



BDMAT

Birmingham Diocesan
Multi-Academy Trust

PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS' INFORMATION



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
BIRMINGHAM

The Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust

The Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (BDMAT) was formed in April 2017 with the founding six schools joining in September 2017. BDMAT currently comprises the following schools:

Coleshill CE Primary
Hawkesley Church Primary Academy – Kings Norton
Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy
Nethersole CE Academy – Polesworth (North Warwickshire)
Nonsuch Primary
Quinton Church Primary
St. Clement's CE Academy – Nechells
St. George's CE Primary Academy – Edgbaston
St. George's CE Academy – Newtown
St Margaret's CE Primary – Solihull
St. Michael's CE Primary – Bartley Green
St. Michael's CE Primary Academy – Handsworth

Our values

BDMAT recognises that the future for schools lies in formal collaborations; schools working together, in partnership, to offer life in all its fullness for the young people who attend them. Church schools have a very distinctive purpose: Education is taught in an environment where there is a set of values and ways of behaving that stem from and express the Christian foundation of the school. Our schools are about providing an education within a Christian framework for children of the local community of any faith or none; our Trust seeks to provide a place where church schools and non-church schools who support our philosophy can continue to provide high quality education, knowing that their distinctive ethos will be protected into the future.

We are therefore committed to our Academies:

Educating for Dignity and Respect

Human dignity, the ultimate worth of each person, is central to good education. The basic principle of respect for the value of each person involves continual discernment, deliberation and action and schools are one of the main places where this happens, and where the understanding and practices it requires are learned. This includes vigilant safeguarding. It is especially important that the equal worth of those with and without special educational needs and disabilities is recognised in practice.

Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

Good schools foster confidence, delight and discipline in seeking wisdom, knowledge, truth, understanding, know-how, and the skills needed to shape life well. They nurture academic habits and skills, emotional intelligence and creativity across the whole range of school subjects, including areas such as music, drama and the arts, information and other technologies, sustainable development, sport, and what one needs to understand and practise in order to be a good person, citizen, parent, child, employee, team or group member, or leader.

Educating for Hope and Aspiration

How we learn to approach the future is crucial. Good schools open up horizons of hope and aspiration, and guide pupils into ways of fulfilling them. They also cope wisely with things and people going wrong. Bad experiences and behaviour, wrongdoing and evil need not have the last word. There are resources for healing, repair and renewal; repentance, forgiveness, truth and reconciliation are possible; and meaning, trust, generosity, compassion and hope are more fundamental than meaninglessness, suspicion, selfishness, hardheartedness and despair.

Educating for Community and Living Well Together

Education needs to have a core focus on relationships and commitments, participation in communities and institutions and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together. We believe our living is inextricably involved with others, sharing our humanity and life on a finite planet. If those others are of ultimate worth, then we are each called to responsibility towards them and to contribute responsibly to our communities.

What does the BDMAT Management Fee pay for?

Currently BDMAT charges a 5% Management Fee for the services that it provides – the 5% is taken monthly from the school's General Annual Grant, which is paid directly to BDMAT. BDMAT does not take 5% of the school's Pupil Premium

Christian Distinctiveness

The character and/or the vision and values of the schools underpin the drive for successful outcomes for young people, both academic quantitative ones and the 'softer' character attributes that the trust would want young people to gain. All schools will be expected to self-evaluate their provision for developing character and strengthen the values of their school, including measuring the impact that actions have had. This will form part of the 'conversation' with the School Improvement Advisor.

For those schools that have a Church of England Foundation, there will be an annual conversation based on the academies' Self-evaluation against the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework and the action plan developed following the last section 48 inspection, by a SIAMS trained advisor known to the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education.

Support for schools will be identified and brokered with schools identified as Ofsted 'Outstanding' in this area, many of which are Church of England Schools but recognising that we have strong links with non CE schools who have expertise in this area.

General

All BDMAT schools will benefit from the provision of the following services:

- Provision of Trust Members for the BDMAT
- Provision of Directors for the BDMAT
- Support with negotiations with the Local Authority (LA) on all individual academy matters
- Negotiations with the LA on academy matters at a strategic BDMAT level
- Relationships with the LA, Department for Education (DfE), Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) at a strategic BDMAT level
- Relationships with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and Diocesan Board of Education (DBE)
- Monthly briefing sheets / bulletin on all relevant topics
- Annual BDMAT headteacher conference
- Facilitated school to school networks
- Succession planning
- Risk management at a Trust level and the preparation and oversight of BDMAT risk and issue registers
- Basic telephone and e-mail advice and support as required
- Administration of SIAMS support and advice pre and post inspection if relevant.
- Administration and support with foundation governor appointments
- Regular mailings from the Diocesan Education Team
- Access to and information on education resources via electronic mailings and the diocesan website
- Attendance and support through head teacher and deputy headteacher appointment processes (interviews and preparation meetings) and an initial visit to newly appointed head teachers
- Access to new headteacher Induction programme, access to NQT programme, Pastoral support, including in times of crisis
- Initial advice on legal issues related to Church school property, site ownership and trust deeds
- Invitation to all training opportunities and events, including bespoke training (Staff or governors), by school or by cluster
- Governor training
- Attendance at Ofsted feedback

