

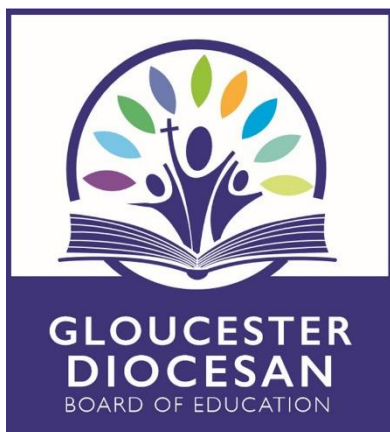
# Gloucester Diocesan Board of Education

## Process for MATs Wishing to be Considered for Conditional Consent to Work with Diocese of Gloucester Church Schools

---

---

With high aspiration for excellence, we are passionate for all within our family of schools to experience God's love in a culture of care, dignity and hope.



## Context and Rationale for this Process

This should be read in conjunction with the [Gloucester Diocesan Board of Education Schools' Strategy](#), which informs the design of the process. In particular, pages 4 and 5 of the Strategy outline the areas which the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Education (GDBE) considers when establishing relationships with MATs and the expectations that MATs working with our Church schools are required to adhere to.

This process has been designed to ensure that there is clarity for all parties when relationships between the Diocese and MATs that have not previously worked with their schools are explored. This is intended to:

- minimise the potential for excessive legal expenses to be incurred prematurely for any party
- ensure clarity for schools about the status of relationships between the Diocese and a MAT
- ensure that time is only invested in progressing towards an application for conditional consent if the MAT has been approved in principle to receive Diocese of Gloucester Church of England Schools and has the necessary articles in place to receive the school in question

This separation of approval in principle and adoption of legal articles from the process of application for conditional consent for an individual school to join the MAT will enable the focus of the consideration of a school's application for conditional consent to focus solely on:

- the capacity of the MAT at that time to offer a good home to that specific school, enabling its distinctively Christian flourishing now and in the long term future
- the shared understanding between school and MAT of the relationship that they are entering into and what they can expect from one another
- the due diligence that school and MAT have engaged in deciding to apply for conditional consent

The GDBE expects any MAT wishing to explore working with their Church schools to engage in Steps 1-3 below in order.

We appreciate that MATs may wish to speak with Diocese of Gloucester schools in order to assess the likely level of interest, before engaging in Steps 1-3. However, any such discussions must be clearly within a market exploration context. There must be no suggestion to schools that the MAT will be able to offer a 'good home' to Diocese of Gloucester schools prior to Step 4 below. Such an indication would be misleading, and not in the best interests of schools and their pupils. As such it would raise serious questions about the transparency and integrity of the relationship between Diocese and MAT.

It should be noted that completion of Step 3 is not an indication that the process of a school obtaining conditional consent to join the MAT will be automatic. Each application will be considered on its own merits in relation to the suitability and capacity of that MAT to offer a 'good home' to that particular school, ensure its Christian character and enable its flourishing.

There will be occasions, for a variety of reasons, where there is a substantial period of time between Step 3 occurring and a MAT taking its first Diocese of Gloucester school. There may also be times where between those points the MAT goes through substantial personnel changes. Where a period of two years or more occurs between Step 3 and a MAT taking its first Diocese of Gloucester school, or where the Diocese identifies significant personnel or other changes in the MAT that may affect its capacity to offer a 'good home' to its first Diocese of Gloucester school(s), the Diocese will request that Steps 1 and 2 are revisited, even where Step 3 has been completed, prior to considering a school application for conditional consent to join the MAT.

## **1. Initial Exploration**

- An initial conversation will occur to discuss whether this is a relationship that the MAT and Diocese wish to explore further. This may be initiated by either Diocese or MAT. It may or may not be prompted by a request from another stakeholder, such as the DfE Regions Group or a school, that an initial exploration occur.
- This initial exploration will take the form of an informal discussion between the DDE, or their representative, and the MAT CEO and/or Chair of Trustees. This discussion will explore the value alignment of the MAT and Diocese and the practicalities that may influence whether this is a relationship worth exploring.
- This discussion will be underpinned by the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Education Schools' Strategy and provide an opportunity to ensure shared understanding of its implications for any potential future working relationship.
- Further conversations with the DDE and/or Principal Advisors can be sought after this initial conversation as required to enable the MAT to determine whether they wish to proceed to the formal Academisation Committee stage below.

