

## What do I need to know about the Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust (LDST)?

### What is an academy?

An academy is a school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local government. Academies are inspected by Ofsted.

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

Academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

### What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

Multi Academy Trusts are groups of schools that have come together to form a charitable company, with a single group of 'Members' (who have an overview of the governance arrangements) and a single Board of Trustees. The Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust (LDST) is a MAT. As part of a MAT:

- individual schools remain as separate entities, with separate names and DfE numbers
- individual schools still receive separate Ofsted judgements and performance tables are still based on individual schools

### What does our Trust care about and how do the values match up?

LDST is a distinctly Christian Trust. We want our children to receive an excellent education built on distinctly Christian values. We are respectful and responsive to the individual needs of our schools, whilst determined to make a difference to learners across all schools.

We have four core values:

Our commitment to '**collaboration**' ensures that we connect and work in partnership for the benefit of learners and staff across our Trust. Staff across our schools work as a family carrying out research, sharing practice, developing resources and increasing expertise. Leaders at all levels, including Headteachers and Chairs of Governors, have regular networks and forum meetings to discuss, solve problems and make collective decisions for the good of all schools.

With such strong bonds of collaboration, we can support our schools to enhance the opportunities and outcomes for their pupils and staff by:

- Developing and sharing best practice in education, teaching, learning, curriculum and outcomes

- Co-ordinating staff recruitment, professional training and career development to create a skilled, motivated, expert workforce
- Working collaboratively to increase operational efficiency and making optimum use of available resources

Our commitment to '**local**' means that our schools are local schools, led by local leaders and governors, serving local communities. Our central team supports and empowers our leaders to provide the highest quality of education.

Our commitment to '**inclusion**' ensures that we are a Trust for those of all faiths and none. We are dedicated to ensuring that all learners regardless of faith, background and disability can achieve their full potential.

Our commitment to '**difference**' ensures that we respect the uniqueness of each of our schools and celebrate the many differences of the whole LDST community. Schools are supported to maintain their own distinctiveness and to develop a curriculum that is unique to them.

### How much autonomy will we retain?

Our school leaders, governors and directors together determine the levels of autonomy and standardisation which ensures that Trust-wide policies, systems and processes support local leaders, whilst allowing them to make school specific decisions.

For example, a common approach to assessment means that data is collected and collated centrally, producing readily available analysis for leaders; whilst a school specific curriculum ensures that the curriculum reflects the needs of individual communities, underpinned by our LDST curriculum principles.

Trust policies ensure that leaders are supported, whilst freeing them up to focus on teaching and learning.

### Who is responsible for standards?

In a Trust, this has to be part of a seamless relationship between the schools and the Trust. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the Accounting Officer. The Board of Directors is held to account by the Department for Education (DfE) for standards, financial oversight and the quality of governance. However, we cannot fulfil the expectations of the funding agreement without good practice at school level.

Therefore, the leaders and local governors are accountable to the CEO and the Board of Directors for standards in their schools. This collaborative approach should be one of mutual benefit for both parties.

We support our schools through our School Improvement (SI) strategy to provide an excellent quality of education and improve outcomes for all pupils, whilst encouraging collaboration between schools to share practice and resources. Through our strategy all

schools are categorised for support and have a dedicated Education Officer who provides appropriate levels of support and challenge to school leaders.

A Link Director ensures visibility and direction between the Board and Local Governing Body (LGB), whilst a Chairs' forum enables LGBs to have a strategic voice.

### How will you improve our school?

All schools can both give and receive support. We know our schools well so that we can be respectful of and responsive to individual school needs, and resourceful in sharing best practice.

As a Trust, we aim to provide an excellent education built on distinctly Christian values, so that our learners can *Learn, Love and Achieve, Together with Jesus*.

Our School Improvement (SI) strategy enables us to support our schools to provide an excellent quality of education and improve outcomes for all pupils, whilst encouraging collaboration between schools to share practice and resources.

Through our SI strategy all schools are categorised for support and have a dedicated Education Officer to provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to school leaders. Our SI strategy ensures that we deploy our capacity as needed, through our dedicated central team and through the expertise and generosity of leaders across our Trust.

We provide multiple opportunities for staff across schools to learn together, research together, share expertise and shape core systems and processes across our Trust. Along with school leaders, we self-evaluate to determine the priorities needed to address gaps in data and to achieve our strategic aims. Our networks and priority teams bring the capacity needed to support schools in their developments.

Trust wide, we are involved in a number of initiatives with the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership (CEFEL), including as a National Professional Quality (NPQ) delivery partner and regional delivery provider; SEND CEFEL national network; a LDST Headteacher sits on the SIAMS national steering group; CEFEL Peer support network with Andy Wolfe (CEFEL Deputy Director for Education) and opportunities to work with colleagues in other Diocesan Trusts. This ensures that professionals across LDST can access the highest quality professional development and national networking opportunities.

