

# Voluntary-Aided Schools Converting to Academy Status

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Academy Status

#### 1. What is an academy?

Academies are publicly-funded schools which operate outside of Local Authority control. They receive their funding directly from central government, through the Education Funding Agency (EFA), rather than through a Local Authority. The government describes them as independent, state-funded schools. Academies have more freedom than other state schools over their finances, the curriculum, length of terms and school days and teachers' pay and conditions.

#### 2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is responsible for running the academy. It has three layers of governance: members, who are best viewed as guardians of the constitution; directors/trustees, who are legally responsible for the running of the Trust and the local governors who are responsible for monitoring standards in the individual schools in the Trust. The 'Members' of any Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) (or Catholic Multi-Academy Trust or CMAT as we know them) in the Diocese of Brentwood will always be the Diocesan Bishop, Corporate Trustee and the Episcopal Vicar for Education.

#### 3. What is the background to academies?

Academies were originally a policy of the Labour government in the 2000s but the policy of establishing Academies has been carried on by successive administrations. The present administration sees schools coming together as academies in MATs providing mutual school to school support and benefitting from economies of scale of joint working arrangements for back office functions as the best way for schools to be successful. Under the terms of the Academies and Adoption Act 2016, the Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC) scrutinise the performance of all schools and will direct any that are considered to be underperforming to become an academy as part of a MAT.

#### 4. How do schools benefit from becoming academies?

Greater control over the curriculum allows flexibility in terms of the balance and mix of subjects. A curriculum tailored to the needs of a Catholic school could be more fully developed; our CMAT model for instance could have built in expectations of a stronger lay chaplaincy function. Stronger collaboration between schools in multi-academy trusts (MAT) is seen as a benefit; schools can more readily appoint new staff to be shared to work across the schools in the MAT and deliver functions that individual schools would struggle to afford. Once operating as an academy, the school receives the same per pupil funding as other state schools. However, it also gains control of all of its budget rather than it being routed through the LA and therefore is able to determine for itself how to spend the entirety of its budget. Catholic schools would not have to pay the 10% currently required towards the cost of capital works and the MAT receives an annual capital building allowance, once it is large enough, rather than having to bid for capital funds. The Department for Education pays £25,000 towards conversion costs. Some MATs have also benefitted from access to a MAT Development and Improvement Fund.

5. Why are our schools converting to academy status and why are we establishing these new larger CMATs?

The CMAT model allows us to protect our schools, their identity and governance arrangements into the future. Our CMATs can better support the long terms goals of developing our future leaders of Catholic education in the Diocese and securing improvements in schools standards across the board by developing and resourcing a strategic vision for leadership development and by pooling expertise and knowledge on standards and developing robust school to school arrangements for school improvement.

6. We are a good school and work well in partnership already so why shouldn't we stay as we are?

Relationships with local authorities have changed regardless as they have re-configured the level of support and the way they provide this support to schools. In addition, the local educational environment has changed with the role of local authorities in relation to schools being significantly reduced over the past few years. The Catholic Multi-Academy Trust model provides us with the opportunity to safeguard the future of all our Catholic schools in local groupings. Working alone does not allow for the same economies of scale to be made and the family of schools will be directly on hand if something does go wrong with additional support and strategic oversight as required. Even good and outstanding schools can find that they have difficulties from time to time it is in our view better to take positive steps to secure the future of all our Catholic schools from a position of strength rather than as we have on occasion found to have to retrieve the situation if things do go wrong.

## Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMAT)

7. How does the CMAT model work?

The CMAT model has been designed to maintain the identity of each school in the trust as separate academies each retaining a Local Governing Body (LGB), headteacher and its own budget. The Trust is the employer of all the staff in the CMAT. A Scheme of Delegation is put in place between the CMAT Board and the LGB to enable each school to operate in much the same way as it does now but the Trust has overall responsibility for standards and as such all schools in the Trust are required to work together to improve standards across all schools in the Trust.

8. What are the particular advantages of the CMAT model?

There are obvious advantages in terms of ability to employ specialist staff to work across all the schools, agreeing common shared ethos, policies and practice, economies of scale in terms of brokering services. Succession planning for school leadership and coaching and mentoring opportunities for senior staff across the family of schools for professional development are other advantages. The main advantage is in creating strong formal partnerships with a strong accountability framework to support schools to improve standards. This also means strengthened support and accountability for the leadership and governance of our Catholic schools.

9. Will primary schools lose their identity and be swallowed up by the Secondary School?

No. Each school will become an academy in its own right and will be part of the CMAT. Each school will retain its school name, headteacher, budget and local governing body.