School Improvement

All BDMAT schools will benefit from a school improvement service which will provide:

- Support and challenge through a minimum of six visits a year. This will be provided through quality assured, 'School Improvement Advisors' appointed/contracted to the Trust, with a background in successful school improvement. The School Improvement Advisors will be appointed through a selection process based on the impact they are able to demonstrate in previous school improvement work that they have been involved with, and their understanding of the vision and values of the Trust. The School Improvement Advisor visits will be quality assured by the CEO; consistent reporting, templates and training will be provided by the Trust. All School Improvement Advisors will be initially line managed by the CEO. As the Trust grows this will be part of the Director of Education's remit.

The visits will be based on a dialogue between the school leaders (Senior leaders and LAB) and the advisor, with a combination of a planned agenda for trust accountability purposes and a negotiated agenda according to the school's areas for further development.

- A tailored offer developed in conversation with school leaders, around the concepts of regular external review, monitoring and evaluation. Every academy will be part of a review cycle. The reviews may be a 'peer to peer' model, a 'formal review' in Ofsted style (by an Ofsted qualified school leader), or a focused 'aspect' review. This will be determined with the school leaders and will take into consideration where the school is in the Ofsted cycle, and the school's individual development needs. The outcomes of the review will then determine the appropriate development and support needed.
- In-depth data analysis, carried out by the School Improvement Advisor / CEO and shared with the school's assessment lead and senior leaders. This will include access to Fisher Family Trust Aspire, (FFT Aspire)
- Target setting support provided through FFT Aspire and School Improvement Advisor.
- Capacity building within individual schools and between schools, through a quality assured leadership programme developed from NQT through to executive headteacher providing MAT CPD opportunities to develop and share leaders.
- Self-sustaining school improvement provided through training and appointment of area/subject specialists to work across the MAT beyond their own school. Central MAT training in areas/ aspects. A network of good practice will be developed with all schools being willing to share and receive.
- The MAT will seek to develop leaders to lead beyond their own school and where necessary influence and/or lead more than one school. Leaders will have the opportunity to be supported into new roles. Where there is weakness or lack of capacity, then an executive headteacher model may be employed.
- Opportunities to work in partnership with existing centres of educational excellence through developing a relationship with a local Higher Education provider to give access to research and development and masters programmes.
- Quality assured training and network opportunities (to include access to the annual leadership conference, annual governors' conference, middle leader networks).

Safeguarding

All BDMAT schools will benefit from:

- An initial safeguarding audit;
- Advice and guidance on the single central register;
- Support in dealing with allegations against staff etc.;
- Guidance on mandatory training; and

- Regular updates.

The MAT trust will employ an officer who is trained as the Designated Senior Lead (DSL). As the trust grows it will look to provide a designated Safeguarding Officer to support individual academies

Finance and Business

- Strategic finance support from a central finance function
- Support of all financial, back office and business support functions
- Provision of financial handbook, policy setting and liaison with the ESFA
- Bespoke financial package – all schools will be expected to operate the same financial software as provided by BDAT (Hoge 100)
- Set up of bank account
- Annual finance software licences
- Training and support
- Budget setting software
- 1 – 3-year budget preparation and management support
- Budget monitoring
- Procurement, best value and contract negotiation
- Updates on changes to national pay scales, National Insurance etc.
- Support with applications for additional grants and funding opportunities
- Management of all month end procedures and submissions e.g. VAT returns
- Preparation of monthly management accounts, if required by the school
- Regular budget meetings with the headteacher, LAB, CEO and the BDAT
- Support with the administration of the Teachers’ Pension Scheme and Local Government Pension Scheme including annual certificates and audit administration
- Preparation and submission of the SORP - charity accounts
- Completion and submission of all reports required by DfE and ESFA
- Ensure compliance to the academies handbook and accounts direction

Human Resources

The BDMAT HR team will coordinate HR services from the central team. BDMAT academies will receive support with:

