

GUIDANCE PAPER:

This document provides guidance to church school leaders and Governing Boards seeking consent from the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) to join a multi-academy trust in the Diocese of Lincoln.

It is important to take note of this guidance before submitting the application form for consent to the DBE.

Lincoln DBE Policy and MAT strategy

Church of England schools and academies may only join a 'majority' church MAT within the diocese of Lincoln. The term 'majority' means that most of the Members of the Trust are appointed by the diocese.

It is the DBE strategic aim that there will be five 'majority' church MATs in the diocese. The DBE believes that a total of five MATS will meet the needs of schools in a successful and sustainable way.

It is the DBE's expectation that the five church MATs will be inclusive and serve schools from different contexts. Each Trust will be required to support schools of varying sizes with different inspection outcomes in a range of localities. It is expected that the church MAT will provide opportunities and excellence for all schools and their communities. An imbalance of schools may lead to a Trust failing to support all its schools successfully.

When considering the consent for schools joining MATs, the DBE will base its decision on three key factors:

1. The impact the school will have on the Trust.
2. The Trust's capacity to improve the quality of education in the school, whilst maintaining the capacity to support all the other schools in the Trust.
3. The impact upon the DBE strategic aim to have 6 successful church MATs in the diocese, which are able to serve a variety of schools in different contexts.

Actions for Governing Boards before applying for DBE consent to join or form a MAT.

There are four key stages that Governing Boards will need to work through before applying for DBE consent. They are:

Stage 1: Identification of options

Identify all the possible options and opportunities within the DBE strategy. This may involve inviting a DBE officer to present an impartial view of all the options at a full governing board. The presentation will involve providing an overview of the different church MATs and the scope for non-academy routes such as federations.

Stage 2: Exploration of options

Explore all the options in more detail. This may involve setting up a working party to research the details of each MAT. This may involve:

- inviting MAT leaders to present to the GB
- finding out about the vision and values of each trust

- speaking to other school leaders within the MATs to hear about their experiences
- researching the educational success of all schools in the Trusts
- researching the financial security within the Trust

The exploration stage will also require governors to consider the implications of non-academy routes including federations. This will require being up to date with the DFE direction of travel, the long term support structures outside of the academy arena and the intentions of other schools in the locality.

Please note that if the school already has established a positive working relationship with a church MAT and/or there is a clear rationale for the school to join this MAT, then the Governing Board may choose not to explore any other options in detail. It is also not expected that Governing Boards will explore options that are clearly not feasible.

Stage 3: 'Weighing the evidence'

At this stage, the working party would present a paper to the Governing Board to share their key findings from the exploration stage. They would present the implications for each option. It would be important to consider the evidence in the context of the DBE policy and strategy noted above.

It is important for all governors to discuss the findings in detail so that there is a shared understanding of what each option would mean for the school.

Stage 4: 'Making a decision' – choosing an option to pursue

Having heard all the information about the different options available, the Governing Board should make a decision about 'next steps'. The Governing Board should record the reasons for choosing and not choosing the specific MATs. The governors should vote for a clearly worded resolution. For example,

'It the Governing Board's decision to submit an application to the DBE to request consent to join the (name) of church MAT'

It is important to name the MAT in the resolution as the DBE will assess the application with that specific MAT in mind (within the context of DBE policy and strategy).

IMPORTANT note: This decision to submit an application for DBE consent indicates that the Governing Board is committed to pursue this proposal seriously, having done research and exploration.

By seeking DBE consent, the Governing Board is asking for permission for the School and Trust to proceed with more detailed due diligence. The DBE consent also enables the DFE project manager to become more involved in supporting the process towards academy conversion.

DBE consent does not mean that the school automatically becomes an academy in the chosen Trust. All schools must also gain the consent of the Regional Director's Office (DFE) to join a MAT. The Governing Board and/or the Trust may withdraw from the process at any stage during the due diligence process. They are not bound by the DBE consent decision. The school and Trust must inform the DBE if any significant issues arise from due diligence that may have a detrimental impact on the DBE strategy and policy. The DBE has the right to withdraw consent at any time during the more detailed due diligence stage if evidence is revealed to show significant risks for the school or Trust.

