



# **Shaping Your School's Future**

## **(Collaborative and Structural Partnerships)**

### **Revision 2019**

## **Introduction**

Our Vision for Education is deeply Christian, with Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' right at the core. There are four basic elements that interplay and run through the whole approach, an 'ecology' of the fullness of life.

They offer a vision of educating for:

- Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills
- Hope and Aspiration
- Community and Living Well Together
- Dignity and Respect

The diocesan vision of educating for community and living well together motivates us to:

- Work with all schools and communities so that they develop and thrive in healthy ways, working to inspire each and every person in Cumbria to understand the value of community, and our need for each other
- Acknowledge that in many areas and ways, schools are growing the communities of the future, which places a premium on their human relationships
- Promote the development of character education, which celebrates 'life in all its fullness' through cultivating and celebrating Christian virtues
- Understand ourselves as members of communities who influence those communities
- Recognise our place within the world community, seeking to promote this understanding and the breadth of vision it requires
- Desire that all school communities celebrate opportunities for forgiveness and reconciliation
- Encourage schools to be places where all are spurred on to volunteer and serve
- Engage with the challenge of modelling and teaching commitment to hospitality and welcome
- Encouraging all churches to play a key role in their local schools and communities

Within our Church and Partner Schools, this also commits us to:

- Being church schools for all, as opposed to 'faith schools'
- Demonstrating the ways in which the Christian message creates, grows and sustains healthy community via forgiveness, love and generosity
- Encouraging and supporting all churches to play a strategic role in forming sustainable local partnerships with schools to share facilities and community resources, having a shared ambition for those communities
- Developing long-term sustainable educational structures, such as our MAT, where this is in the best interests of the young people and our communities
- Loving our communities, seeking to serve and promote the common good
- Offering a wide and generous welcome to all

This guidance is for senior leaders and governors of standalone schools (maintained schools or academies), as they consider the sustainability of their schools. It will provide assistance during the decision-making process and, ultimately, enable schools, with the diocese, to make the right decisions for their school and the local community.

In November 2015 the Board of Education affirmed the following basic principles that it would use in any cluster or local discussions about the future of church schools.

1. Support for the presumption against the closure of rural schools which is underpinned by a strong commitment to the role of church schools serving their local communities;
2. Encourage and support schools proactively to seek forms of collaboration that encourage the sustainability of local schools;
3. Make judgements on the on-going sustainability of a school based on the quality of education, leadership and management and its financial viability based on accurate forecasts;
4. Judgements will not be based on numbers at the school or generalised assumptions as to the effectiveness of small schools or the high unit costs of such schools; and
5. Work closely with schools to give advice on all aspects of relevant process so that they can respond in the way they wish to and support them through change, if agreed.

This document should be read with reference to the following documents

[Guidance Paper: Forming or Joining a Group of Schools: staying in control of your school's destiny \(ACSL NGA\)](#)

[Embracing Change: Rural and Small Schools \(Church of England Education Office\) 2018](#)

The challenges of leading a rural school. A state of Education series report. [www.thekeysupport.com](http://www.thekeysupport.com)

### **Church schools in Cumbria**

Our diocese is unique in that a significant majority (93%) of our primary schools fall into the category of Small or Very Small, with 80% of our pupils being taught in these schools.

Nationally, 65% of C of E Schools are small or very small, but 60% of pupils are taught in schools that are larger.

53% of Church of England Schools nationally are situated in rural areas with 32% of all pupils. 19% of non-church schools are rural with 9% of the total number of pupils.

School Type [Nat Soc sub division]	Number of Primary Schools	Headcount
210+	7	2011 (20%)
Small (111 – 209)	26	4062 (40%)
Very Small (Fewer than 110)	69	4103 (40%)

*Source: Cumbria County Council Jan 2019*

### **Local Overview**

Cumbria is not immune from changes that are occurring nationally, and neither can schools ignore the local challenges.

The school landscape in England is changing rapidly. As at February 2018, about 28 per cent of primary schools and more than 72 per cent of secondaries were academies. More than half of academies are now part of formal partnerships (MATs), and maintained schools are continuing to come together to form federations.

In Cumbria **60.5%** of all secondary schools were academies and **11%** of all primary schools. (February 2018). From February 2019 over 50% of all pupils in England were taught in academies for the first time.