10. Which other schools in the diocese are joining CMATs plans and are any schools opting out?

The Diocesan plan is for deanery based CMATs, resulting in 8 across the Diocese, not for one big MAT. Within the Diocese already, there are 3 new MATS established – Assisi Catholic Trust in Southend has 8 primaries and 1 secondary school; Christus Trust in Basildon currently has just 1 primary school but with the MAT Development Fund Grant that they have received others are considering the best time to join. The Good Shepherd Trust currently has 1 secondary and 1 primary in it. There are also two school Academy Trusts in Harlow, Newham and also Colchester. Some schools needed to join a CMAT and others plan to follow when it suits them best. The Diocese believes that this process is likely to take three years to complete. About a third of all Diocesan schools are already academies or in CMATs. No schools are opting out. Diocesan schools are not just schools within the Diocese they are schools that are under the control of the Diocesan Bishop.

11. How will academisation affect links between our school and local secondary schools?

Schools will still have the opportunity to work with other schools, outside of the CMAT as they decide best. This plan does not curtail that opportunity. We wish to maintain a positive working relationship with each LA and for our schools to work collaboratively with Catholic as well as other local schools that are not Diocesan schools.

12. Isn't taking the schools out of Local Authority control a risky move.

Catholic schools are not, and have never been, under Local Authority (LA) control.

Catholic schools are Voluntary Aided (VA) not Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools. The governors of Catholic VA schools are the employers of the staff, are able to set the length of a school day and term times, following consultation with parents. The decision to admit children to the school is already made by the Governing body and not the Local Authority. All of these will be unchanged when a Catholic school goes into a CMAT.

Our schools have had a good relationship with the relevant LAs and it is envisaged that this will continue. Thus, where the LA is offering a good service that gives the best value for money the schools will 'buy in' to receive what is on offer.

## Accountability

13. Some people have suggested that there is less transparency or accountability for academies, how will the diocese ensure that future management regimes will not run the school in a way that takes money away from vital teaching and learning to pay themselves?

Academies are more accountable than other types of school. Academies have to produce independently audited annual accounts. These have to be lodged at

Companies House by the end of each year and are a matter of public record. The Trust Board in each CMAT has oversight of the finances of each school within the Trust. The Diocese currently requires all academies to share this information in a timely manner so that the Members (Bishop, Corporate Trustee and Episcopal Vicar) are able to satisfy themselves that there are no concerns that they have not been made aware of.

Academies are accountable to the Secretary of State for Education through the Regional School Commissioner (RSC). The RSC oversees each application for conversion and the appointment of members and trustees, thus ensuring that there are robust governance and systems of accountability within each MAT.

The accountability, governance and management structures of the MAT are further documented in its "Scheme of Delegation".

14. Who regulates the CMAT and where is the transparency and accountability? What is to stop school leaders paying themselves 'over the top' salaries and wasting money on non-education items? How will we know?

In addition to what was said above it is a particular strength of the proposed structure that each Governing Body will have a Deanery based Trust Board that will have oversight of the financial position from outside of the individual school. CMATs within the Diocesan framework will be held to account by the Diocese whose primary focus will be on ensuring the best outcomes for children. The Diocese plan to set up an annual meeting with each CMAT to verify, with independent expertise, the reliability of the financial standard.

The Scheme of Delegation defines the roles and responsibilities of each body and individuals with delegated authority within the CMAT. Parents will continue to be represented on Local Governing Bodies and are encouraged to apply to be a trustee of the CMAT if they have an appropriate skill set.

15. In relation to academisation will taking the school outside the control of the local education authority leave the school vulnerable to financial mismanagement etc? What checks or safety net will be in place if things do go wrong?

Please see points already made above.

In addition, Academies and MATs are subject to strict financial control by HM Treasury through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

A Master Funding Agreement between the DfE and the MAT sets out the conditions that the MAT and the Academies must observe if funding is to be paid, one of which is the compliance with the ESFA's "Academies Financial Handbook".

The Handbook, primarily for Chief Accounting Officers (CAOs) and Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) details the main financial and governance requirements (monitoring, reporting, financial planning, internal control, internal scrutiny, transparency), delegated authorities and audit requirements. In the view of many academies LA Maintained schools do not have the same level of financial scrutiny and therefore accountability.

16. An argument for academies is achieving economies of scale but how is that principle going to be different to how the local authority operates now and how will the CMAT do a better job? What are the success criteria? How will success be measured and who will be accountable? Will these processes be transparent?

Economies of scale will only really be achieved when the schools go in to the CMAT as it is through things like bulk purchasing power for resources, reduction of duplication and the use of common service providers across the CMAT that will make the difference. Resources can also be shared in the knowledge that schools are working closely with other schools who are part of the same legal entity. The CMAT board will be accountable for the oversight of this across CMAT schools. Savings that the CMAT achieves over time will be used to further support the education of the children. The LA Model rarely enables schools to benefit from savings to be made beyond that of working with the LA, whereas with the Diocesan approach there is the possibility of cross CMAT, Diocesan and national Level agreements as they search for economies of scale. The funding of the CMAT will be solely focused on educational provision and not on the wider range of services provided by an LA.

Schools already buy in some services from local authorities other than their own (e.g., clerking and governing support) but other services (e.g., HR and payroll) are not always easy to separate out from each other.

Converting to an academy gives independence from the Local Authorities' decisions, services and control, and provides an opportunity to find equal or better services elsewhere at less cost.

