



Dear Parents,

18 September 2012

In October last year the Diocese of Leeds established the principle of a model of partnership working between clusters of schools, the Multi-Academy Trust model, in which Catholic Schools could convert to Academy status whilst safeguarding their distinctive Catholic ethos and ensuring that no school in the Diocese would be left in a vulnerable position.

Having considered the Leeds Diocesan guidance, and having received conditional Diocesan approval, the Governing Bodies of Sacred Heart Ilkley, St Mary's Horsforth, St Mary's Menston, St Joseph's Otley and St Joseph's Pudsey wish to consult you on a proposal to formalise the already strong partnership working between them by coming together to establish a Multi-Academy Trust in February 2013.

Other local Catholic schools may decide to join the Trust at a later date. From the information given at evenings last academic year, you will remember that the diocese have grouped together its 93 Catholic Schools into 5 proposed trusts. For our schools, the diocese grouped St. Mary's Menston and its feeder primary schools with St. John Fisher Harrogate and their feeder primary schools. Over the last few months all schools have been working together to produce a plan, and the above schools are ready to consult with stakeholders.

In considering conversion to academy status the over-riding concerns of the Governing Bodies are to ensure that our schools continue to provide the best standard of education and continue to care for our pupils, to preserve the Catholic ethos within our schools and to continue to serve our wider Catholic communities. Therefore, your views are important to us and we are keen to know them **before** coming to a decision on whether to take the proposals any further.

Consultation will run from Tuesday 18th September to noon on Friday 12th October.

You will find further information on the proposal in the attached statement for stakeholders and on a discrete Trust website www.dioceseofleedscmat2.org and via a link on the school website:

We are holding the following consultation forums:

6-7pm Thursday 27th September at St. Mary's, Menston.
6-7pm Monday 1st October at St. Joseph's, Pudsey
6-7pm Monday 1st October at St. Joseph's, Otley
6-7pm Thursday 4th October at Sacred Heart, Ilkley
6-7pm Wednesday 10th October at St. Mary's, Horsforth

If you were unable to attend the previous information evenings, we would encourage you to attend any of the events to gain more information. As well as using the forums you can e-mail your views to a.tindall@stmarysmenston.org or write to the Head teachers at any of our schools using the attached response form.

Yours in Christ

Chairs of the school Governing Bodies

Mr Bob Lavery, St. Mary's, Menston
Mr Nick Read, St. Joseph's, Pudsey
Mrs Diane Gaskin, St. Joseph's, Otley
Mr Chris Stainton, Sacred Heart, Ilkley
Mr Joe McDonnell, St. Mary's, Horsforth

MULTI ACADEMY TRUST CONSULTATION

Statement for Stakeholders on conversion to Multi-Academy Trust Status

What is being proposed?

The Governing Bodies of St Mary's Menston, St Mary's Horsforth, Sacred Heart Ilkley, St Joseph's Pudsey and St Joseph's Otley are considering a proposal of converting to Academy status in February 2013 and forming together a Multi-Academy Trust.

Other local Catholic schools may decide to join the Trust at a later date.

At the very heart of the proposal is the continued promotion and protection of the Catholic nature of our Diocesan schools. As such a Mission Statement has been crafted over a number of months which summarises this.

CMAT Core Principles

We will work together to provide the best possible opportunities for every child

- Providing assistance to parents in the education and formation of their child
- Serving the Diocese, parishes and homes
- Providing a service to society.

- **Jesus Christ at the centre**

In all we do including curriculum, pastoral care, spiritual development and how we treat and develop our staff.

- **Education of the whole person**

Recognising that each individual is made in God's image.

- **Strive for excellence**

In all we do as an integral part of the spiritual quest. Centres of excellence in Religious Education and the wider curriculum.

- **Education of all**

To aim to provide the best for all with a particular duty of care for the poor and disadvantaged.

- **Common Good**

We will all work together with responsibility for each other, to help and support in solidarity. We will be collaborative, committed to working in partnership within the CMAT and with the wider community. We are committed to the principle of reciprocity, so we will work together, providing mutual support.

