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## Introduction

This document presents the Truro Diocesan Board of Education’s (TDBE) Academisation strategy and vision and in doing so, revisits the TDBE’s original strategy document of 2014 entitled ‘A coat of many colours’.

*“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children,  
because he was the son of his old age:  
and he made him a coat of many colours.”*  
Genesis 37:3 KJV

Jacob (or Israel) gave Joseph this coat as a gift intended to show his love for him. We know that the coat, which was a symbol of Joseph’s distinctiveness, set him apart from his brothers and leads to times of joy, adventure and challenge. We look to this story as inspiration and reminders of the beautiful coat that is our schools. Each set apart in their own Christian distinctiveness and each living out, as Joseph did, God’s plan for his people.



A core purpose of this document is to outline the ongoing TDBE strategy across the school system with a particular focus on academisation in order to provide context and specific guidance on aspects of this work which the diocese will be involved in. This document seeks to provide guidance to both schools and trusts in the context of initial academy conversion, re-brokerage, merger<sup>1</sup> or transfer<sup>2</sup> all of which is relevant in the local system as it stands.

The coat of many colours (2014) referred then to the challenges and opportunities ahead as we approached a new landscape of schools and the families they would join. Then, and now, we rejoice in the gift of the coat of many colours that are the 43 church schools of the Diocese of Truro. Since this original strategy, over 90% of church schools sit within multi-academy trusts (MATs) and 85% of schools within the Duchy as a whole are now academised and form part of this new and evolving landscape of schools.

Our coat of schools remains a coat of many colours and is set apart from others in their Christian foundation: a precious gift, like Joseph's coat, from previous generations. Over time the coat has changed and will continue to do so. It's a different cut with tailors working collaboratively each adding to the pattern, colour and style.

The diocese has successfully worked with multi-academy trust partners, the Local Authority and the regional DfE team to enhance the school system landscape and respond to the needs of schools within it. This has created a rich trust landscape in which the diocese plays a pivotal role.

The landscape of schools in 2024, and the way in which we work in this space, sees us live out the Truro Diocesan Board of Education's core aim:

**TO BE A SIGNIFICANT PARTNER IN IMPROVING OUTCOMES  
FOR ALL CHILDREN IN CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY.**

In this, it holds fast to the Church of England Vision for Education which describes:

- educating for wisdom, knowledge and skills,
- educating for hope and aspiration,
- educating for community and living well together,
- educating for dignity and respect.

Our partnerships with schools, MATs, the Local Authority, national Church of England Education Office and others have been and will continue to be central in how we enable our schools and all those in them to flourish.

## The Vision for Church Schools in the Diocese of Truro

The vision of TDBE, reflecting this strategy build on those first presented in 2014 and reflect the DfE Trust Development Statement<sup>3</sup> for the south west in that all church schools will, by 2030, sit within strong multi-academy trusts.

This strategy document details the frameworks, statute, guidance and working procedures that inform this vision and support the Diocesan Board of Education in seeing this to fruition.

## Governance Oversight of the Truro Diocesan Board of Education in MATs

Truro Diocesan Board of Education is a committee of the Board of Finance and the academy work of Truro DBE is carried out by its academies arm, Askel Veur (AV). AV is an incorporated academy trust (part of the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, it is important to make clear our use of the word merger in this context. The TDBE see a merger as the bringing together of two or more trusts. This creates a new trust. In a merger, one or more trusts will 'close' with one remaining as the receiving trust. Within the process of consultation with the DBE through Askel Veur, this will be made clear.

<sup>2</sup> The TDBE see a transfer as one or more trusts or schools moving into an existing organisation. This is where those moving into, take on the values, vision and approach of the receiving trust.

<sup>3</sup> [South West trust development statements \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

DBE) to fulfil the purpose of representation at corporate member level in the academy trusts we partner with.

The TDBE is a committee of the DBF established under the DBE Measure (see next section). The TDBE recruits members, fulfilling skills and need and through these members, it is able to serve its objects and works closely with the BDC with a common purpose. The DBE reports to BDC and the Diocesan Synod through the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE).

Askel Veur is a partner to the Academy Trusts that operate our academies through its role as corporate member of each trust in which church schools sit. The corporate member (of Askel Veur) is a statutory partner and fulfils much of the statutory requirements in the DBE Measure for the provision of a church school and in protecting its Christian distinctiveness. The members of each academy trust we partner with appoint trustees and ensure the Objects of the trust are fulfilled. Within each trust, trustees report to the members (and Askel Veur as a member) who then reports to the DBE. Askel Veur, reporting to the TDBE, supports the TDBE in its role when maintaining governance oversight of academies during this area of work.

