



## Central services to schools 2023-24

### The vision and ethos of the Trust

The vision of the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust (DGAT) is to provide children of all faiths and none, with excellent educational provision which transforms lives within a caring and supportive Christian ethos. Our decision making and the central services we offer are focussed on the needs of each school, ensuring that children get the best primary school experience that we can offer. This means that we use our financial resources as effectively as we can to support teaching and learning and we invest in our staff to enable them to be the best they can be.

Working collaboratively to sustain and develop excellent educational provision is at the heart of the Trust's ethos. It is an expectation that all DGAT academies will play an active role in sharing best practice and learning from one-another, as well as being outward facing, engaging with the wider local and national educational agenda.

### Quality of service

Christian service sits at the heart of all we do. We value all our academies equally and will demonstrate this through the quality of service we provide. There is a direct contact number for each of our central team members and we aim to provide a response to emails and telephone messages within 5 working days. It will often be much quicker than this and will be immediate in an emergency, but where your query will take longer than this to resolve, we will give you a clear indication of timescales.

As a learning organisation we strive to ensure our services are the best they can be, and we will seek your views to improve further.

### The offer:

The Trust provides a wide range of support to its family of academies. This falls broadly into six categories:

1. School Effectiveness
  - A wide range of high quality CPDL events
  - Frequent visits from the school effectiveness team to work with the Headteacher and governors on school priorities, providing support, challenge, coaching and mentoring. This support can vary depending on the agreed self-evaluation of the school.
  - Joint monitoring activities to quality assure teaching and learning judgements
  - Pastoral support for Headteachers including a weekend duty phone number
  - Support with preparation for Ofsted and SIAMS visits and collation of self-evaluation documentation
  - Onsite support on the days of inspections
  - Headteacher support and networking through regular virtual Huddles and in person Headteacher days
  - Induction programme for new Headteachers
  - Termly leadership development and networking opportunities through subject and aspect specific forums led by expert practitioners for example SEND, EYFS, English, Maths, Pupil Premium
  - Moderation across the Trust for all year groups

- Access to a Pupil Premium Champion providing support for the progress of disadvantaged pupils
- Support with writing and monitoring the impact of focussed Pupil Premium work
- Undertaking of Headteachers' performance management
- Philosophy for Children (P4C) training for all school staff
- Peer reviews and joint work scrutiny to support key aspects of school effectiveness work
- Support in evaluating the impact of work in developing outstanding practice, including production of template documentation and written reports for headteachers and governors
- Provision of statutory policies including safeguarding
- Access to a wide range of documents and resources to support leaders in all aspects of their role
- Support, training and continued professional development and learning opportunities for all staff
- Support for schools with RSHE and wellbeing work from the Trust Wellbeing Lead
- Opportunities for pupils to work together with children from other Trust schools
- Pupil tracking software (Target Tracker/Sonar in 2023-4), training, support and data migration
- Subscription to School Bus and The Confederation of School Trusts
- An annual Trust wide INSET day
- General advice and support in terms of school leadership and decision making.
- A weekly communication (the Herald) which distils DfE, LA and Trust communication in one easy to read place
- A range of documents to save leaders time in monitoring and evaluating provision

## 2. Safeguarding

- An annual safeguarding audit
- Support for all safeguarding questions from the Trust Safeguarding Lead
- Support with dealing with allegations against staff
- Access to the Trust safeguarding policy which is updated in line with any changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Update training for DSLs, those responsible for the single central record and safeguarding governors
- Guidance in accessing mandatory training for school staff and governors
- Advice and guidance on the single central record from the central team
- Supervision as requested for DSLs.
- Safeguarding induction training for all new Governors.

