

Diocese of Leeds

Building the Future

Background

The government introduced legislation in May 2010 that allowed schools judged by Ofsted to be 'outstanding' to convert to academy status. Academies are independent schools funded directly by the government but they may choose to work in partnership with the local authority. The option was then extended to those schools judged 'good with outstanding features'. In April 2011, the DfE announced that any school meeting criteria set around an improving school could be considered for academy status. In this case, each application is considered on an individual basis by the Secretary of State for Education (SoS) who will only give approval where he is satisfied that the school has the capacity to become academies and that there are systems in place to support improvement. Ideally the school would be in some type of partnership for support. Alongside these new provisions, the drastic cuts to local authority funding resulting in a reduction of support and loss of skilled advisers as well as the landscape of academies, free schools and the option of multi academy trusts is resulting in a significant change to the provision of maintained education. This results in a position where it is important to rethink how schools operate and access support in order to improve.

These new possibilities as well as existing legislation regarding federations provides an opportunity to consider the current position of educational provision in the Diocese and whether it is the appropriate time to consider changes to further strengthen the mission of the Church with respect to Catholic education.

Catholic Mission

Catholic schools are an important part of the mission of the Catholic Church. Importantly, Catholic education is distinctive:

"As you know, the task of a teacher is not simply to impart information or to provide training in skills intended to deliver some economic benefit to society; education is not and must never be considered as purely utilitarian. It is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full – in short it is about imparting wisdom. And true wisdom is inseparable from knowledge of the Creator,"

Pope Benedict XVI , Twickenham, Papal Visit 2010

The changes provide an opportunity for everyone, trustees, clergy, foundation governors, headteachers, governing bodies, staff and parish communities to reflect on our role in the Church's mission to provide a Catholic education for pupils attending our schools. As a Diocesan family of schools we are all working for the Common Good rather than our own interests and our schools need to be outward looking as active members of the wider community.

This gives rise to three principles:

1. Strengthening the Diocesan family of schools including identifying opportunities for supporting the formation of young people and those who work in our schools
2. Governance reaching beyond one school
3. Development of high level partnerships between schools impacting on the improvement of all our schools

It is vital in reviewing options that no school is left in a vulnerable position and that unity is maintained across the Diocese (whilst it is for a governing body to decide to convert or become part of a federation, it is for the diocesan bishop and trustee to give consent).

Formal Joint Working Options

The CES and National Society have worked with the DFE and solicitors to develop new academy models to address the specific needs of Church VA schools. There is now no legal barrier to conversion.

1. Single academy model – this is the usual model where an academy company is established for each school converting to academy.
2. Multi academy model – groups of schools form a ‘multi academy’ under a wider trust that could be Diocesan based or developed on a more local basis.
3. Hard Federation – groups of schools come together under a single governing body retaining VA status and in partnership with the LA.
4. Remain as a VA Catholic school – the option to join a trust or federation at a later stage will remain. Schools may form partnerships.
5. Other academy variations – here are various legal variations relating to model 2 above that could be considered

Option two is the model the trustees have decided on for the Leeds Diocese - the Diocese would appoint a majority of foundation directors to the trust board with a smaller local governing body (LGB) in place in each school with a majority of foundation governors. There would be an overall reduction in the number of foundation appointees though those appointed would be required to undertake training for their roles. Although the trust board would set the strategic direction for the group as a whole a scheme of delegation would be developed to allow decision making to be carried out at the most appropriate level. Such a scheme would evolve to reflect best practice and experience.

Although staff will transfer to an academy trust (that becomes the employer) by TUPE, future staff could be recruited to work across all schools in the group. This would give opportunities for staff to broaden their experiences across a wider range of schools as well as the recognition of specialist roles that may not be viable under a single school model. The employment of staff by the trust board would not be a significant change as governing bodies have always been the employer of staff in

Catholic VA schools a role they have carried out with a long standing history of equity and fairness. One of the main benefits from this model will be in terms of succession planning. With a larger workforce there will be an inherent flexibility allowing senior leaders (and others) to work with other schools gaining valuable experience in a range of leadership scenarios gaining important professional development. This also provides the opportunity to develop innovative models of leadership according to group circumstances.

