

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Why is our school considering becoming an academy and joining the Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust (LDLT)?

North Stainley CofE VC Primary School is a Church of England school within the Diocese of Leeds. Our school already has a strong working relationship with the diocese working closely with the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), the DBE being one of two statutory bodies that the school works with, the other being the Local Authority. When Church Schools decide to convert to become an academy they have to join a Church Multi-Academy Trust and proceed in accordance with any policy and guidelines set by the DBE. Leeds DBE published its revised Academy Policy in September 2021. The policy encouraged all Church Schools not yet academies to consider their academy future and review which of the 11 Church MATs in the diocese would be right for them. The DBE policy reflects the Government's agenda and expectation (reinforced in Government and DfE communications in 2021 and we expect will be a main thrust in the soon to be published Education White Paper) that all schools will, in time, become part of a strong family of schools in a MAT.

The Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust was established by the DBE in 2022 in close partnership with the DfE, who provided project funding for its development. The Trust converted 7 church primary schools in the Autumn term of academic year 22/23 (with an 8th school pending) all in North Yorkshire, across the Ripon and Skipton areas and is now looking to bring in some more schools, with an expansion of the Skipton cluster and a new cluster in Leeds. North Stainley governors believe this is the right time to pursue academisation and to be part of the expansion of LDLT. We are encouraged by the vision for the MAT and the strong emphasis already placed on collaborative working. We feel the MAT vision, ethos and values will align well with our own school vision and values. If schools must, in time, convert and become academies we feel this is the right option and right time for us.

2) What is an academy?

Academies are state schools, funded directly from central government, no longer under the control of the Local Authority. Academy status gives schools more freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance.

The school will still be a Church of England School under the authority of the Diocese of Leeds and its religious designation will not change.

All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules as other schools on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), exclusions and admissions. Church Schools will continue to be inspected under the Statutory Inspection for Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework.

An academy is part of a charitable trust (the MAT) run by a board of trustees. Trusts and their academies are rightly expected to work with and support other schools, including vulnerable schools. Should you wish to know more about the Government's policy, the Department for Education has its own academies bookmark on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

School has a copy of the Leeds DBE Strategy if you wish to review that as well.

Church of England schools **must** convert into a Church MAT to preserve the objects of their trust.

3) What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi Academy Trust is a charitable company and is responsible for overseeing the running of a number of schools. It has three layers of governance: the Members; the Directors; and the Local Academy Councils (similar to school governing bodies).

A MAT is formed when its articles (legal document) are approved by the DfE and it is registered at Companies House as a company. The Church of England has specific articles approved by the central church and the DfE

for the creation of Church MATs. As already stated a Church School can only convert into a MAT that uses these articles. MATs are made up of a number of academy schools – some are just primary school MATs, others will have secondary schools in them and some will include Special Schools too. It is usual for MATs to have periods of growth, when a number of schools might join and then some period of consolidation. There isn't a set number of schools that makes a MAT. In the Church MATs in the diocese it is most usual for converting schools to keep their own name; if the school wants to change its name it can do. The partnership established between all schools in the MAT ensures that the schools can share skills and best practice and make optimum use of resources ensuring best value for money for each school.

We believe that there is greater scrutiny of academies now than for voluntary aided and controlled schools and Governors are confident that this will have a positive impact on standards and enable the school to continue to fully engage with its community.

Whilst we are aware of some difference in opinion as to the effectiveness of Multi Academy Trusts, and we would encourage you to consider the arguments for and against and submit any concerns or questions you might have as part of your feedback, governors have thought very carefully about this decision and are confident this is a positive future for our school.

4) What are the main differences between academies and maintained schools?

For Church Schools that convert, the religious nature of the school remains the same, but the model of governance and funding change. MATs have a direct funding agreement with the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) and receive funding directly from them for all schools in the MAT - these funds are then distributed to each school to manage. Maintained schools receive their funding via the Local Authority (LA) who receive it from government. Standards are monitored by the governance and leadership of the Trust instead of the LA. Standards are reported to the Regional Director (RD) on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). Academies have more freedoms and do not have to follow the national curriculum but they do have to take part in national assessments such as (SATs and GCSEs) and Ofsted will still monitor them. As already stated the effectiveness of the school as a Church School will still be monitored by the Diocese and inspected through the SIAMS process.

