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**CDLT Stakeholder Frequently Asked Questions**

CDLT (Chester Diocesan Learning Trust) is a proposed new Multi Academy Trust backed by Chester Diocese and Chester Diocese Board of Education. The following schools are set to form the trust at its inception in October 2025 (Subject to DfE approval):

Capenhurst CofE Primary School, (Cheshire)

Lostock Gralam CofE Primary School (Cheshire)

Hoylake Holy Trinity CofE Primary School, (Wirral)

Hoole Church of England Primary School, (Cheshire)

St Andrew's CofE Aided Primary School, (Wirral)

West Kirby St Bridget's CofE Primary School (Wirral)

Davenham CofE Primary School (Cheshire)

When forming a new MAT schools and the Governing Body have to consult with Staff and Parents and the community and the information gathered is shared with the DfE as part of the process.

This document is a frequently asked questions document covering questions asked across all of the schools involved in the process.

**Finance**

| How will the MAT allocate funding across its schools, and what measures are in place to ensure fair distribution of resources? | The schools will continue to receive the same funding that they currently do, but this will now come directly from the DfE, rather than via the LA. Currently the LA topslice this budget to provide some central services. Each school would receive the full allocation from the DfE and the MAT will take a similar management fee to provide the MAT Central services.  |
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| If one school in the MAT struggles financially or academically, how might this affect the funding or focus on other schools, including ours? | The purpose of a Trust is to be stronger together. School experiences can go through different highs and lows throughout a number of seasons and what we hope is that as a trust schools will be supported so that they are resilient  |
| Allocation of funding from PTA. Will our school fundraising go into a pot to share with all schools or will we be able to retain our own PTA funds? | This will not change and schools will still have their own fundraising with no pooling of resources.  |
| From a financial point of view, can the head still make decisions or is there a cut-off? | The Scheme of Delegation sets out the decision delegated to the Head and limits financially imposed. Similarly, governors will need to approve some financial decisions within different levels of decision making within the Trust. |
| Will joining a MAT overcome lower LA funding? | No, funding will be the same. We currently pay the LA for services such as HR and IT support. We would still have to pay for these, but the costs would be met from the management fee each school pays into the trust.We can however share resources which could provide saving. For example, we can share CPD, so can save budget, and reinvest back to the children. Sport and moderation are other examples.  |
| What about finances? How is it fair? Would we ever have to bail another school out financially?  | All schools will pay a percentage management fee to the MAT.Services and salaries come from that central pot.We would not have to ‘bail’ another school out because of the strict financial regulations. We may choose to support one another within the trust but not ‘rescue’ schools financially.Maintenance due diligence will take place. |
| Are there any budgetary implications of joining the MAT (Multi Academy Trust)? Noting there is usually an amount taken from the school’s budget to go towards the costs of the MAT. | The amount taken by the MAT will be on a par with the money that is topsliced by the LA under the current arrangements. |
| Is the budgeting all done centrally and how is this different to the current situation? | As now the Headteacher and SBM will be supported in the development of the school’s individual budget based on the school priorities. The academy handbook stipulates that we cannot set a deficit budget. As the Trust Board is ultimately accountable to the Secretary of State they have to have the final sign off for the budget following local governors involvement. |
| Can you talk us through the flow of financing? | Schools will receive an annual allocation known as General Annual Grant (GAG), this is a direct replacement for the current School Budget Share received by LA schools. The LA currently de-delegate some funding to support the LA central services. The MAT will take 5% of GAG funding to fund the central services provided to schools, which will replace numerous SLAs. The GAG is paid on a monthly basis. Other government grants are received at the same time as LA schools. GAG funds will be sent to each school’s bank account monthly and schools will manage expenditure accordingly, with support from the MAT with consideration to annual budgets. |
| Can you talk through the control and limitations for any risks and the process itself? | The MAT will retain a Risk Register which will be continually analysed and added to as appropriate. The Trust Board will be made up of experts in the fields of Education, Finance, HR and much more.  |
| If the trust is to be registered as a charity, what leverage or opportunities are there in terms of generating greater levels of funding? Whether through grants, commercial partnerships, etc. | An academy, like a VA school, is an exempt charity and so not directly registered with the Charities commission. Grants are available to maintained schools now and the Trust will take advantage of such opportunities. |
| Academy trusts do not have to follow the national conditions of pay, pensions etc for teachers and support staff will this impact staff negatively. | CDLT will not deviate from the Teachers Pay and Conditions Document and will continue to pay teachers and support staff within the same National framework. |
| Is each school expected to fund their own improvements, for example in requiring new kitchen equipment or the construction of a new classroom, rather than having to 'bid' or request for the funds from a central trust pot? | If a Trust has under 3000 pupils then Capital work is bid for from the Conditions Improvement Fund (CIF). Once a Trust reaches 3000 pupils then it will receive its own pot of money for capital works. At the start CDLT will be under 3000 pupils so will bid for CIF.  |
| How will the management fee be calculated? Will schools have the opportunity to influence the decision on what the fee will be? Is the fee expected to be fixed annually or will there be room for it to be increased in-year depending on funding pressures within the trust? | This has already been discussed with heads and governors and is looking to be 5% which is lower than the national average of 6.5%. Financial modelling has been undertaken to ensure this covers the services required. The management fee will be reviewed as in any Trust to ensure it is appropriate for the Trust each year. |