The National Picture

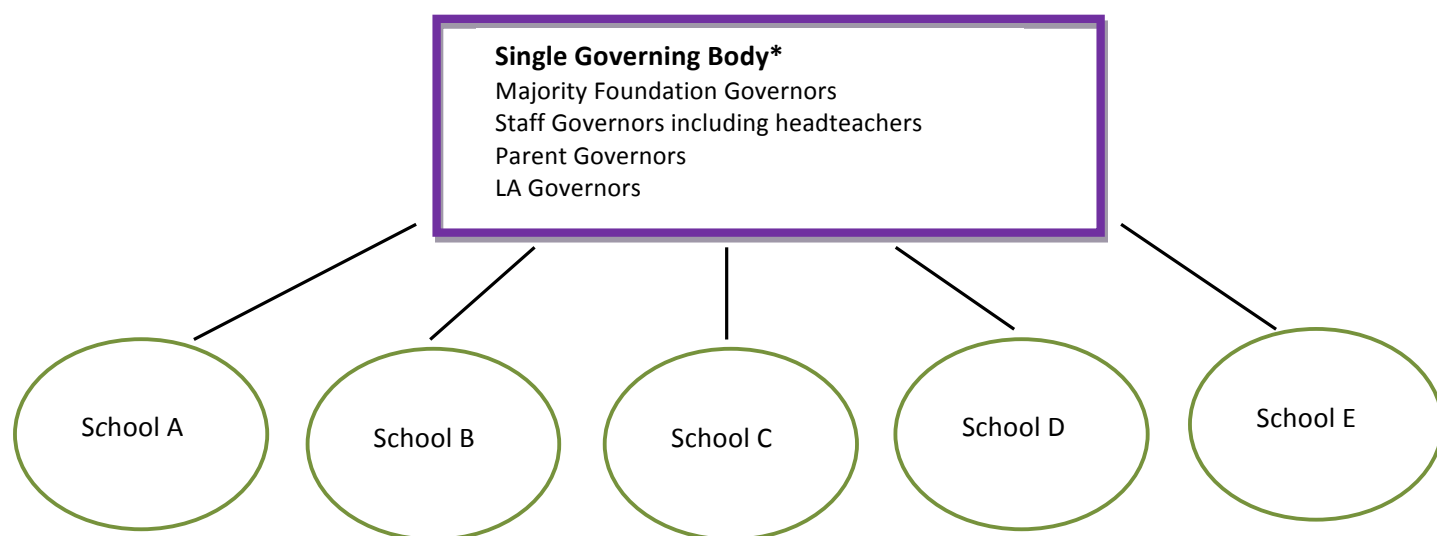
As at May 2011, the number of schools converting to academy status nationally continues to increase. Secondary schools have led on conversion as much because they have the greater capacity to manage the change, however, there are now primary schools applying in greater numbers.

- 1070 schools have applied to be an academy since June 2010
- 647 of these applications have been approved
- 384 have already converted
- a third of all secondary schools are either now academies, or in the process of becoming an academy
- the total number of open academies, including those opened under the previous government, now stands at 658.

Across Catholic dioceses, a significant number are now at the stage of detailed discussions with DfE including Birmingham, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Nottingham, and Southwark.

Appendix 1- Diagrammatical illustrations of models

Federation

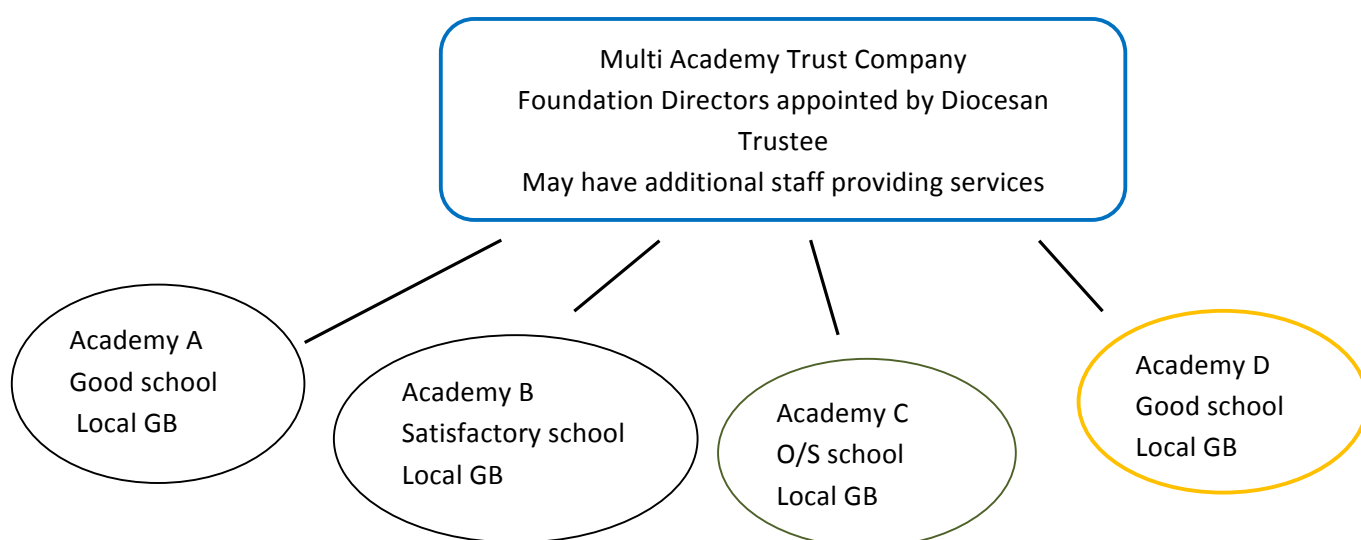


Schools may:

- Share budgets especially to cover overheads
- Have staffing arrangements operating across schools
- Use the executive headteacher model to provide leadership across more than one school

Need to establish several federations across the Diocese.

Academy



Establish several Academy trust companies across the Diocese

Trust Co employs staff, holds any leases for land, is the admission authority, establishes policies and strategy to reflect Diocesan principles, determines term dates, sessions etc

The way in which a Local GB operates differs to an existing school GB but will have a scheme of delegation to allow local decisions re staffing, curriculum

Diocesan Wide Model

