

Here are the answers to any questions received by email, letter or verbally other than being raised at the various consultation meetings
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Q. Would an academy make it easier to pool resources when recruiting teachers for our Catholic Schools?

A. Teachers from the schools would be employed by the Trust, so the opportunities for teachers will be wider for enhancement and development within the trust. This may be attractive to some applicants. However no teacher will be “forced” to work away from their home school. There will be opportunities to pool other resources which may provide opportunities to reduce costs.

Q. Why not wait until 2014 until an academy is forced upon us. What are the advantages of changing now?

A. At the moment, no school will be forced to convert (unless they fall below floor targets or have an inadequate OfSTED outcome). Schools could wait, and some are watching and waiting. One of the advantages of going sooner is financial. The LA top slice will come to the schools. As time goes on the value of this top slice is smaller. Also the only way to gain capital funding is if a school is an Academy. However in the CMAT model, it is not finance that drives the decision. It is collaboration and the promotion of Catholic Education.

Q. It is vitally important that Catholic ethos of our schools is maintained.

A. This is at the heart of any decision the foundation governors will make. The CES has secured safeguards to protect the Catholic nature of our schools. A majority of the Trustees will be appointed by the Bishop (Foundation), and the majority of each local governing body will be appointed by the Bishop (Foundation). There are also safeguards in the “Object” of the Articles of association which would state :

- (a) *to advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by establishing, maintaining, carrying on, managing and developing Catholic schools designated as such (“**the Academies**”) which shall offer a broad and balanced curriculum **and shall be conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Catholic Church and all Catholic canon law applying thereto including any trust deed governing the use of land used by an Academy both generally and in particular in relation to arranging for religious education and daily acts of worship and having regard to any advice and following directives issued by the Diocesan Bishop***

Q. We would be against the academy process – my wife is a teacher and the NUT guidance is not to support the process.

A. This is the position of the majority of the teaching unions, information from the NUT can be found at <http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/10584>

The unions have a number of reasons for not wanting Academies, they are listed below, and can be found on the NUT web site:

Reason one: Academies hand over state schools to sponsors

Creating Academies in place of community or foundation schools involves the transfer of publicly funded assets to unaccountable sponsoring bodies. Academy sponsors are given control of a modern independent school set up as a company limited by guarantee. Sponsors receive the entire school budget directly from the Government. Academies on the scale proposed by the Government have the effect of transferring billions of pounds worth of publicly funded assets in the form of buildings and land into the hands of private sponsors.

- A. The Catholic Diocese is already a commissioner of education. The buildings already belong to the diocese and will continue to be owned by the diocese so no assets are being handed over. The school budget will go to the individual Academies and not be held by the Trust.

Reason two: Many sponsors are unsuitable

Sponsors are not required to have educational expertise or experience. As examples, Academy sponsors include Charles Dunstone, the founder and Chief Executive of Carphone Warehouse, Aston Villa football club, Christian philanthropist, Sir Peter Vardy, of Reg Vardy car dealership and David Samworth, a sausage, pies and ready meals manufacturer.

- A. This is not the case for the CMAT as the “Members” who sit above the Trust will continue to be the Bishop. This is the current situation.

Reason three: Academies Threaten Fair Admissions Procedures

Academies have a destabilising effect on the capacity of other neighbouring schools to achieve a balance of abilities amongst their pupil intakes. The publicity surrounding Academies gives parents the impression that they are the “best” secondary schools in the area irrespective of the quality of other schools. Their brand new buildings and glossy image on show during visits by Government ministers can act as magnets for parents. This has resulted in some Academies being heavily over-subscribed, irrespective of the realities of their educational attainment.

- A. As a VA school we are already our own admission authority and this will remain exactly the same as it currently is.

Reason four: Academies threaten teachers' pay and working conditions

All Academies are able to set their own pay, conditions and working time arrangements for newly appointed teachers joining the Academy. In some Academies, pay and conditions arrangements for such teachers are similar or identical to those for teachers in local authority maintained state schools. In others, teachers' pay and conditions can be very different.

