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ACADEMISATION STRATEGY

2026-2029

York Diocesan Board of Education

Foreword from Mari Palmer, Diocesan Director of Education

Welcome to our Academisation Strategy for the Diocese of York.

In line with our Diocesan vision for education, which seeks to build flourishing communities in its schools, parishes and homes where every child, young person and those who care for them has a transforming encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ, we are aiming to ensure our schools are supported to provide the best possible education for the pupils in our schools.



Therefore, the mission of the YDBE is to work in partnership with schools and academies, ensuring support to enable them to provide high-quality education, inspired by the Christian faith and values and underpinned by a theologically rooted Christian vision.

The YDBE has, over time, built deep, unique and long-lasting relationships with our Multi Academy Trust (MAT) partners, which it continually strives to develop.

The aim of the academisation strategy is to set out a clear strategy in relation to academisation and to make decisions in the best interest of Church Schools and Academies, in line with its statutory responsibilities.

Here we set out the YDBE's strategic aims in relation to academisation, ensuring that Church schools understand how they may become Academies and how they operate within a Multi Academy Trust while safeguarding their Christian character. The strategy also identifies key requirements regarding preferred trust structures, governance arrangements, and expectations for school improvement, ensuring that academisation strengthens educational standards and preserves the church's role, responsibilities, and Christian ethos in its schools and MATs. It highlights our desire for strong working partnerships with each of our YDBE MAT Partners.

Through this strategy and our supporting guidance documents, the YDBE sets out to enable schools, academies and YDBE MAT Partners to understand the expectations and requirements of the YDBE (and by extension, the Diocese of York Educational Trust (DYET) in its role as the Diocesan Corporate Member (DCM)).

We would welcome conversations with schools who would like to explore academisation further or from anyone who has any queries regarding this document.

Mari Palmer



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1. The YDBE and Academisation

The YDBE

The YDBE advocates and supports options for individual schools regarding the school structures available to them, including academisation. We remain neutral and respect the right of governing boards to make decisions about the future status of their schools. We wish to ensure however that Governing Boards are well equipped to have those discussions in a meaningful and constructive manner that serves schools both now and for future generations.

To ensure Church schools and academies are well informed and MATs are appropriately supported, the YDBE will:

- advise and support schools to ensure that they are working in collaborations focused on developing school improvement, particularly that which is focused on Christian vision, religious education, collective worship and a shared understanding of spirituality.
- encourage school leaders and governing bodies of maintained schools to reflect on their individual school's response to the government's desire for all schools to be academies within "high-quality school trusts".
- provide up to date, comprehensive guidance and policy for schools wishing to convert to academy status and support school leaders, governors and Trusts throughout the process. Our guidance will explain in detail the diocesan process and requirements for Church schools, academies and trusts in line with this Diocesan Academisation Strategy.
- use its expertise to provide support to governing boards considering academisation, from initial consideration, through to due diligence and formal conversion to ensure well informed and factual decisions are made and all stakeholders feel fully supported throughout.
- be a strategic partner with our YDBE Partner MATs in line with this strategy, to support their growth and prepare for the future. The YDBE will include them as strategic partners in the development of our Diocesan Academisation Strategy.
- support schools where the Secretary of State for Education (through the Regional Director) issues a Directive Academy Order in any circumstances. The YDBE will work closely with the RD and schools that have revived a Directive Academy Order to help them to identify a suitable MAT partner. (The YDBE expects that schools subject to such intervention will be placed in one of the YDBE Partner MATs and will work proactively with the YDBE Partner MATs and the DfE to ensure this outcome.)
- promote partnership working and collaboration in all forms in both maintained and MAT settings, (for example, engagement with Teaching School Hubs for CPD and further qualifications such as NPQs).
- promote strong governance and leadership within our YDBE MAT Partners by working collaboratively with key central team stakeholders, Directors and Members, including providing training and development opportunities where appropriate. The YDBE will also facilitate the connection of MAT CEOs and other MAT central team professionals to other MAT leaders of Church schools in the Diocese and nationally to help support them in their system leadership.

- require standard or enhanced membership of the Diocesan Service Level Agreement for all academies and will work collaboratively with YDBE MAT Partners for ways to make best use of School Development Adviser support by pooling visits and sharing themes for multiple schools within the MAT where appropriate.