## **2. Formal Academisation Committee**

MATs seeking Church articles to enable the addition of a Diocese of Gloucester Church school must present their proposals to a formal Academisation Committee meeting convened by the GDBE.

- The MAT will notify the clerk to the GDBE of the desire to present a proposal to the Academisation Committee and be allocated a date and time to attend the meeting.
- The MAT must present a proposal of a maximum of three pages at least ten working days in advance of the Academisation Committee for consideration by the committee. This proposal should respond to the following questions:
  - What is your understanding of Christian Distinctiveness?
  - What is your capacity to support and enhance the flourishing of Diocese of Gloucester Church of England Schools?
  - How do you intend to work in partnership with the GDBE within its family of MATs and schools?
  - What is your understanding of the changes you will need to make to your articles to enable you to offer a good home to Diocese of Gloucester Church of England primary schools? How will doing so impact your governance and wider future practice?
- This proposal will be reviewed by the Principal Advisor for Governance or DDE who will brief the Academisation Committee panel.
- The MAT CEO and Chair of Trustees will be invited to attend the Academisation Committee on the specified date. The Academisation Committee will engage the MAT representatives in a structured questioning session, informed by their reading of the proposal and the briefing received from the GDBE Principal Advisor for Governance or DDE. This questioning session is likely to focus on:
  - Understanding of Christian distinctiveness
  - The MAT's vision for schools
  - Preparedness to adopt majority articles with the GDBE
  - Commitment to, and understanding of, the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Education Schools' Strategy, including willingness to engage with Diocese of Gloucester quality assurance processes for all MATs within the Diocesan family
  - Capacity for effective governance
- The Committee will make recommendations to the GDBE who will decide on whether agreement to proceed to the adoption of appropriate articles can be given.

### **3. Agreement to Proceed and Adoption of Appropriate Articles**

- On the receipt of agreement to proceed, if the MAT wishes to proceed to adopt appropriate articles, the MAT and Diocese will then engage in the necessary legal process.
- This step must be completed before the MAT engages in discussions with individual schools about the possibility of progressing to apply for conditional consent.
- Once both agreement to proceed and articles are fully in place, the Diocese will update the [Current MAT Options Document](#) on their website to reflect this.

### **4. School Engagement**

#### **4.1 Clear Communication**

The GDBE communicates the process to schools, emphasising that MATs must undergo formal approval before discussions commence. A formal and updated list will be made available on the website and upon request.

As detailed above, there is an expectation that MATs will offer unambiguous clarity to schools about the status of their relationship with the Diocese and that Step 3 above must be completed before the MAT engages in discussions with individual schools about the possibility of progressing to apply for conditional consent to join the MAT.

The MAT and school are equally responsible for keeping the Diocese updated as to the conversations that they are having about the possibility of a future relationship at the earliest opportunity.

#### **4.2 Conditional Consent Applications**

Please refer to the processes available on the [Diocesan website](#) for conditional consent applications. The MAT is required to be transparent with the school about the formal nature of this process and the responsibilities that exist within it.

### **5. Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation**

The GDBE takes seriously its legal responsibilities under the DBE Measure for the flourishing of all its schools, whether within a MAT or SAT, or VA or VC. As part of this, the GDBE requires all MATs within its family of MATs and schools to engage fully with the GDBE's processes of support and challenge, through ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Engaging in the steps above is taken as representing an ongoing commitment to engagement in this process.

Failure of a MAT within the family to engage in these processes, or unresolved issues raised through them, will cause the GDBE to suspend the formal approval of the MAT to take further schools until these issues are resolved. This will include removing the MAT from the list of current MAT options on their website.

Where this decision is made, the GDBE will notify the MAT of the decision in writing and call a meeting to discuss the steps that must be taken to regain formal approval to apply for conditional consent.

### **6. Red Flag Mechanism**

If schools suspect false promises or misunderstandings in their communications with a MAT, they can refer back to the established procedure for clarity. The Diocese will address such concerns promptly.