Financial due diligence has to be carried out on each school converting to become an academy and this is highlighting those areas where economies of scale might be best achieved. Headteachers will be consulted on their preferences whether to stay with a current provider or decide to change. Success will be monitored and reviewed by the Executive Leadership Group (made up of headteachers identified in the Scheme of Delegation) which advises the Board of Trustees. The annual audited accounts that must be published and these will provide a transparent overview of the financial health of the schools in the CMAT.

## The Conversion Process

17. What is the process for schools to become academies?

Initially, schools have to register their interest online with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). There will then be a 4-week consultation with parents and the parish community which gives an opportunity to provide more information on the changes to them and to answer any questions or concerns.

The school will then submit an application to the RSC to convert to academy status. This will be considered by the RSC and if he/she is satisfied it meets their criteria, he/she will issue an academy order. This releases the conversion funding to the school (currently £25,000 per school). The legal documents and the funding agreement between the Academy Trust is then set up which in effect has a contract to run the academy.

The family of schools then registers the CMAT with Companies House and agrees leasing arrangements for school buildings and land using a supplementary

agreement based on models provided by the Catholic Education Service of England and Wales.

The final stage is the signing of the Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State. The Department for Education says it expects conversions to take a minimum of three to four months from registering an interest through to signing of the Funding Agreement.

18. To what extent has an analysis of the risks and challenges of conversion been carried out and what mitigations are in place to avoid or minimise the impact of these?

In one example in the diocese the Headteachers' School-to-School support group had been discussing the process of conversion for at least two years. In July they recommended the appointment of a Project Manager to facilitate and inform the conversion process. It was then decided to adopt a strategy of growing the MAT in two phases. Schools chose, or were identified, for phase one or two after an initial analysis and discussion with each school.

Financial, academic and legal due diligence was then undertaken on each school applying to convert in phase one; and these reports were used to shape the discussions on the vision for our CMAT, and what the governance manuals term the "Academy Plan".

Advice, support and guidance was also available through the Academies Working Group at the Catholic Education Service (CES), Department for Education, Regional Schools Commissioner and through links that have been identified with other Catholic Dioceses. These inputs were considered in order to ensure a smooth and informed process could be undertaken. This approach will be further enhanced going forward through the appointment of a CMAT Development Officer on behalf of the Diocese as more schools become involved. This will help to ensure that schools are consistently supported as they proceed towards academisation.

19. What do you see as the benefits for our school becoming an academy? What evidence do you have to support of these assertions?

Greater financial control, strengthening of Governance and oversight. Increased accountability. The benefits as already indicated in question 15 around economies of scale when the CMAT is in place. Increased professional development opportunities, wider access to resources and ensuring that good practice does not stay in just one lucky school.

*"Evidence from around the world demonstrates that educational performance is improved by giving autonomy to professionals and holding them to account for the outcomes they achieve (PISA 2009 Results, "What makes a school successful?" Resources, Policies and Practices (volume iv)). Moving control to the frontline – as close to the classroom as possible – is an effective way of improving performance." ["Multi-academy trusts. Good practice guidance and expectations for growth." P.8, DfE Dec. 2016]*

In addition, a number of documents and resources have been considered:

**Church Documents**

Bishops' Conference of England and Wales *Christ at the Centre* (2012)  
Code of Canon Law (1998)

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM)

Congregation for Catholic Education *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997)

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_27041998\\_school2000\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html)

Diocese of Leeds *Schools of Discipleship* (2008)

<http://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/education/files/pdf/SchoolsofDiscipleship.pdf>

Pope Francis *Apostolic Exhortation: Evangelii Gaudium* (2013)

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

Pope Francis *Address to Italian School Teachers* (10 May 2014)

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/may/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140510\\_mondo-della-scuola.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/may/documents/papa-francesco_20140510_mondo-della-scuola.html)

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education *The Catholic School* (1977)

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19770319\\_catholic-school\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html)

### **DfE Documents**

*Characteristics of Successful Multi-Academy Trusts* (August 2015)

<http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Characteristics%20of%20Successful%20MATs.pdf>

*Educational Excellence Everywhere* (March 2016)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/educational-excellence-everywhere>

*Governance Handbook* (November 2015)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/48147/Governance\\_handbook\\_November\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/48147/Governance_handbook_November_2015.pdf)

*Memorandum of Understanding between the Catholic Church and the Department for Education* (April 2016)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/517424/Memorandum\\_of\\_understanding\\_between\\_the\\_Catholic\\_Church\\_and\\_DfE](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517424/Memorandum_of_understanding_between_the_Catholic_Church_and_DfE)

*Multi-Academy Trusts: Good Practice Guidance and Expectations for Growth* (December 2016)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/576240/Multi-academy\\_trusts\\_good\\_practice\\_guidance\\_and\\_expectations\\_for\\_growth](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576240/Multi-academy_trusts_good_practice_guidance_and_expectations_for_growth)

### **Letters**

Lord Nash to all Chairs of Trusts (October 2016)

