

Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST)

Contact Name and Details	The Revd David Deeks, Chair of MAST
Status of Paper	Annual Report to Council
Action Required	The Council to receive the report and agree nominations
Draft Resolutions	56/1. The Council receives the Report. 56/2. The Council nominates, for appointment by the Conference, for the period 2014-2017: Barbara Easton, Julie-Ann Hewitt, Robert Jelly and Lesley Brookbanks.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Clarification of MAST's role and responsibilities and its current policies and actions
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Summary of Impact

Financial	Request to conclude conversations for modest financial support
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Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST)

1.0 Context

- 1.1 There are 26 Methodist schools in the state sector in England and 39 Methodist/Anglican schools. The great majority of these 65 schools are primary schools. 40 of them are Voluntary Controlled schools, 21 are Voluntary Aided. Two Methodist schools and one joint school have become academies since MAST last reported to the Council; making 4 in all. A further 2 of the joint schools are about to become academies.
- 1.2 The joint Anglican/Methodist schools are located in 20 dioceses of the Church of England. Each diocese, through its Board of Education, runs its schools in its own way, with the diocesan boards being loosely coordinated by the National Society. MAST has to relate separately to each of these dioceses, usually through its Diocesan Director of Education.
- 1.3 One prominent feature of the geographical distribution of the 65 schools is that almost half of them are in the North West of England.

2.0 MAST (Methodist Academies and Schools Trust)

- 2.1 MAST was formed in January 2012 by the Methodist Council. The Council has delegated responsibility to MAST for the oversight of the Methodist and (jointly with the Church of England) the ecumenical schools in the state sector in respect of 'standards, ethos and school improvement' (SO 342(1)). MAST is approved by the Department of Education (DfE) as an educational provider. MAST therefore oversees support and guidance for Methodist and joint schools in providing the best all-round education for all their pupils, inspired by Methodist values and ethos and resourced by high quality professional expertise. MAST works collaboratively with the Church's Director of Education.
- 2.2 MAST is a limited company. It has up to 14 members, with a range of expertise among them. It meets 3 or 4 times a year; in each month when MAST does not meet a conference telephone call enables members to catch up with rapid changes in state-funded education and among the MAST schools. MAST sends a termly letter to the schools.
- 3.0 **MAST's responsibilities** may be summarised as follows:
- 3.1 MAST and academies. On the policy of schools becoming academies, MAST takes a neutral stance.
- If a Methodist or ecumenical school is required by the Secretary of State to become an academy, MAST will do all it can to support the legal and oversight changes to help the academy to become a success.
- If a governing body of a good or outstanding school wishes to explore its school becoming an academy, MAST will advise as objectively as possible. Only if a governing body freely chooses to convert a school into an academy will MAST then advise on processes and help to clear the path to a successful academy.

Where new schools are approved by the DfE and a Local Authority, they must be

academies. In a number of areas MAST is working with local groups of Christians in support of a bid to form a faith-based academy; but the bid process is highly competitive and appears to be skewed towards commercial providers. (MAST made two unsuccessful bids in 2013 to sponsor new academies, one to work in partnership with an existing Methodist school. MAST is currently preparing a bid in partnership with one of the Methodist independent schools; and is involved in early explorations towards joint Anglican/Methodist bids for new academies in areas of rapid population growth.) MAST will not support bids for Free Schools in areas where there is already a sufficiency of places, only where there is a proven shortage.

In the cases of existing joint schools becoming academies, or new joint academies, MAST has negotiated formal agreements with the Church of England, through the National Society, about land issues, the adaptation of a diocesan multi-academy trust to oversee a joint academy (including the appointment by MAST of a Methodist director of the diocesan multi-academy trust) and other necessary agreements to underpin the ongoing support of a joint academy from the local Methodist church, the circuit, the district and MAST.

Beyond that, MAST throws its energy into directing and developing support for all our schools, encouraging them to strive for the highest standards and outcomes within a Christian culture of compassion and understanding.

3.2. Religious Education, Collective Worship and School Ethos.

MAST has now produced its Handbook for the inspection of Methodist Schools within the SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) Framework. The joint schools inspections are largely the responsibility of the relevant diocese, though some of them will come the way of MAST. The DfE funds the processes of administration of the scheme, the training, appointment and deployment of inspectors, the writing of reports and their quality assurance; but MAST is responsible for the training and monitoring of the standard of work by the inspectors. MAST is indebted to the voluntary oversight of this work by one of its members, Neville Norcross.

Highly acclaimed RE resources, written by Lat Blaylock (national RE expert and editor of RE Today) and published by the Methodist Church, applicable to Key Stages 1-4, were launched in September 2013. They are an excellent resource for all schools (not just faith schools) and for Church-based work with children. Copies may be purchased (£35, incl p&p and VAT) via Norwich Books and Music on 0845 017 8220 or www.methodistpublishing.org.uk. MAST will mount a further conference, in the North-West, led by Lat Blaylock, to introduce these RE resources and explore their imaginative use on Tuesday 3 June 2014.

3.3 School Improvement (SI). MAST has access to the confidential information held by the DfE on the educational performance of all 65 schools. The SI Committee (comprised of educational professionals, not all of whom are members of MAST) identifies schools most at risk and makes an approach to such schools in support of help already being accessed from local networks and providers. MAST has agreements with Roehampton and Oxford Brookes Universities, and with some providers in the commercial sector, so that, if needed, help could be commissioned to add support to a school.

