



'Stronger Together'

**The Leicester Academies
Charitable Trust (LACT)**

**Memorandum of Understanding
for Academy Conversion**

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the commitment of the Leicester Academies Charitable Trust (LACT) to provide services to its constituent schools. It explains the rationale for the LACT's approach within the context of the vision of the Leicester Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) for its wider family of schools.
- 1.2 The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlines the services currently provided centrally within the LACT and the contribution made as a deduction from schools' budgets ("the Top-Slice") in order to fund this work. Within the MoU, the LACT and its constituent schools acknowledge the level of support provided in the different areas and schools needs to be responsive to current need. The MoU explains how all of the LACT's schools can be involved in shaping the future development of the services provided and in supporting one another.
- 1.3 This MoU should be read alongside the LACT's Articles of Association (AoA), Master Funding Agreement (MFA), Supplemental Funding Agreement (SFA) and Scheme of Powers, Duties and Delegation (SPDD). In the event of any conflict between these documents and the MoU, the other documents will prevail. The MoU will be reviewed and updated annually by the LACT Board of Directors.

2 The LACT's approach

- 2.1 The LACT is a local family of schools who believe that we are "**Stronger Together**". Established in 2013 as the Multi-Academy Trust for the Diocese of Leicester, the LACT welcomes all schools and existing academies who share its values.
- 2.2 The LACT aims to ensure an outstanding education for all its children, and to promote the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of its schools.
- 2.3 As an academy trust, the LACT aims to provide high quality business support to maximize the resources available for schools to provide high quality teaching and learning.
- 2.4 The LACT believes in the importance of the church school at the heart of the local community, with strong links to the parish church. The LACT works closely with the Leicester Diocesan Board of Education, sharing resources and common values.
- 2.5 All schools within the LACT family are expected to support one another, by sharing best practice, providing emergency cover, or mentoring and coaching other staff & governors.
- 2.6 The Leicester Academies Charitable Trust provides:
 - * **freedom** for good and outstanding schools to develop and thrive
 - * **support** for sponsored academies to improve
 - * **stewardship** of our shared resources
 - * **nurture** for all of our schools to grow together

3. **Shared values**

- 3.1 The DBE has adopted the following statement of its core values and ethos. The DBE set up the LACT as part of its support for church schools in Leicestershire, and the LACT shares the DBE's values and ethos.

Education of the highest quality

- Education for all – the witness of **inclusivity** in a context of life-long learning.
- High personal and academic standards within Church of England Schools – the witness of **excellence**.
- High quality **Collective Worship, Religious Education** and opportunities for personal Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural Development – a **holistic education**.
- **Distinctive** education – which is overtly based upon and celebrates Christian teaching and principles and is both **professional** and **pastoral**.
- The right of every individual to ask deep and meaningful **questions** and to hear the Christian response.

Excellent leadership – principled and passionate

- The right of every staff member to experience servant leadership which values their individual contribution and supports them to be highly effective.
- Education within safe, secure, appropriate and attractive **environments** which contribute to effective learning.
- The **Vocation** to teach and support the development of a core of Christian professionals throughout education.
- Education that seeks to treasure and protect **creation** and promote sustainability for the benefit of future generations.

Trusting Relationships

- Schools 'earn autonomy' – the trust walks hand in hand with all schools offering **bespoke support and challenge**, enabling excellence for all.
- Positive, successful and creative links between **School, Church, Parish and community**.
- Education which recognises the **global** nature of humanity and seeks to promote **equality and social justice**.

4. **LACT services**

- 4.1 The Leicester Academies Charitable Trust is comprised of both central and local functions. The schools in the LACT are not separate entities but are an integral part of the LACT organisation. The core central functions are not services "bought-in" by the schools but are a fundamental part of the way in which education at the local schools is provided. LACT schools cannot opt out of these core central services. "There are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand "I don't need you" and the head cannot say to the feet "I don't need you"" (1 Corinthians 12: 20-21).