- Strategic HR advice;
- Head teacher recruitment;
- Support with headteacher’s performance management/CPD/training opportunities for headteachers;
- Recruitment at all levels utilising the discounts of a larger company, including contract negotiation, and ensuring the corporate image of the BDMAT is protected;
- Negotiations with Unions;
- Review of HR practice and disseminating best practice;
- Advice and support to headteachers and Local Academy Boards so they can carry out their responsibilities;
- Access to specialist HR legal advisers;
- Support with day to day HR queries; and
- Payroll

Governance

- Support and advice for Local Academy Boards (LABs);
- Training and continued support of the LAB;
- Governance support when establishing committees etc.;
- CPD/training opportunities for governors and staff;
- NGA membership;
- Processing LAB appointments;
- Chair of Governors network group;
- Provision of the Scheme of Delegation;

- Recruiting developing and training for effective governance;
- Telephone support and advice;
- Maintenance of governor database;
- Support with skills audits; and
- Attendance at LAB meetings as required, and at least once a year.

Health and Safety

- Up to date policy documentation through the development and coordination of common policy and share best practice;
- Advice on occupational health;
- Access to Educational visit training; and
- Coordination of annual monitoring visit which will include checks to ensure the academy school's testing regime is up to date (costs covered by the academy).

I.T. Services

All BDMAT academies will, in time, benefit from:

- Website support;
- IT support; and
- Broadband support.

PR, Marketing, Branding and Communications

The BDMAT will provide a clear branding guide that sets out how the BDMAT is to be referenced and presented in all academy materials, documents etc.

The BDMAT team will offer a range of support tailored to meet the needs of individual academies including advice on communication reviews, strategy and policy in areas of:

- Stakeholder engagement;
- Recruiting and retention;
- Advertising and marketing; and
- Crisis communication.

Admissions

All BDMAT academies will benefit from:

- Advice on admissions consultations;
- Advice and support for admissions;
- Liaison with LA admissions teams;
- Strategic response to changing admissions needs;
- Attendance at meetings; and
- Access to an Admissions Appeals Panel (charged at cost).

Other

BDMAT has a working relationship with a nationally recognised law firm, who provide a telephone helpline service, giving schools access to initial free advice. Each school will be allocated an amount of additional legal support each year.

The Trust will develop a list of preferred suppliers to recommend to individual schools. These will be recommended on the basis of their financial security, references regarding the quality of their work, willingness to support the ethos in which the trust works, the trusts best value statement.

Central services, including CEO of the Trust, Finance Director and admin support, central government apprenticeship levy.

Questions you may have.....and some answers.

1.How are academies funded?

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools, with an additional amount to cover the services that are no longer provided by the Local Authority. Academies have to provide their own services from this money, although there is extra help with rates and insurance costs.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) calculates funding using a Local Authority (LA) formula for mainstream provision or place-led funding for high needs institutions. Most funding for academies comes from the General Annual Grant (GAG). Capital and pupil premium allocations are paid outside the GAG.

The financial year for academies runs from 1st September to 31st August.

2. Who is the MAT accountable to?

The MAT is accountable to the Secretary of State. As a company limited by guarantee, the MAT must prepare and file an independently audited annual report and accounts with Companies House. The trust must also hold a public annual general meeting.

3. How will BDMAT be funded?

The MAT holds the Master Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State and decides how much money to delegate to schools and how much to retain. Typically MATs retain between 5% and 8%. We plan to retain 5% of a school's budget in order to provide cost-effective back-office services and schools will decide on their own spending priorities.

4. Could this percentage be increased by BDMAT?

Any increase to the 5% would be due to an unavoidable increase in the cost of providing services to MAT Schools. Schools would be consulted on any proposed increase, and would receive good notice of any increase, and would have the opportunity to build it into their budget.

5. Will we receive any additional resources in terms of money or support?

The additional support will come from MAT central staff.

6. How much say do individual schools have in their own budgets?

Individual schools will still set their own budgets with assistance from the MAT. Budgets will need to be signed off by the school's Local Academy Board, and then the MAT Board, prior to formal submission to the EFA. The MAT does not wish to pool academy budgets therefore each school will receive their own funding, minus the agreed 5% contribution.

7. Our school is running with a surplus budget. Will the MAT take this money from us?

Your surplus budget remains with the school to save or spend as they see fit (within a loose framework of due diligence guidelines that will ensure transparency and probity).

8. Can a school with a deficit budget convert?

Conversion with a deficit is subject to the DfE's guidelines. A school with any size deficit would need to have a recovery plan in place and agreed by the DfE before they would allow its conversion.

