



Chester Diocesan Academies Trust



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Introduction

Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) was established by the Diocese of Chester in March 2013. The Diocese, proud of its historic involvement in its church schools and determined to support them effectively in the future, decided to establish a Trust that was available for Church schools if they became academies.

Academies are publicly funded schools which operate outside of local authority control. The government describes them as independent state-funded schools. They are funded directly by central government instead of receiving their funds via a local authority. They receive the same funding per pupil as other schools but receive additional money, which would previously have been held back by the local authority to provide extra services across all schools. Essentially, academy trusts have more freedom over their finances and the services they buy, the school year, teachers' pay and conditions, admissions and the curriculum. Children still have to sit national tests and academies are inspected by Ofsted.

CDAT has created an offer that ensures Diocesan schools can join a Trust, whilst:

- Retaining the distinct character of their school, which is underpinned by the Church of England faith;
- Concentrating on the core purpose of delivering a first-class education for children with the 'business' side of academy operation being handled by a team of experienced professionals.

The purpose of the Trust is to create a mutually supportive family of Church academies, holding within it both schools that choose to become converter academies and those seeking a sponsored solution. By their nature, Church of England schools operate in the spirit of partnership and cooperation with their neighbours, and as such look to the Diocese as central to their relationship with fellow Church of England Schools. In a changing educational landscape, CDAT aims to provide reassurance through the continued involvement of the Diocese.

Canon Betty Renshaw MBE
Chair of Directors
CDAT

Rt Revd Libby Lane
Chair
Chester Diocesan Board of Education



The CDAT Vision

CDAT academies will have a distinctive ethos that is clearly rooted in the Gospel.

Christian values will impact on every area of their work and be communicated and shared in such a way that all members of the school community can clearly articulate them. These are more than general moral values which people of different faith backgrounds or no faith might share. Rather they are distinctively Christian values, based on the Bible and centred on the example of Jesus Christ.

It is important that all those engaging with CDAT have a clear appreciation of its distinctively Christian vision.



CDAT will seek to be a successful family of church schools providing distinctive and loving environments founded on Christian beliefs which ensure effective education for all children, through excellent teaching, innovation and the sharing of good practice as schools work together across the Trust.

We will:

- build a thriving community of schools with common moral purpose rooted in Christian values and ambition for children, but encouraging each academy to develop in the best way to serve its community;
- provide a culture of healthy dialogue and listening between CDAT and its academies;
- provide mutual support and improvement to develop the practice of all our professional staff so that all can improve;
- empower effective school leaders and local governing bodies to take courageous decisions in the best interest of young people;
- provide systems and services that aim to reduce the administrative burden and support school leaders with the professional management of their academies;
- provide purposeful and supportive early intervention for academies that would benefit from accelerated school improvement.

Governance within the Trust

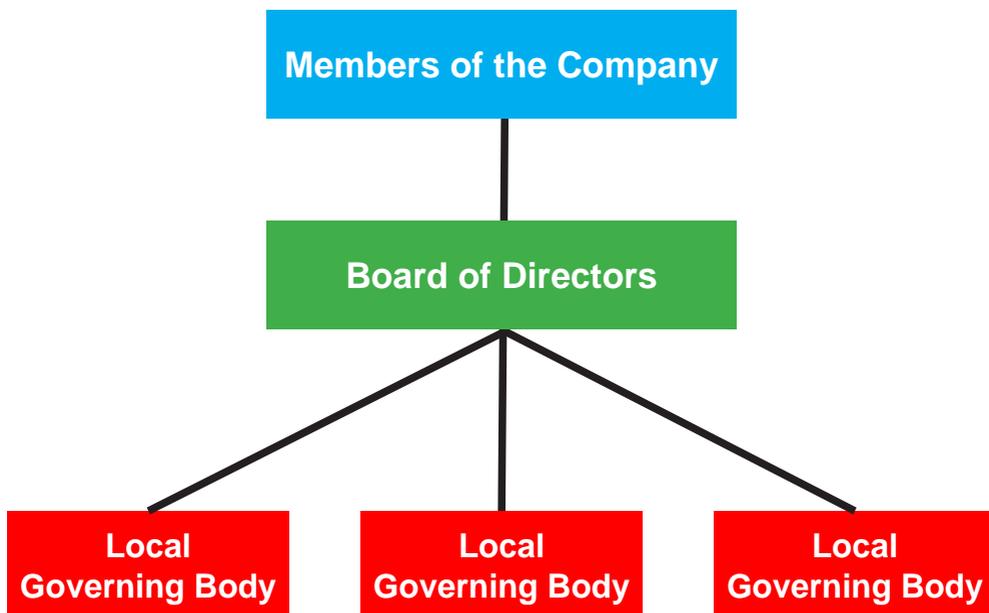
CDAT is committed to the integrity and autonomy of local governing bodies. In CDAT, the Trust has overall responsibility for the education of the children and a local governing body is established to oversee the school on a 'day to day' basis. Some members of the governing body are appointed by CDAT and others will be elected by parents. Local governing bodies are responsible for monitoring the operation of their schools and are accountable to the Trust's directors for the performance of their school.