The arrangements for reporting and governance of trusts are outlined in regulations made under the SSFA 1998<sup>4</sup>, the Academies Act 2010<sup>5</sup> and in the Articles of Association of each individual trust. Through the appointment of Corporate Members within trusts we ensure that the Diocese of Truro is represented and a significant voice in each trust we partner with.

## Brief Overview of the Powers and Functions of the DBE under the 2021 Measure

### The religious authority

The religious authority for Church of England schools is the DBE for the Diocese in which the school is located<sup>6</sup>. The work of the DBE is governed by the Diocesan Board of Education Measure 2021. The Measure provides the legal framework within which the DBEs engage and work with Church schools. The Measure confers functions and powers on DBEs, for example it:

- I. confers power on the DBE to provide advice on matters affecting church schools;
- II. lists the situations in which the governing body/board, and also the site trustees of a school site must obtain the DBE's advice;
- III. outlines where the site trustees or DBE's consent is required (for example capital works);
- IV. requires 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;
- V. sets 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);
- VI. sets out when and how the DBE may give directions to church schools and trustees and requires those receiving a direction to comply with it; an example is to direct a church school to permit an inspection of the religious education or collective worship in that school, should the DBE have concerns as to its quality or content.

### The role of the Site Trustees and the Trust Deed

Church of England school sites (including academies) are generally held on educational endowments, known collectively in education law as the 'Trust Deed'<sup>6</sup>, which establishes the charitable objects and the purposes for which the site can be used. The governing documents of the school will reflect those parameters within which the Church school is to be conducted which must be compatible with the Trust Deed. The school occupies the site at the will of the site trustees, for the furtherance of the object of the Trust Deed. Control of the site is always retained by the site trustees of the educational endowment, and

<sup>4</sup> SSFA - [School Standards and Framework Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> [Academies Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> see s579 Education Act 1996

that is reflected in the way in which schools occupy the site on a bare licence (the school has implied permission to occupy the site but does not have any legal or equitable interest in the site).

## Evolution of the TDBE and Askel Veur

In previous years, as the diocese partnered with others in the evolving landscape of schools, Askel Veur's role was significant in the processes of conversions, academisation and re-brokerage. As the remaining few Diocese of Truro church schools academise and/or join MATs, the more separate nature of Askel Veur's role will be less needed. It is therefore proposed, as part of this wider strategy, that AV continues to exist operationally as part of the TDBE but that it operates in a more ad hoc way. It will, through its corporate members, continue to report to the DBE directly rather than to AV and then to TDBE as a separate step.

## Trust Partnership Standards - informing joining trusts

In order to consider conversion or re-brokerage which involves a Church of England School, the TDBE, by hand of Askel Veur, considers a range of factors<sup>7</sup>:-

- The process starts with the needs of the school (its pupils, families and colleagues) its wider community, and the alignment of their vision and values to any proposed partner.
- Any proposed trust partner must demonstrate their clear and tangible commitment to the Church of England Vision for Education.
- Trusts must demonstrate their capacity, strength and plans reflecting the DfE's Trust Quality Descriptors<sup>8</sup>
- It must be evident that there are clear systems, structures and capacity regarding school improvement. This must ensure that the needs of the school(s) joining are provided for and that there are opportunities for said school(s) to enhance the trust and offer support to others as appropriate.
- Trusts must be able to demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusivity and wellbeing.
- There is an expectation that our multi Academy trust partners will work with us to the benefit of the wider school system. This may take the form of contributing to training and development opportunities, providing support for other schools who may need it in the form of leadership or other capacity, engaging in diocesan activities and linking to national opportunities to support children and families.

## Governance - *trust- and school-level, Articles and Schemes of Delegation*

As regards governance and leadership, requirements for governance are clearly laid out both in articles and in the schemes of delegation for each of our multi Academy trust partners. There is an expectation that trusts will work closely with our Education Governance Lead (EGL) and DDE to develop these and ensure that standards of governance are maintained. Central to this is that governance is effective in protecting and projecting the Christian distinctiveness of our Church of England schools in whichever multi Academy trust arrangement they find themselves.

Should a school wish to join a trust, or a trust look to have school(s) join their trust, the balance of foundation governance represented within that trust would form a significant part of any initial discussions and would be a key part of the decision making process undertaken by Askel Veur.

Currently within our diocese, we operate a range of models with our trust partners and this sees both VC and VA schools sit in either majority or minority article trusts. This is an approach we will continue to adopt supported through the processes undertaken by Askel Veur, on behalf of the DBE, when ensuring that a Church School joins a trust that will promote, nurture and protect the Christian distinctive nature of the school(s).