<http://www.bishopflemingacademyaccountants.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Lord-Nash-letter-to-academy-chairs-of-trustees-October-2016.pdf>

Peter Lauener (EFA) to all Academy Trust Accounting Officers (October 2016)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-academy-trust-accounting-officers-october-2016>

### **Other Papers/Reports**

All Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership / National Governors' Association *Twenty-One Questions for Multi-Academy Trusts* (March 2015)

<https://www.academyambassadors.org/resources/twenty-one-questions-multi-academy-trusts>

National Audit Office *Financial Sustainability in Schools* (December 2016)  
<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Financial-sustainability-of-schools.pdf>

National Governors' Association *Written Evidence Submitted to the Education Committee MAT0044* (May 2016)  
<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/multiacademy-trusts/written/32354.html>

The Future Leaders Trust *Heads Up: Meeting the Challenges of Headteacher Recruitment* (November 2015)  
[https://www.ambitionschoolleadership.org.uk/.../Headteacher\\_Shortage\\_Report\\_9vH2...](https://www.ambitionschoolleadership.org.uk/.../Headteacher_Shortage_Report_9vH2...)

The Future Leaders Trust, Teaching Leaders, TeachFirst *The School Leadership Challenge: 2022* (November 2016)  
<https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/The%20School%20Leadership%20Challenge%202022.pdf>

Reform Research Trust *Academy Chains Unlocked* (September 2016)  
<http://www.reform.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Academy-chains-unlocked.pdf>

### **Education Blogs**

Governing Responsibly – a blog by Robert Hill (3 October 2016)  
<https://roberthilleducationblog.com/2016/10/03/governing-responsibly-tackling-the-weaknesses-in-the-governance-of-academy-trusts/>

Where is the MAT agenda going? – a blog by Robert Hill (31 October 2016)  
<https://roberthilleducationblog.com/2016/10/31/where-is-the-mat-agenda-going/>

Academy Chains – a blog by Robert Hill (ongoing)  
<https://roberthilleducationblog.com/academy-chains/>

## **20. What do you see as the disadvantages of our school becoming an academy?**

Some might see a reduction in individual autonomy by the school as it is held to account by the Trust board. Some might have the perception of the reduced status of each individual school but that is something we are keen to avoid. The involvement of all school leaders in an Executive Board or Leadership Group would go some way to minimizing this as a possibility.

## **21. How should parents, parishioners, teachers and other stakeholders be consulted? What opportunities should there be to enable different opinions to be voiced and heard?**

Appropriate legal advice should be obtained prior to a school commencing the consultation. Advice received to date indicates that there is no prescribed format or timescale for the consultation but it should be informed by the views of stakeholders. Typically, schools approach parents informing them of the decision being made, the thinking behind it and inviting comment. In response to requests for further discussion and information schools may also run an information evening for parents. Schools will always consult staff who work at the school about the proposed development.



**22. Given the importance of the change why would this not be put to a vote?**

The Governing Body has a statutory duty to consult such persons as they think appropriate about the school becoming an academy. The Academies Act 2010 makes it clear that this consultation can be carried out before any academy order is made or after. The Governing Body will consult widely and will welcome all views and comments, which can be provided in a variety of means. It is hoped that a majority of parents and carers will support the proposal. All views will be taken in to consideration and these will help to influence key thinking, the next steps and the future approach taken. The majority of the Governing Body (Foundation Governors) are appointed by the Bishop in service to Catholic education with a specific function of preserving and developing Diocesan schools. In this context the decision is made by the governing body. Please also see relevant answers provided above.

**23. Who does the Diocese feel are their Stakeholders?**

The CMAT consultation is for the Governing Body of each school not the Diocese, but the Diocese supports the proposal and is assisting all Diocesan schools to meet their legal duties to engage genuinely with each school community.

**24. How are stakeholders engaged, their views gathered and any concerns covered and addressed prior to a decision to move forward with a CMAT?**

See the answers above to questions 20, 21 and 22.

In addition, discussion and consultation has been going on with school leaders and governors about Multi Academy Trusts for over two years. So, this process of deliberation should help to inform any formal consultation carried out by a Diocesan school in readiness for joining a CMAT in due course.

**25. Can parents or others influence a decision or is it a done deal?**

The concerns of those against academisation, in general or for specific reasons will be heard and will be addressed. The information relating to consultation are set out above in the answers to questions 20 and 21.

**26. Who gets the final say? What redress do parents have?**

Bishop Alan has shared his vision for the Catholic schools in his Diocese. The approval of the Diocesan Trustees must be obtained to any application by a Catholic school to become an academy. That approval is conditional on schools fulfilling the Bishop's wishes and in particular becoming an academy as part of a CMAT. As noted earlier, the decision to become an academy is the Governing Body's.