## 3. Governance

- The oversight of the Trust Board, who take on the legal and statutory responsibilities of the Trust and its schools.
- Access to central governance lead support and expertise
- Legal advice and support as necessary
- Support throughout the conversion process
- Training and support to transition from maintained governance to academy governance
- HR support for conduct and capability hearings and appeals
- Processing of appointments for governors (including foundation appointments)
- Membership to The School Bus and The Confederation of School Trusts
- Chairs of Governors' Group meetings three times a year
- Clerks' forum meetings three times a year
- National Governor Association (NGA) membership

- Advice and support regarding admissions
- Training opportunities for governors including annual update training for safeguarding, SEND and pupil premium governors
- The writing of significant change business cases, as required
- Regular governors' briefing to ensure governors are kept abreast of policy and legislative developments, for example changes to national funding arrangements
- Central staff attendance at governor meetings
- Policy co-ordination and development
- Support with handling complaints, and conduct and capability issues
- Central clerking support when requested

#### 4. Finance

- Access to a central finance team via telephone and email
- Statutory ESFA returns completed for each school including
  - ✓ Budget return (BFR, combined budget and 3-year forecast return)
  - ✓ Land and buildings return
  - ✓ Annual rates reclaim
  - ✓ Annual accounts return (AAR)
- Completion and submission of all financial reports required by the DfE
- Maintenance of the capital asset register
- VAT returns to HMRC
- Challenge and support to Headteachers and governing bodies regarding establishing long term (3-5 year) financial forecasts
- Bespoke finance package, including all annual finance software licences and budget setting software
- Ongoing training and support on all financial software, procedures and reporting
- Regular school business manager and finance staff forum
- Practical support with budget preparation and management, including monthly or bimonthly budget meetings with the Headteacher
- Regular updates and briefings on all financial and business-related matters, including, for example, changes to national pay scales and National Insurance rates
- Management of all month end procedures and submissions including VAT returns
- Preparation of monthly reports to Headteacher, Local Governing Board and the Trust
- Administration of the Local Government Pension Scheme and Teachers' Pension Scheme, including completing annual certificates and audit administration
- Management of procurement, best value and contract negotiations
- Applications for additional grants and funding, as opportunities arise
- Preparation and filing of annual Statutory Accounts for the Trust
- Regularity audits including liaising with internal and external auditors
- Preparation and submission of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) – charity accounts
- Administration for all actuarial valuations
- Compliance checks on all financial and business functions
- Setting up and maintaining all bank accounts
- Supplier credential checks
- Membership to the Gloucestershire Association of School Business Managers if required
- Provision of a central finance function
- Administration and payment of the apprenticeship levy

## 5. Estates and Business

- Audit of the estate and prioritisation of actions through the provision of an online estate dashboard
- Support in developing a strategic response to estate management and premises development
- Negotiation, set-up and liaison for all insurance arrangements, including land and buildings
- Tendering, procurement and management of all capital projects
- Support with health and safety compliance checks including an online compliance dashboard
- Support with emergency planning and implementation
- Efficiencies through the economies of scale of central procurement of premises compliance servicing
- Trust wide deals brokered for school supplies and services
- Centrally arranged and managed contracts.
- Carbon reduction and energy efficiency audit and strategic heat carbonisation plan
- Streamlined energy and carbon reporting (SECR)
- Annual GDPR audit and training.
- Maintenance of a corporate risk register
- Oversight of all leases and contracts
- Oversight of insurance (RPA) and management of claims
- Support in the event of an emergency on site.

## 6. Human Resources and Legal

- Conversion support, including TUPE consultation, the preparation of the Commercial Transfer Agreement, Land Transfer Agreements and Funding Agreement
- Provision of Trust-wide HR policies and procedures
- Union negotiation
- Employee Assistance Programme for all staff
- HR support
- Occupational Health
- DBS online checks and associated costs
- Recruitment support
- Negotiations with the Local Authority, DfE, ESFA and Regional Director, as required
- Data Protection Officer provision-including support with Subject Access and Freedom of Information requests
- Secondment opportunities and arrangements

This support is funded through an annual levy from each school's General Annual Grant (GAG)

We ask that:

- ✓ Central colleagues are treated with the same courtesy and respect that schools expect from the central function.
- ✓ A prompt response to central team requests for information in line with the timescales set out above.
- ✓ An understanding that the central team needs to prioritise workstreams, and it may not always be possible to respond to a school request or resolve the issue immediately

If you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving, please contact the CEO directly by email.