Much of the support for schools is now being delivered through many active local cluster arrangements and through the development of Cumbria Alliance of System Leaders (CASL) which is supporting structures and networks to build the capacity so that schools can ensure they receive the school to school support they require. This includes very close working relationships with the increasing number of Teaching School Alliances in the county.

The development of the Diocesan Vision for Education 2018 identified the specific challenges faced in Cumbria. This includes:

- Rolls falling, particularly in rural areas.
- An ongoing reduction in school funding.
- The complexities of national movements towards new structures for school organisation, including multi academy trusts (MATs) as well as strong cluster working locally.
- The different impacts of changes in church structures, resources and deployment; fewer full-time paid ministers brings an emphasis on self-supporting ministers and lay ministry, and affects the number of governors, whilst also providing a significant stimulus for greater lay involvement, and opportunities to do things in new ways.
- Our Diocese and County-wide vision of God for All, with its emphasis on mission and outreach, which encourages, expects and equips churches and church people to look outwards, including to their local schools.

## **School performance**

Church schools in Cumbria perform well and SIAMS (church inspection) outcomes are even better.

However, the number of outstanding schools is below the national average and this may be linked to how difficult it is for small schools to attain an outstanding judgement.

‘The pattern of education in England is shifting. Schools that once were islands are becoming connected. Indeed, it is increasingly rare to find outstanding schools that do not have a web of links with other schools.’

### **NCSL Prepared to Lead 2011**

The reality has been that, in order to make many of our small schools economically sustainable, headteachers have taken on substantial teaching commitments and can only fulfil their senior leadership function for a very limited part of each day, with enormous pressure on their time. This is likely to increase as budgets get tighter and schools feel less well supported with the business of running a school. None of this is sustainable and has the potential to become crisis management at its worst.

<b>Ofsted Outcome</b>	<b>Church Schools</b>	<b>Cumbrian Schools</b>	<b>Schools Nationally</b>
Outstanding	15%	13%	20%
Good	77%	75%	65%
Requires Improvement	7%	10%	11%
Inadequate	1%	2%	4%

## **Pupil forecasts**

Pupil rolls particularly in rural areas will be a challenge. Numbers in primary schools in January 2018 were 10498. In January 2019 it was 10176. A fall of 3% in one year. There is a predicted fall of 8.7% by 2023. with 10 schools by more than 25% over the same period. Rural schools can also have higher rates of mobility

This represents an expected fall in pupil numbers in 60% of church schools regardless of size.

***Admissions for 2018-19 show over a third of church schools admitted fewer than 10 pupils and almost a quarter 6 or fewer.***

### **Recruitment and governance**

The recruitment and retention of headteachers is an ongoing concern with relatively few applications for headship.

Many local schools now face real difficulties in recruiting experienced and outstanding leaders. Evidence nationally emphasizes the particular issues for rural and coastal areas.

***There is around 11-13% foundation governor vacancies and there will be fewer paid ex-officio clergy.***

### **School budgets**

The backdrop continues to be one of limited financial resources and constraints.

Historically, LAs with a significant proportion of rural schools have been amongst the most poorly funded.

Restricted budgets and increased staff cost will continue to mean real terms reductions taking account of any changes resulting from the implementation of a national funding formula particularly for those schools not attracting sparsity funding. Research collected in 'The challenges of leading a rural school', notes that staff in small rural schools are experienced and therefore more expensive on average but are needed to manage mixed year classes.

The impact of increasing costs for special needs children is also having an impact. A high number of SEN pupils proportionately in a small school can have a significant effect due to the requirement of schools to find the first element of funding from their core budget.

With reduction in capital funding the quality of school buildings will deteriorate.

### **A strategic response**

The diocese encourages schools to undertake a [self-evaluation](#) of the strengths and weaknesses for the school going forward and to consider the risks to the school.

Governing bodies need to plan for succession and what that will look like for the school. This isn't something that can be done overnight or be a response to a resignation or other event. The time when each school or establishment has its own headteacher will disappear.

Likewise, governing bodies, perhaps highlighted in undertaking skills audits, will find that the number of willing and skilled governors will decrease.

But many leaders and governors are unsure about the options available to them, concerned about the time, commitment and knowledge required to properly understand these choices. They may be nervous about the changing expectations of schools and concerned that decisions may be taken out of their hands if they struggle to meet those expectations. The diocese wants to work with governing bodies and empower them.