9. How does capital funding work?

Capital works at MAT schools are funded by a combination of DFC (as in a maintained school) and the DfE Academies Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). DFC will be automatically calculated based on pupil numbers and paid once a year, whereas the CIF is accessed through a bidding process (which the MAT would assist with). Capital funds will be held and administered by the MAT, just as the Diocese currently holds DFC for VA schools, but spending decisions will be taken at a local level. Voluntary Aided schools will no longer have access to the Locally Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP), nor will they have the 10% liability towards capital costs that currently applies. The MAT can apply to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for specific capital projects – as can individual schools. All this comes within the terms of the Funding Agreement.

10. What about the conversion grant?

A school converting to become an academy for the first time, will be given a £25,000 conversion grant which is made payable to the MAT. This can be spent on the legal and other costs of conversion of each school that joins the MAT. If already an academy, there is no further grant, and an individual academy will need to cover the conversion costs out of their own funds.

11. What about LA services?

Schools already have freedom to purchase services such as HR and Finance from a range of providers. Being part of the MAT widens this horizon but within a secure and transparent framework that releases the headteachers, governors and staff of individual schools to concentrate more clearly on the core business of teaching and learning. Some services – such as school transport, oversight of the provision of school places, co-ordination of admissions at age 5 and Fair Access Protocols – are retained as a statutory responsibility by the LA.

12. What about the money which the LA currently retains?

Most of the schools' block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is delegated to schools through the funding formula, but some is de-delegated from schools to the LA for functions such as Trade Union cover, behaviour support, and the landlord's part of property maintenance, as agreed by Schools Forum. This de-delegated sum is available to academies, which become responsible for providing those services themselves.

13. How will SEN funding work?

Special needs remain the responsibility of the Local Authority so the LA is obliged to deliver the same levels of support to academies as they do to Local Authority maintained schools. This includes access to high tariff needs funding as well as access to specialist provision via the same systems and procedures that maintained schools are subject to.

14. Does the LA still have responsibilities for academies within the MAT?

Yes, the LA still has responsibility for the following:

- home to school transport, including transport for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- education psychology, SEN statements and assessment
- assigning SEN resources for pupils who require high levels of additional resource (this is a top-up to formula funding under a separate contract with the LA)
- monitoring of SEN provision and parent partnerships
- prosecuting parents for non-attendance
- provision of pupil referral units for a pupil no longer registered at an academy.

15. Can't we continue to use the same services as now?

We wish to ensure the best value for money we can, the buying power of a group of schools is stronger than an individual school negotiating their own contracts. Some services academies will be able to continue to use, and other services will be managed centrally.

16. For those services we have to pay for separately, will we have to use suppliers recommended by the MAT, or will our school be able to buy-in services from elsewhere if they chose?

BDMAT schools will be free to choose their own suppliers for services outside of the MAT's core responsibilities but will be expected to follow the BDMAT financial regulations on purchasing (i.e. like for like quotes above a specified value etc). BDMAT will be able to broker relationships on behalf of its academies that offer reduced costs and a single point of contact. In due course, it may be appropriate to consider whether there are any areas where jointly procured services might be beneficial to the MAT and its schools both financially and in terms of quality of service.

17. We work closely with our local schools. Can we continue to do so within a Diocesan MAT?

Absolutely. This is a fundamental aspect of BDAT's philosophy. Our aim is for local hubs to develop within BDAT so that local schools support and strengthen each other. Good and outstanding members of school staff will be encouraged to share their expertise across both these local hubs and more widely across the MAT. If schools have relationships with schools outside BDMAT they will be able to continue to work with them.

18. Will all the schools in BDMAT have the same policies?

We will aim to utilise the best practice from all member schools in revising both statutory and non-statutory

policies and consulting on their wording before implementation across the MAT.

19. What would happen if BDMAT no longer wished to sponsor an individual academy?

BDMAT will do all that is possible to resolve any differences or difficulties that may arise with an individual academy. In the very unlikely event that it wishes to withdraw from supporting an academy, two years' notice must be given, after which time responsibility for the academy then falls to the Secretary of State.

20. Can our school leave BDMAT?

Both sides should be committed to making the partnership work. At the moment there is no straight-forward process for a school to leave a MAT. If there were serious issues, we would try to resolve matters with your school and the DfE. We all want what is best for the children in your school.

21. How would admission arrangements change once our school becomes an academy within BDMAT?

BDMAT becomes the Admissions Authority for the academy. This means that the admission criteria can be altered (provided they are in accordance with the School Admissions Code). For church schools it would be possible to include some priority for church attenders. However, BDMAT does not have a hard and fast policy on this and will not propose any change without consultation with the local academy body.