**Ethos/Vision:**

| What steps will the MAT take to ensure our school retains its unique identity and strong ties to the local community? | One of the reasons for developing the MAT is so that we can ensure that our schools unique identity and strong ties to the community and local church are retained. By working together with like minded schools we can enhance the uniqueness and links to the community.  |
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| How will the MAT involve parents and the local community in shaping the future direction of the school? | As now, parents will have a voice through the Local Governing Body. There may be other opportunities that may be developed as the Trust grows. |
| Will our status as voluntary controlled or voluntary aided be affected. | VA schools will become an academy within the MAT and will not retain the VA title but the school's attributes, such as admissions, religious education (RE), and collective worship, are managed and upheld and secured through a document called the Supplemental Funding Agreement.Similarly, VC schools won’t retain the title Voluntary Controlled titl;e but the Supplemental Funding Agreement for your individual school and the Articles are designed to reflect the current status of the school so it would in essence remain a VC school. There would be no change to the criteria for admission to the school (the Trust becomes the admission authority and so will need a separate policy for each school but these will reflect what happened before eg VC school criteria set out under the LA) |
| What if other schools within the academy trust make a decision about e.g. uniform, policies-does the majority decision win ? | Any decisions such as uniform will remain the decision of the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school.  |
| Could there be over-ruling by other schools or the academy itself when decisions are being made? | No, Schools will not have power over other schools.  |
| Will there be one school that takes the lead in the academy trust? | No, each school will have the same importance and value within the trust. |
| We are a same sex couple and we love the ethos and welcoming nature of our school. Will working more closely with the Diocese affect this? | There will be no change to the inclusive and welcoming ethos of the school. We already work very closely with the Diocese who really value the ethos of our school and this will be fully supported when we create this trust. |

**Structures and processes:**

| Who will oversee the MAT, and how will they ensure decisions are made in the best interests of each individual school? | A thorough and robust CEO appointment will be made when the time is right. The CEO pay will be benchmarked against National figures.The CEO will be accountable to the Trust Board and Members and will be subject to a rigorous Performance Appraisal process. The Diocesan DDE and Deputy DDE will be involved in the recruitment process to ensure that whoever is appointed will reflect the vision and values shared by the founding and future schools. |
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| What specific support or benefits will the MAT provide to our school, particularly in terms of staff development and resources? | There is a list of services that will be offered by or procured centrally by the trust, including HR, payroll, Legal, finance, health and safety, etc the heads who are looking to form the trust are working together on what additional services/resources they want to have as part of the trust, this includes school improvement and CPD. |
| How will the MAT be held accountable, and what opportunities will parents have to provide feedback or voice concerns about decisions? | The Schools are accountable to the Headteacher as now, and the Headteacher is accountable to the CEO and the MAT Board. Parents will have their voice on the Board of Governors as now and any feedback or concerns will be shared with the Full Trust Board.  |
| Will this change affect admissions into the school? | The LA will continue to run admissions. Any changes to the admissions criteria would have to undergo a formal consultation.  |
| What happens next in terms of the process? | Due diligence is finalised.Staff have their own consultation and TUPE period.The legal team work in the background to finalise the formal paperwork for the DfE. |
| When will the school officially join the Trust? | It is planned that the Trust will officially be formed on October 1st 2025.  |