Regional and National Relationships: Department for Education and National Society for Education

The National Society for Education (NSE) provides support and guidance to DBEs, helping them to fulfil their roles effectively. This includes liaising with key stakeholders at a national level e.g. agreeing template Articles of Association that enables individual Diocesan Strategies to be realised. (b) Partnership working with Regional Directors. To further each Diocesan Academisation Strategy, the NSE have agreed the following principles for DBEs and Regional Directors (RD) to work together:

- The DfE establishes an operational framework that facilitates effective relationships including consideration of:
 - Points of contact.
 - Agreed schedule of meetings.
 - Agreed standing agenda items.

The DfE ensures that substantive messages are shared by the Regions Group with the DBE in a timely manner:

- Ensure data updates are regularly shared.
- Effective triaging of queries as required by the Regions Group team. •

The DfE ensures consistency of approach across the Regions Group teams which ensures awareness of the national Memorandum of Understanding between the Church of England and the DfE (MoU) and the use of the Diocesan Strategy to develop effective ways of working:

- Regular operational meetings with the DBE to review policy development at a local level.
- Improved induction within the Regions Group team to embed an understanding of the Diocesan Strategy and national MoU.

The primary expectation is that Regions Group/RDs will consult the Diocesan Strategy as the main point of reference to understand the local relationship and expectations including protocols for engagement with Church schools. There will be an expectation of regular contact meetings with the RD and their team including regional colleagues where a DBE works across more than one RD team.

2. Legal Framework of YDBE involvement and key guidance that must be read as an additional part of this strategy

A Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) is the statutory body with responsibilities for the promotion of Christian education and for Church schools and academies. Within the relevant legislation, the religious authority for Church schools is the DBE for the diocese in which the school is located. The YDBE is the 'religious authority' for Church schools in the Diocese of York.¹

Every Church of England Diocese has by law a DBE, constituted in accordance with the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 (Measure).

In practical terms, the Measure confers functions and powers on DBEs, including (but not limited to): conferring

- power on the DBE to provide advice on matters affecting church schools;
- listing the situations in which the governing body/multi academy trust (MAT) board, and also the site trustees of a school site, must obtain the DBE's advice;
- outlining where the site trustees' or DBE's consent is required (for example capital works); requiring
- those to whom the DBE gives advice to have "due regard" to that advice. This means they would have to demonstrate good reasons for not following it;
- setting out the circumstances in which a Church school must obtain the prior written consent of the DBE (for example prior to seeking an Academy Order); and setting out when and how the DBE may give
- directions to church schools, MATs and site trustees and requires those receiving a direction to comply with it.

In this Diocese, the YDBE aims to carry out its responsibilities in a spirit of Christian service to those who work and learn in schools and academies and to all those who seek to support them. We firmly believe that the services we offer help schools and academies make a positive difference to the lives of the children and young people across the Diocese.

The Diocese of York Educational Trust

The YDBE has established the Diocese of York Educational Trust (DYET), a charitable company limited by guarantee, which helps to support the YDBE's work in relation to academies and trusts. DYET is the Diocesan Corporate Member of every MAT which includes a Church of England school in the Diocese and plays a distinct role within the governance structure of our YDBE MAT Partners. In a system of a notable number of partner MATs, DYET's Member role is seen as essential to embed a permanent and consistent Foundation presence within every MAT.



The Following guidance shall form part of the Strategy:

- **YDBE Academy Conversion Guidance.**
- **Trust Governance Guidance**
- **All YDBE Reporting Guidance for Church Academies and YDBE MAT Partners**
- **Scheme of Delegation Guidance**
- **YDBE Policy and Strategy for Academies – Financial Contributions**
- **Persons of Significant Control Guidance**
- **Related Party Transaction Guidance**
- **Headteacher Recruitment Guidance (Academy Schools)**
- **YDBE Merger Policy**

The YDBE may, from time to time, amend any guidance issued or issue further guidance as may be necessary. The YDBE will clearly communicate this with all YDBE Partners and Church Schools and will update the Strategy accordingly. Changes to the Strategy

The YDBE Reserves the right to update and amend the Strategy at any time as it may deem appropriate. In the event that any changes are required, the YDBE will endeavour to discuss proposed changes with YDBE MAT Partners and any other appropriate stakeholders.

3.YDBE expectations – Academy Conversion

Diocesan Academisation Process

Where schools seek to/are required to become academies, the policy of the YDBE has been and continues to be the promotion of mixed Church school and non-Church school MATs that serve local communities. The YDBE sees this as a furtherance of its mission and feels it aligns well with the Church of England's national Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good (2016) and Our Hope for Flourishing School Systems (2023).