A key piece of work to this end is the expectation that trusts holding church schools engage in the Programme for Church School Flourishing (see page 6). This programme, in partnership with the other five

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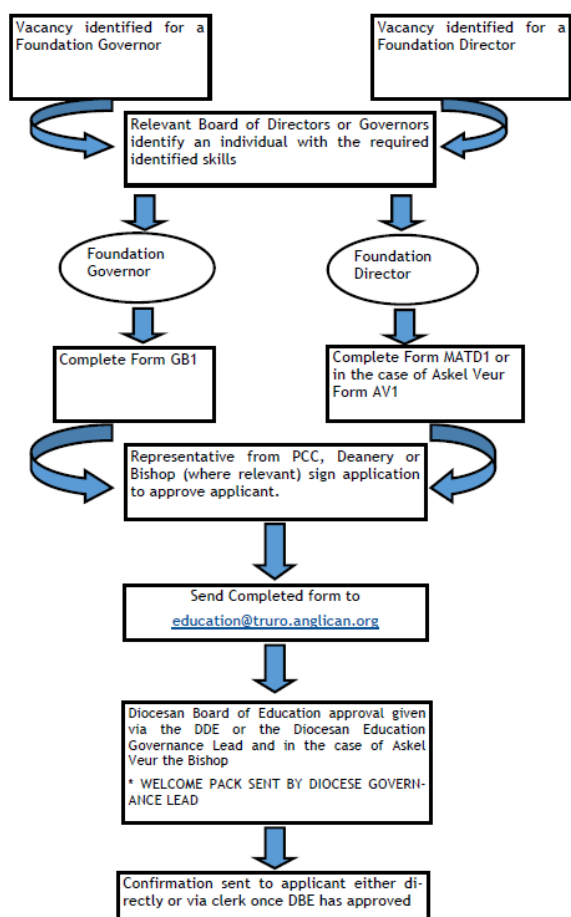
<sup>7</sup> See Proposal to Convert Form, Askel Veur

<sup>8</sup> [Annex A - Trust Quality Descriptions July 2023 .pdf](#)

dioceses in the south west, focuses on ensuring that MATs are enabled, encouraged and enriched as partners of the DBE.

It is vital that all MATs understand their role in promoting the Christian values of our Church of England schools, enabling them to fully flourish and thrive aligning to their Christian foundation. In working with multi Academy trusts, TDBE has agreed to two versions of governance: minority and majority articles which are adopted without variation. Within each there's representation from the diocese at local, trust board and member level. This ensures that the Christian foundation of our schools is valued and enhanced. Support and training for all layers of governance are provided by the diocese, via the EGL.

#### Appointment process for Foundation Directors and Foundation Governors



Member level representation comes through Askel Veur with significant importance placed on this role to ensure that standards of governance at all layers are effective. Askel Veur reports member updates at every meeting and considers any specific issues to be raised by members in future meetings. This enables effective representation to be considered corporately by AV.

In addition to representation of Askel Veur as corporate member in trusts where there are church schools, members of the Education Team (the DDE or EGL) are in some instances members of other multi-academy trusts. This is encouraged and shows how the work of the TDBE is valued and respected in this area.

There is a requirement for a clear scheme of delegation which outlines the foundation elements of governance for each of our church schools and how these are to be enabled with our multi Academy trust partners which allows for a range of local governance models. For any committee with delegated authority, there must be clear terms of reference to explain how the multi Academy trust will ensure and enable the flourishing of the Christian distinctiveness of our Church of England schools. Engagement and reporting on this is facilitated by the DDE and EGL.

All appointments with a foundation designation must be agreed by TDBE via Askel Veur and the EGL. The process for this is shown on the left (taken from the Diocese of

Truro Appointment Process document which details the skills and attributes that should be considered as well as clear guidance on what the TDBE will and will not support within this process.

Within the appointment process, support is available from the EGL who is expected to be informed of resignations, recruitment processes and appointments. As part of this, the EGL can provide support in ensuring that conflicts of interest are noted and/or addressed.

## Communication and Reporting - Partnership Working

### Multi-Academy Trusts

There is an expectation of regular communication from multi-academy trust partners, as well as reporting of key information. This includes, but is not limited to:

- outcomes data
- admissions arrangements (for which we can also provide support and guidance)
- any changes to schemes of delegation
- buildings related areas such as changes to buildings, change of use, new projects, refurbishments



- changes in governance structures and/or individual persons fillings positions
- attendance information including strategy to support strong attendance
- CEO reports to trustees
- annual reports and challenge partner / school improvement partner reports.

CEOs meet with the DDE three times a year and the DDE attends trust meetings once a year to talk to trust boards about DBE strategy and any ongoing issues including system updates. The education governance lead meets with trust governance professionals to ensure a flow of information around governance there is an ongoing concern around small schools and the mitigation of risk around numbers on roll. This forms an agenda item for DDE:CEO meetings and enables the DDE to report and share intelligence from across the diocese at a regional and national level. The DDE also identifies opportunity for further out working with partners such as special schools to ensure fulfilment of our commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our diocese.