**Where do you see your school in five years' time?**

**Do you have a succession plan in place for your headteacher?**

**How could a formal partnership arrangement deliver better opportunities and outcomes for your pupils and staff?**

Governing bodies should:

- a) Consider undertaking the diocesan audit**
- b) Produce an action plan**
- c) Engage in local cluster discussions**
- d) Discuss options with the diocese**

The Board of Education will continue to work with other diocesan leaders and structures to encourage closer working between all schools and local churches. In many cases it is the local school and the local church that sit at the heart of their communities and increasingly they need to work together so that both can continue to serve.

The Church's network of parishes is too often an under-used resource for its work in education. Every school in the country, regardless of its religious designation, sits in a parish and could therefore benefit enormously from a mutually supportive relationship. Excellent practice found in the report demonstrates that this needs to be much more than the incumbent sitting on the governing body ex officio.

**Many schools where the Church's vision for education was thriving reported:**

- Strong relationships between the head and clergy, providing spiritual development for the whole school community and particularly pastoral support for the head
- A shared vision between the school and parish for the enrichment of the whole community
- The parish supplying a strong pipeline of engaged, supportive and challenging governors.
- School families and staff deeply involved in parish life.

*More opportunities for the promotion of this kind of relationship need to be developed so that they happen more regularly and rely less on a personal connection between the headteacher and incumbent.*

**Training and developments partnership project: Needs analysis report National Society September 2015**

## **Collaboration**

Page 2 (and appendix 1) of the ‘guidance paper’ – (see below) outline the benefits of collaboration:

- strong collaboration with shared accountability can lead to better progress and attainment for pupils, and help schools meet rising expectations
- school leaders and teachers can share thinking and planning to spread expertise and tackle challenges together
- governors can come together to share strategic thinking, to combine skills and to support each other during challenging times
- school leaders, teachers and other staff can be shared across more than one school, enabling schools to find different solutions to recruitment challenges, to retain staff by providing new opportunities within the group and to plan succession more effectively
- groups of schools can find it easier to find and fund specialist expertise (specialist teachers and specialists in areas such as data analysis, finance, health and safety) and provide richer curricular and extra-curricular activities shared professional development can more easily be arranged, whether led by staff from one of the partner schools or an outside body
- the economies of scale and collective purchasing made possible within larger groups can help schools cope better with shrinking budgets (Appendix 2 provides examples of areas in which financial efficiencies can be made)

Please note also that in our context, in particular, the cost of employing a head to teach and the difficulty in recruiting to governance or school leadership.

Evidence suggests that the more formal collaborations are the greater the impact of the benefits outlined above, there is greater shared accountability and the collaborations are more likely to lead to greater sustainability and long-term school improvement.

## **Partnership Models**

Based on: [Guidance Paper: Forming or Joining a Group of Schools: staying in control of your school’s destiny \(ACSL NGA\)](#)

There is plenty of advice, on how more formal partnerships work. Note that there are specific legal requirements and restrictions involved of which church schools considering entering into such partnerships should be aware.

It is worth noting at this stage several aspects that won't change if a school enters into federation or a multi academy trust:

- Individual schools remain as separate entities, with separate names and DfE numbers



- Individual schools still receive separate Ofsted judgements (though Ofsted are beginning to 'co-schedule' inspections of schools in some groups and to do some preliminary inspections of MATs)
- Performance tables are still based on individual schools
- Individual schools retain their existing religious (or non-religious) character though governance may be an issue

Schools need to consider looking at such an arrangement from a position of strength when they perhaps feel they are doing alright and don't have to change rather than responding to a crisis.

Both federations and MATs involve two or more schools coming together under a single accountable body. They remain as separate schools, but responsibility for all schools in the group ultimately rests with the single accountable body.

All schools in federations are maintained schools. Federations are accountable to their local authority.