LDST is committed to recruiting and retaining the best staff to ensure the very best outcomes for all our children. In order to do this, we prioritise our staff to ensure they are both equipped to do a good job but also enjoy their time in work. Below is a list of benefits of being a member of staff in LDST:

- Access to high quality CPD via our networks, DfE Behaviour Hub and NPQs
- Opportunity to become a System Leader working Trust wide to support other schools

- Our Leadership Pathways support succession opportunities throughout our Trust
- Annual Trust Conference
- Ability to share good practice across all schools in our Trust and moderate assessment judgements with Trust schools
- Favourable employment policies
- Access to Occupational Health if required, via referral by Headteacher

### What opportunities will there be for us to support other schools in the Trust?

LDST was established through the conversion of a significant number of good and outstanding schools. This was done purposefully to ensure that we have strong practice to support other schools over time. Leaders across our Trust are developed through our Leadership Pathways approach and are given opportunities to carry out additional roles, both at central team level or within other schools.

All schools can both give and receive support. We look for the strengths and capacity in each school and when ready we establish schools (in partnership with the senior leadership team) that become lead schools – e.g. DfE Behaviour Hub. We actively encourage action research and involvement in national networks and initiatives.

Staff are afforded opportunities to support other schools but are never mandated to do so. However, many staff see this as a CPD and career opportunity for themselves as well as enjoying the challenge of making a difference Trust wide.

### What is the role of the Board of Trustees and the Members?

A Trust is a charity and the Members appoint the Trustees. The Trustees (Directors) own the strategy and challenge and support the CEO and the Trust leaders to implement the improvement plan. The schools work with the Trust and with other schools to deliver the improvement in their schools.

### What role does the local governing body (LGB) play?

LDST has a Board of Directors who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and the schools in it. The Board of Directors is responsible for appointing the governors on each Local Governing Body (LGB). The Local Governing Body is responsible for making the decision to become an academy and therefore are an important part of our governance structure.

Each school has its own LGB that works with the Headteacher to check that the school is providing a good quality of education. A scheme of delegation is in place. This sets out the role of the Local Governing Body and how it delivers its function as a sub-committee of the Board of Directors. Our recent governance review will enable us to further refine this.

As committees of the Board of Directors, our LGBs challenge school leaders and quality assure - for example safeguarding, curriculum and standards. This is completed in order to provide assurances to the Board that the school is well led and managed.

The LGB sets the vision for the school in line with the overall vision of LDST.

### How does the Trust communicate with the school and how can we inform the Trust and the Board of our challenges and successes?

Communication has to flow in both directions from the Trust to the school and back again. Each term, we produce "Director Items" to ensure LGBs know what information needs to be communicated at school level. Each school has a Link Director which ensures transparency and communication from Directors to LGBs. Our Governance Handbook supports LGBs to establish an appropriate governance structure with terms of reference. Our recent governance review will enable us to further refine this.

Regular CEO and Education Officer meetings in schools means that we know our schools well and can respond quickly to support needed and share effective resources more widely. Trust Leaders share contextual information with the Directors termly, enabling us to identify what is going well and where further support may need to be deployed.

### How do we influence key strategic decisions that impact on our school?

We are one Trust with a shared vision and purpose that all schools provide an excellent education built on distinctly Christian values. Stakeholders identify priorities together so what we are working on reflects the needs of schools across our Trust. Working alongside other schools on a set of shared priorities enables leaders to action research, network and share best practice.

### If we join you, what will the Trust be like in three years' time?

Our future vision is for one Trust, sub-divided into smaller hubs to enable greater collaboration over a smaller geographical area. Schools within each hub, led by a Hub Director, will also continue to work together to provide an excellent education for pupils Trust-wide. Joining now will enable new schools to have the opportunity to shape this, and our model will grow with us to reflect the needs of schools in LDST.

## Finance and Funding

### How is the school accountable financially?

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable Trusts, and we are required to produce and file accounts. Our systems are robust and quality assured by regular audits, conducted by our external independent auditor.

### How does academy status affect SEND funding?

SEND funding will come directly from the government through the Education Funding Agency. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the local authority.

### Does it cost to become an academy?

Yes. There are legal costs associated with becoming an academy. The government gives each converting academy £25,000 to contribute towards these costs.

### Who owns the school building and land?

The local authority and/or Diocese will be required to grant a 125-year lease to the Trust.

## Staffing

### Do the staff stay the same?

When a school converts from a local authority maintained school to a new academy, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it under the same employment terms and conditions.

### Do the terms of employment for staff change?

As part of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) arrangements, staff are entitled to transfer to the new academy under the same employment terms and conditions.

### What happens with regard to staff pensions?

If you are a teacher in the current school, your pension will continue as part of the teacher's pension scheme, with the Trust continuing with the same employer responsibilities as the predecessor school. Non-teaching staff will usually be members of the local government pension scheme and the Trust will secure 'admitted body' status with the local pension authority to protect the pension rights of employees and take on employer responsibility, both for contributions and administration of the scheme. Staff can opt out of either if they wish to make alternative provision.