As far as the administration of admissions is concerned, academies will find themselves in the same position as VA schools are currently. For the main September intake, the LA continues to co-ordinate the process. All applications are received by them. In late January/early February, they send an electronic file to schools of all the applications they have received and the school ranks them according to its admission criteria and returns them to the LA. This is a relatively simple administrative process that only takes place once a year. The Diocese provides training for school staff in how to do it. The LA continues to send out offer letters to parents. For mid-year applications academies (just like VA schools) undertake all the administration themselves. Protocols have been established by the Diocese and full support and training is available to help with these processes.

22. How would admission appeal arrangements change once our school became an academy within the MAT?

BDMAT buys in appeal services from the Diocese given that there is an established, effective system already in place. However, BDMAT schools will need to prepare a Statement of Case in advance of the appeal and field a Presenting Officer (governor or senior member of staff) for the appeal itself. Again, the Diocese provides training on these responsibilities and has template Statements of Case which schools can populate quickly and easily.

23. Will we still have OfSTED and SIAMS inspections?

Yes, OfSTED is responsible for monitoring academies and SIAMS inspections will continue for church schools.

24. What will be the process should our school's results drop, or an OfSTED report identify areas for improvement?

BDMAT is responsible for overall school performance and will continually monitor standards, aiming to intervene before an OfSTED inspection if students were not making the required progress.

The MAT would support the school's action plan to improve outcomes for students and broker external support, if

required. Equally, this is a two-way process and we would expect schools to notify BDMAT of any issues.

It would also be the responsibility of BDMAT to ensure that areas for developments listed in an OfSTED report and section 48 report are followed up.

25. Are there benefits of conversion in terms of educational outcomes?

Evidence suggests that schools working together in formal partnerships leads to improved standards. Joining BDMAT will give you increased opportunity to collaborate with other academies within our MAT.

26. Will staff still be employed by our school or will staff contracts be with BDMAT if our school converts and becomes a MAT academy?

The conversion to MAT status will involve a transfer of staff under TUPE. If your school joins BDMAT, it will become the employer of the staff and all staff contracts will be with BDMAT.

BDMAT will be involved with appointments of senior staff (Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher), but other appointments being delegated to your school's Local Academy Board.

27. Will staff be able to work in other schools within BDMAT? Will they have to?

Staff will have the opportunity to work in other schools within BDMAT within reasonable travelling distance. Consultation will take place on any proposed changes in the light of the needs of schools within the MAT.

28. Is there still a need for a bursar/ SBM in each school?

Individual staffing models will be specific for each school and led by need.

29. Will there be a change in the salary scales our school employees are currently on?

Staff will transfer on no less favourable terms and conditions. Any necessary amendments in the future would only be following consultation with staff and unions.

30. Who decides the pay & conditions for each school?

As discussed above, your school staff would transfer to BDMAT on no less favourable terms and conditions and any necessary amendments in the future would only be following consultation with staff and unions. No changes to terms and conditions will be made as a result of your school becoming part of BDMAT and this is protected through legislation. Of course, we all recognise that things can change in any school (academy or not) over time, but staff will not be in a worse position due to academy conversion – in fact, TUPE legislation will offer staff more protection if changes were made.

31. What will be the process for staff progression – performance management? Will there be other opportunities?

There will be a range of opportunities for staff training and staff progression, and we see this as a major advantage of schools joining BDMAT. The MAT will be responsible for the performance management of Headteachers and will work closely with governors.

32. What is the situation regarding teacher and support staff pensions once our school becomes an academy?

Teachers working in an academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), just as if they were employed in a Local Authority maintained school. Staff transferring from a maintained predecessor would simply continue their membership of the Scheme. As the employer, BDMAT would be responsible for remitting contributions to the TPS and for all other administrative responsibilities that fall to employers who employ teachers who are subject to the teachers' pensions regulations.

BDMAT will also ensure that the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) arrangements stay in place for non-teaching staff. As part of the conversion process, the LGPS scheme's administrators will undertake an actuarial assessment to determine how much BDMAT will need to contribute and the terms of that contribution. This may be higher than at present.

In short, your school's staff will not see any impact on their pensions because of the conversion to academy status. The MAT's funding agreement requires it to ensure that all staff employed by it have access to the TPS or the LGPS (as applicable). The cost of the pension contributions will be met out of the academy budget as is the case currently in maintained schools (not out of the 5% contribution).

33. What about continuous service?

BDMAT has opted to recognise all continuous service on conversion.