Directors oversee the strategic direction of all academies within the Trust and are responsible for the deployment of resources across the group of academies. The Trust uses a 'scheme of delegation' to determine how much autonomy each academy is given within the Trust. The Trust will work closely with governors to agree an appropriate scheme of delegation as part of the academy conversion process.

The Members of the company comprise Chester Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), two individual Members of the DBE, the chair of the Directors and additional Members may be appointed by current Members with the consent of the DBE.

The Members set the vision and strategic direction of CDAT and they appoint the Directors, apart from the Chief Executive Officer and co-opted Directors who are appointed by the current Directors with the consent of the DBE.

CDAT is recognised by the Department of Education as an appropriate mechanism for a Church school to become a sponsored academy or for converting academies to join.



The CDAT Offer

CDAT provides member academies with the following benefits:

- Stability and protection in a fast-changing educational landscape;
- Core support for key academy functions;
- Support for schools requiring rapid improvement and schools aspiring to become or remain outstanding;
- Strong strategic guidance and advice from our experienced team who understand, support and develop church school education;
- Collaboration and sharing of best practice between all academies in the Trust;
- Economies of scale and cost savings for a range of services centrally procured by the Trust;
- Working relations within a Trust that maintains the integrity and independence of local schools judged 'good' and 'outstanding'.

As a CDAT academy, schools will receive a comprehensive package of support allowing leaders to concentrate on the core purpose of delivering an outstanding Christian education. A management fee of 5% of basic school budget is retained by the Trust enabling the following high-quality services to be delivered:



CDAT Services to Support Academies

CDAT has negotiated a package of services for member schools with trusted suppliers and colleagues. The following services are included in the CDAT management fee.

Service: School Improvement Enhanced Support Package

The school improvement service for CDAT comprises an Education Officer and a number of consultants. The Education Officer is responsible to and reports to the directors of the Trust. The Education Officer is an ex-HMI with experience in school improvement with all types of schools, with a proven track record and capable of working at the highest levels. Consultants also have experience in supporting and challenging schools in a variety of ways, including as inspectors for Ofsted and as local authority and Diocesan consultants.

Collectively, the team is experienced and qualified to support and challenge schools in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Christian distinctiveness, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management. The school improvement package will include support and challenge for governance and the team are able to draw on further support from the Diocese and National Leaders of Governance as appropriate.

The CDAT school improvement support package includes:

- An initial review of the school resulting in a written report. This will meet the dual purpose of providing an independent, up-to-date evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses for the school/academy and provide a 'due diligence' exercise for the Trust, so the Trust Board has an accurate assessment of needs. Reviews will be conducted with the full involvement of senior staff and staff at the school. The Review will report under conventional Ofsted headings, although the Framework will be adjusted to reflect the principles and priorities determined by the Trust (for example, increased reporting of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the school's distinctive church ethos);
- A termly monitoring meeting from the education officer or consultant, to focus on aspects of outcomes or quality of provision jointly determined by the Trust and the school. The visits will result in a written note shared with the school and reported to the Trust;
- An analysis of performance for each of the Trust's schools, based on national tests and assessments;
- The annual review of the school's principal / headteacher by the Education Officer. Interim reviews at the half-year point will take place;
- An annual conference for CDAT member schools, aimed at, amongst other things, ensuring a commonality of aims, values and direction for its schools;
- A termly meeting of Principals and Vice-Principals to discuss educational matters of interest and urgency. Outside speakers will be invited to address the group;
- Support for religious education and church ethos, providing any additional advice and guidance where required.