**27. The school may have been supported financially for building work by a Parish. Will the diocese consult with each Parish?**

Parishioners work in partnership with the Diocese and the Government in funding a new school. Parish contributions once given for the purpose of education become the responsibility of the education commission to use for the purpose that they were intended. Any contributions would sit alongside government funding for the development of a new school. The combined contributions would usually amount to 10% of the building cost of a Voluntary Aided school. The Diocese has ownership, responsibility and oversight of all diocesan schools within the Diocese of Brentwood.

All priests of the Diocese have been aware of this policy for about three years and Bishop Alan's Pastoral Letter on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018 was sent out to all parishes across the Diocese in order that parishioners who might not otherwise have known, would be aware of the diocesan vision (Also see answer to question 39).

This is the School's consultation process. The Diocese expect the School's unique character and distinctiveness to be preserved and enhanced as a Catholic school in the CMAT rather than as a local authority school. This principle is enshrined in the Scheme of Delegation.

**28. How long has this process been ongoing and why are parents the last to hear about it?**

The plan was shared with Headteachers and Governors formally in 2017 but first discussed in 2016 when schools were asked to work more closely in deanery based school-to school support groups. It was expected that Chairs of Governors and Heads would be sharing ongoing information with Governing Bodies. Schools were asked in 2017 to publish on their school websites 'The Diocesan Vision for Education', which speaks about 'MAT solutions for all schools'. Therefore, parents should have been aware of it since 2017.

**29. The Diocese covers the whole of Essex and five London Boroughs - how is it possible that a CEO based centrally can possibly know what is best for a local school and the others in the CMAT? All the schools are so different.**

The proposal is for deanery based CMATs i.e. localised areas of 10-14 schools-not a diocesan wide CMAT- each CMAT will have their own CAO.

There is real value in schools which are different to each other in make-up, working together and sharing ideas to maintain and improve practice across the whole. The uniting factor is the Catholic nature of each school, based on Gospel values and a mission to the Common Good.

## Organisation and Governance

**30. What about Governance, does that change?**

Each school will retain its own 'Local Governing Body' (LGB). The CMAT will have a Board of Trustees made up of a majority of Foundation Trustees appointed by the Bishop, the Board of Trustees takes on the responsibility of being the admission authority for the academies in the Trust and the employer of all staff employed within each academy. Under a scheme of delegation, the functions associated with this responsibility will be carried out by the LGB e.g. recruiting staff for the individual academy (other than senior posts such as the headteacher), having an admission panel to apply the admission criteria etc.

**31. What will be the status of the school governors? Will the Bishop implement their proposals? Can he (or the CEO) dismiss the governors if they do not agree with him?**

Schools within a MAT will have local Governors' Committees or Governing Bodies for each school with an overarching Board of Directors/Trustees. The Governors are a mixture of Foundation Governors and elected Parent and Staff Governors. In

keeping with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) issued in 2011 and re-distributed to all schools 2017-18:

### **Governance**

*The School will comply with all directives issued by the Bishop and this Memorandum of Understanding has the status of a directive issued by the Bishop. The School will adopt and will comply with all policies of the Diocese and the Bishop communicated to the School from time to time.*

Foundation Governors are appointed by the Diocese via the Parish, on behalf of the Bishop; they can be 'dismissed' by the Diocese if their position becomes untenable because they fail to adhere to the requirements.

The Scheme of Delegation sets out a Trustee Code of Conduct. A similar Code of Conduct is being drafted for Governors and will be incorporated in the Scheme.

### **32. When a school converts will the governors have to resign, will there be sufficient governors to take their place and will the new governors have the necessary skills?**

Existing governors do not have to resign, the Local Governing Body will still exist and if governors wish to continue, they will be able to do so. Indeed, we will encourage them to do so as we need to retain all good and willing governors. Succession planning for governors has always been important and will continue to be so and we hope that the emphasis in the role of governor in the CMAT on making a difference to standards in schools and overseeing the Catholic Life of the school will prove more attractive to people who are considering the role of governor.

### **33. What safeguards will be built in to prevent the CMAT from taking decisions that the schools are not comfortable with?**

Firstly, there will be a scheme of delegation between the CMAT Board and individual school Local Governing Bodies. Secondly, the Members will be responsible for ensuring that the Trust is operating for the good of all the schools in the Trust and will hold the Directors to account on this.

### **34. Communication with parents from our schools is very good. Will that continue and will the role of parent governors remain the same?**

Yes. Parents and the relationships of our schools with them are of paramount importance and that will not change. The role of parent governors on Local Governing Bodies will not change. If anything, the expectation on the LGB to engage with the views of parents has increased as engagement within stakeholders is one of the core responsibilities.

### **35. Who will be CEO of the new CMAT, and is there an organisational structure in place that can be shared?**

The Board of Trustees will decide, in consultation with School Leaders and local Governing Bodies what structure best suits that particular CMAT i.e. whether they will have a CAO or a CEO and whether this post will be part-time or full-time. This post would then be advertised and interviewed for in the usual manner.

36. Who will have overall responsibility for our school? Will it still be the Headteacher or a CEO directly employed by the Bishop? If the latter, how will the CEO liaise with parents? Who will be responsible for ensuring that the standard of education and the school ethos will be maintained?