**Staffing:**

|  If the governors are no longer the employers, how does this impact recruitment? Practically, will they still be involved in the recruitment process? | Schools will be fully involved with recruitment to their staff.The Trust will be involved in recruitment to senior roles within schools such as the appointment of a new Headteacher, as will the DBE. |
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| Finance support is provided in this new MAT, will there need to make any changes to the school admin team? | We don’t foresee any changes in administrationstructure and don’t envisage any changes to running the operation of the school.There will be a change in the software we use and admin staff will be trained on how to use this. |
| Staff are TUPE over but what about new staff? Will it employ non-qualified teachers? | CDLT will not be employing unqualified teachers to teacher roles. This will be a freedom that is removed from academies anyway when the Children’s wellbeing and schools bill goes through parliament. |
| If the world changes what happens, if a new Head enters for example?  | A new headteacher could be appointed at any time if the current headteacher were to leave.The governing body would consider what they would want in a new headteacher in the same way as they would do now. |
| Will any TA roles be cut as has happened in other Academies? | There are no plans to cut any job roles as a result of converting to become an academy.  |
| Will we lose some of our great staff to other schools in the trust? | No, but staff will have the opportunity to work and engage in CPD across the trust schools. Staff may eventually move to roles within the trust if they become available as staff might naturally move to other schools now. |
| Will the Headteacher still be 100% focused on this school? (some Heads in MATs have more than one school to manage). | There are no plans to change any of the school structures.  |
| To what extent would the LGB be involved in the appointment of a new headteacher? | The LGB would work in partnership with the Trustees, CEO, and DBE to appoint a new Headteacher when the situation arises.  |
| Will the first CEO, bearing in mind that will only be seven schools, be a full-time position?  | It is likely that the first substantive CEO will be full time as the central team will be lean at the start. The CEO role can encompass school improvement and business development and so it is not a job that could easily be managed on a part-time basis. |

**Teaching and learning/curriculum/SEND:**

| How much decision-making power will our school retain regarding curriculum, staffing, and budget allocation under the MAT? | The Head and the Governors would retain many of the powers that they retain today. There is no plan for a CDLT curriculum although the opportunities for collaboration may see schools adopting new initiatives, however no-one would be forced to take on anything new whilst they continue to perform well. The Headteacher will deliver a staffing plan to the budget set and this will be up to them to decide. The budget will be no different to the budget the school currently receives and the Governors alongside the head will plan and deliver this budget. The Trust will appoint a Chief Finance Officer who will oversee the budgets and spending across all of the schools. |
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| How will collaboration between schools within the MAT be structured to ensure shared learning and best practices? | This is currently being explored by the schools forming the trust as to what would work best.  |
| How will Educational Healthcare Plans operate? | These remain the responsibility of the LA and funding would still come from the LA. We hope the new MAT will be in a position to provide access to speech and language/EP service etc to support our EHCP process in the future. Of all the services which we allocate funds, SEND is a key area with economies of scale, hopefully the school can procure these services more cost effectively as part of a MAT.  |
| How would it the support change for the SEND children/would it change? | Nothing would change in terms of the expected process however, our hope is that working together and sharing good practice will improve outcomes for every child. |
| If you are stepping away from the LA, will we diverge from National Curriculum? | No, the current government has mandated that all schools must follow the National Curriculum when the new bill comes into force.We will learn from good practice across the MAT – for example we may look at one school who has a strength in the geography curriculum. We may then adapt our Geography curriculum because of that collaborative work but we would still follow the National Curriculum.  |
| Will things like homework and approaches toteaching and learning change? | No - we will still make the decision which fits with our school development plan and priorities. We will retain our autonomy as a school whilst also being in the position to learn from and share with others but still make our own decisions. |
| Is the curriculum in religion the same across all CDAT schools? | The schools are a mix of voluntary aided schools who follow Questful RE and voluntary controlled schools who follow their locally agreed syllabus. This will continue in the MAT as set out in the Supplemental Funding Agreement. |
| Will the trust itself be subject to Ofsted inspections as well as the individual schools? | At the moment no. But this may change over time.  |

**Children:**

| What are the benefits to the children? What will they gain rather than the office/finances? | As well as a workforce that is constantly learning from one another to ensure effective teaching and learning, as part of a bigger group we hope the children will feel part of a larger family. Enrichment can be supported as the Trust can create wider opportunities for our children. |
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| Can we use other school’s facilities / space? | Yes, we have explored commonality and challenges, so can support one another. |
| What changes will the children see?  | We do not expect the children to feel any change day to day but we hope that they will continue to have teachers that are constantly developing their practice and so impacting their learning experience. More opportunities to work with children from other schools on projects will also help to further their experiences. |