- 4.2 Beyond these core services, school leaders may wish to buy in additional services within delegated budgets. These services may be available from the central office team, from other LACT schools, from the DBE or its consultants, or from organisations outside the LACT. Subject to normal financial procedures and the need to comply with any LACT or school-level policies, school leaders are free to procure additional support as they wish.
- 4.3 The LACT Directors believe that its school leaders should be enabled and supported to focus on the core functions of their schools, namely educating children. To this end, it believes in providing as much support as possible to schools in three key areas:
- **School Improvement Support**
 - **Finance & Business Support**
 - **Governance, HR & Policy Support**
- 4.4 The LACT's approach is to maintain, and expand if possible, the range of core services provided to its schools in these key areas, since these are services which its school leaders would otherwise need to procure commercially or from rapidly-reducing local authority provision. As a consequence, the LACT intends to maintain the Top-Slice at current levels (see below), but to make it work ever harder for schools.
- 4.5 The inclusion of additional areas within the core service provision is driven by the wishes of school leaders in the LACT and is subject to agreement by the LACT Directors. In the unlikely event that a function was to be removed from the core service provision, this would be consulted upon within the LACT and would be subject to agreement by the LACT Directors.
- 4.6 Mutual support is a fundamental principle of the LACT. Schools and their leaders will inevitably be at different points in their journey, but are all travelling the same road together. Where a school needs or wants additional support, central staff may be able to provide this directly or may broker the support from elsewhere. Good or Outstanding schools within the LACT may be ideally placed to provide school improvement support, which would be paid from the Sponsorship Grant of the supported school. By serving as system leaders, the better-performing schools or those with particular strengths will, in effect, reduce their net financial contribution while benefitting others.
- 4.7 The core services currently provided within the Top-Slice funding are:

| School Improvement Support | |
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| <i>Service</i> | <i>Frequency/Description</i> |
| School Improvement visits | Termly visit by LACT Education Officer, focusing on attainment & progress, teaching & learning and leadership & management respectively |
| External advisor at Headteacher Performance Management | Annual |
| OFSTED & SIAMS inspection support | As required, supporting school and attending inspector's feedback |
| Data analysis & monitoring | LACT-wide monitoring of school data to |

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| | ensure issues addressed locally and to identify cross-cutting trends. Detailed review of data in autumn term improvement visit |
| Annual report to LGB | Report on School Improvement presented by Education Office, usually to first meeting of academic year |
| Ongoing advice & support | Routine visits by LACT Education Officer, at least termly, and telephone/email advice as required |
| Staff training & development | Staff and governor training generally is a matter for schools to arrange within delegated budgets, but the LACT provides some training courses at no extra cost to LACT members. Details of currently available courses can be obtained on request. |

| Finance & Business Support | |
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| <i>Service</i> | <i>Frequency/Description</i> |
| Financial Advice, Support and Training for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Forecasting • Financial Reporting • Financial Systems • Procurement • Insurance • VAT Returns • Business Planning • Income Generation • Internal and External Audit • Statutory Returns • Capital Projects | <p>The main role of the Central LACT Business Team (CLBT) is to work with the LACT schools on an ongoing basis to ensure that the required resources are available for effective teaching and learning.</p> <p>The CLBT consists of a Business Manager, Management Accountant, LACT School Bursar and Finance Assistant.</p> <p>Collectively the CLBT has a vast range of expertise available to provide proactive and reactive support to meet each LACT school's individual business and finance needs.</p> |
| Accountancy & Statutory Financial Returns | All schools are part of the LACT and therefore all Statutory Financial Returns to the EFA, HMRC and Companies House are completed when required by the CLBT with input from each of the schools. |

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| Internal & External Audit | <p>Internal Audit - All schools will go through a cycle of Health Check and Full-Audits on an annual basis.</p> <p>External Audit – This is carried out annually to ensure the LACT and its schools are meeting financial and regulatory requirements.</p> <p>The CLBT will coordinate and support schools through both the Internal and External Audits to ensure continued high standards.</p> |
| Pensions Actuary | This is carried out annually to assess the Pension Deficit position for accounting purposes. |
| LACT Bursar service | The Bursar Service will provide all schools with ongoing support to ensure systems are being used correctly across all LACT schools. This will consist of approximately two visits per term. LACT Schools may wish to purchase more regular visits to help support the day-to-day financial work in schools. |
| Health & Safety Audit | Health and Safety Audits are a statutory requirement and take place on a three-year cycle to ensure all Health and Safety practices are being met. Schools will receive an action plan after each audit to address any issues raised, with work to be funded by the school or through external capital grants. |
| Insurance | <p>Apart from Staff Absence Insurance, the CLBT procure and coordinate all of the necessary insurance required for each school. The range of cover includes Employers, Governor and Public Liability; Property; School Trips; Professional Indemnity; Hirers; Fidelity Guarantee; Business Interruption; Money Cover; Computer All Risks and Works In Progress. Further details of the cover are available on request.</p> <p>Ill Health Pension Insurance is coordinated by the CLBT and recharged to each school. This is calculated at 0.9% of the total payroll for support staff. There is a subsequent saving of 0.9% on employer's pension contributions for support staff.</p> |