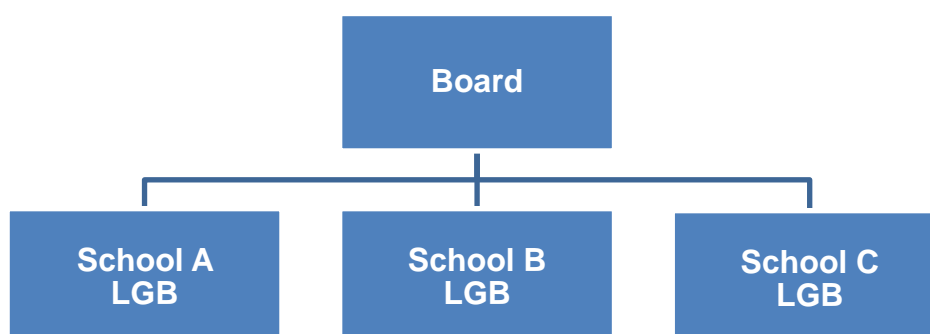
All schools in MATs are academies. MATs are accountable directly to the Secretary of State through the Regional Schools Commissioners. They are set up as charitable companies.

***Therefore, academies and maintained schools cannot enter into a formal partnership involving shared governance.***

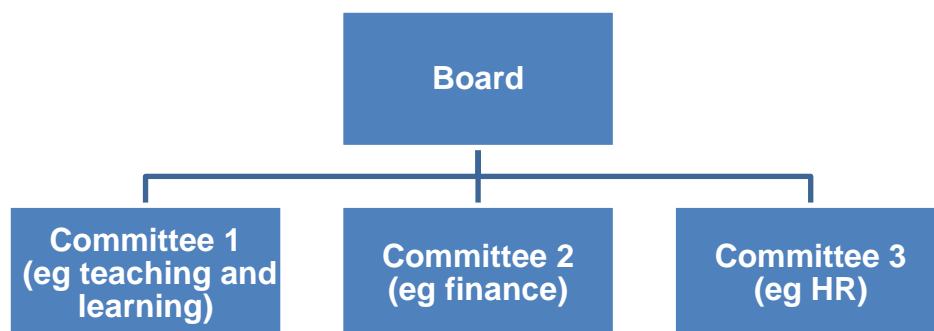
Schools forming or joining either type of partnership become accountable to an over-arching board which sets the strategic direction for all schools in the group.

Most groups, particularly as they get bigger, will also want to set up committees or local governing bodies (LGBs), they sit under the main board. These committees can be focused on individual schools or on specific areas across schools. For example, see the following models.

#### **Model 1: School-based committees**



## Model 2: Issue-based committees



Federation governing boards must have a minimum of seven governors. The types of governor required are determined by the types of schools that are federating. All federation governing bodies must include:

- one parent governor elected or appointed from each school
- the headteacher of each school (unless there is an executive head of both/all schools)
- one staff governor
- one LA governor
- foundation governors for church schools

Most federations opt for issue-based rather than school-based committees as this encourages governors to think strategically across all the schools in the group and reduces the number of governors required across all the schools.

### **Diocesan advice**

***The following section provides specific recommendations and advice for church schools***

### **Collaboration**

Most schools in reality are already collaborating with schools within their area on an informal basis and can look to formal collaboration to strengthen and build on existing good practice. Formal collaboration under the collaboration regulations enables governing bodies to work more formally together and is an arrangement which is legally recognised.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/1962/contents/made>

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/governance/a0056911/collaboration-and-federations-an-overview>

Under these regulations, a joint committee with representatives of the governing body of each school can be delegated powers, usually with a specific area for development e.g. IT or community cohesion. Any decision made by this joint committee should be ratified by the full governing body of each school within the collaboration. Where there is a mixture of church and non-church schools, it would be inappropriate for such a committee to make recommendations on any areas fundamental to the church foundation or Christian distinctiveness of any of the schools.

“Informal collaborations have served small schools well, and have contributed greatly towards the richness and variety of children’s learning experiences.”

‘Better Together – Models of Collaboration for Small Schools’ DCSF 2009

### **DBE Recommendation**

***Both informal and formal collaborations offer a useful and positive development for schools in partnership working and should be considered as a constructive way of maintaining and developing good educational provision at church schools. The DBE supports schools looking to develop this approach to working more closely together but would oppose the delegation of any decision, which may impact upon the Christian ethos, and distinctiveness of a church school working in a collaboration.***

### **Specific Issues for Church Schools in Federations**

While the Federation Regulations allow for the federation of any different type of school, the constitution of the federated governing body can be an issue when church schools federate with other categories of school. Ideally, it is best when VC/Foundation schools federate with other VC/Foundation schools, and VA with VA.