5) Will the uniform at the school change?

Some MATs do have a corporate approach but LDLT will not. It is important that each school continues to have its own unique identity in the Trust and LDLT recognises this includes uniform, logo, and signage.

6) Will the school day or holiday dates change?

Again some MATs do but in LDLT it is not intended that there will be any change to the length of the school day or the holidays as set already by the governing body of the school and the Headteacher.

7) Will the name of the school change?

There is no requirement for the school to have the word academy in its title, although it can if it wishes. Any change of name of a Church School requires Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) approval.

8) Will staff change or have to move to other schools?

No. Staff terms and conditions are protected by law. Nobody will be told to move to another school. Occasionally, there may be job opportunities in other schools and staff could apply for those, as they could if they weren't in a Trust. Staff terms and conditions are protected by a process called TUPE when they join the Trust.

9) What are the advantages for pupils of becoming part of Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust (LDLT)?

Schools joining LDLT will be given greater opportunities for collaboration and the sharing of good practice. The expectation is that this will have a positive impact over time on teaching and learning, and ensure all children in every schools will have access to a quality education. Each school will still be led and managed by a head teacher and the local governors. The Trust structure will provide greater opportunities for curricular and extra-curricular activities. Also, some jobs will be done by the central team of the Trust, leaving head teachers time to focus on teaching, learning and pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, physical and social development.

10) What are the advantages in general of becoming an academy in a MAT?

There are many advantages of being part of an academy trust, from working together to preserve and improve education in the area, to educational, financial and spiritual benefits. Essentially, a group of schools working together in a single body can do lots of things that are harder for stand-alone schools to do. Teachers work and learn together to improve the way they teach and schools can share practices that make a difference to the quality of teaching. Teachers and leaders can work together on the things that matter – like curriculum and assessment. In addition, schools can challenge and support each other to continually improve.

11) What will be the main benefits for schools within LDLT?

The opportunity to work with top quality staff, including a Trust leadership team who will be sharply focussed on securing excellence. A strong emphasis on collaboration and partnership across schools including moderation of standards to ensure the highest quality provision. A greater control over finances and the money due to schools. There will be educational benefits for students as a result of additional freedoms available to academies in terms of the curriculum we offer, and how we prioritise resources. The opportunity to work in close and formalised partnership with other schools and share expertise and services that will benefit all of our students and staff is a key incentive to join LDLT. The sharing of resources and expertise, will allow us to target funding towards improving front line teaching and learning and the opportunity to develop our own solutions collaboratively.

12) Why change if things are working well with everyone?

As already stated this is the direction of travel envisaged for all schools by the government. In making this decision governors are being proactive rather than waiting to be told. The Diocese are also being proactive by ensuring it has enough Church MATs for schools to convert into and the opportunity to join a young MAT and to help shape and form the culture and ethos is a strong incentive for our schools. Partnership working is strong in the Diocese and certainly has been amongst the first cohort of schools in the Trust. We know that being in a Trust will enable schools to grow even stronger as we learn from the strengths of other schools. We will create improvement projects together and further strengthen our family of schools.

13) Will schools lose their identity and will there be big changes?

No. Each school will become an academy in its own right and will be part of the Trust. The scheme of delegation established by the Trust in consultation with the schools protects the uniqueness of each school. The Local Academy Councils' (LAC) role will be to ensure that the ethos is strong and the unique identity of the school is maintained. There are no significant changes planned which will affect pupils on a day-to-day basis. Uniforms, school day, free school meals, school name and holidays will not change.

14) What will the direct impact be on families if our school joins a Trust?

The move will not have a negative impact on families. The school will still be led and managed by the head teacher and a LAC.

15) What are the legal responsibilities towards children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?