Through Corporate Members (of Askel Veur) attending members' meetings and receiving reports from trusts, members are able to fulfil their roles as outlined in the Academy Trust Handbook Part 1<sup>9</sup>. Following members attending meetings a report (which can be found in the Diocese of Truro Governance Handbook) is submitted to Askel Veur.

Through strong partnership working, the TDBE will work closely with trusts and schools in all areas of their work which can include instances whereby permission of the DBE and/or Site Trustees is required under the DBE measure. Through communication between the DDE and CEOs, reassurance that Trusts are fulfilling the Measure are provided and as part of a cycle of communication and reporting, the DBE Measure will be revisited each year during CEO Huddles (online group meetings of CEOs with the DDE) and the first face-to-face meeting of each year.

Schools are encouraged to be involved in church appointments at a local level and support is provided to ensure strength of connection between school and parish for this reason.

### Regional Directors (RDs), National C of E Team and other partners

The DDE meets regularly (approximately monthly) with members of the RD team. This link is a core part of the system working of the DBE and how, through relational and partnership, church schools are part of the continued conversations around areas of strength and need in the trust and academy landscape.

Similarly, close partnership working with the national Church of England Team and Education Office, SIAMS team, Local Authority, OfSTED and other significant partners who support, inspect and inform the work of schools is a key role of the DBE, through the DDE, and is central to the vision of the DBE - to be a significant partner in improving outcomes.

### Programme for Church School Flourishing (PCSF)

A core strategic commitment of the TDBE is that of ensuring **Powerful Partnerships**. This area of work is seen lived out through our involvement in the south west's approach to embedding the PCSF in trusts within which there are church schools.

This programme sees us train, network, collaborate and develop four key leadership roles in each trust:

- Leader for School Flourishing
- Leader Church School Governance
- Champion for Church School Recruitment
- Leader for RE and Collective Worship

These four roles will partner directly with members of the TDBE Education Team and support trusts in fulfilling core areas of their duty to enable our schools to flourish.

It is expected that MATs with church schools in them engage in this programme.

<sup>9</sup> [Academy Trust Handbook - Part 1: Roles and responsibilities - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/ATHB-Part-1-Roles-and-responsibilities-Guidance-2020.pdf)

## Our commitment to strong MATS

In order to see us live out our vision of ensuring that all church schools are within strong families of schools, the DBE uses various strategies to gain assurances of the strength of a MAT. Through partnership working with those MATs we partner with and through the process of joining / merging / re-brokerage of MATs along with continued communication and sharing of information as noted in 'communication' (page 5).

The DBE, through the work of the DBE, wider members of the Education Team, corporate members and communication with partners seeks assurances in the following (non-exhaustive list reflecting the Trust quality descriptors<sup>10</sup>):

- *Commitment to the Church of England Vision for Education<sup>11</sup>*
- *School Improvement capacity - transformation and ambition*
- *Inclusivity*
- *Governance and Leadership*
- *Sustainability - Finance and Operations*
- *Partnership working with diocese and other significant partners*
- *Wellbeing of the whole school community and culture*
- *Serving the disadvantaged - expectations for setting a supportive culture in every church MAT*
- *Serving the diocesan family of schools - working collaboratively to support the wider system and sharing best practices*

A significant part of securing the on-going strength of MATs and church schools is the involvement of the DBE in the planning and appointment of trust senior leaders and the heads and senior leaders within church schools.

## Schools or Trusts requiring support

Where schools require additional intervention and support, next steps will be determined in partnership with MATs, the RD team and (where appropriate) the local authority. This can include for reasons including:

- following a second RI OfSTED category judgement
- following an inadequate OfSTED judgement
- concerns arise surrounding a school or trust's capacity to deliver improvement
- vision and/or practices of the trust may be failing to maintain a school or trusts Christian character
- reluctance to engage in the strategy and/or work of the DBE
- agreements in the Memorandum of Understanding / expectations in the articles are not being met
- where a significant event affects the leadership capacity of the school or trust in which it sits
- where the RD team or DBE identify support is needed

The support that is then put in place, again in consultation with partners, can include accessing the DfE Trust and School Improvement (TSI) offer<sup>12</sup>, the intervention of members of the DBE Education Team or consultants or intervention from the Local Authority.

Full details of the TDBE support strategy can be found from page 21 of the Diocese of Truro Governance Handbook.

## Small Schools

The TDBE are committed to supporting the work of small schools. For the purpose of this document, we identify small schools as those being of 60 pupils or less.

<sup>10</sup> [Trust Quality Descriptions July 2023 .pdf](#)

<sup>11</sup> [C of E Vision for Education \(churchofengland.org\)](http://CofE.org)

<sup>12</sup> [Trust and school improvement offer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

When, in the instance of a small school seeking to join a MAT, proven track records of supporting such schools will form a key area of the due diligence process.

## Contacting Us

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