***It is acknowledged that the context of Carlisle diocese, where many schools are rural and where there is a roughly even split between VC and VA church schools it is likely that insisting on VA only federations would be a significant barrier to collaboration and such ‘mixed’ proposals should be looked at sympathetically.***

VC/Foundation/Community school federations can work very effectively but with the following issues:

- The maintenance of foundation governors for each VC school within the federation is critical to maintaining the ethos and Christian distinctiveness of the school (depending on the governance structure).
- A balance of clergy and lay foundation governors should be sought with parishes or mission communities considering the wider support requirements across the federation
- Foundation governors should not be left to undertake the RE, PSHE, SIAMS and Collective Worship policies across all schools within the federation unsupported. There must be corporate responsibility from the federated governing body for all aspects of each of the schools within the federation
- The appointment of an executive head across the federation must be very carefully considered (see below)

The trust deed of each church school must be checked to ensure that there are no requirements contained within it which would inhibit a federation. Most issues can be resolved by making a submission to the Charity Commission, but care would need to be taken in relation to early years and extended services provision, and if children from a different age range may be taught at the school under the federation arrangements. The instrument of government for the federated governing body must contain an appropriate ethos statement for all church schools. This and the trust deed are the legal documents underpinning the school's Christian distinctiveness and must not be weakened or overlooked.

The DfE guidelines do not make mention of the distinct nature and role of the ex-officio Foundation Governor on a Governing Body; and does not name the role within the governance guidelines, even though technically the Governing Body could elect to have more than one Ex-officio appointed. The strong recommendation from the DBE is that all Church schools in a Federation ensure that the planned governance model includes the ex-officio Foundation Governor as a distinct role, as a right of office. The DBE would not support a proposed composition of the Governing Body which did not recognise the Ex-officio Foundation Governor position. Appropriate training in 'Church School Distinctiveness' should be provided automatically for **all** members of a federated governing body involving one or more church schools.

**The above also apply to VA schools.**

**In addition**, there are a series of other issues that make it difficult for VA schools to federate with any other category of school.

- In a mixed VA/non VA federation, the governing body would be the admissions authority for the VA school, while the local authority would be the admissions authority for any VC or community school.

- In a mixed VA/non VA federation, the governing body would also be the employers of the staff at the VA school, but not at the VC or community school. This can generate issues over contracts for staff working across more than one school in the federation, including an executive head. There are additional occupational requirements regarding Christian commitment that can be applied for a VA school that would be problematic in a mixed federation
- The capital funding for VA and non VA schools is currently different and VA capital cannot be vired across and used in non VA schools. This inhibits the ability to effectively share resources in a mixed federation. The federated governing body must bear the governors' 10% liability for capital works at VA schools.
- There are additional responsibilities regarding the delivery of RE and SIAMS inspection arrangements

The governing body of a federation comprising only voluntary controlled schools must also include at least two (but no more than one quarter of the total) foundation governors.

The governing body of a federation comprising only voluntary aided schools must also include such number of foundation governors as to outnumber all the other governors by two. **The same will be a requirement of any federations that are to be supported by The Board of Education that contain voluntary aided schools.**

The governing body of a federation comprising voluntary controlled schools and community, community special or maintained nursery schools must also include at least one foundation governor. It is likely that the DBE would insist on 25%.

### **DBE Recommendations**

- That schools give serious consideration to federation, not only when a trigger point is reached, such as a headteacher resignation, but as part of the governing body's long-term strategic planning for the sustainability and improvement of the educational provision at their school and across the area.**
- That church schools contact the Diocesan Education Department at the outset of any conversations on federation or different models of school organisation or leadership to enable discussion as to how arrangements might work and what would be acceptable to the Board.**
- That, wherever possible, VC schools look to federate with other VC schools, but do not ignore the potential for federation with community schools.**
- That VA schools seek to federate with other VA schools. In exceptional circumstances the DBE will agree to VA schools being part of a federation consisting of non-VA schools where there is a majority of foundation governors.**

- e. **VC schools wishing to federate with VA should consider a change of status to VA first**
- f. **That the strength of the foundation for any church school entering a federation should be safeguarded by the maintenance of the ex-officio foundation governor role and with a minimum of 2 foundation governors on any federated governing body and preferably 25%.**
- g. **That full training on Church School Distinctiveness be provided for all federated governing bodies where there is a church school involved.**
- h. **That the instrument of government for the federated governing body is discussed at the earliest opportunity with the Diocesan Director with regard to the structure of the governing body and must include the appropriate ethos statement.**

In all cases the diocesan Board of Education would need to agree any proposed revised Instrument of Governance.

