**Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust (LDST)**

**FAQs (in addition to the responses below, please visit** [**www.ldst.org.uk**](http://www.ldst.org.uk) **for further information about the Trust)**

**1. Why has the Diocese developed a Multi-academy Trust?**There are three fundamental reasons: the first is to keep the family of Church of England schools together; the second is to keep Jesus at the heart of those schools; the third is to maintain and secure the high quality education already being delivered in the vast majority of schools. **2. Would schools share vision/values in a LDST or can they still keep their own?**Each school will want to develop its own Christian education vision, noting the LDST and National Church of England education visions but reflecting their own individual characteristics, just as now.

**3. Christian character at the heart of LDST – what will happen if community schools join?**We do not expect large numbers of community schools to join LDST and those that do will understand and accept the Trust’s strong Christian character. Community schools will not change their designation and it will be the role of the Trust’s directors to ensurethere is no dilution of the Christian character of LDST – directors will be held to account on this by the Diocesan Board of Education.

**4. Who can join the LDST?**All Church of England schools in the Diocese of Liverpool can join LDST, although none will be forced. Schools considered by Ofsted as ‘requiring improvement’ maybe expected to convert to academy status. Schools with ‘serious weaknesses’ or ‘special measures’ will be expected to convert. Currently the Board’s policy is that any converting Church of England school can only join the LDST, unless there are exceptional circumstances, in which case the Board will consider each proposal individually.

**5. Why is the number of Academies increasing?**
This is a major policy of the government. Schools that are good and outstanding have been converting to academy status since 2011, and there has been significant growth in the sector each year since. Schools in difficulty have to look for solutions through the Academy route and sponsorship by already established MATs. In addition, Government funding to local authorities is reducing year on year with a detrimental effect on their service provision.
 **6. Is the Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust a charity?**
The LDST is a company incorporated in England and Wales, limited by guarantee with Registered Company number 0923635; Charity Number EW56679.  It is an exempt charity.

**7. What are the expected changes to the Governing Body?**
The LDST have a central Board of Directors who are responsible to the Secretary of State for overall standards for each school in LDST.  There is a local governing body (LGB) in each school which is responsible for day-to-day operational matters. These responsibilities will be stipulated in the LDST Scheme of Delegation which is available on the LDST website (The Scheme of Delegation is a working document and reviewed regularly with Chairs, Governors and Headteachers, any changes are agreed by all governing bodies in the Trust). The members of the local governing bodies are appointed by the Trust Directors and the vast majority of current local governors were serving school governors at the time their school converted. It is important to LDST that foundation and parent governors continue to provide local input.

**8. Becoming an academy will require a strong and effective Governing Body. How will we find the governors with the necessary skills, experience and time?**
Being part of LDST means that the Board of Directors have the necessary range of skills required at Board level.  The Local Governing Body does not take on the additional requirements under the Companies Act and therefore governors are sought, as before, from the local community. They have the necessary skills and have delegated responsibility for their particular school. Most current governing body constitutions have remained unchanged, with the exception of the Local Authority position which no longer exists.

**9. Are there difficulties in appointing Directors who are independent of the schools in their area? What is their brief/how often do they meet/what ‘power’ might they require?**One of the reasons for having a LDST rather than lots of school led MATS is that it means not having to find so many Directors. The full Board of Directors currently has 9 members and meet 6 times a year; they are the accountable body and have responsibility for all schools in the Trust and the CEO/ Trust central team.

**10. What happens to the staff?**
All staff employed by the school are entitled to transfer under TUPE ((Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006)) to the Academy, and their terms and conditions remain unchanged. The Board of Directors become their employers.

**11. Can academies alter the pay and conditions of employees?**
When a school converts to a new academy, employees are entitled to transfer on the same terms and conditions of employment.  The legalities of the process are covered by TUPE. In summary, staff maintain existing pay, conditions and length of service and all staff can, if they wish to, retain their current pension arrangements.

**12. How does the LDST improve teaching and learning?**By increasing opportunities for collaboration, including cross-phase; providing increased school improvement functions and support capacity. The Trust has a monthly Headteachers’ forum, a termly Chair of Governors’ forum, a governor training programme, school to school peer evaluation, a moderation network, subject leader training, a curriculum lead, a SEND lead, advanced pupil progress and data analysis etc.

**13. What would happen to SEN provision?**
The same support continues for pupils with a statement of special educational needs and the funding for this element continues to be provided by the LA. The LA retains its responsibility for statutory duties, obligations and procedures remain in place when a school converts to academy status. The Trust has a SEND lead to support and advise schools and to maximise funding.

**14. Alternative provision – would the LA expect us to pay for this?**Yes, and even if we eventually have AP within the LDST each child will need to be funded.

**15. Will academies be free from Ofsted inspections?**
Academies remain subject to the Government’s inspection arrangements and to the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) The first inspection of schools converting to academy will usually take place within three years of conversion. Ofsted do not select new academies for a first inspection (section 5) until they are in their third year. Ofsted, may however, conduct a Section 8 monitoring inspection of any new academy within the first three years if they receive information that causes them sufficient concern.