34. If we convert will we lose our individuality?

We recognise that schools have their own unique identity, and we want to celebrate this. We see this as a key benefit of being part of BDMAT. There is currently no expectation that your school's uniform, name or its distinctiveness would be altered as a result of your school's conversion.

35. What would be the timescale and process for conversion?

The DfE estimates that it usually takes between 4-5 months for a school to convert to an academy. Conversion can take place at any time during the year on the 1st of a month. Should your school decide to join BDMAT, we would work closely with your school through the conversion process providing project management, and support to make the conversion process as seamless as possible for your school.

36. What would happen to the ownership of our school land and buildings if our school converted to an academy?

A Church of England school site ownership is often complex and typically involves private trustees holding parts of the site, and the Local Authority owning others. In the case of each school a report on title would be commissioned by BDMAT to establish existing arrangements. For church schools, the land and buildings remain with the site trustees, usually the Diocese. The playing fields are typically held by the Local Authority and a long lease (125 years) based on the DfE model lease would be granted by the Local Authority to BDMAT.

BDMAT Board of Directors

Mini Biography: **Melanie Crooks**

Mel is Director of Finance across a number of church related entities – the Diocesan Board of Finance, Cathedral, Thrive Together Birmingham, together with the Diocesan Board of Education and the current umbrella trust for sponsored diocesan school academies, The Diocese of Birmingham Educational Trust (DBET). She is a member of the DBET Academy Finance and Scrutiny Committee, with oversight for school financial management and audit effectiveness. She also provides financial governance and management training to governing bodies/accounting officers and school business managers.

Mel is Foundation Governor for the Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall (Academy Trust) and member of the Business Committee, with a remit covering school property and finance and with delegated oversight of the internal and external audit process. This Trust is in the process of forming a Multi Academy Trust for which she will be a Board member. Mel is also a Trustee Director of the charity 'Writing West Midlands' and chairs its Finance Committee.

Mel was previously an Audit Partner with RSM UK LLP, specialising in the Education and Charity Sectors. She has worked with more than 10 academy schools through the academy conversion and set up process, providing particular support with academy financial management and governance structures. Between November 2002 and March 2013, she also worked extensively within the public sector, providing financial management and grant funding assurance services to a number of central government departments and NPBD's such as UK Border Agency, Ministry of Justice, MoD, Met Office and DCLG.

Mel has invaluable experience in reviewing and implementing academy financial management and governance from both a practitioner and oversight perspective. This enables her to ensure that industry best practice can be effectively implemented and robustly monitored.



Mini Biography: **Geoff Harley-Mason**

Geoff works both as a mentor to church youth workers supporting them in their ministry to young people and as a learning mentor to year 6 young people at school in Sparkhill. He has qualifications in both youth work and theology and has worked for several churches in the West Midlands. Currently he is chair of Governors at Arden Academy in Knowle and is also a director of the Arden Multi Academy Trust. As part of these roles he sits on the Solihull LEA Schools Forum.

Geoff is part of the church community at St Andrew's Chelmsley Wood where he is working with the church on its school's work and developing a strategy for local youth work. In the school environment Geoff is particularly interested in Mental Health education for young people and in pastoral care in schools.



Mini Biography: Christopher Mansell Chief Executive Officer

Christopher took up post as CEO of the new BDAT on 01 September 2017. Previously he was Headteacher of Nethersole Church of England Academy in Polesworth, North Warwickshire, a sponsored academy with the Diocesan of Birmingham Educational Trust since September 2014.

Prior to this, he had been Headteacher of 3 other schools in Derby City and Derbyshire, having commenced his first headship in 2000. All of his headships were at schools which were in 'difficult situations', including one that had recently been placed into Special Measures and one in an inner-city, highly deprived area.

Christopher is a serving Ofsted Inspector working within the East Midlands region, a role he plans to continue in order to retain an insight into the current expectations of the inspectorate.

Christopher lives in South Derbyshire with his wife, Louise, who is also a Headteacher.



Mini Biography: Nick Pilditch

Nick joined the team in June 2017 and comes from a business background; his expertise in that world is in business transformation and culture change. Nick is commercially trained and gained his MBA from Edinburgh Napier University in 2016.

He also has extensive experience in strategic decision making, continuous improvement, problem solving, HR, company restructuring, corporate finance and mergers and acquisition.

Nick is a chartered manager and has managed teams right up to board level while setting and exceeding KPI's across a number of disciplines with a focus on international growth. Nick works across a number of industrial sectors including defence, UK civil and defence nuclear, oil & gas and government sectors.

Nick lends us his skills from an 'outside perspective' and offers a contrasting and complimentary approach to the Board.