- **Subsidiarity**

A strength of our schools is that they are all distinctive and rooted in their local parish communities. All decisions should be made as close to grass roots as good governance allows.

- **Inclusive evolution**

A basic tenant of the Diocesan principles is that no school should be left behind. We will constantly look to involve and serve other diocesan schools within our geographic area, developing structures and services that are available to all.

- **Service**

We will continue to look outwards and work in partnership with all schools and the wider community to the benefit of all.

Any decision on whether or not to convert to Academy status will be taken by the Governing Bodies based on what is considered best for our schools, our students, staff and the wider Catholic community. As part of the decision making process the Governing Bodies are committed to undertaking full consultation with our stakeholders and will take their views into account before any final decision is taken. The purpose of this statement is, therefore, to introduce the proposals to you, signpost you to where you can find additional information and inform you how you can take part in the consultation.

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state-funded school which operates independently within the requirements of national codes of practice for state schools, however, unlike a state school it receives its funding directly from central government rather than through a local authority. The first Academies, established under the previous Labour Government, required a

sponsoring organisation and had the sole objective of raising standards within the school. Under new legislation introduced by the present coalition government schools that are either 'outstanding' or 'good with outstanding features' are now also eligible to convert to Academy status together with their partner schools. It is the current intention of the government that all state schools should become Academies by 2014.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

The Catholic Education Service of England and Wales (CES) did not immediately encourage Catholic Schools to consider conversion to Academy status as it was necessary to consider whether conversion could take place whilst safeguarding the distinctive identity of Catholic schools and how all our schools could remain supported and not isolated.

Following discussion between the CES and the Department for Education, DfE, the Diocese of Leeds determined a model approved by the DfE that meets those pre-conditions and makes it possible for Catholic schools to convert to Academy status, if and when the Governors decide that conversion is an appropriate step. The model involves a family of schools forming a 'multi-academy trust' under a diocesan wide **shared company**. The essential principles of the model are that no schools are vulnerable, isolated or left behind, it involves no external business sponsorship and there will be no change to the distinctive nature of any of the schools in the Trust.

Why convert?

Schools have always operated within a changing educational landscape and the introduction by the coalition government of the Academies programme means that for the collective of Catholic Schools to do nothing is not a viable option. It is the Government's vision that the majority of schools in England will over time convert to Academy status and will cease to be 'maintained' by their Local Authority. To date the funding for maintained schools has been routed through Local Authorities who have 'top sliced' that funding to construct and deliver a set of support services, such as legal advice, across all their maintained schools. Local Authorities are adapting to this new climate by selling services in packages. So even remaining as we are, a Voluntary Aided (VA) school, under the Local Authority would look different in the future than it does today.

Receiving funding directly from the DfE would mean that we could across all five schools receive funding that the LA presently takes. There are some services which we would buy back from the Local Authority out of this additional funding. However, the remaining additional resources would provide the Governing Bodies with an opportunity to prioritise spending as it sees fit to maintain and improve the education of our children.

In addition, the Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust model will enable our schools to share resources and services more effectively and to provide consistent and continuous support for young people in keeping with our ethos and mission.

What will change?

Conversion to Academy Status for Catholic Schools will not be as significant as for Local Authority Maintained Schools. The Governing Bodies of Voluntary Aided Catholic Schools already manage their school finances and have responsibility for employment and admissions. Under the Diocesan model Governance of our schools would remain largely unchanged as the majority of governors would be appointed by the Diocese and there would be staff and parent governors as now. The only difference would be the establishment of an overarching Multi-Academy Trust Board.

We now have the opportunity to work even more closely together in a supportive Multi-Academy Trust. This will give us the opportunity to share good teaching and learning, join together to buy resources and develop a collaborative way of working for the benefit of all our children and families.

We have a vision for Catholic education that goes beyond individual schools and changes our perception from 'my school', to 'our schools'. The challenge for us all is 'How can we share our gifts and talents to ensure all education for all of our children is 'Outstanding'?