In a Church of England schools and academy, our responsibilities to all children extend beyond curriculum standards so that children flourish. Academies must follow the SEND Code of Practice and work closely with the LA, who retains the statutory responsibility for SEND in an authority just like other schools.

16) What about safeguarding?

The same expectations for schools about safeguarding would be in place in the Trust. Local Authorities also retain a statutory responsibility for safeguarding.

17) How does the school convert to an Academy?

The GB needs to take a resolution to convert and apply for an Academy Order – which it has already done. The DfE, through its senior regional officer (the Regional Director –RD) and her Advisory Board need to approve the school to convert and award the Academy Order (March 2023). The governors need to carry out a formal consultation process with parents and carers and with staff. If there are local site trustees then these need to be consulted too. Following consultation the governors then need to ratify their decision or decide now is not the time. The MAT and school engage in some due diligence of things like finances and the legal status of the land and buildings. The school progresses to conversion.

The cost of the process to become an academy is met by a grant of £25,000 per school from DfE. Subject to approval by the GB, the timeline for the school to convert is 1st September 2023. The current governing body will become the LAC under the Directors and Members of the Trust.

18) What is the role of parents?

All schools that convert to academies must ensure that parents are consulted. Parents are important in the work of the schools in the Diocese and schools looking to become part of a MAT must seek to work in partnership with the families who entrust their children to their care. LDLT will become the Admissions Authority although each school will have their own admission policy which they will follow. There will be no change in policy or pupil admission numbers. Our catchment area and our partner schools will remain unchanged too. Admissions will still be administered by the LA. The MAT board is responsible for arranging for any admissions appeals if there are families who wish to appeal for a place in a Trust school. Parents will also remain as a key category on LACs.

19) What is the leadership structure in the Trust?

There will be a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and a Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Each school will have its head teacher as it does now. These roles will not be diminished. The Trust and the LAC will be involved in the appointment of head teachers if and when vacancies arise. Each school is an equal partner in the Trust so that there is no school more important than another. Each school will retain and manage its own budget but will contribute through a retention of funds for key roles and projects within the Trust.

20) How will governance work?

There will be three layers of governance. Five Members have been appointed and they have appointed a Trust Board. Currently LDLT is made up of seven Directors – this will increase to around 12. As stated, each school will have its own head teacher and LAC. The powers and responsibilities of each of these groups is outlined in the Scheme of Delegation. The LAC will carry out many of the functions the GB presently do. For instance, the LAC will ensure that the standards in the school are as good as they can be and that the school is delivering the improvements needed. This will be supported and monitored by the CEO and the Board of Directors.

21) What services will the Trust provide?

The Trust has a core central team. The core team offers support for schools around standards, finance, school improvement and the operational running of schools. They will continue to work with the Leeds Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) to offer strong support in developing each Church school's distinctive Christian life and character. The Trust will be required to purchase services that are of the best value and the best quality. LAs retain their statutory responsibilities for areas such as safeguarding and SEND. The Trust can make savings by economies of scale. This money can then be used for the education of children.

22) Who owns the buildings and how are they maintained?

The ownership of sites used as Church of England schools is held by the Diocese (this can include the Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) or local trustees e.g. the Incumbent and Churchwardens or private trustees). This arrangement does not change when schools become academies. The ownership of the land is acknowledged in the Church Supplemental Agreement (CSA) which is signed by the Diocese and the Secretary of State for Education. The schools and in turn the Trust will continue to be responsible for the day to day management and maintenance of the buildings and sites and the Trust will have access to a standard capital allocation to enable significant works to be carried out when needed. In some cases, the playing fields used by the school will be owned by the LA. They will be expected to grant a 125-year lease of the playing fields to the Trust.

23) What happens with finances and resources?

The Trust Board will be responsible for presenting the consolidated accounts for the Trust as a whole. The Trust will provide opportunities for centralising contracts and service delivery that we hope will yield savings for school budgets. The LAC will be responsible for managing the delegated school budget, with oversight from the central team. The Trust is responsible for the central service fund and for strategic planning across the whole Trust. The LAC is responsible for staffing structures. As now, they will need to ensure that the structure is sustainable within the delegated budget. The central Trust team will support in this area if needed.