### **The Good Shepherd Multi Academy Trust**

The academy trust (the MAT) for the diocese of Carlisle is a 'mixed' MAT and, therefore, can accept any school. As a charitable company, the MAT has articles of association; legal documents that set out the governance composition and procedures for the trust.

Why a Diocesan MAT?

- Providing a clear set of principles and a distinctive ethos which impacts the decisions and direction and priorities of the schools working together;
- Helping address financial pressures including those arising from falling rolls;
- Overcome recruitment and succession planning problems; and
- To provide a church school solution to schools in difficulties

The directors:

- Ensure the organisation remains solvent and spends money in accordance with its charitable objectives;
- Ensures the schools in the MAT provide a good standard of education; and manage the delivery of central services and policies

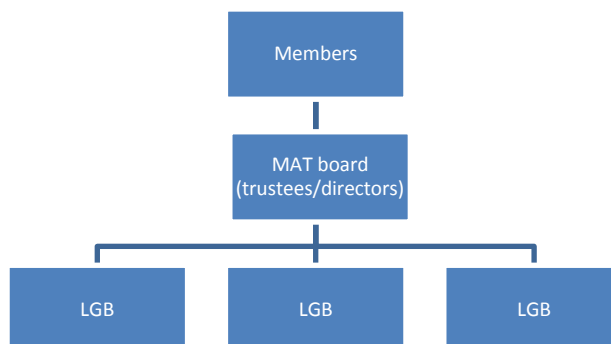
The MAT provides a co-ordinated approach to monitoring and supporting school improvement and reducing headteacher and governor workload.

MATs are also required to have a group of members who sit above the board of trustees. The members have a hands-off but significant role. They monitor the performance of the trust and hold the directors to account. They will intervene if the board is not performing by making changes at board level. It is likely that the members will meet rarely, though they are able to meet more often if they wish. They are the conscience of the MAT and include senior members of the diocese.

Please note that a MAT is really another form of federation, but the structure and governance provide even more flexibility around budgets and staffing arrangements to enhance the benefits of collaboration e.g.

- all staff TUPE across so there is one employer meaning it is easier to provide new opportunities for staff<sup>1</sup>
- opportunities to allocate budgets and funding more flexibly
- governance at local governor level reflects the previous nature of the school.

The governance model in the diocesan MAT therefore looks like this:



The structure also allows local schools to work together in clusters whilst benefiting from greater economies across a larger number of schools. Schools working together and deciding on staffing and local support without the bureaucracy that comes with every MAT. That autonomy is secured through schemes of delegation.

The Diocesan Board of Education took the decision at the end of 2014 that any schools wishing to become an academy must currently join the diocesan trust. The reasons for this were to ensure that structures were sustainable in order to support struggling schools whilst providing maximum devolution for good or outstanding schools.

However, the Board acknowledges that there are limits to the capacity of one trust and that some schools will want to see more locally based governance, though the cluster model goes some way to overcome this. The diocese continues to work closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner to look at a more devolved model with church majority governance trusts where sustainability can be secured.

More information on the diocesan trust can be found on the trust website

[www.thegoodshepherdmat.co.uk](http://www.thegoodshepherdmat.co.uk)

<sup>1</sup> When a school converts to academy status, the conversion is covered by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE Regulations). This means employees are legally protected when the School converts to an academy and they will transfer from their old employer (in this case, the Governing Body of the School) to their new employer (in this case, the Multi-Academy Trust) on the same employment terms and conditions. Staff working in an Academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) just as if they were employed in a LA maintained School. Membership of the TPS will automatically transfer with teaching staff when the School converts to an academy.

## **Summary**

1. Governing bodies to consider strategically the future of their school and consider the options available.
2. Consider the particular issues for church schools in entering into any type of collaborative arrangements.
3. Engage in cluster group discussions.
4. Ensure the diocese is informed at an early stage should the school be considering any kind of arrangement.

Please refer to the document

[Guidance Paper: Forming or Joining a Group of Schools: staying in control of your school's destiny \(ACSL NGA\)](#) to consider strategies for engaging in the debate