- A. Teachers in Catholic Schools have a Catholic Education Service Contract. If a Catholic School converts, it must continue to use the Catholic Education Service Contract. Pay and conditions are preserved and are written into the Articles.

Reason five: Academies do not offer pupils a better education than other local schools

Academies are based on a flawed premise that standards will be raised simply through designating a school as an Academy and by transferring it to a sponsor. There is no independent evidence that Academies are delivering significantly improved results at a faster rate than other local schools. Price Waterhouse Coopers Fifth Annual Report, published in November 2008, concluded: "There is insufficient evidence to make a definitive judgement about Academies as a model for school improvement".

- A. The schools in the consultation are already some of the highest achieving schools in the country, this is not the driving force for CMAT's in the diocese of Leeds.

Reason six: Academies undermine the independent role of school governors

The governance arrangements for Academies differ substantially from those of local authority schools which have a balance of places for key "stakeholders", particularly elected parent and staff governors, as well as representatives of the local community and the local authority.

- A. Governance in VA schools is already different from community schools. At the moment there is a majority of Foundation governors on the governing body, this will remain the same. Elected parents will be given places on the Trust as will staff. Elected parents and staff will also be on the local governing body. However there will be no local authority representative.

Reason seven: Academies have a damaging impact on other neighbouring schools and on local authorities.

Academies can create or reinforce local hierarchies of schools. The entitlement of Academies to select ten per cent of their pupils means that they are able to choose more academically successful pupils

- A. As stated earlier, the admissions arrangement will remain the same and there will be no academic selection. Priority is given to Baptised Catholics in the

Parishes the schools serve. Admission arrangements can be found on each school web site and will remain the same.

Q. “To do nothing is not an option” – but there are only 5 schools moving forward. Do the other schools dispute this statement, or do they have other plans?

A. The “to do nothing” statement means that a decision to convert or not to convert (or to convert at a later date), needs to be taken by the governors. We have been asked by the diocese to look at this question, and make a decision one way or the other.

Q. We are already in a trust – what advantages will the new set up give us?

A. The background and FAQ section of the web site covers most of this.

Q. Teaching staff have safeguards for T & C written into the trust document. Are there similar proposals for support staff?

A. There is no distinction in the document, ALL staff T & C are safeguarded.

Q. Will the Academy 'become insular' and turn 'within' rather than looking 'outwards'. While Western Europe appears to be becoming increasing secular, it is important that the Academy Trust does not become more 'fundamental' in its teachings. The 1st Article 'enshrines' the Catholic Ethos. What assurances can you give that this will not be at the detriment of producing 'rounded individuals' aware of and caring for all citizens.

A. In the mission statement that forms our application, we have addressed this. You are right that the first object is the same, and is influenced heavily by the current VA status we have.

We are also keen to continue our outward looking nature. We work with the LA, we are part of clusters and families and intend to continue this. (And this is in our mission statement). As a Catholic school we will continue to:

Assist parents in the education of their child

Serve the parish and diocese

Also serve society.

This means that through the values we teach, the care we give and the outcomes the students achieve, we will produce valuable members of society.

Q. Will the school buses still run from feeder catchment areas to the high school and how will they be funded.

A. The arrangements for transport to Catholic Multi Academy Trusts are the same as the current arrangements to Voluntary Aided Schools.

Q. In moving to academy status how will the quality of teaching and learning be improved?

A. The change of status is about structures and governance. However, in the original Academy proposals there was a stated aim to give schools more say in their own priorities. For all headteachers this is always about the work that takes place in the classroom. There will be a small amount of extra funding from the dedicated schools grant which will come directly to the schools. The use of this is determined by the individual headteacher and Academy Council. As teaching and learning is at the heart of what we do, the extra funding should be directed here.

Q. Is it quite simply the case that academy status is about the school receiving their total budget as they are directly funded by the DfE rather than the top sliced sum from the local authority?