Each school will continue to have their own Headteacher or Head of School (as suits each school's size and circumstance best) and that Headteacher will report on standards to the 'executive board' of heads and to the CAO/CEO. The Headteacher, Governors and Trustees would be responsible for maintaining the Catholic ethos of the school; the day to day running of the school, as now, would be the responsibility of the Headteacher.

## Resources / Financial

37. Is the decision to convert to an academy primarily driven by a need to share resources amongst schools in the Diocese rather than to be of benefit to each individual school?

The motivation behind the decision to convert, the advantages and disadvantages are explained in the Bishop's letter of 8<sup>th</sup> September. In addition, a position statement has been produced by the Diocese and is available on the Diocesan website for all to access. This document has been shared with all Headteachers to assist them to inform their school communities about the process. The intention is that all schools will over time benefit from giving and receiving. It is an opportunity to put a safety net in place for our Catholic schools, should they experience a difficulty in the future. It is also an opportunity to strengthen and support the governance and leadership in our schools.

38. What is the cost of academisation for the school and how will this be funded?

The cost varies from school to school depending on the amount of legal work that needs to be completed. Some schools with complicated land issues may end up with a higher bill, however, all schools converting to become an Academy within a MAT receive a grant of £25,000 which will cover the costs involved.

39. Where will the money from the economies of scale be spent?

On the educational provision for the children.

Each school within the CMAT will see the financial reports which show the benefit to each school of core services provided by the CMAT. Savings would be reflected in the school's budget. As an example; John the Baptist CMAT in Norwich has conducted a study which shows each school's savings as a result of being part of the CMAT and resulting increased surplus.

40. How will allocation of funds to activities supporting educational goals be decided upon?

Each school will receive their own funding and Trust priorities will be agreed at Board level. Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers will remain responsible for their budgets and decisions on curriculum resources.

41. How will a school going in to the CMAT be funded? Will the school be audited and be required to publish its accounts? Will the school receive the same amount of money as all other schools in the Diocese? If not, how will the money be allocated? Will the school receive more or less money as an academy? Who will control what the money will be spent on?

All academies are audited and have to publish their accounts on school websites. Academies have received more money than maintained schools as their budgets as historically they have not been 'top-sliced' by local authorities first. Money will continue to be allocated based on pupil headcount and other factors such as Pupil Premium and SEND, as now. Lines of delegation for spending will be clearly stated within the school's financial regulations.

In addition to the Master Funding Agreement referred to above (Qu.14), each Academy enters into its own Supplementary Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State. Reporting and auditing requirements are detailed in the Financial Accounting Handbook:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/714474/Academies\\_Financial\\_Handbook\\_2018.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714474/Academies_Financial_Handbook_2018.pdf)

## Teaching, standards and effects on the school

42. What arrangements will there be to ensure accountability and to quality assure standards?

The chief element for ensuring accountability and assuring standards will be unchanged. Academies are all still subject to Ofsted inspections and their results are published by the DfE. Additionally, as Catholic academies we would remain subject to the Diocesan Canonical inspections. The CMAT, as the accountable body, is expected to build a strong school improvement model and apply this robustly across all schools in the Trust. The LGB will have a responsibility for ensure that standards in each academy are monitored and evaluated effectively. It is in the interests of all the academies in a CMAT to ensure that each individual academy is successful.

43. Will there be any impact on front line teaching time?

There will be no impact. The teaching of pupils will remain the schools' first priority. Teachers will not be required to work in other schools in the same CMAT; they will remain class teachers in their own schools as they are now. However, there will be opportunities for outstanding teachers to promote best practice across other schools in the Trust and be part of system leadership and change if they wish to. There will also be opportunities for the CMAT to recruit staff to work across a group of schools e.g. specialist language teachers, special needs teachers, family support workers, etc.

44. What impact will academisation have on the curriculum and will the CMAT continue to value a well-rounded education?

It is envisaged that all schools within the Diocese would continue to teach the National Curriculum (NC) and give 10% time to RE, as now. There is no reason to think that a broad and balanced curriculum and high expectations of standards across the board will not continue. Academies do have more control over their own

curriculums and are not bound by NC per se but in order to ensure pupils are ready for their next stage of education, most follow NC. Schools within the CMAT would agree if there would be common Schemes of Work for particular subjects or whether each school will determine their own. For most schools, there may not be any noticeable changes to curriculum other than that which may evolve over time as a result of sharing best practice across the schools.

45. Has any school's academic performance dropped after changing into an academy within a CMAT? If so how was this addressed by Catholic MAT? Will there be a continuous review/monitoring of the academic performance of children and will the parents be kept informed of the progress?

The experience of the Diocese is that schools working as part of a Catholic MAT have improved following conversion. Schools that have converted on their own have been more vulnerable, which is why the policy of the Diocese now is to approve of academy applications only where schools are joining (or forming) one of the Deanery Catholic MATs. Continuous monitoring of academic performance of children would continue in a CMAT and school context and parents would be kept informed of this as they are at the moment.