24) What will happen to the existing school reserves or deficits? Any transfer of assets?

All assets and existing reserves or deficits will be retained by the school on conversion, having been contractually transferred by the governing body to the Trust pursuant to the terms of a Commercial Transfer Agreement (CTA). The LA is obliged by statutory regulation to transfer any school surpluses to the academy within 4 months of conversion, though typically it happens more quickly than that.

25) What happens with teachers and support staff employment?

Teachers and support staff employed by the LA (VC schools)/GB (VA schools) at the point of the transfer will transfer to LDLT on their existing Terms and Conditions, There is no expectation that staff would work in different schools. However, future posts might be designed to do this.

26) Who are the Members and Directors of LDLT?

There are five Members who have established the MAT and appointed the Directors. These are: The Bishop of Leeds – Rt. Rev'd Nicholas Baines; a representative of the Diocesan Board of Finance – Rt. Rev'd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley the Bishop of Ripon and the Chair of the DBE; a nomination by the Diocesan Board of Finance - Jonathan Wood who is the CEO of the Diocese; an individual Member – Baroness Canon Margaret Eaton; an individual Member – Canon Matthew Ambler, a solicitor and a Member of the DBF, Chair of the House of Laity of the Leeds Diocesan Synod and member of the DBE.

Directors include: Peter Foskett (Chair) a retired solicitor; Mark Evans, former HMI and National Lead for RE; Angela Cox, OBE – former Director of Education for the Catholic Diocese of Leeds; Liane Atkin – solicitor, Chief Operations Officer for Durham and Newcastle Diocesan MAT and Assistant Director of Education for Durham



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and Newcastle DBE; Richard Graham – senior planning officer for Yorkshire Dales National Park; Geoff Park – accountant and CFO for the Diocese of Leeds; Khalid Shahjahan, a solicitor. Further Directors will be appointed.

27) Who is the CEO and CFO of LDLT

MATs must have a senior leader, a Chief Executive Officer or CEO, who acts as the accounting officer for the Trust. They also need a Chief Finance Officer or CFO. MATs will have a number of central team colleagues too, including a lead for education standards, often called a Director of Schools. LDLT CEO is Richard Noake, who is also the Director of Education for the Diocese of Leeds. LDLT CFO is Leanne Noone, who has been working on secondment with the Trust but recently appointed full time from September 2023. LDLT Director of Learning is Simone Bennett, also Deputy DDE for the Leeds DBE.



Glossary specific to Church Schools progressing conversion into LDLT

TERM	MEANING
Academy	An academy is an independent school that is directly funded by central government and free from direction or control by the Local Authority.
Academy Company	A registered company and charitable trust which runs a multi academy trust (MAT)
Academy Order	Formal document from the Secretary of State enabling progression towards academy conversion.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Key role and runs the MAT. The Accountable Officer to the Education and Skill Funding Agency (ESFA)
Chief Finance Officer (CFO)	Key role and leads on all finance matters and ensures the requirements of the DfE and ESFA are met.
Church of England School (CoE School)	A community school with a distinctive Christian character. These are not faith schools, they are established by the Church of England to serve their local community. They are inclusive and serve those of Christian faith, other faiths and of no faith.
Church Supplemental Agreement (CSA)	The document which formalises the legal relationship between the academy/MAT/trustees in relation to a Church school site
Commercial Transfer Agreement (CTA)	The formal document which transfers contracts and staff from a school to a MAT.
Companies House	Statutory body for all registered companies. A MAT is a registered company.
Company Members	The voting members in a company.
Company Directors	The Board of Directors administer the property or assets for the benefit of a third party(ies). The academy trust (MAT) is a registered company and charitable trust.
Conversion	The term used for the legal conversion of status from maintained (by the Local Authority) to an independent academy (within the MAT).
Conversion Grants	Grants received in relation to academy conversion. Set up grant £25,000 from which all set up costs are met. Additional £45,000 for schools 'required' to convert (subject to a Directive Academy Order (DAO)).



