



Chester Diocesan Learning Trust

Parent Consultation

St Bridget's Primary School

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 the formal response to the process following a 4 week consultation period.

| Over what period did your consultation take place? | 4 weeks:  Monday 20th January to Monday 24th February 2025 |
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| How did you disseminate your consultation materials? | * On the school website * Emails to Parents * Letters to Parents * Letters to wider community * Social Media |
| List the respondents and stakeholders you proactively engaged with in your consultation process: | * Parents * Community Groups * Local Councillors * Wider Community |
| What information was made available to consultees? | * Presentation in person to all stakeholders week commencing * Presentation shared with parents * Access to Trust Website * FAQ Document |

| Why has conversion to academy come onto the table at this particular time? | Conversations about the possible move to a MAT have been taking place for some time as this has been the direction of travel for lots of schools. As this is a brand new Trust being shaped by its headteachers this seemed to be the best option. |
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| What are perceived to be the day to day benefits for teaching, bearing in mind the standard of education in the school has recently been judged as Outstanding by Ofsted? | staff will still be gaining lots from experience and expertise in the other schools. There is always something to learn and staff will have the opportunity to collaborate closely with teachers that share their subject or key stage giving additional support and strength to the teaching team. |
| 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. |
| Will the Headteacher still be 100% focused on the school? (some Heads in MATs have more than one school to manage). | There are no plans to change any of the school structures. |
| Will the governing body remain the same and will there be any changes in the governing body’s authorities? (There will be a MAT board so could this mean some local autonomy is lost). | Each school will retain a Local Governing Body and many of their responsibilities will remain the same with an even stronger focus on safeguarding and standards within individual schools. Sitting above the LGB will be a Board of Directors made up of experts from various fields such as Education, Finance and HR. The Headteacher and the Governing Board are accountable to the Trust Board. There will be a two way flow of information and reporting between the Governing Board and the Trust Board. Currently the governing board has its powers delegated to it by the LA who have the power to step in if they feel the school is failing academically or financially. The delegated powers will come from the Trust Board through the scheme of delegation which delegates lots of powers to the LGB. |
| What is an academy? | An academy school is a state-funded school in England that is independent of local authorities. Academies are run by academy trusts and receive funding directly from the Department for Education (DfE). |
| Will slides and information from the meeting be shared? | Yes |
| 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. |
| What if the headteacher changes? | 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 the local governing board have the same powers as they do now? | Some of the powers of the governing board and their support for decision making at a local, school level will remain. Some of their role will change as the academy will be overseen by a board of trustees. |
| 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. |
| What are the differences between CDLT and CDAT? | CDLT has been established for a number of years and has wider geographical reach than CDLT. CDAT was established initially to provide a network of support for schools that needed development and support. CDLT will be formed of good/outstanding founding schools who have chosen to work together as they believe this is in the best interest of their school communities. |
| Why didn’t we join CDAT? | We wanted a more geographically local offer should we join an academy and want to be part of the shaping of a new trust. As a school our results have been excellent over time and so we are not a school that has needed additional support. |
| What can we learn from CDAT? | The importance of working within a geographic locality; the systems and structures that work well in setting up and maintaining a trust of schools.  CDAT has good knowledge of working across multiple schools. |
| This is a 125 year relationship; will there be anything in the articles about limits and boundaries? | The land that the school buildings and hard areas is owned by Site Trustees who are tasked with ensuring that the land is used only for a church school. This remains with the Trustees through a Church Supplemental Agreement. This document will stipulate the boundaries. |
| Is this conversation closely related to OFSTED and the OFSTED outcome? | No, this decision has no link to OFSTED or OFSTED outcomes. |
| 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. |
| 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. |