Completing and submitting the DBE consent application form.

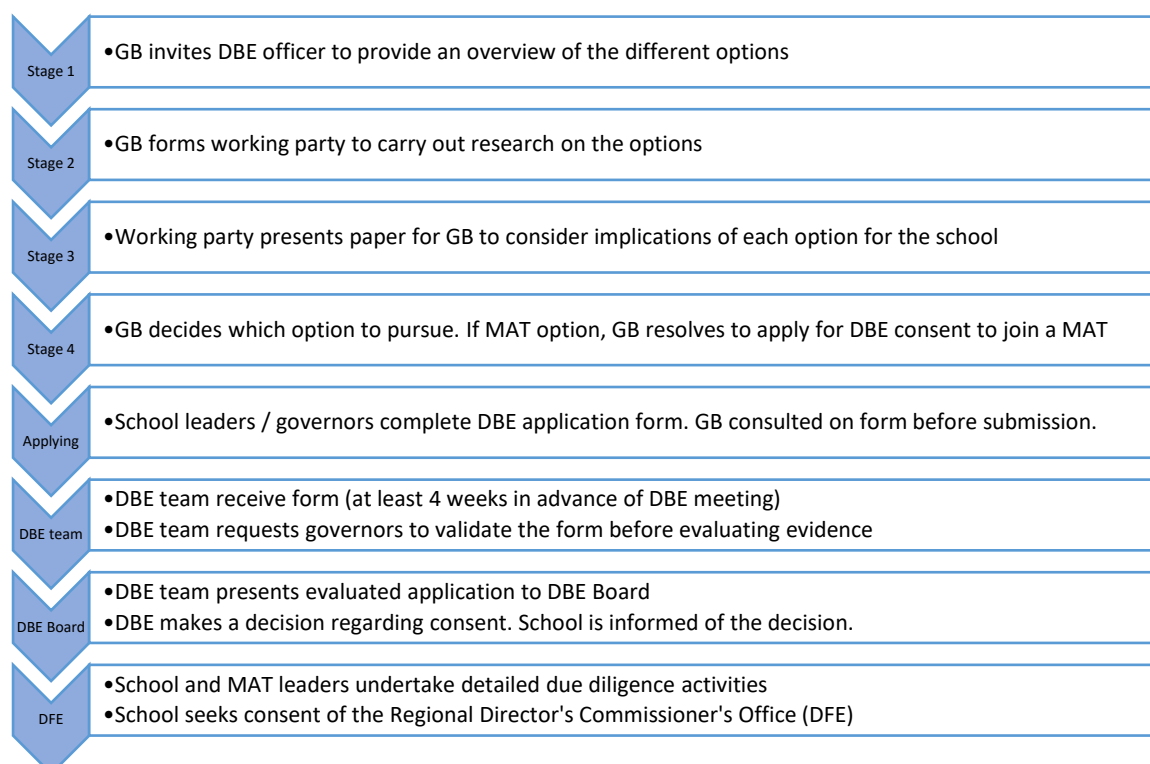
When the Governing Board has progressed through the four stages above and they have made a formal and minuted decision to apply for DBE consent, they should request an application form from the Diocesan Board of Education Administrator, Ellen Cross ellen.cross@lincoln.anglican.org

School leaders should answer all questions on the form (in conjunction with the MAT leaders) and provide accompanying documentation as required. It is important to report on the form the reasons for choosing / not choosing the specific MATs. A copy of the Governing Board minutes with the clear resolution will be required. The Governing Board must sign off the completed form before submission to the DBE. The foundation governors support must be evident in the minutes or from a separate written declaration.

The diocesan education team are available to answer any queries about the application form.

It is important to find out when the DBE would be able to consider the application so that the form can be submitted at least four weeks in advance. This allows for the DBE education team to validate the application form with the Governing Board and for the DBE education team to analyse the application and present the case to the DBE. The DBE will inform the school and Trust of its decision after the DBE meeting.

THE PROCESS



Guidance reviewed February 2026 by the Diocesan Director of Education

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