TERM	MEANING
Department for Education (DfE)	The DfE is a department of Her Majesty's Government responsible for matters affecting people in England up to the age of 19, including child protection and education.
Diocesan Authority	The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE).
Diocesan Board of Education (DBE)	A statutory Board, established under the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021. Responsible to the Diocesan Synod and the body responsible for Church Schools and academies in the Diocese.
Diocesan Director of Education (DDE)	This is a statutory role and appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, the DDE implements the DBE's policy for Church schools and academies in the Diocese.
Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF)	The DBF is an incorporated, charitable body which is the diocese's financial executive and employer of its staff.
Directive Academy Order (DAO)	Issued by the Secretary of State for Education directing a school to convert to academy status.
Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)	The ESFA is responsible for distributing funding for state education in England (for 3-19 year olds) and for managing school estates.
Education Services Grant (ESG)	Funding received to enable MATs to provide/purchase services.
Master Funding Agreement (MFA)	The document entered into between the MAT and the Secretary of State. Individual academies have a Supplemental Funding Agreement (SFA).
General Annual Grant (GAG)	The main revenue funding an academy receives.
Governor	A trustee/director of a MAT is a governor of the academies within the MAT. Trusts often delegate roles and responsibilities to a Local Governing Body (in Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust (LDLT) these are referred to as Local Academy Council (LAC).
Governing Body (GB)	A maintained school's legally accountable body. It is accountable for the individual school to the LA and the Diocese as Diocesan Authority. On conversion to academy status the GB dissolves.
Incumbent	The holder of a Church of England parochial charge or benefice. Often the Incumbent is an ex officio foundation governor on the governing body of a maintained, and a member of the LAC of an academy.
Land Trustees	The owners of the school site (often excluding the playing fields which are owned by the LA).



TERM	MEANING
Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust (LDLT)	A MAT set up by the Anglican Diocese of Leeds to provide a secure home for those choosing to convert to academy status and vulnerable schools who are the subject of a Directive Academy Order (DAO).
Local Authority (LA)	The LA is an administrative body of local government.
Local Academy Council (LAC)	In some trusts this is referred to as a local governing body. They have devolved responsibility (from the MAT) in relation to operational matters in the academy (set out in the Scheme of Delegation). The level of delegated responsibility depends on the context of the individual academy.
Maintained School	Maintained by the LA. This also refers to Church schools whether they are voluntary aided, voluntary controlled or foundation schools.
Members (see also under Company Members above)	The subscribers to the Memorandum & Articles of Association of the Company and whose names will appear on the Register of Companies at Companies House.
Multi Academy Trust (MAT)	A registered company and charitable trust, registered at both Companies House and the Charity Commission and set up to run academies.
Objects	Contained in the Memorandum & Articles of a Company and in a Trust Deed. This is the purpose of the Company/Trust.
Ofsted	A Government agency responsible for inspecting organisations providing education, training, and care services in England to do so to a high standard.
Parochial Church Council (PCC)	A PCC is the executive committee of a Church of England Parish and consists of clergy and churchwardens of the parish, together with representatives of the laity.
Project Manager(s)	Person(s) engaged to plan and manage the academy conversion.
Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs)	Act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education (SoS) and accountable to the National Schools Commissioner. Each RSC is supported by an advisory board (AB). On a recommendation from the AB the RSC will issue (on behalf of the SoS) an Academy Order (AO).
Religious Designation (i.e. Church of England)	Designated under an Education Order as having a distinctive Christian character.
Secretary of State (SoS)	Government Minister with the Education portfolio.
Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools (SIAMS)	Administered by the Church of England (CoE) for Church Schools to inspect the effectiveness of Church Schools.



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TERM	MEANING
Supplemental Funding Agreement (SFA)	Supplements the Funding Agreement entered into between the MAT and the Secretary of State. The SFA relates to individual academies within the Trust.
Trust Modification Order	Required if the Trust Deed objects do not extend to cover academies.
Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE)	A TUPE transfer happens when an organisation transfers from one employer to another. The transferring organisation's employees may be protected under the terms of TUPE.