**Archdiocese of Birmingham**

**Diocesan Education Service**

Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL) / CEO Development Consultation: Summary of Responses

***This document includes a high-level summary of the responses received through the consultation on the development of the role of the Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CEO equivalent) within the wider governance and accountability framework of Diocesan MACs. It should be read in conjunction with the ‘DES CSEL Project Update July 2018’ and other documentation (including an updated CSEL role description and person specification) available on the MAC Executive Leadership section of the Diocesan Education Service website at*** [***https://www.bdes.org.uk/mac-executive-leadership.html***](https://www.bdes.org.uk/mac-executive-leadership.html)

1. Background and Context

In the light of the Diocesan Education Strategy launched in 2016, there was an increasingly apparent need for the governance and accountability framework for Diocesan Multi-Academy Companies (MACs) to be reviewed. Alongside this, the need to develop a clearer executive leadership and management model was identified. In the Autumn Term 2017, the Diocesan Education Service commissioned a National Leader of Governance to undertake a research and development project to support the determination of the most effective and appropriate senior leadership and accountability model(s) for Catholic MACs within the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the development of advice and guidance to existing and developing MACs in this respect. The objectives of the project were:

1. to collect, analyse and distil current views, information, data and existing research relating to senior leadership and executive leaders/accountable officers in MACs to inform the determinations to be made by the Birmingham Diocesan Education Service in conjunction with the Trustees, and
2. to engage key stakeholders to ensure the analysis was robust and took into account the existing spectrum of views and experiences while ensuring a focus of future sustainability and not outdated perceptions and historic difficulties.

Phase I of the project consisted of a desk-based review of a range of research in relation to governance and accountability frameworks in academies and executive leadership models within academies as well as in a range of other sectors (e.g. business, higher education, charities, government).

Phase II included consideration and consultation on initial findings and deepening and broadening stakeholder engagement to seek views on initial proposals. A sample governance and assurance/accountability model was developed and refined together with a provisional model role description and person specification for the role of MAC Catholic Senior Executive Leader/CEO. These developments took place alongside engagement of stakeholders in a variety of fora including meetings and workshops with the Diocesan Education Service, individual meetings with key stakeholders (e.g. a sample of existing Accounting Officers, Directors of MACs, governors and headteachers), and feedback within Diocesan briefing and training sessions (Chairs of MACs, Headteacher Briefings, Inductions). The project lead has also attended a number of national and regional academy events and round table discussions and has liaised with other national organisations directly as to any relevant sector-wide developments and/or potential future related guidance (DfE/RSC, CES, NGA). Additionally, an online consultation was undertaken inviting all stakeholders within Diocesan schools and academies to comment on the provisional CSEL/CEO role description and person specification following their publication and circulation together with a range of contextual information.

1. Phase II and III: Key Matters Raised in CEO/CSEL Consultation

The planned Phase III of the project was to determine the executive leadership model and communicate it with a view to rolling it out from September 2018, acknowledging the need for a transitional period and arrangements, particularly for existing MACs. It was agreed that a summary of the key issues raised through the online form and related discussions would inform Phase III, including when considering potential further revisions to the CSEL/CEO role description and person specification.

The vast majority of the 35 respondents to the online consultation form were in favour in principle of the introduction of the role of the Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CEO equivalent) within our Diocesan MACs, as were those who engaged in discussions with the NLG project lead. For those who were not in favour or were not sure, the primary concern raised was in relation to associated costs and financial sustainability of their MAC. There were a small number who were dismissive of the greater resilience and sustainability of Catholic schools through collaboration as a MAC and felt school improvement support and joint professional development could be provided through, for example, a teaching school, and that the MAC structure was therefore not needed.

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| **Summary of responses received through online form between 8 May and 16 June 2018** | | | | |
|  | **Yes** | **No** | **Not Sure** | **Total** |
| *Are you in favour in principle of the introduction of the role of Catholic Senior Executive Leader / CEO within Diocesan MACs?* | **23 (66%)** | **5** | **7** | **35** |
| *Does the proposed Catholic Senior Executive Leader / CEO Role Description include in your opinion all key elements?* | **28**  **(80%)** | **3** | **4** | **35** |
| *Does the proposed Catholic Senior Executive Leader / CEO Person Specification include in your opinion all essential criteria?* | **19**  **(54%)** | **8** | **8** | **35** |

For those who said no or were not sure if the prosed CSEL/CEO person specification included all essential criteria, a number were firmly of the view that the postholder should have a relevant teaching qualification and/or have served as a headteacher/principal. However, there were also a number of respondents who felt that, while it might be typical for the appointee to have served in such a capacity in order to possess the range of skills and expertise required, it was not absolutely essential for this to have been the case and that it was more important to have breadth of related required skills together with an understanding of deploying them in an educational and charitable environment given the significant difference between the role of Headteacher or Executive Principal and that of the CSEL/CEO. A range of reasons were given as to the supporting rationale for each position.

