

Belonging to the MAT

1. Introduction by the CEO

The purpose of this document is to set out for Headteachers and Local Governing Bodies what it means to belong to the Diocesan MAT. As CEO, I am proud of all that we have achieved together since we formed the MAT back in 2015. We have built a MAT which is collaborative, supportive and successful. Whether you are new to the MAT or not, I hope that by bringing together in a single document (with a number of appendices!) our hopes and expectations, you will find this useful.

2. Vision and values

The MAT's vision is to provide the highest possible quality of education, underpinned by our Christian ethos and values. We are committed to developing cultural capital for pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, the wellbeing of staff, developing leaders, providing high quality CPD for staff, ensuring financial probity and effective governance.

Our schools are a mix of large and small, rural and urban and each school serves its local community. We are keen that schools retain the best of what is unique about them, whilst working together as part of a harmonious whole. Schools are accountable to the MAT, but we offer a significant amount of autonomy, which we know schools enjoy. We promote collaboration between schools for the benefit of pupils and staff. Our interdependence requires high levels of commitment, performance and trust. The Christian faith which underpins our MAT offers "life in all its fulness". The Church of England offers a compelling vision for education, which is all about educating for wisdom, hope, community and dignity. As a MAT, we aspire to be the best that we can be, for the sake of the almost 3000 pupils in our schools.

3. The MAT board

The MAT Board is responsible for standards and finance in all its schools. The MAT members appoint directors, or trustees. There are currently eight directors including myself-
<http://cofesuffolkmat.org/about/structure>

The board meets six times a year and has a Finance and Audit Committee, which also meets six times year and a Standards Committee which meets termly and monitors attainment and progress in all our schools. The board also has a Premises and Risk Management Committee which meets termly and reviews risks. On occasion, directors may be appointed as governors on local governing bodies.

The board is responsible for approving its annual consolidated accounts, which must be externally audited. These are published on our website-
<http://cofesuffolkmat.org/about/annual-reports-and-accounts>

A small central MAT team is based at the diocesan offices in Cutler Street, Ipswich.

The Board approves MAT-wide policies, which are published on our website-
<http://cofesuffolkmat.org/policies> and on GovernorHub. A number of these are HR policies, as the MAT is the employer of all staff.

4. Local Governing Bodies

When a school become an academy, the legal entity which is responsible for standards and finance becomes the academy trust. All our schools continue to have a local governing body (LGB), however, either for a single school or shared with (an)other school(s). The local governing body's constitution and responsibilities are set out in each school's scheme of delegation, which should be on each school's website. The scheme of delegation is reviewed from time to time by the MAT board.

In our MAT, schools are able to set their own budgets, for approval by the MAT board, and to determine their own curriculum and school-based policies. We value the role of local governing bodies in their local communities. A termly network meeting for chairs and vice chairs provides opportunities to share good practice. I provide a termly update on GovernorHub.

5. Headteachers

Headteachers are at the heart of the MAT. The MAT is responsible for the appointment of headteachers and headteachers' performance management reviews. The CEO and Head of School Improvement (and an external adviser in the case of performance management reviews) work closely with governors on headteacher appointments and the Head of School Improvement conducts performance management reviews for headteachers in their first year and then a MAT adviser does so in subsequent years, in both cases working with governors. Headteacher pay decisions are made by the trust.

Schools are encouraged to support other schools in the MAT and one of each Headteacher's performance management targets identifies what this will involve each year. New Headteachers are provided with an experienced Headteacher mentor from within the MAT and encouraged to use a Headteacher and Chair of Governors agreement to agree expectations. If Headteachers are off sick or absent, they are asked to let the Head of School Improvement know so that appropriate support can be offered.

Headteachers work in triads, providing peer to peer review and support. Headteachers value email and phone contact with a supportive group of colleagues which enables queries to be raised and good practice documents shared.

6. Accountability

As a MAT we strive for high standards in all our schools and have put in place a number of systems to ensure consistency, whilst being mindful of workload and wellbeing.