A number of other elements would remain unchanged. An Academy would still be bound by the statutory codes for Special Educational Needs and the Admissions criteria and catchment areas for each school would remain unchanged.

Our schools will continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, however, an Academy is not bound by the prescriptions of the national curriculum and Governors are conscious that this freedom could offer an additional safeguard from a secular agenda which may not accord with Catholic teaching.

All our schools have excellent relationships with their Local Authority and work well in partnership with other local schools. That commitment to wider partnership working will remain and we will work with our Local Authorities across

a wide range of schools in an atmosphere of mutual support.

What are the challenges?

As mentioned already a number of the challenges facing maintained schools converting to Academy status have already been embraced by Voluntary Aided schools.

However, there are the perceptions of schools “going it alone” and of a “two tier” system with a disregard for disadvantaged schools and the notion of instability for staff in terms of pay and conditions. The Leeds Diocesan model addresses all of these challenges; no school may convert on its own; all schools have the opportunity to convert as part of a family of schools and schools facing difficulties will be supported. In addition, no school can convert without the consent of the Bishop and the Trustees who will ensure that all schools are legally committed to converting under the same conditions, safeguarding pay and conditions for staff.

How will the consultation work?

The consultation period will run from Tuesday 18th September to noon on Friday 12th October 2012. The Governing Bodies are consulting with all our stakeholders including:

- The Leeds Diocesan Education Service
- Parish Priests and the Catholic Community
- School Governors
- Parents and known future parents
- Pupils
- Staff including Staff unions and associations
- The local Authorities Leeds and Bradford
- Elected representatives (local MPs, Councillors)
- The wider local community including voluntary groups associated with the Schools

How can I make my views known?

You are invited to submit your comments and views using the Trust website e-mail a.tindall@stmarysmenston.org In addition, you are welcome to attend any of the Consultation events in any of the five schools. Any views expressed at them will be captured and included in the final considerations of the Governing Bodies.

Before I give my views where can I find out more information?

Further details on the Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust model are contained on a dedicated Catholic Voluntary Academy website (www.dioceseofleedscmat2.org) for this Trust which includes

1. Diocesan documents
2. A frequently asked questions section.
3. Response forms
4. Links to the Catholic Education Service website, and further information generally on Academies provided by the DfE can be found at:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies

Finally

We feel it is important to emphasise the distinctiveness of the Leeds Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust proposal. It is underpinned by a commitment to work for the good of all diocesan schools, to ensure that none are left in a vulnerable position and our Catholic identity and ethos are maintained and strengthened. Furthermore, our five schools will maintain their own identities together with their commitment to working with others within and beyond our local area for the benefit of all concerned. The freedoms, with the resources, that Academy status will bring would be major factors in enabling our schools to continue to provide the best possible education for our young people and to serve our Catholic community.

Our total commitment is to do, in Christ, what we already do but to do it better.

Catholic Voluntary Multi-academy Trust

Consultation Pro-forma

The Proposal

That the following schools; St Mary’s Menston, St Mary’s Horsforth, Sacred Heart Ilkley, St Joseph’s Pudsey and St Joseph’s Otley having received conditional approval from the Trustees of the Diocese of Leeds apply to the Secretary of State to become Academies as part of a Diocese of Leeds Catholic Voluntary Multi-academy Trust.

What queries or comments do you have about the possibility that our Catholic Schools may convert to becoming part of a Catholic Multi-academy Trust?

Name:

Stakeholder/Parent.....

Staff member (specify school)

Prospective parent (present school and year group of child).....

Student (school/year group).....

Parishioner (specify parish).....

Other (please specify)

Date completed

It will not be possible to reply personally to individual questions but account will be taken in the deliberation period and will form part of the report to Governors.

A blank Word version of this pro-forma is available on the website:
<http://dioceseofleedscmat2.org/resources/>

Please return this form to school.
Anonymous returns will be discounted.