A. This is not the case in a Catholic Multi Academy Trust. It is based upon some core ideas.

Trust Mission Statement

Schools of Discipleship, Diocese of Leeds

Our schools are distinctively Catholic, with Christ and the teaching of the Catholic Church at the centre of all we do, with the liturgical, sacramental and spiritual life.

We will work together to:

- provide the best possible opportunities for every child
- Provide assistance to parents
- Serve the Diocese, parishes and homes
- Provide a service to society.

Core principles

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.

Q. What is the relationship between the multi academy trust board and the individual school governing bodies: who tells us who what to do?

A. In the model documents, all decision making is delegated to the Academy Council. The Trust have the statutory duties on standards and finance. However if an Academy finds itself in difficulty the Trust can take back the decision making. However in the Core Principles we can see:

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.

Q. Is someone paid to be in charge of the multi-academy trust, like a Chief Executive?

A. At the moment, it is envisaged that the work will be done by the internal capacity in schools. However, the Trust may need to be facilitated in some way, and Executive Officer may be an option. The guiding principle is that a bureaucracy should be kept to a minimum.

Q. There is an assertion in the information available about Academy status that the evolution of the Trust will be inclusive and other schools will not be left out.

However, there is no mention anywhere of how the Trust and the schools within the Trust are going to safeguard and develop inclusive practice in respect of meeting the needs of students with special educational needs. St. Mary's in particular (and St John Fisher) is a high-achieving school: how are the Headteacher and the Governing Body going to ensure that provision for and practice around SEN students are of high quality and produce the impact that parents would expect, bearing in mind the contextual environment that the Trust will be looking for high levels of academic results, something which some SEN students may not be able to achieve in relation to other students? OFSTED have recognised this by looking at the progress of SEN students in their own right: how does the Trust propose to support and develop this progress?

A. Catholic education has always had inclusion as a core principle. This is also in the mission statement which is stated below.

We will work together to:

- provide the best possible opportunities for every child
- Provide assistance to parents
- Serve the Diocese, parishes and homes
- Provide a service to society.

The first bullet point states that we are looking to develop every child regardless of their background or ability. The statutory responsibilities will still apply and schools remain accountable for all groups of children. The new OfSTED framework is clear that it will look at these groups and expect progress. The Trust will have responsibility for standards and will monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPI). SEN, FSM, Traveller, EAL e.t.c will be monitored closely as they are now. A school cannot be high achieving unless all groups achieve well taking into account their starting point. The context should have no impact on the progress of SEN students. To achieve these outcomes the provision will need to continue to be of a high standard. It is a common misconception that all SEN students are low attaining. They may be placed on the register for a variety of reasons including learning.

The following items do not become the responsibility of the academy and continue to rest with the local authority. These are:

- home to school transport (including SEN)
- education psychology, SEN statementing and assessment
- monitoring of SEN provision, parent partnerships, etc.
- prosecution of parents for non-attendance
- individually assigned SEN resources for pupils with rare conditions needing expensive tailored provision (this is usually a top-up to formula funding)
- provision of pupil referral units or education otherwise for a pupil who is no longer registered at an academy.

Q. The autonomy of Academies puts the governance more into a business management setting and Board members will in effect be Non Executive Directors of a large company. This requires very careful consideration of the Board structure so as to keep in touch with mission and values.

A. This is the case. The “objects” and the “articles” will drive this across the trust. Also the board will have a majority of foundation governors which should help this.

Q. Careful consideration needs to be given to size of institution so that the Chief Executive (Principle) and Executive team do not lose sight of the learner experience. I am not a supporter of some Academies that have grown too big too quickly under a brand that fails to connect with students and parents.

A. At the moment, the plan is for 5 schools to start. The maximum is 16. It is not an intention to become “a chain”, like some organisations such as ULT or AET.

Q. Timing, there will never be a good time to undertake such fundamental changes, pending education reforms will overlap with CMAT and change management principles must apply so as to take students, parents, staff and stakeholders with CMAT.

A. Many things are changing very fast in education. This is another one of those changes. We have tried to keep everyone up to date with the new agenda, and will hope to continue with this as time goes on. This web site may continue to keep people in touch.