School improvement

All schools are required to use the same assessment system, Target Tracker, which schools use to assess attainment and progress and which directors use to monitor all schools. Governors can monitor their school's standards on a consistent basis. Teachers are required to update Target Tracker and schools to submit end of term data by given deadlines. Headteachers are expected to attend Headteacher meetings with the CEO and Head of School Improvement twice a term, and an annual budget briefing in March with their school business manager. Headteachers are also required to maintain a School Development Plan, using the same template format across the MAT, and to submit a School on a Page (SOAP) at the end of each half term, which we recommend should also be used as part of their report to their local governing body, thus streamlining workload. A MAT review meeting is held at the end of each term in those schools which are sponsored and have not yet achieved a judgements of Good overall effectiveness at their most recent Ofsted inspection. Headteachers are asked to provide a short news story about their school at the end of each term for publication on the MAT website- <http://cofesuffolkmat.org/news>

Finance

Schools are responsible for setting their own balanced budgets which are then approved by the MAT board, and for ensuring their financial sustainability. Schools plan on the basis of a three year budget and monitor their expenditure. All schools are required to use the same financial system, PS Financials (PSF), for which training is provided and support available. This enables the MAT to oversee all financial transactions, and schools their own. Schools are also required to follow Financial Policy and Procedures and to complete a monthly checklist. Headteachers are responsible for approving the monthly payroll. The MAT finance team meets regularly with business managers and offers ongoing support.

The MAT retains a top slice of General Annual Grant (GAG) funding (currently 5%) which goes towards the running costs of the MAT (mainly the employment of central staff), and enables the MAT to procure services from a range of other suppliers in a cost-effective way.

Buildings and Health and Safety

The MAT has provided an Asset Management Plan template for LGBs to plan future expenditure on their buildings. Our health and safety policy sets out the responsibilities of LGBs and Headteachers for health and safety in their schools. LGBs should also maintain an up to date inventory of their equipment. Our MAT has enjoyed considerable success in recent years in obtaining Condition Improvement Funding (CIF) from the ESFA, which has enabled a number of building projects to take place, which improve the learning environment for our pupils.

7. Support

The MAT fosters a strong sense of belonging to a family of church schools with shared values. We have developed a series of networks for Headteachers, business managers, chairs and vice chair of governors, subject leads and SENDCos. An increasing amount of CPD is provided across the MAT and staff are encouraged to take part. School to school Headteachers and teachers work with other schools in the MAT. The Head of School Improvement provides regular support to schools and dedicated support during an Ofsted inspection. We have a highly successful track record of school improvement, with nine schools having been inspected by Ofsted since they joined the MAT, all of which have been judged Good. We are also proud of our record on SIAMS inspections, with 13 schools having had a SIAMS inspections since they joined the MAT. 11 of these have been judged Good and two Outstanding or Excellent (the framework for inspection changed in 2018).

As well as working with schools in the MAT, we recognise, of course the existing close links within pyramids and with secondary schools. However, all schools within the MAT agree to collaborate and share expertise with other MAT schools first, before then using any other spare capacity to work with other local schools. We recognise, too, the importance for parents of having the same PD days as local schools. However, we do want to come together once a year on one of the five PD days and ask schools to plan ahead to be able to join us, usually on the Friday immediately before the October half-term for shared PD for all teachers.

We carry out an annual workload and wellbeing survey for all teachers and headteachers within the MAT and ask schools to maintain a wellbeing group, appoint a wellbeing co-ordinator and approve an action plan.

In Suffolk, the School Learning Improvement Network (SLIN) offers a similar model of peer review as our triad system. If schools wish to take part in SLIN, we would encourage schools to think about the time commitment of being involved in two models of support.

Currently Suffolk County Council offers termly visits from a Standards and Excellence Officer. Whilst most schools welcome this ongoing connection with Suffolk, if schools feel they do not have capacity for such visits, the Head of School Improvement will liaise with the SEO and defer a visit until a more appropriate time.

8. Partnership

At the heart of the MAT is our care for our pupils, and for the staff who teach them. Relationships matter in the classroom, the staffroom, between schools and across the MAT. Our job is to support you so that you can concentrate on teaching and learning. I am deeply grateful for all that schools do. Please be assured of our ongoing support for you.

Jane Sheat
CEO
November 2020

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