The YDBE seeks to preserve and support its diocesan family of schools and has detailed the following options for Church schools wishing to convert from maintained to academy status.

The YDBE has produced detailed guidance on becoming an academy: DBE Academisation Guidance. This sets out further details of what is required, helpful timelines for schools undertaking this process. It also includes how the YDBE must be involved in the agreement of key documentation to protect the school's Church foundation. **The YDBE's consent is required to all Church school conversions and any transfer of any Church schools from another MAT.**

The YDBE must be notified and involved at the earliest stage in discussions relating to potential academisation, so that it might provide advice and guidance to the school and potential MAT partner, along with details of the Diocesan requirements and support around due diligence. All proposals for schools to join a MAT must be in line with the Diocesan Strategy.

Once notified, the YDBE will meet with Governors of a Church School to discuss the process including steps regarding due diligence. The YDBE will support Church Schools closely during the Due Diligence process to ensure Board's are fully equipped to make a well-informed decision.

Subject always to receipt of the YDBE's consent, a school may:

- **Convert and join one of the existing YDBE Partner MATs in the school's geographic locality. This should in all cases be the starting point for all; or**
- **where appropriate and after consultation with the YDBE to determine why a suitable YDBE MAT Partner in the school's locality is not suitable, a school may seek to convert with an existing YDBE Partner MAT in a different geographical area; or**
- **where appropriate and after consultation with the YDBE to determine why a suitable YDBE MAT Partner in the Diocese is not available,* to work with the YDBE and an existing or new MAT to reconstitute the MAT to become a new YDBE Partner MAT at the same time as the conversion of a Church school(s).**

*The YDBE recognises the need for academy solutions to be available in all localities. The YDBE anticipates that there is capacity in the existing YDBE Partner MATs to take Church schools in the diocese, however there is the possibility of increased capacity through reconstitution (or even the creation of a new MAT) if required.



When considering giving its consent to a proposed conversion, the YDBE will ensure that:

Subject always to conditions and a due diligence process:

- **A VC or foundation school may be given consent to join a Church majority or Church minority governance YDBE Partner MAT.**
- **A VA school may be given consent to join a YDBE Partner MAT with Church majority governance only*.**

*This reflects the previous maintained status of the school involved and helps to safeguard its future as a Church school in line with its Trust Deed.

YDBE Consent and Applying for an Academy Order

Once a suitable YDBE MAT Partner has been identified, the school and relevant MAT must obtain written consent from both the YDBE and the Site Trustees prior to requesting or acting upon an academy order.

Schools should notify the Assistant Director of Education (School Organisation and Governance) when they have expressed an interest to the DfE. They should then send their completed YDBE DBE application form to the Assistant Director of Education (School Organisation and Governance), along with the following supporting documentation:

- Copy of the governing body resolution agreeing to apply for an academy order; and
- Letter from the Chair of Governors expressing a request for the change of status and the reasons why; and
If the school is seeking to join an established MAT, the MAT's conditional consent to the school joining the
- MAT.

Schools should discuss with the Assistant Director of Education (School Organisation and Governance) /School Buildings Officer (as applicable) if they need support in obtaining any other consents (e.g. Site Trustee consents).

The YDBE will consider the application and will convene a joint panel from members of both the YDBE and The Diocese of York Educational Trust. If approved, the YDBE will issue a letter of conditional consent that will be required by the DfE as part of the academy order application process. Please note that consent remains conditional up until the date of conversion.

The process and basis upon which any panel will consider an application by a school and reach a decision is contained in the YDBE Academy Guidance document.

Schools and MATs should send their signed YDBE conditional consent letter accepting the relevant conditions to the Assistant Director of Education (School Organisation and Governance). The Chair of Governors and the Chair of any established MAT the school is seeking to join will be required to sign and return the letter prior to the YDBE undertaking further work in connection with conversion.



Sponsored Academies

We will work closely with the RD and schools that have received a Directive Academy Order to help them to identify a suitable MAT partner. In light of the recent legislative changes, it is anticipated that this will be a rarity. Where such an Order is made, the YDBE expects that schools subject to such intervention will be placed in one of the YDBE Partner MATs and will work proactively with the YDBE Partner MATs and the DfE to ensure this outcome. Once a preferred sponsoring MAT has been confirmed, the YDBE will issue a letter similar to the conditional consent letter outlined above outlining some of the key requirements to ensure that the requirements of this Strategy are met.