**16. What happens to a school’s Ofsted judgement when joining the MAT?**It remains with the school, judgements are only ‘removed’ when schools are ‘sponsored’/forced into academisation.

**17. How will the LDST treat church schools that are considered inadequate by Ofsted; is it truly inclusive?**In addition to 12 above; The Trust Education Officer will undertake a full review in the school once they have converted, or just prior to conversion. The review team will be expert in curriculum, SEN, leadership and teaching. The review will identify areas for improvement that the Trust will then support the school in addressing. The Trust also seeks to support specific year group and subject leaders where needed to ensure planning is focused on the needs of the pupils. The Headteacher will have a mentor from one of the Trust’s outstanding schools. The Trust, at the earliest opportunity, includes the school in assessment, curriculum and subject leadership developments in order to address any concerns.

**18. What will happen to local links and partnerships that already exist?**
Joining LDST does not preclude a school from being part of a local partnership which is for the benefit of the school.

**19. Will the school be able to set its own curriculum?**
Academies are able to offer a more flexible curriculum but they are required to provide a ‘balanced and broadly based curriculum’. The teaching of English, Maths and Science remains central, as does RE in a Church school.

**20. How are academies funded?**
Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools receive from the LA, plus additions to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the local authority. Academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets to best benefit their pupils.

**21. How will insurance be arranged for the school?**
Trust schools get the cover they need for their pupils, staff and buildings, and save money, through the Risk Protection Arrangement, which is provided by Insurance professionals on behalf of the DfE.

**22. Will existing financial systems be retained?**
The LDST are currently researching the options available in relation to financial software packages and the impact each option may have on member schools. All member schools currently use SIMS FMS.

**23. What is done with any surplus budget that the school may bring into the trust?**
Any revenue surplus remains with the school, and is credited directly to their bank account by the local authority after conversion.

**24. How do you make sure budget changes ‘proposed’ are seen to be fairly applied?**Finance is delegated to schools as previously, based on pupils, there are no decisions needed at MAT level about that. Provision of Trust services is needs led. Heads and schools are asked to evaluate these if there is any perception of unfairness.

**25. How will finance work on a daily/monthly/yearly basis.**The Trust’s Director of Finance and Operations (DFO) has strong experience in this area. The Trust also provides two accountants who visit schools to support Headteachers, School Business Managers and Governors in understanding the system, and in preparing and monitoring budgets.

**26. What about schools who are projecting a deficit in the next year or two. Will this affect whether or not they will be able to be part of the first wave?**That would be part of the due diligence, and ensuring that plans are in place to manage any deficit.

**27. Worried regarding cash flow.**This is a significant change for schools. Again, the DFO has strong expertise in this area and is able to manage and advise on this centrally.

**28. What happens about admissions?**
Academies become their own admissions authority and we give guidance to schools about this in line with the admissions code and having due consideration to the local admissions forum. No schools have changed their admissions policy since joining the Trust.

**29. What happens to existing academies?**Standalone academies can join the LDST; Church of England school led MATs will continue to exist as part of our ‘mixed economy’.

**30. What is the role of the Diocesan Board of Education moving forward?**Nominating LDST Trustees, SIAMS inspections; all the current roles in relation to schools with the exception of LCVAP which ends for academies. The Board of Education staff continue to support the Trusts development, as required.
 **31. Do individual LDST members still promote their establishments in the search for pupils?**Yes

**32. What is the schedule and timescale for the LDST process?**There are currently 16 schools in LDST and one more due to join in February 2020. The whole process from governing bodies deciding to convert to actual conversion is approximately 12 months.

**33. What about due diligence on potential converting schools.**There is a thorough due diligence process undertaken prior to Board approval which covers Buildings, School Improvement, Finance and HR matters, amongst other things. For Church schools we already have a lot of information and history. The purpose of due diligence is not whether or not a Church School can join but rather when it can join. We endeavour, with the school, to resolve any issues identified in the due diligence exercise, as soon as possible.

**35. Is there a definitive list of services offered within a LDST?**Yes, please refer to the Trusts’ Membership Agreement on the website.

**36. What about schools that don’t have the office staff capacity to take on additional academy related work?**This is another advantage to joining the LDST and central functions will be strong to assist schools in this situation.

**38. Do schools need to consult before converting?**
Yes. All schools are required to carry out a consultation process but it is up to each school to decide whom and how to consult. There is no legally specified length of time for the consultation (but LDST and the DFE prefer 4 weeks in term time) and schools have flexibility in how it is conducted. Typically consultation is with parents, staff, unions, local schools and the local community.

**39. How do you consult with stakeholders?**
Informal consultation can begin through school newsletters and staff meetings.  Formal consultation takes place in a variety and combination of ways; by letter (with reply slip for comments), by email, through drop-in sessions/ parents’ evening to answer any questions.  The Governing Body will then vote on whether to continue with the Academy process. They will then inform all stakeholders of the decision.

**40. What support will be available to Headteachers and Governors for parent consultation?**The LDST will provide representation at these meetings.