Difference

The new (May 2016) Church of England Education Office Vision document, *Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good* matches the diocesan vision expressed in the four words above

Bigger Church – Deeply Christian
Bigger Difference – Serving the Common Good

The structural changes taking place in education are the most significant to effect church schools since the 1944 Education Act and will create a legacy for generations to come. The question facing the Board of Education and our schools is how to use these changes as an opportunity, not to see them as a threat. The changes present three major opportunities:

1. To strengthen the family of schools
2. To strengthen provision for school improvement from the Education team in the diocese
3. To expand our provision of schools

The recommendations in this paper would ensure that Liverpool is in line with national policy from the Church of England Education Office (to expand our provision, particularly in the secondary phase) and current practice in almost all dioceses (to provide for middle-tier, medium sized Diocesan Multi-Academy Trusts and by the expansion of the school improvement function in diocesan boards).

The recommendations for consultation have emerged from consultations conducted in the summer term of 2016 and in further conversations among the Education team and at the request of heads and Chairs of Governors. The Standards' committee met on 27th September and received the consultation recommendation enthusiastically.

Church Schools in the Diocese of Liverpool – flourishing in the future

In March 2016 the National Schools Commissioner (David Carter) set out his vision for the development of academy structures in three tiers:

- 1 National chains of 50 or more schools
- 2 Middle tier regional trusts of 10-20 schools
- 3 small local trusts 3-10 schools

If the current developments in the diocese continue, in the next ten years the diocese will have a large number of small local trusts (30-40), one or two of our trusts may grow to middle tier size. Each of these trusts will operate separately to the Diocesan Board of Education

Possible routes:

- **Continue as we are, MATs developing locally**
- **Develop a strategic plan for academisation but without full diocesan MATs**
- **Develop a strategic plan for academisation including development of full Diocesan MATs and school improvement functions within the Board staff**

We **recommend** that we consult on the formation (or use current trusts to form) three middle tier trusts which eventually will grow to 10-20 schools each. These trusts will be broadly geographical and consist in the first stage of a majority of good or outstanding schools. They would be operated by the Board of Education and would develop a school improvement function and team. The overriding criteria for academies within the diocesan MATs should be balancing the proportion of Good/Outstanding schools to RI/Special Measures significantly towards the former. Geographical/transport factors will be the second criteria for consideration

Summary Recommendation

That the Board's staff consult with all stakeholders between 1st October and 30th November on the following:

- **That the Board take a pro-active stance on academy formation, identifying a possible route for all schools**
- **That the Board form a number (probably no more than three) of middle sized multi-academy trusts that will be full Diocesan MATs (this may be done using one or more of the existing trusts)**
- **That the Board develop its school improvement and standards work to meet the needs of the current educational context**
- **That a presumption be made in favour of all MATs being church majority/VA style trusts to allow the possibility for inclusion of VA schools at any point in the trust's existence**
- **That the name of trusts reflect explicitly the Christian character of the trust and not just by including 'Church of England' in the title**
- **That the Board's staff actively seek opportunities for expansion, by the opening of free schools, in line with the aspirations of the national Church of England Education Office and where there is demand**

Timeframe

Free School bids may be submitted in March or September. It would be good to submit at least an initial phase of bids at the March date. Funding for free schools is guaranteed only for the March 2017 round of applications, there is a risk that funding will be diverted to Grammar School expansion after September 2017.

A full academisation road map to be ready for July 2017, full Diocesan trusts to be operational by September 2017

Timeframe for Consultation

27 September	Draft Policy to Standards Committee
29 September	Draft Policy to Board Executive Committee
4 October	Presentation of new phase consultation at Heads' & Chairs' conference
5 October	Consultation online
Oct – Nov	DDE meets with Local Authorities
8 October	Presentation to Diocesan Synod
31 st October	Board staff review submissions and seek 100% response

30 November
14 December

Consultation ends
Board of Education meets to consider the consultation and recommendations