46. How will joining with other schools to create this CMAT improve standards at the school, both financially and standards of teaching and learning?

It is a recognised fact of educational research that where collaboration rather than inter school competition exists, schools generally make significantly more progress. We have been working collaboratively with other Catholic and LA primary schools both sharing ideas and supporting leadership. As a result, schools have over the past three years consistently been in the top 10% to 20% of schools high achieving schools across the core curriculum. Any substantial collaborative work that involves a sharing of expertise benefits a school. Being part of a CMAT would only serve to consolidate this work further. Please also see answers to earlier questions in relation to finance.

47. What is the staff retention plan to actively engage teachers and other staff to avoid them leaving?

Catholic schools often attract high quality candidates as a result of fair and equitably applied Pay Policies and Performance Management processes. This information is in the public domain in the form of our OFSTED reports, Pay Policy and any advertisements for teaching or support staff.

As we will maintain the current staff Pay and conditions and job security will be enhanced we do not believe that this will be an issue. We are also lucky to have staff who are committed to working in the Catholic sector.

Significant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, good career development prospects, access to a wide range of resources and strong leadership support will all contribute to the ongoing retention and development of staff.

## School pupils

### 48. How will additional support services currently provided by the LA be funded by the CMAT?

Academy schools can purchase services from the Local Authority, if they choose to do so, or they can purchase them from other sources if these are better.

Currently, all additional services such as Sport, Before and After School care, Sport's Provision, Music tuition, Instrument Hire, Monitoring and Inspection, School Meals, as examples, are bought in from the LA as Traded Services. This position will remain unchanged as part of a CMAT.

### 49. What measures are in place to ensure access and quality of these services is as good or better than the current situation? (E.g. support for students with learning differences.)

Support for SEND and pupils identified as vulnerable groups will continue at the same levels. Under current legislation, academies, maintained schools, free schools, model schools and studio schools are funded at local and governmental level for these areas. For example, Pupil Premium allocations remain as now irrespective of school designation.

In terms of direct Educational Health Care provision, there is a duty on each LA to provide support directly to schools again irrespective of designation. With specialist help such as speech therapy, then this is an NHS service and would come under the remit of that area.

Academies, must, since 2013, have due regard and make provision for SEND funds with their agreed Funding Agreement – this information, once in a CMAT would be available within the public domain and published on the relevant website for the academy or chain of academies.

### 50. Will pupils who need extra assistance continue to receive it at least at current levels and move in line with the LA's policy?

Academies are funded through the ESFA (c.f. Qu.14), not through the Local Authority. Academies get the same level of funding for each pupil as local authority schools in the same area; their notional SEND budget is worked out in the same way; they can get top-up funding from the Local Authority in the same way.

All schools have to fund, from their school budgets' notional SEND funding, the first 15 hours of support for a child. Although academies and free schools are outside Local Authority control, LAs still retain their statutory SEND duties. These include carrying out statutory needs assessments of children with SEND, and arranging the special education provision specified in any EHC plan.

### 51. Will pupils be able to continue to benefit from music lessons and instrument hiring from an LA Music Service?

Yes. Music tuition, and the hire of instrument are a bought in LA service (where available) that will continue as integral to the curriculum extension work at the school.

**52. Will pupils continue to be assessed in line with other primary schools in the LA?**

Yes. Children will continue to be formally assessed at the end of EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

All EYFS providers must participate in the assessment arrangements outlined in EYFS ARA.

Academies must comply with the requirements for maintained schools within KS1 ARA. Academies must choose which LA is responsible for external moderation of their KS1 Teacher Assessment.

An academy's funding agreement... require the academy trust to ensure that the KS2 national curriculum assessments are administered in the school according to ... published guidance.

**53. If standards at a member school are unsatisfactory, how will the CMAT address this?**

It is in the interests of all the schools in the CMAT to make sure that no school in the group gets into this position. The CMAT will have a responsibility to monitor standards across the CMAT and to ensure that there is a well-resourced Trust wide approach to standards and school improvement. Any strengths and good practice identified should be able to be shared across the CMAT and similarly weaknesses addressed through the CMAT school improvement model.

**54. What will happen about admissions?**

Admission arrangements will remain the same as they are now. Academies are subject to the same Admissions Code as other state schools. This sets the rules for fair admissions and prevents schools from selecting on the basis of ability. They also remain part of the Local Authority co-ordinated admissions system. It is a requirement that any Catholic academy adheres to the diocesan standard admissions policies, just as they do now.

**55. Will parents of children at primary schools still have a choice of which secondary school to send their children?**

Yes. There will be no change to admissions policies or on parental choice.

**56. What will happen about exclusions?**

There will be no change to existing policies on exclusions. Academies have to follow the law and government guidance on excluding pupils.