In addition to the above numerical summary of responses received through the online form, a summary of the key matters raised through the survey responses as well as within the broader consultation discussions and meetings are set out in Appendix A.

1. Implementation and Further Development of the Role and Associated Frameworks

The imperative to further at pace these developments has only become more clear throughout the project and consultation period.

The feedback and responses received through the consultation process informed a workshop at the DES earlier in July at which further refinement of the CSEL/CEO model role description and person specification was undertaken as well as agreeing a number of next steps for the project.

Endeavouring to introduce the CSEL/CEO role aligned with the Diocesan Academy Strategy will require a substantial change and development programme including active engagement by all key stakeholders facilitated and supported by the DES. Close collaboration between the DES and senior leadership of schools and academies (including governors and Directors as well as Accounting Officers, Headteachers and Principals etc) is required to achieve successful implementation.

Yvonne Salter Wright

National Leader of Governance

20 July 2018

**Appendix A**

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| **Summary of issues raised in engagement and consultation** | |
| 1. ***Essential qualifications / Experience as senior leader in education*** | Of those who said no or were not sure if the proposed CSEL/CEO person specification included all essential criteria, a number of respondents highlighted that it should be a requirement that the postholder should be a qualified teacher who has previously served as a Headteacher/Principal (of an outstanding school/academy). Arguments put forward in favour of this included: diminished respect from other teaching staff members if the CEO/CSEL was not a qualified teacher with a proven track record of leading a school, that the postholder must understand education and schools (and by inference would not if they hadn’t had this direct experience/qualification), and reduced effectiveness in relation to improving pupil progress and outcomes at the necessary pace for a number of schools within our Diocese. It was also put forward by some that the position of the CSEL/CEO should act as primary ‘school improvement partner’ and that they could not do this without such experience. A point of diversion between respondents was whether the CSEL/CEO themselves should ***always*** act as the equivalent to a ‘school improvement partner’/NLE advisor or whether such advice and support and scrutiny might be sought through collaborative work amongst the senior leadership within a MAC as well as from outside of the MAC (perhaps through liaison with other Diocesan MACs in future). One respondent commented: “This person must know exactly how a school works, what it means to teach a class full of children, the realities of that. . . Without this background I fear this post will end up being filled by those who may well have wonderful business experience yet have no idea what it means to teach children and to lead a school.” The respondent did indeed acknowledge the need for business acumen and strong financial and people management skills, but also raised an interesting point about the balance of skills and understanding at Board-level and its implications for strategic decision-making, particularly if the CSEL/CEO is not an ‘educationalist’ or someone who has a deep understanding of the educational environment and landscape.  However, there were also a number of respondents who felt that, while they envisaged it would most often be the case that the appointee to the CSEL/CEO position had served as a senior leader in a school or academy, this specific experience (rather than the skills and expertise drawn from it) was not always ‘essential’ and that the CSEL/CEO role is substantively different from that of a Headteacher/Principal or even Executive Principal and that it was important to consider the full breadth and depth of skills and knowledge required and be open to perhaps a broader range of potential candidates that could fulfil them. It was raised that different staffing structures and the range of expertise available within different MACs and accessible to them externally (as well as at varying levels of maturity) would require variable skills and expertise from the CSEL/CEO (and other senior leaders) in this respect. Also, it could be argued that a crucial skill of any CSEL/CEO was harnessing the expertise of their staff teams when undertaking strategic planning as well as operational decision-making.  There is no doubt that all respondents and interviewees wished to ensure ‘children remain at the heart’ of the frameworks and decision-making processes – precisely what this means in practice is of greater contention. |
| 1. ***Affordability and Impact: pay and performance management of the CEO/CSEL (and other senior executive leaders)*** | One respondent was of the view that while there are benefits to the role, the cost implications outweigh these. There has been significant concern in relation to future funding in the light of the changes to the NFF and the cost of implementing the role of the CEO/CSEL. However, consideration must be given to the role in the wider framework of leadership and management capacity, capability and sustainability across a MAC with, over time, leadership and management structures being reviewed to see what most effectively delivers outcomes for pupils. The CSEL/CEO position should not be seen in isolation and links to a range of other strategic objectives that align to the mission and vision of our Diocesan Catholic schools. Additionally, for the CSEL/CEO to be successful, consideration must be given to the relevant MAC-wide supporting infrastructure and the ability for the CSEL/CEO to deploy resource flexibly to address key areas of need, whether there is a distributed model within the constituent schools/academies or a ‘central’ MAC infrastructure which provides services and/or is deployed according to MAC-wide priorities for school improvement. |
| 1. ***Need to Maintain Engagement and Understanding but Reduce Perceived (or Actual) Bias*** | One interviewee felt it was extremely important for the CSEL/CEO not to become too detached from the direct leadership and management requirements within schools and indeed the impact of the CSEL/CEO activity had on the pupils within the MAC and that this could be a risk if the Accounting Officer/CSEL/CEO was not a Principal within one of the MAC schools. The balance between hands-on management and need to develop MAC-wide strategic leadership capacity was acknowledged, however.  Other respondents and interviewees, however, felt the CSEL/CEO and other MAC positions should not be seen to be ‘from’ one of the schools but to be truly MAC-wide, engaging and supporting all schools and seeking the success of all the pupils, staff and communities within the MAC and ensuring consistently high provision across the MAC. It was noted that should too many individuals within a central MAC team all come from one school, others might perceive them as biased towards ‘their’ particular school. Emerging sector good practise is that the CSEL/CEO of a medium to large multi-academy should be a full-time role and should not continue direct senior leadership duties within one or across a small proportion of the MAC’s schools/academies. |

