

## Parent/Carer Information and FAQs

### *Joining the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education Multi-Academy Trust*

#### **SDBE MAT**

#### **Why are St Stephen's informally consulting on joining the SDBE MAT?**

- To support and develop St Stephen's as a one-form entry school in a landscape of change.
- To provide the school with high quality services to support the day-to-day leadership and management of the school.
- To have access to high quality professional development for our staff.

#### **What is the SDBE MAT mission statement?**

- *"Creating inspiring learning communities where all can grow and flourish, rooted in God's love, bearing fruit abundantly"*

#### **What is a multi- Academy Trust?**

- A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is where a number of academies join to form a single Trust with a Board of Trustees.
- The Trust's role is to ensure that individual Academies are performing to the best of their ability and that they get the support and challenge that they require.
- Each school has a Local Governing Body (LGB). The LGB has responsibility for the ongoing governance of the school. It is comprised of the members of the current governing body and the SDBE MAT delegates much of the decision making for the school to it.

#### **Why the SDBE MAT?**

- They believe a school's identity is sacrosanct – that who we are as a school community should be protected.
- They work with the SDBE schools to improve educational standards and financial performance so that our pupils get the best opportunities in life.
- They provide almost endless opportunities for staff development and the sharing of best practice.
- They offer a large range of services to our schools, replacing some of those costly services that a school may currently buy into, including School Improvement, Human Resource management, Health and Safety, Payroll, etc.
- The SDBE MAT started in 2016 and has 12 schools at present, with others school's joining at this present time.

#### **What will stay the same?**

- St Stephen's unique identity (no branding)
- Our name
- Our ethos – Christian Distinctiveness
- Our values and vision
- Our uniform
- Our staff
- Our admissions process being overseen by Lewisham
- Our Governors- who will have delegated authority

#### **What will change?**

- The SDBE MAT will be responsible and accountable for the school rather than the Local Authority.

- The academy is funded directly by the Government not through the Local Authority. (Lewisham, however, continues to have a statutory duty of responsibility for areas such as SEN, child protection and attendance.)
- The MAT will have ultimate responsibility even though they delegate duties such as budgets, curriculum and staffing to the governors as is the case at present with the LA.

#### **Other information:**

- As a Church of England school, we are not allowed to join any other MATs.
- Our only other options – to become a stand-alone academy or not change.
- Once the school converts to an academy, there is no route, under current legislation, to return to being a voluntary aided school.
- Should the governors decide to join, the earliest will be the April 2024.

#### **What happens next?**

- Once the informal consultation stage is completed, and we have addressed any questions from staff, parents and carers, we move on to the formal consultation stage when we talk with Unions about the proposal.

## **FAQS**

#### **Q Will the SDBE match our school ethos?**

Yes, the school ethos will remain the same as will the school values. The Christian values hold by the school are also shared by the SDBE.

#### **Q Is there more funding if we join the MAT?**

#### **Q How is the Mat funded and is there an impact on the school?**

There is no more Funding. The funding from the government stays the same, it is based on the number of pupils. The SDBE will top slice money before the school is allocated their budget in the same way the Local Education Authority does at present. The Mat is a non-profit organisation.

#### **Q Who employs the staff?**

Staff are currently employed by the Governors but will be employed by the MAT. All of our staff's pay, conditions and pension arrangements will remain the same.

#### **Q Do the teachers' terms and conditions change?**

No, they remain the same as does pension schemes.

#### **Q Does the MAT have a say in our school policies?**

The MAT produces policies at a whole school level for overarching policy making eg. Finance, GPDR issues.

The school retains their freedom to have policies that reflect the context and character of the school.

#### **Q Will the school have to follow the MAT policy for RSE (Relationships and Sex Education)?**

No, the school's RSE policy is written and agreed with parents and reflects our school's context and Biblical values.

#### **Q Do all the schools in the MAT follow the same curriculum?**

No, we continue to deliver the curriculum that works for our school. We may decide to change some areas based on good practice seen in other schools.

**Q What are the underpinning values of the MAT?**

The MAT is underpinned by the same Christian values as the SDBE

**Q Will we still have Ofsted?**

Yes, this will continue as all schools are accountable to OFSTED.

**Q How does the governance of an Academy work and how does it impact on the School's?**

The governors legally have to be removed at the point of academisation but then immediately given delegated authority back. The governance will not change and they will continue to make decisions on behalf of the school.

**Q What happens if something goes wrong in the Trust or we do not like the direction they are going?**

Once you come part of a Mat you cannot revert back. The schools in the MAT have a voice and would raise concerns. Ultimately the MAT is responsible for the leadership and management of the school. The MAT is answerable to the DfE and if there is an issue of the Mat is failing the DfE step in.

**Q What level of influence does the Southwark Diocese have in the operational level of the MAT?**

The school deals with the operational, day to day running of the school. The MAT is responsible for the school's outcomes and management. The Venerable Jonathan Sedgwick is a Director on the Board of the MAT and is a representative from the Southwark Diocesan. The Board oversee the organisational level of the MAT. (The other members of the Board can be found on the MAT website - <https://www.sdbemat.org/> )

**Q If the MAT will perform audits, who will hold the MAT to account?**

The DfE are accountable for all schools.

External bodies such as OFSTED will continue, and the local authority will still oversee some areas of school such as SEND and safeguarding and Admissions.

**Q What is the maximum size that the MAT will reach?**

The MAT has grown in small steps, starting with 2 schools and is at present 12 schools. The MAT will ensure it does not take on other schools if it does not have the capacity to do this.