**57. What is to prevent you changing the length of the school day or term times after conversion?**

Changes will not be made in relation to academy conversion. Voluntary-Aided schools have the freedom at the moment to set their own arrangements on term-time, holiday dates and length of school day should they so wish (they are required to consult). However, they usually fit in with local practice. It is to be expected that any CMAT would also want to fit in with local practice for the convenience of parents and staff. Parents and other stakeholders would be consulted if any changes were to be considered.



## Services

### 58. What about school meals, grounds staff, and other support obtained the Local Authority?

If the Local Authority offers good quality services providing value for money the CMAT may elect to 'buy in' these services. It could also choose to procure these services from other providers. One advantage of a CMAT is that schools can take on the same provider for certain services with potentially a reduction in cost for that service.

### 59. Will Local Authorities support schools that become academies?

The role of the LA is clearly laid out in legislation and they retain some statutory functions for all schools and academies e.g. for excluded pupils, for children with statements of special educational need. Many LA services are traded for all schools anyway. The LA may provide these support services if enough schools ask for them. Some Local Authorities may choose to cease delivering some services over time and signpost availability in other areas from other providers.

## Finances and resources

### 60. What assurances have we that costs in the future might not get out of hand and leave a school financially vulnerable?

Our schools are already used to running their own finances and operating within annual budgets. In order to be approved for academy status by the DfE schools must demonstrate that they have sound financial systems and appropriate financial expertise to manage their budgets.

### 61. Will each school be responsible for submitting returns to Company House?

The CMAT will be responsible for presenting one set of consolidated accounts to Companies House on an annual basis.

### 62. Will the new arrangement affect land ownership?

No. Any assets owned by the Diocesan or Religious Order Trustees will remain in their ownership. This is dealt with through a separate legal document called a 'Supplemental Agreement' which is entered into by the Secretary of State, the Diocesan or Religious Order Trustees and the CMAT.

### 63. What is the position over potential pension deficit costs for employees in the Local Government Scheme?

At the moment schools already pay towards the reduction of any pension deficit as part of existing arrangements with their Local Government Pension Scheme Administrator. These arrangements will continue as an academy.

### 64. How will capital funding be allocated in future? Will it be retained by individual partners or centrally administered by the Trust?

As an academy, Catholic schools do not have to make the 10% contribution to capital works that VA schools have to. The Government have now also introducing

an annual 'capital fund allocation' for Multi-Academy Trusts which enables the Trust to manage its own capital works programme without having to enter a bid for funds. These funds can be 'carried forward' year on year and therefore there is flexibility for the CMAT to consider significant capital build initiatives.

## Impact on staff

### 65. What happens to terms and conditions?

The STPCD (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document) must be adhered to. For support staff, local terms and conditions will be tracked. This has been part of our discussion with the staff unions to date.

All terms and conditions of employment are protected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 ('TUPE'). This means that, on the day a school becomes an academy, all staff will transfer to the employment of the academy trust, with their terms and conditions as they were before.

### 66. What happens to continuity of service?

When staff transfer to an academy, their length of service is protected. Whilst there is no continuity of service if an employee of an academy leaves and goes to work at a maintained school, it is common practice for school employers to agree contractually to honour years of service. The implications of this will be noted in the "TUPE measures letter" that will be issued to staff as part of the formal TUPE consultation. There is no expectation that maternity pay is affected as school policies typically reflect statutory benefits.

### 67. Are pensions affected?

Staff will not see any impact on their pensions because of the conversion to academy status. Continuity of service is retained when the staff transferred to the academy. The funding agreement (which is the contract between the academy and the Secretary of State) requires that the academy ensure that all staff employed at the academy has access to the Teachers Pension Scheme or the Local Government Pension Scheme (as applicable).

### 68. What about union recognition?

Trade union recognition will transfer to the academy under TUPE.

## Post Academisation

### 69. How will the success of conversion in to a CMAT be assessed?

The CMAT Trust Board, supported by the Diocese, will monitor standards, attainment, finance and risk, staff well-being and turnover. Working together the CMAT has the opportunity to develop benchmarks for each of its schools and quickly identify and provide support if concerns are raised.

### 70. What freedom would the academy have in regards to the length of terms and school days arrangement?

Academies can set their own term dates (as can GB's of voluntary aided Catholic schools now). Academies are not bound to teach for 190 days as maintained

schools are, but in practice most primaries follow the same academic year as their local schools, with exceptions for INSET days, as now. Parents have to be consulted if the overall length of the school day is to be changed. Please see answer to question 56 above.

**71. What would happen if the academisation was not a success?**

There is no mechanism for an academy to return to local authority control. Generally, academies that are deemed failing or underperforming may be transferred to another MAT or sponsor (known as re-brokering) or subject to other intervention from the relevant Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). However, in the case of Catholic schools, the RSC would discuss 'intervention' options with the Diocesan School Commissioner (DSC) as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU - between the DfE and the Catholic Church) in order to reach agreement about the most appropriate plan for the school. One key purpose of this CMAT plan is to ensure support, guidance and direction are in place before any external intervention would be required. Trustees and the Diocese would ensure that any problems arising, including a severe decline in standards would be addressed at an early stage.