MAST's forward planning looks to release the potential of MAST schools working collaboratively with the Methodist independent schools, under the banner of the 'Methodist Family of Schools'. The aim is to facilitate a genuinely mutual exchange of expertise and experience in school development and school improvement. Essentially, this is a school to school support and engagement model, but with a real difference. Just being part of it is enough to be able to engage support and understanding. As in any family, we respect differences, but we encourage a strong sense of belonging together, with shared values and ethos, to support and help one another. MAST and MIST (The Methodist Independent Schools Trust) have agreed the same ethos statement for all Methodist schools.

MAST will be encouraging schools within the Methodist Family to get to know one another better in regional clusters. Fortunately, with the exception of the north-west, the Methodist maintained and independent schools naturally fall in to regions which overlap largely with the regions of the Discipleship and Ministries learning Network. MAST looks to both to add strength to and draw support from the Learning Network.

- 3.4. **Governance.** MAST must provide formal guidance to its schools and Methodist circuits relating to the appointment of Foundation Governors to school governing bodies. The guidance is currently under review. In a world where the make-up and skills-base of governing bodies is coming under closer scrutiny (not least from Ofsted), MAST is working with MIST and external advisers to increase awareness of what is expected in terms of skills and experience, self-evaluation and ongoing training for governors and governing bodies.

MAST is directly involved whenever a head is appointed to a Methodist or ecumenical school.

MAST must also advise governors on school admissions policies, and check that each school complies with the law.

- 4.0 **Local Church Support.** There is a long tradition of support for Methodist and ecumenical schools from the local church, the circuit and the district. This includes chaplaincy (typically provided by the local Methodist presbyter and/or Anglican priest), Foundation governors, informal support from the congregation, a school visitor and (from the District) the Schools Officer and the Chair of the District. Formal guidance for District Schools Officers is in preparation.
- 5.0 **MAST and MIST.** MAST has been pleased to contribute to the work arising from the Education Commission, whose recommendations were adopted by the 2012 Conference. The Revd David Gamble has facilitated this work and MAST is pleased that the Director of Education will carry it forward. In particular, as already mentioned in this report, MAST has been working ever more closely with MIST (Methodist Independent Schools Trust), through a joint group of MIST and MAST members. From this joint group comes the energy for the MIST and MAST families of schools to develop regional links and imaginative projects for sharing perspectives. In addition to the shared ethos statement and shared work on governor development, MIST and MAST are developing a shared stand at the forthcoming Conference, a shared website and a shared directory. One of the most significant pieces of work which has grown among the independent schools for over a decade is World Action in Methodist Schools - resources and projects developed in

partnership with the Methodist Relief and Development Fund for global development education to become embedded in all parts of the school curriculum. In its next phase World AIMS will increase its reach among younger children in the independent schools and simultaneously in the MAST schools.

Explorations have started on the formal arrangements for the merging of MIST and MAST as required by the Conference.

6.0 **Staffing and Resources.**

6.1 MAST's Executive Officer is James Royal, seconded to this work for 2 days a week from his role as head of Blackrod Church Primary School in Bolton. As a gift from MIST, Sandra Commins is MAST's administrator for one day a week and Lynn Braybrook (in the MIST office) keeps MAST's accounts. Members of MAST are involved in many ways in supporting the range of tasks which fall to MAST and responding to the large number of opportunities that the current ferment in public education presents.

6.2 MAST lives on a shoe-string. It is in dialogue with the Connexional Team about a realistic way of meeting its costs. It is also in the process of persuading the schools it serves that there are costs to which they can contribute for appropriate services rendered. It is important for the Council to understand that MAST's work is done in the Council's name. When MAST was formed, it was likely assumed that MAST itself would be the multi-academy trust for all Methodist schools becoming academies and that financial arrangements would be negotiated within that framework to make MAST a much larger and self-financing 'business'. That was soon discovered to be an unrealistic expectation, and fortunately the DfE has changed its approach to support more local academy trusts. The DfE is fully supportive of what MAST in reality is - an enabling and overseeing body for Methodist schools and for a network of academy trusts. Meanwhile the DfE has high expectations of the responsibility MAST holds for the performance of Methodist schools. While DfE money meets some of our costs (eg SIAMS) and while a small DfE grant remains for further developmental work, especially in respect of academy conversions, the relatively small expenditure (for the work involved) must be found by some means within the Methodist community.

7.0 **Nominations and Appointments.**

The Council is asked to nominate for appointment by the Conference the following as members of MAST:

Barbara Easton - The Methodist Church's Director of Education

Julie-Ann Hewitt - Executive Head of Bedford Hall and Westleigh Methodist Primary Academies, Wigan

Robert Jelly - Formerly the Executive Director of Education, The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA); currently the Head of Learning and Assessment at the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, Vice Chair of The Youth Consortium (Surrey and the Borders)

Lesley Brookbanks - Head of Christ Church CE Primary School, Lancaster; SIAMS inspector; Methodist.

*****RESOLUTIONS:**

56/1. The Council receives the report.

**56/2. The Council nominates, for appointment by the Conference, for the period 2014-2017:
Barbara Easton, Julie-Ann Hewitt, Robert Jelly and Lesley Brookbanks as members of the
Methodist Academy and Schools Trust.**