Charging

DBEs do not receive public funding in order to facilitate academy conversions. As such, the YDBE has set a Charging Policy which identifies charges which must be paid by Trusts as required.

Final YDBE consent

Until all matters have been dealt with to the satisfaction of the YDBE, any consent given by the YDBE will be conditional only. Final consent is given once all relevant document is signed and released by our solicitors.



4. Key requirements for YDBE MAT Partners

The YDBE requires all YDBE MAT Partners to be strong, sustainable and provide capacity for the long term. To that end, the YDBE advocates the growth of existing YDBE Partner MATs to further this aim.

In a diocesan context, hallmarks of a strong and sustainable MAT would include:

- Being considered a strong MAT in line with the DfE's Trust Quality Descriptors: Annex A - Trust Quality Descriptions (publishing.service.gov.uk).
- Commitment to the Church of England Vision for Education.
- Willingness (subject to due diligence processes) to take all schools regardless of Ofsted category, size, location, Church school designation or not.
- School Improvement capacity - including those aspects particularly relevant to a Church school – to support transformation and the flourishing of all.
- Governance and Leadership capacity at all levels, including the provision of strong local governance.
- Sustainability in Finance and Operations.
- Care for the wellbeing of the whole school community.
- Being inclusive and serving the disadvantaged with expectations for setting a supportive culture in every Church school/MAT.
- Serving the diocesan family of schools by working collaboratively to support the wider system and a commitment to small and rural schools.
- Making full use of the service level agreement with the YDBE for each of its Church academies in the Diocese of York.
- Proactive engagement in the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection process across the MAT.
- Membership of the Risk Protection Arrangement Scheme for schools.

The YDBE and DYET have agreed that any new YDBE MAT Partners will be required to adopt majority church articles and should contain at least 3 church academies.

The YDBE shall use this criteria to consider any application by a MAT to become a YDBE MAT Partner. Any potential partner should ensure that they can fully demonstrate how this criteria is met. Any application process will include a paper based presentation together with a formal presentation to a panel of the YDBE and/or DYET.

Appendix 1 -YDBE MAT Partners

Trust	Key Information
Collaborative Learning Trust	94-96 Pegholme, Wharfebank Mills Ilkley Road, Otley, LS21 3JP CEO: Janet Sherrif Board Chair: Ian Bond
Dales Academies Trust	C/O Oakbridge Church Of England Primary School, Alvertune Road, Northallerton, DL6 2GD CEO: Damian Chubb Board Chair: Judy Hooton
Ebor Academy Trust	Ebor Business And Training Centre The Leyes, Osbaldwick, York, YO10 3PR CEO: Gail Brown Board Chair: Debbie Clinton
Elevate Multi Academy Trust	Alanbrooke Academy Alanbrooke Barracks, Topcliffe, Thirsk, YO7 3SF CEO: Nigel Ashley Board Chair: John Brear
Galileo Multi Academy Trust	The Innovation Centre, Vienna Court, Kirkleatham Business Park, Redcar, TS10 5SH CEO: Jane Spence Board Chair: Graeme McGregor
Heartwood Learning Trust	C/O Vale Of York Academy Rawcliffe Drive, Clifton, York, YO30 6ZS CEO: Helen Winn Board Chair: Jane Lewis
Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust	Archbishop Holgate's School, Hull Road, York, YO10 5ZA CEO: Andrew Daly Board Chair: John Hattam

Selby Educational Trust	Selby Community Primary School, Flaxley Road, Selby, YO8 4DL CEO: Ian Clennan Board Chair: Dave Kellet
The Education Alliance	South Hunsley School & Sixth Form College East Dale Road, Melton, North Ferriby, HU14 3HS CEO: Scott Ratheram Board Chair: Karen Dow
Yorkshire Learning Trust	Tadcaster Grammar School, Toulston, Tadcaster, LS24 9NB CEO: Ian Yapp Board Chair: Nick Sheppard



Appendix 2-

The York Diocesan Board of Education has agreed its policy and strategy for academies and Multi Academy Trusts with regards to the following:

- The YDBE's longstanding policy and strategy in relation to academisation, and experience of its operation;
- The Education and Adoption Act (2016);
- Academies Act 2010
- The Education Act 1996
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026
- White paper: *"Every Child Achieving and Thriving"*
- The YDBE's statutory responsibilities as set out in the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021;
- the Memorandum of Understanding between the Church of England and the DfE;
- Guidance from the National Society for Education (including SIAMS)
- Broader Academy Trust operational guidance as published by the Department for Education.



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