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| Capita SIMS/FMS & Multiview Systems | The CLBT and every school within LACT use Capita's Financial Management and Multiview systems. This allows us to have a consistent approach to financial management. The costs of this system are met fully from the LACT Top-Slice. |
| Education Funding Agency - Academies Capital Maintenance Fund Bids | These are coordinated centrally by the CLBT in conjunction with YMD Boon Ltd as and when schools are eligible to bid. |
| Central Procurement for Selected Services | The LACT will advise on the procurement of any goods or services schools may require and will, if appropriate, coordinate centrally on behalf of all schools. LACT Directors decide on an annual basis strategic procurement to enable best value for the LACT. |

| Governance, HR & Policy Support | |
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| <i>Service</i> | <i>Frequency/Description</i> |
| Centralised policies & documentation | Developing central policies and procedures for use across LACT. Reviewing & revising existing policies. As required by new legislation/guidance or at request of schools. |
| Admissions service | Calculation of distance for all applications for first time / in year admission to all LACT schools. Advice as required. Assist in review of admissions policies or catchment. [DBE appeals panel also deals with all LACT admission appeals, through Partnership Agreement] |
| Networks: HTs, Governors, Business Staff | Termly meetings for LACT Networks, for dissemination of information, sharing views/issues & training |
| CPD network | Developing training for staff and governors across school functions. Sharing best practice within LACT & other Diocesan schools. |
| RE & Collective Worship training | Annual training course for RE coordinators and foundation governors, in partnership with DBE |

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| Strategic HR support & advice | All HR policies and procedures are developed centrally, facilitated by the LACT's Strategic HR consultant. This includes consultation with recognised unions through JCG. Operational HR is provided by Leicestershire County Council. The cost of this is met by the LACT schools. |
| Governance training, advice & support | Central point of advice for LACT governors. Administering appointment process (through DBE). Termly conference for Chairs. Subscription to Buckinghamshire Learning Trust development package. |
| LACT Web Portal | Provision of LACT website, hosting all LACT policies and news. Secure access areas for school leaders. |
| Subscription to DBE Partnership Agreement | Annual subscription paid, with entitlement to access services without charge/at reduced cost, in accordance with that agreement. |
| Liaison with DfE, EFA & Local Authorities | LACT Officers provide a central point of contact for all enquiries from DfE & EFA about individual schools or LACT-wide issues. Liaison with LA in relation to central services. |

4.8 Additional services are also available from the LACT and from the DBE and its consultants, at an additional cost according to the service provided. These include:

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| Additional Services available (not included in Top-Slice) |
| <i>Service (for further details, see Diocesan Partnership Agreement)</i> |
| Buildings maintenance |
| HR Project work/Bespoke HR training |
| Attendance Officer support |
| Additional school improvement project work & training |
| External Review of Governance/ Governor Training |
| Clerking of meetings, panels & hearings |

5. Financial Contribution (Top-Slice)

- 5.1 The LACT receives all funding from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) in respect of each school within the LACT. This funding includes:
- General Annual Grant (GAG), which includes the School Budget Share and the Educational Services Grant.
 - Pupil Premium
 - Primary Sports Grant
 - Devolved Formula Capital (DFC)

Sponsored academies also attract a one-off School Improvement Grant, paid to the LACT. The expenditure of this grant is agreed between LACT Officers and the sponsored school.

The local authority also provides top-up funding for high needs statemented pupils and for early years provision.

All funding is transferred to each school bank account from LACT shortly after it is received from the EFA. Schools receive a monthly statement to show the type and amount of funding transferred.

- 5.2 The LACT retains 5% of the School Budget Share at source as a Top-Slice to pay for core central services. No deduction is made from any other income stream.
- 5.3 In the unlikely event that the LACT needed to change the basis of the Top-Slice, this would be a decision for the LACT Directors after full consultation with Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers within the LACT.

6. Shaping the future

- 6.1 There are many opportunities for school leaders within the LACT to be involved in the future direction of the LACT, through the structure of the organization, through consultation and through feedback.
- 6.2 Structurally, the LACT Board of Directors includes a number of representatives from its constituent schools, alongside LACT Officers and representatives of the DBE. Other school representatives are involved in the work of the LACT's committees and working groups.
- 6.3 Policies and reports for the LACT Board of Directors are made available to Chairs of Governors and Headteachers in advance of the meeting, allowing school leaders an opportunity to comment on proposals and to influence decisions about the services provided.
- 6.4 LACT Officers meet regularly with Headteachers and with Chairs of Governors. The LACT positively welcomes feedback about its services and suggestions for improvements.

7. Commitment

On behalf of the LACT Directors and the school, we the undersigned subscribe to the principles set out in this Memorandum of Understanding, and commit ourselves to working together as members of the Leicester Academies Charitable Trust for the benefit of the school community at

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On behalf of
Leicester Academies Charitable Trust
Dated:

On behalf of
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