**The Trust and its future:**

| Beyond the initial seven schools joining, have any other schools been a part of the CDLT process and withdrawn? | We have two additional schools who are consulting and wishing to join. We have a further school who is reviewing its finances and staffing before it takes this any further but is still keen to be part of the Trust. One school came to the very first expression of interest meeting but didn’t engage with any further development. |
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| Why has CDAT been ruled out as an option? | The decision was made to create a new MAT so that schools in the area had a choice of MAT to join rather than all schools having to join CDAT. CDAT is already well developed and this has given us an opportunity to shape the MAT but it is also more geographically based which we felt was more appropriate for our needs. |
| The letter mentions a board of skilled and experienced directors, are you able to give more information on these people and what their experiences are? | **Andrew Warren** - recently retired Regional Director for the West Midlands (the body that makes decisions on academy conversions and school improvement for the region) also ex CEO of a church academy trust.**David Hermitt** - Member of the DBE, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, ex CEO of a MAT and a current Ofsted inspector.**Gail Webb** - ex LA adviser and headteacher, currently sitting on an RC MAT board and some DBE governing boards.**Adrian Lee -**  recently retired secretary for the University of Chester and solicitor.**Emerald Thomas** - Accountant who specialises in academies and charities.**Dayan Atenyam** - CFO of a MAT based in Manchester and experience of charitable companies.**Chris Penn -** Diocesan Director of Education, Member of CDAT Board. |
| The letter says that this is a consultation period, but finishes by saying,“ Any decision as to whether to become part of Chester Diocesan Learning Trust **has been****taken** by the full Governing Body based on what is best for our children, our families, our staff and our wider community.”Does this mean that the decision has already been made? | The Governors of each school have taken the decision to pursue the formation of a new MAT and we are currently in the consultation period. This consultation document will be used by Governors and Directors to make an informed decision whether to move forward with the conversion process and onto a formal staff consultation after Easter.  |
| In terms of accountability, what changes? | The trust now has a board of trustees.A CEO and CFO will be appointed in due course.As heads there will be a higher level of accountability in many ways. |
| Is it a total severance from LA? | No some services will still link to the LA – statutory assessments for example. We will still work with local partners and LA initiatives. |
| Is the decision to join an academy time dependent because partners schools to work with are dwindling? | Yes, we are increasingly losing a network of schools to work with as many local schools have joined a range of academy trusts. |
| Where will the central office be? | CDAT was originally in Church House. We do not know at this time where CDLT will be based.  |
| Who sets the strategies and priorities within the trust? | The Trust Board and CEO using information gathered from the schools within the MAT. |
| Have the trustees already been set? | There is currently an interim Trust Board. MATs cannot form a full board until the Trust is created. The Interim board is made up of experts in the fields of Education, HR, Finance and much more.  |
| What was the process of appointing trustees? | An advert was sent out across the Diocese with a list of desirable skills for the shadow Board. Applications were received and scrutinised by the Members who made the appointments. These applications then went to the DfE advisory board for them to agree to the formation of the Trust. It is anticipated that the shadow board will become the substantive board once the Trust is incorporated. There are a couple of gaps on the Board and applications are still welcome - especially with regards to experience in HR. IT and buildings and maintenance  |
| Who decides if schools are eligible to join the trust? | The Members, trustees and management team, scrutinised further by the DfE. |
| Why is it so important that we start/join a new trust rather than an established trust? | We will have the opportunity to help create, shape and mould the vision for the trust. |
| Have the other six schools signed up or are they at the same stage as us? | All schools are at the same stage |
| Do trustees have limited terms of office? | Yes 4 years like governors |
| Will the new Local Governing Body have any statutory powers whatsoever? | The Governing Board will have delegated responsibilities from the Board of Trustees.  |
| Will schools still have the right to appoint 3 Foundation Governors and for the clergy to be a Governor?Will this right be enshrined in the trust documentation? | Yes, the model church Articles stipulate that local governance reflects the prior category of the school (so at least 25% local governors approved by the Diocesan Corporate member for VC and the majority for VA) the DBE has governor recruitment procedure for local governor recruitment in academies which reflects its procedure for foundation governor appointments. |
| If after consultation, parents and/or staff say ‘no’, what will happen? | Governors will collect/receive all the feedback from all consultations and hold an extra-ordinary meeting. There will be only one agenda item – academisation – and they will then vote to see if they wish to convert or otherwise. |
| Can a school ‘unconvert’ from academy status or move to another MAT once it has converted? | At the moment there is no process for reverting to a maintained school but this may be possible under the new government Changing MATs is possible but It is a complicated process involving the LA, Diocese and DfE. It would also have to be a church MAT.  |