Mini Biography: Revd Barrie Scott

Barrie has been Vicar of St John the Evangelist, Perry Barr since January 2015 and was previously Honorary Assistant Priest (SSM) at St Michael's Handsworth for sixteen years. Between 2004 and 2015, Barrie was also Headteacher of two different schools in the Midlands, having previously served as Deputy Headteacher, Head of Modern Languages and Advisory Teacher for Languages in schools across the Midlands. Granville Community School in Swadlincote, an 11-16 comprehensive school, moved over 3 years from Serious Weaknesses to become the best school in the area, the rise in KS3 SATS and GCSE results making it one of the top ten most improved schools in the country. Following this, Barrie became Headteacher of Cannock Chase High School, a large 11-19 comprehensive school in Staffordshire and oversaw its successful conversion to a free-standing academy and a rise in results of 18% on GCSE headline measures and a comparable increase in A Level/sixth form results. The school also saw a rise from 4% to 20% of sixth-formers obtaining places at Russell Group universities. Barrie was elected to the Association of School and College Leaders National Council in 2011 and was a member of the Ofsted monitoring and the Curriculum and Standards committees. He also served on the Academies and Direct Employers Group.

Since being elected to the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education, Barrie has been closely involved with the team which wrote the successful bid for a secondary free school and is also Vice-Chair of the new Birmingham Diocesan Academies Trust. He is involved in the "Yes2Life" campaign, which is a multi-denominational, multi-faith organisation which seeks to raise awareness of and combat knife and gun crime in Birmingham. He also volunteers as a Stonewall School Role Model, is an occasional contributor to local media and is a trustee of the Thomas Bromwich Charity, which offers financial support to the needy in the ancient parishes of Handsworth, Great Barr and Perry Barr.



Mini Biography: Ravinder Sandhu

Ravinder was appointed as a non-executive Director in February 2019. Previously he led the turnaround and growth of Health Navigator Ltd, a healthcare company in London, as the Managing Director and Partner.

Prior to this, Ravinder was the Sales Director for dr foster (a Telstra Health subsidiary) which was a global leader in healthcare data analytics. Holding board level responsibility, his remit required him to oversee the sales leadership and business development of the portfolio of products and services across the UK, EMEA and APAC.

Ravinder has also held senior management positions within Bupa Home Healthcare, Healthcare at Home, NHS Commissioning Support Services and a number of the large retail pharmacy chains.



Mini Biography: Steven Skakel Senior Executive and Trustee with twenty-five years of Experience in Leadership Roles

Steven is an Independent Director and Trustee with a portfolio of roles. He is currently Chair of Shirley Deanery and Birmingham Diocesan Synods. In addition to joining the Birmingham MAT, Steven is a member of Bishop’s Council for The Church of England Birmingham, a member of the national Church of England Peer Review team, a trustee of the Barrow Cadbury Trust and a school governor.

Prior to this Steven was on the Board of NextiraOne UK as Managing Director from 2006 to 2014. He has more than twenty years’ experience of the enterprise communications market (Voice, Video, Data, Contact Centre and Data Centre) gained in operational sales and service roles offering consulting, solutions and services.

Outside of work Steven is passionate about Birmingham and the West Midlands region, despite hailing from Edinburgh! His passion and mission is to make a difference, encouraging and supporting others as they seek to be the best they can be. Steven is married to Sally with two children, Patrick (25) and Nicola (22) and they live in Solihull, West Midlands.



Mini Biography: Dr Jan Smart

Jan’s current role is HR Director of the Church of England, Birmingham. Prior to this, she was CEO of the Renewal Christian Centre in Solihull for seven years and from 1989 to 2008 she held various senior management roles at Cadbury Limited, including: Sales Analyst, Market Research, Strategic Planning, Business Development, Finance, Training & Development, HR and Employment Law . Her specialist HR experience will support the BDAT in developing high quality people practices and ensuring compliance with statutory requirements relating to HR policies and procedures, while her general business experience will support strategic planning and development.



Mini Biography: Sarah Smith Diocesan Director of Education

Sarah came to the Diocese in February 2015 from her post as Executive Head Teacher of St John's CE Primary School in Sparkbrook, rated outstanding by Ofsted, which she led successfully for eleven years.

A National Leader of Education, she has been involved in supporting schools on their journey of school improvement and has served as Chair of Birmingham Local Authority Primary Forum.

Sarah's focus currently includes developing the Birmingham Diocesan Academies Trust, of which she is now Chair of the Board, and working on growing new church schools through the Department of Education's Free Schools Programme. Following a recent successful bid, Sarah is currently involved in setting up a new secondary Free School in the Diocese and in the bidding process for further Free School options for the Diocese.