Service: Human Resources

Working with Schools Ltd has been appointed to provide HR and Payroll support to CDAT. They have over 15 years' experience in providing first class professional support services within the education sector.

A dedicated personnel team will provide expert and timely advice relating to the interpretation and application of employment law and conditions of employment. The CDAT HR service includes:

Staff recruitment / Appointments

- Advice on the recruitment and selection process to ensure compliance with statutory requirements (e.g. safer recruitment issues and anti-discriminatory legislation), as well as local procedures and good practice guidelines.
- Advice on job descriptions and person specifications.
- Advice on the terms of the offer of appointment (e.g. grading, starting salary, working arrangements).
- Preparation of written statements of particulars detailing terms and conditions of appointment.
- Production of letters confirming amendments to contracts, as appropriate (e.g. regrading, promotion, change of hours/weeks worked).
- Advice on the application of the salary provisions contained within relevant national agreements and Trust policies.
- Maintenance of staff list to reflect contractual details such as job title, grading, annual salary, hours, continuous service dates.
- Maintenance of equality and workforce data information.

Service conditions / Policies & procedures

- Advice on the interpretation and application of national and local agreements that cover the conditions of service for teaching and support staff employed in member schools.
- Provision of details of the occupational and statutory entitlements relating to various forms of leave of absence, such as sickness, maternity, paternity, adoption, parental and other special leave provisions.
- Advice on retirement procedures to be followed in different situations (e.g. age retirement, retirement on grounds of ill health).

Health & welfare of employees

- Advice on the application of absence monitoring procedures, covering issues such as maintenance of absence records and conduct of attendance management and return to work interviews.
- Assistance with completion of referrals to occupational health and advice on the action required following receipt of the report from the medical officer.
- Advice on redeployment matters and response to requests for “reasonable adjustments” to duties and/or conditions.

Employee relations

- Advice and support during the process to be followed relating to disciplinary, grievance and capability procedures. This may include attendance at formal meetings and assistance in the drafting of relevant correspondence.
- Assistance with the application of redundancy procedures, including required timescales, selection criteria and calculation of payments.
- Liaison with professional associations and trade unions relating to the above matters or other employment issues.
- Undertaking routine management interviews and day-to-day investigations where appropriate. Incidents (or allegations) of a more serious nature whereby an Investigatory Officer is required will be subject to pre-agreed additional charges.



Service: Payroll

Payroll Processing

- Designated payroll officer to provide personal payroll support.
- Provision of schedule of dates outlining deadlines for input data, date of initial run report to the Trust and/or the Academies therein for checking, last date for validation and changes, Bacs submission deadlines and pay dates.
- Provide templates for completion by the Trust and/or the Academies therein, in respect of their submission of data for payroll processing.
- Request relevant details from the Trust and/or the Academies therein, where data for inputting is incomplete.
- Process monthly adjustments (variations such as starters, leavers, overtime, leave without pay)
- Process deductions in respect of nursery vouchers.
- Calculation and payment of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and Statutory Maternity/Paternity Pay (SMP/ SPP).
- Preparation of payroll in a format that complies with the client's statutory obligations, including processing statutory notices (e.g. P45s, P46s, student loans, national insurance rates).
- 'Correction Window' facility providing payroll information in advance of the pay date thus allowing corrections to be made.
- Production of confidential pay slips for all employees and dispatch to the Trust's and academies' named contact prior to pay day.
- Provision of P45s and P60s.

Payroll Bacs

- Production and submission of a monthly payment file reflecting net salaries to be paid from the Trust's bank account by secure Bacs processing.
- Payment by secure Bacs processing of the relevant amounts to the relevant Pension Fund, on a timely basis and including the submission of a monthly analysis showing salary and contributions (including AVC's) for each relevant employee.
- Payment via secure Bacs processing of amounts to third parties (e.g. Trade Unions, Healthcare Scheme, Nursery Vouchers) including submission of analysis of deductions from employees.
- Monthly payments of relevant amounts to HMRC via secure Bacs processing.
- Process advance payments in respect of omissions from the original input data received and/or errors, where applicable.