| Is there a management team? | There will be a CEO appointed by the Trust Board and in time a Management Team such as Chief Finance Officer to ensure the stable running of the MAT. |
| 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 management team have a say in which schools join in the future? | Yes |
| Will there be any redistribution of schools across the Chester Diocese trusts? | No |
| Who sets the strategies and priorities within the trust? | The Trust Board and CEO using information gathered from the schools within the MAT. |
| Are the trustees voted onto the board? | Yes, the Trust Members appoint Trustees. |
| What happens to our governors? | We will continue to have a local governing board. |
| You are really positive about this but what are the negatives we and you should be looking out for? | We would see the negatives as not joining and being left without collaborative partners. |
| In the next nine months what would put you off doing this? |  |
| Can you give us an idiot’s guide to trustees, CEO and the academy structure? | **In a Nutshell:**   * **Trustees:** Set the direction and make sure everything's running legally and financially sound. * **CEO:** Makes the day to day decisions, and implements the trustees strategic plans. * **Academy Structure:** The framework within which the trustees and CEO operate, allowing for greater school autonomy. |
| Who are the trustees? | 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 |
| Are any trustees local? | See Above |
| 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. |
| 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. |
| Ultimately, will the trust get bigger? | Yes |
| Who decides if schools are eligible to join the trust? | The Members, trustees and management team scrutinised further by the DfE. |
| Who makes the final decision as to whether St. Bridget’s joins the trust? | The Governing Body |
| Is there a risk that our operating budget will be reduced due to the management fee? | No |
| Is the management fee within scope for us? | Yes |
| Can the management fee be changed? | This will be reviewed annually |
| 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. |
| Why the 1st October? | This is easier for administrative purposes due to the summer break. |
| 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. |
| Is the funding per pupil centrally the same? | Yes |
| 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. |
| Will there be reports and publications made available to us? | Local Governing minutes will be published as standard, as well as the minutes from each board meeting. The Trust has to produce a financial report and statement of accounts each year which is published on Companies House. |
| What impact will our children see? | The children should notice very little changes. However, the impact of working collaboratively with high performing schools, sharing CPD and excellence will positively impact on the quality of education for each child. |
| Is there any possibility of other schools joining the founding seven at this stage? | No but there are schools who have expressed interest in joining at a later stage. |
| When would there be a phase 2? Would this be quite soon after phase 1? | This would possibly be from about 6 months onwards. |
| Would the curriculum change? | No, our curriculum offer is outstanding and works well for our children and therefore there is no need to make changes at the present. |
| Would there be pressure to change the curriculum? | No |
| Is the curriculum in religion the same across all CDAT schools? | The schools are a mix of voluntary aided schools who follow the Chester Diocese curriculum and voluntary controlled schools who follow their locally agreed curriculum. As a voluntary controlled school we follow our locally agreed curriculum. |
| Have the other six schools signed up or are they at the same stage as us? | All schools are at the same stage |
| Do parents, teachers and governors have any say over the trustees? Would they have any say in the future? | The Trustees are appointed by the Members - they are appointed for their skills and ability to manage an organisation that is made up of multiple sites. |
| What is 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 |
| Do trustees have limited terms of office? | Yes 4 years like governors |
| How can the wider the community be knowledgeable about the roles and recruitment process of trustees and management within the trust? | The information given above can be widely shared. |
| Why has conversion to academy come onto the table at this particular time? | This question was answered earlier on. |
| What are perceived to be the day to day benefits for teaching, bearing in mind the standard of education in the school has recently been judged as Outstanding by Ofsted? | This question was answered earlier on |
| 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. | Currently the LA topslice our budget to pay for central services. The payment to the MAT will replace this payment to the LA. This question was answered earlier on |
| Will the Headteacher still be 100% focused on the school? (some Heads in MATs have more than one school to manage). | Yes, at the current time there are no plans for an Executive Headteaher structure. This question was answered earlier on |
| Will the new Local Governing Body have any **statutory** powers whatsoever? | The Governing Board will have delegated responsibilities from the Board of Trustees. |