Mini Biography: Christine Thompson

Since 2012, Christine has worked as a 'Hotline' officer with the Association of School and College Leaders, offering telephone advice to all ASCL members, which requires up to date expertise and knowledge of curriculum, data for accountability, inspections, pay, performance management, employment law, management of staff and students and Governance and Trusts, as well as strong people skills. Christine has also worked since 2011 as a self-employed education consultant, supporting schools in the primary, secondary, special and pupil referral unit sectors. Her specialisms include supporting Senior teams and Governors on school improvement, particularly involving leadership and management, subject and pastoral leader training, pre and post inspection support, school evaluation and school improvement planning.

Christine's previous roles include Headship at Kingsbury School, Warwickshire, an 11-16 LA comprehensive school, from 1995-2001, which was identified by The Daily Mail as "The most improved school in England" in 1999 and by the LA as a 'Centre of Excellence'. From 2001-2003, Christine was Senior Inspector for Secondary Education in Warwickshire, leading on school improvement across the county and heading up the Inspectors' Improvement Team and the National Strategies team. She also led on the Specialist Schools roll out. From 2003-2005 she was Headteacher at Limehust High School, Loughborough, an 11-14 LA comprehensive school, and from 2005-2011 at Abbot Beyne School, Burton Upon Trent, an 11-18 LA comprehensive school. Christine led these 3 very different schools through five Ofsted inspections; all were rated Good and her Leadership was rated Outstanding. Two of the schools had significant multi-cultural populations and Abbot Beyne School was graded Outstanding for its Community Cohesion work.

In all her Headship posts, Christine developed and sustained strong teams across the schools and gained significant experience in school improvement, Governance, finance and HR. She was also elected Chair of the East Staffordshire Heads' Group and worked hard to develop strong links across the schools, many of which were Academies and parts of Trusts.



BDMAT Members



Mini Biography: **Andrew Halstead**

Andrew is the Diocesan Secretary for Church of England – Birmingham. He is the senior non-clerical executive in the diocese, leading its projects and administrative structures and is responsible for staffing and allocation of resources. He acts as Company Secretary for finance, investments, property and office services across the 184 churches.

Previously Andrew was Operations Director at the Football Association, running the opening events at Wembley Stadium and planning the National Football Centre. Andrew's background is in information systems, holding senior positions at Blue Circle, Saatchi & Saatchi, WPP, Kone and 3i.



Mini Biography: **Pat Saunders**

Pat Saunders' main career was with the Local Government Ombudsman, specialising in local authority education issues and working as a lay inspector of rural and urban primary and secondary schools when OFSTED was first established.

As Chair of Governors of a church primary school Pat played a major part in ensuring that it maintains its Christian distinctiveness while keeping pace with the national schools' agenda. Under her chairmanship the school became one of the first in the Diocese to convert to academy status and to establish a nursery and wraparound care within its Academy Trust.

Pat has also mentored the Governing Bodies of schools in difficulty, helping them to evaluate their overall performance and set a vision for the future. Pat is Vice Chair of the Birmingham Diocese Board of Education.



Mini Biography: Sarah Smith

Sarah came to the Diocese in February 2015 from her post as Executive Head Teacher of St John's CE Primary School in Sparkbrook, which she led for 11 years.

A National Leader of Education, she has been involved in supporting schools on their journey of school improvement and served as Chair of Birmingham Local Authority Primary Forum.

Sarah's focus currently includes developing the CofE Birmingham's Multi-Academy Trust and working on growing new church schools through the Department of Education's Free Schools Programme.



Mini Biography: Matt Thompson

Dean Matt is Dean of Birmingham. He was installed as Dean of Birmingham on 30 September 2017

Matt served his title at the Parish of the Ascension, Hulme in the Diocese of Manchester from 1994 to 1997. From 1997 to 2000 he served first as Assistant Curate and then as Team Vicar in the Langley and Parkfield Team Ministry. From 2000 to 2008 he was Priest-in-Charge at St Cross Clayton and Area Dean of Ardwick from 2003 to 2008. From 2008-2017 he was Vicar of Bolton and Borough Dean of Bolton from 2010-2017. He served as an honorary canon of Manchester Cathedral from 2012-2017 and as Chair of the House of Clergy for the Diocese of Manchester from 2015-2017.

Throughout his ministry, he has been particularly involved in schools, urban regeneration, interfaith ministry and community cohesion. He is interested in public theology and Ignatian spirituality.