Payroll Reporting

- Production of monthly management reports to the Trust and/or the Academies therein, in Excel and PDF Format, as appropriate.
- Production of and submission of year end reports for HMRC and Pension Funds, including reconciliation of deductions and payments. The submission will be made in accordance with the requirements of the relevant agency.
- Submission of Full Payment Submission information to HMRC under the Real Time Information system. Full details to be submitted to HMRC on or before the date that payslips are produced.
- Provision of current staff lists to reflect contract details such as hours worked salary etc. This will include the production of a revised staff list to reflect wholesale changes to the salaries to be paid following national pay awards and/or annual incremental progression.

Payroll Advice

- Provision of maternity pay schedule (copy for the Trust and staff member).
- Assistance from payroll staff with extensive knowledge and expertise with queries relating to the payroll.
- Advising the Trust on pay triggers, e.g. absent employee moving to half pay etc; including the issue of a draft letter.

Payroll Administration

- Provision of relevant information to statutory agencies (e.g. HMRC, DWP), as required.
- Provision of relevant information to other bodies (e.g. Healthcare schemes, Trade Unions), as required.

Pensions

- Liaison with the Local Authority, Teachers' Pensions and Local Government Pension Fund Administrators relating to pension matters.

Service: Finance Support

- Regular planned meetings with each academy lead finance administrator.
- Ensure that income and expenditure has been recorded correctly in the academy's finance system.
- Ensure that revenue and capital expenditure has been recorded correctly in the academy's finance system.
- Advice on maintenance of MIS Personnel module.
- Ensure adequate financial controls / systems are in place and maintained to reduce financial risks.
- Assist with the preparation of and review monthly bank reconciliations.
- Production of monthly / termly returns as appropriate e.g. VAT reports; cashflow statements; and a fully reconciled trial balance.
- Reconciliation / review of VAT / salary control accounts.
- Advice and guidance on cheque book / Bacs procedures to ensure good practice.
- Advice and guidance on the management / accounting for the use of debit cards.
- Any other work required, within the time constraints of the planned visits.
- Provision of a named financial consultant on a telephone helpline to advise on recommended action re budget monitoring, availability of funds for investment, need to terminate investments, procedures and systems and deficit / surplus planning.
- Conduct a "health check" of all financial systems in use in school, including those for non-delegated budgets, such as school funds to: ensure that all systems are being used correctly and comply with professional codes of practice and legislation.
- give advice on potential for systems improvement.
- provide data that makes a realistic contribution towards improvements in the management of school finances.
- Completion of Statutory Returns to CDAT / EFA as appropriate.
- Ensure that each academy meets all the current and future requirements of regulations and standards associated with FMGS (in the first year) and audit.



Service: Financial Management System (FMS)

- A Financial Management System will be installed at the school, which will ensure that the reporting requirements of academies can be easily managed. The proposed system will include:
- Financial management and reporting.
- Technical services, training and consultancy and data conversion services help get the system up and running.
- The data conversion service populates the new system with data from your existing MIS.
- An assigned contact who will work with you to ensure a smooth migration. Each stage will be planned with you from setting the target launch date to the data extraction and installation stages.
- **Support service desk** – telephone, email, remote and re-active on-site support visits to support your SIMS application suite.
- **Support for software packages** including Microsoft and anti-virus packages.
- **Restoration of your database** using the data from your most recent viable backup.

Service: Audit / Accountancy

- Preparation of year-end accounts from initial trial balance.
- Audit of annual accounts and report on regularity.
- Telephone support for the Academy School Business Manager for general audit and accountancy issues.
- Academies accounts return at 31st August.
- Audit of the end of year certificate for the Teachers Pensions return.
- Initial VAT health check visit.
- Support to the finance team on specific tasks (e.g. training).
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Service: Legal Advice

Stone King have been appointed to provide the following support for CDAT academies.