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| 1. ***Importance of Recruitment Process and Performance Management Process to appoint and develop successful future system leaders*** | Strong support has been given to the need for further guidance and advice in relation to the recruitment process for such a senior role with extensive accountabilities, one respondent stating “the recruitment process should be robust, transparent and perspicacious”. Another respondent highlighted that the role description and person specification was indeed extremely aspirational and subjective, however, continued to state that “We need to be rigorous in ensuring we get the quality of leadership we need and that this is evaluated and challenged. . .” The potential benefit, particularly within transition for existing MACs, of seeking to appoint to the post internally (perhaps temporarily in the first instance) was also mentioned by an existing MAC Board Chair, perhaps having multiple phases within the transition to the revised executive leadership and governance and accountability model. The DES acknowledged that it was indeed important to seek both to develop related guidance materials but also ensure relevant support and training is provided as to how to successfully deploy in practice. |
| 1. ***Importance of Understanding Safeguarding and Child Protection within the Context of a School*** | The importance of safeguarding and the CSEL/CEO’s role in fostering an environment where children are safe and well was incorporated within the role description and person specification early on. That being said, there were two current teachers who engaged with the consultation who felt this critical aspect did not get communicated sufficiently in the person specification. It was thought, for instance, that if someone with insufficient understanding through experience of the complexities and challenges that come from serious safeguarding and child protection concerns (and the significant resources often required to appropriately deal with them) would be a serious and unacceptable risk to a MAC and having the experience of serving as lead/DSL for safeguarding within a relevant organisation should be moved from desirable to essential.  Given the significant professional competence in safeguarding that there should be at school level within an organisation, as well as the key competence required for the CSEL to harness and apply the expertise of others within the organisation, it was determined that rather than making such DSL or related experience essential, the person specification criteria would be bolstered and the importance of ensuring a meaningful understanding by those undertaking recruitment to the CSEL/CEO position would sufficiently address the risk identified. |
| 1. ***Strategic leadership of Catholic mission (and Diocesan academy strategy)*** | Strong support was provided by the vast majority of respondents as well as by those interviewed for the CEO/CSEL to be a practising Catholic. The implications this would have in relation to the potential pool of suitable applicants currently and the consequent need to develop and grow Catholic system leaders with capability and capacity to take on the role in the future was also recognised. There was also discussion that in exceptional circumstances or short periods during transition, consideration may need to be given to how this was applied in practice. |

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| 1. ***Membership of the CEO/CSEL on the Board*** | While there were various views expressed in discussions as to whether the CSEL/CEO should serve as a member of the Board of Directors, most during the consultation took for granted that the CSEL/CEO would be a member of the Board (as this was set out in the current constitutions). Research shows there are reasons both for and against formal membership of the Board by a CEO and there are a range of factors that impact what would be best for a particular organisation. That being said, it has been communicated to the DES by the RSC/DfE and CES that CEOs should not formally serve as a member of the Board (nor should any staff member) and therefore this change will also need to be made. Despite this, the significant importance of the CSEL/CEO in advising the Board and providing strategic leadership across the MAC must continue to be emphasised. It will be necessary during this transition for good practice to be communicated as to what this change means in practice as there will be scope for misunderstanding and adverse consequences particularly if the Board does not have a skilled governance officer/secretary/clerk. |
| 1. ***Method of Transition for existing MACs*** | The need for transitional arrangements for existing MACs has been highlighted and brief initial discussions in this respect have been held on a number of occasions. There are many practical questions raised in this respect (similar to any staff restructuring process). It is clear that close engagement by MACs with the DES will be required during this period with examples of potential transition models being developed for discussion and adaptation to fit the maturity and challenge of the particular existing or newly forming MAC. |

As at 20 July 2018