| Will St Bridget’s Church still have the right to appoint 3 Foundation Governors and for the Rector 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) the DBE has governor recruitment procedure for local governor recruitment in academies which reflects its procedure for foundation governor appointments. |
| To what extent would the LGB be involved in the appointment of a new headteacher (obviously in 25 years’ time or so!!)? | The LGB would work in partnership with the Trustees and CEO, and DBE to appoint a new Headteacher when the situation arises. |
| Would the LGB have a veto or could a new headteacher be imposed on the school against their will? | Any new Headteacher will be appointed by collaboration between the Governing Board, the CEO, the DBE and Trustees. |
| Currently as I understand it there is a definite requirement that any Headteacher should be a practising Christian. Will this requirement be maintained, and how? If it is maintained would the trustees be able to override it? | As a voluntary controlled school this cannot be a requirement of the headteacher, governors can only require the head to be supportive of this ethos. This will be the same in the academy as the Supplemental Funding Agreement will keep a number of factors of the school being VC the same. |
| 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. |
| On what basis will the trust allocate capital expenditure over the next five years? | At the start schools/the Trust will need to apply for School Improvement Funding directly from the DfE. If the trust grows to over 3000 pupils then it will receive its own allocation and will need to have a capital strategy in place. |
| Could we have a list including name, position, and experience, of all the current trustees? | **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 |
| 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. |
| Will there be any form of ‘get out clause’ at any stage in case the trust is run incredibly badly? | There is no ‘get out’ clause. MATs are subject to far more internal and external scrutiny than maintained schools and therefore the chances of the Trust being run badly are minimised. |
| Since St Bridget's recently received Outstanding across the board in  its Ofsted inspection, it is evident that the school is currently  managed and run in an exceptional manner. With that in mind, what  benefit is there for the school, it staff, and its pupils of joining or  forming a MAT? | The reason that St Bridget’s is outstanding for teaching and learning is because it is outward facing and always ready to learn from others as well as offer support. This cross collaboration of schools means that professionals come together and gain further experience and ideas from one another. St Bridget’s is constantly moving forward and this is an opportunity to do this with like minded schools. The opportunity for the leadership of St Bridget’s to be involved in the shaping of a brand new Trust is welcomed. |
| I have witnessed how MATs can become an additional layer of "middle  management" that interfere with the autonomy and independence of  schools. For example, they may choose to dictate the way that subjects  are taught, which would previously have been the role of the SLT and  head of subject area teaching staff. This has a disempowering and  demoralising effect on everybody in the school from the Head and SLT  right through to the teaching staff and support staff. Have the school  and governors considered the impact of this? What reassurances can you  provide about how the MAT will operate to ensure the school staff still  feel empowered to control the direction of their own school and teaching? | There is a wide variety of ways in which MATs can be run. CDLT is being formed by the schools that wish to be the founding members which means they are creating the vision and values by which the trust will manage its business. This vision is reflective of the other Diocesan Trust CDAT which supports its schools to develop their own curriculum unique to their individual context. Similarly CDLT will be made up of a group of schools that are in very differing contexts and so one type of curriculum or teaching style would not be appropriate or beneficial for any of the schools. The scheme of delegation clearly delegates these matters down to school level. |
| If the MAT is underperforming or the school are unhappy with the MATs  direction or input, what options do the school and school governors have  to remove the school from the MAT? | MATs are tightly scrutinised by the DfE and any underperformance is challenged with some schools being rebrokered to another Trust. This is not a simple process but it can be done, however it would need to be another CofE MAT. |
| Will staff keep their jobs? | Yes |
| Will there be a new school uniform? | No |
| Will the school's ethos or curriculum change? | No |
| Will staff have the opportunity to work with others across the Trust? | Yes. Schools are already working together with staff being given the opportunity to work with peers across all of the schools. |
| Will this change affect admissions into the school? | The LA will continue to run admissions. Any changes to the admissions process will 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. |