Academy Conversion Legal Support (the cost will be covered by the conversion grant)

- Preparation of all legal documents required for conversion including:
- Supplemental Funding agreement
- Land due diligence, land questionnaire and Church Supplemental Agreement
- Playing field lease (if any)
- Commercial Transfer Agreement (non-land) (excluding detailed review of commercial contracts)
- Additional support based on the specific context of the school

Legal Retainer Service

- Includes up to 1 or 2 hours of initial legal advice, for an unlimited number of matters, including:
- Governance and School Leadership
- Company secretary support
- Employment
- School Property
- Safeguarding and Health and Safety
- Business Management
- Complementary attendance at Stone King seminars
- 10% discount on hourly rates for matters outside the retainer
- Monthly e-briefing of legal developments
- Access to the Stone King website retainer area, which contains policy tools and templates
- Governance review and advice

Conversion Policy and Process

As a Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust, CDAT is committed to supporting any church school that wishes to join the Trust however it must ensure that any growth is undertaken in a sustainable manner that ensures the best outcomes for every child. To this end CDAT has developed a process that allows for a steady growth and means the Board has a clear understanding of each school as it joins.

Conversion Process

Step 1: Express an interest

Any school that is interested in exploring the possibility of joining CDAT should contact Sue Noakes in the first instance at sue.noakes@chester.anglican.org or 01928 718834 (ext 230).

We will then be happy to speak to your governing board about what joining CDAT would mean and how the Trust operates.

The Board of Directors will be informed of any schools that have expressed an interest.

At this point the governing board may wish to start the informal consultation with members of staff.

Step 2: Register an Interest

Schools register their interest using the online form available from the DfE website and name CDAT as the MAT that they propose to join.

After receiving the form a named contact from the DfE will contact CDAT.

A summary of information about the school is collated in collaboration with the school. The summary is given to the Board of Directors and a decision made as to whether to continue to the next stage. If there are reasons (eg a financial deficit) that may pose a risk to the school joining CDAT then further work may need to be undertaken before agreement is given.

A CDAT officer and the project manager liaise with the headteacher and chair of governors to develop a timeline for conversion.

Parental and wider stakeholder consultation takes place.

Step 3: Application to convert

The governing board passes a resolution in favour of academy conversion. Minutes of the meeting are sent to CDAT.

The school, with support from CDAT, submits a formal application to convert to the DfE.

The decision of the Regional Schools Commissioner is reported to the school and CDAT.

If conversion is agreed an academy order is made.

CDAT start the TUPE process with staff.

Step 4: Due Diligence

In order to ensure the Board of Directors has a clear understanding of the schools within the Trust a detailed due diligence process will be undertaken which covers the school's academic, organisational, structural and financial situation at time of conversion.

Step 5: Conversion

The project manager, CDAT officer and school work through the detailed project management plan to the point of conversion and the school joins the Trust.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How long does academy conversion take and how will the process affect the day-to-day running of the school?

A: This will usually take 3-4 months with support from the Diocese. CDAT has services in place to ensure smooth transition and has been through the process before. We use experienced colleagues to minimise any impact on the school community.

Q: What is the role of the Chief Executive Officer?

A: The CEO is the Accounting Officer for the Trust and provides strategic support for schools. The CEO is also the key contact for the Regional Schools Commissioner and DfE and acts as the point of first contact to ensure schools are not distracted from their core purpose of teaching and learning.

Q: The priority for our school is the education of young people, how will CDAT ensure academy status does not distract us from this?

A: CDAT has a strong school improvement offer that will support the school as it focuses on the education of its young people. This support is complimented by the business support functions that CDAT offers including HR support, accountancy and audit, finance support and the reassurance of the legal team, CEO and Diocesan team.

Q: Will the structure of our governing board be affected?

A: Each school will have a local governing body with a scheme of delegation in place making clear the levels of decision making. Governor support will also be included as part of the enhanced school improvement package.

Q: Will we be financially better off as an academy?

A: Academies receive the same per pupil funding as maintained schools but core services will be provided by CDAT and paid for by the management fee.

Q: Will our partnerships with other non-academy schools be affected?

A: Academies are encouraged to work with all other local schools and CDAT would encourage this where there are clear benefits. It is essential that as an academy the school remains part of beneficial partnerships with other schools.





Chester Diocesan Academies Trust