



St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

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1 November 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

Consultation to Convert to Academy Status

As I am sure you are aware, schools are increasingly working together in an effort to improve outcomes for pupils, respond to budgetary challenges and provide much needed services for the children entrusted to our care.

For the past four years the Diocesan Education Service has been working closely with the Diocesan Academies Partnership Committee and Bishop Richard, in order to develop a coherent model of Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) across the Diocese consisting of two cross-phase Catholic MATs. Xavier Catholic Education Trust was formed in September 2016 to serve Catholic schools in Surrey and Bosco Catholic Education Trust was formed in April 2017, to serve Catholic schools in Sussex. The aim is to cement and to develop relationships between schools, facilitate collaboration, provide services which may previously have been lost through funding constraints and to continue to raise standards.

After careful consideration and preliminary discussion with the Diocese, the Governing Body of St Catherine's has decided that they wish to explore conversion to Academy status and join Bosco Catholic Education Trust.

We are writing to consult with staff, parents, local community partners and parishes to determine whether St Catherine's should proceed with the first step in this process, which is the conversion to Academy status, and we would very much welcome your views on the matter.

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded state schools that are independent of the Local Authority and receive funding directly from central government. St Catherine's will still be a Catholic School under the authority of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton and its religious designation will not change.

Why is this being considered?

As a successful Voluntary Aided School, gaining Academy status would give us the autonomy to continue to develop our school and to continue to achieve high standards. As a multi-academy trust, there will be greater opportunities for working more closely with other Catholic schools in Sussex and the wider community of schools.

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What are the advantages of conversion?

The Government is clear that the greater freedoms enjoyed by Academies are designed to allow schools to develop and to build on individual strengths in response to the needs of the community. In addition, we believe that formal partnership as a Catholic Education Trust (CET) has a number of benefits for all schools. The CET will:

- formalise and strengthen our existing partnership work with other Catholic schools in Sussex which will enhance our Catholicity, reinforce our shared values and promote a culture of openness and trust;
- support the continuity of Catholic education in Sussex for pupils from 4 to 18 years and ease their transition from primary to secondary school;
- enable all schools to both access and deliver peer-led school-to-school support, sharing outstanding teaching and learning expertise across the Trust schools;
- provide additional opportunities to share resources and facilities, developing a collaborative way of working and 'joined-up' provision for the benefit of all of our pupils and families;
- secure additional finance to invest in resources for our pupils and schools by providing access to funding that now no longer goes to the Local Authorities;
- enable member schools to respond more effectively to the budget pressures all schools are facing by securing economies of scale whilst retaining individual school autonomy;
- reduce the impact of any future reduction in LA services by developing our own capacity to meet the needs of our pupils or commissioning our own specialist support services - for example, to support pupils with SEN. As an example, Bosco CET employ their own Educational Psychologist and Speech and Language Therapist.

What are the benefits to the community?

By working together collaboratively, the schools will be better placed to support the work of the parishes within Sussex. The development of the CET will also give strength to the Catholic voice and viewpoint within local communities and the education sector. By supporting each other in the promotion of gospel values we will develop a future generation that demonstrates these values in their everyday lives.

What are the disadvantages of conversion?

Greater freedoms do bring additional responsibilities including statutory duties as an academy trust company, but the school is confident that, with the support of Bosco CET, we can manage these.

Will any changes to the School be made as a result of conversion?

We do not intend to make any changes to the school as a result of the conversion, apart from taking advantage of the opportunities outlined above to work more closely with other schools in the CET. Please be assured that the Catholic character, ethos and values of the school would remain unchanged, should the Academy conversion take place. Indeed, we anticipate that this opportunity to work even more closely together within a supportive Catholic Education Trust would further strengthen and support St Catherine's ethos and traditions.

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How to take part in the consultation process

At this stage, we are not committing St Catherine's to conversion to Academy status. We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision. We would like to know what you think of our plans and are inviting you to take part in this consultation.

We have already held consultation meetings at school for staff and would like to invite you to a parents' consultation meeting to hear more about the proposals, take part in a question and answer session and raise any queries you may have. This will take place on **Monday the 20th of November at 5.00pm** in the hall and we ask you to contact the office in advance, to let us know that you will be attending. We very much hope that you will join us.

Your views are important to us and so, following this meeting, we will be giving you the opportunity to give your response as part of the consultation process. On **Tuesday the 21st of November at 9.00am** an online form will be made available to complete. You may wish to complete the form overleaf in hard copy instead, and we ask that you return this to the school office. The closing date for the receipt of all forms is **9.00am on Wednesday the 13th of December.**

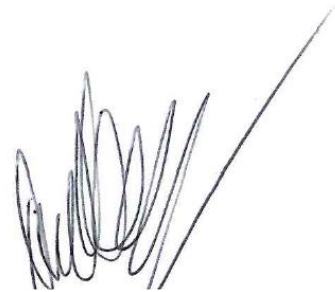
Many thanks in anticipation for your involvement in the consultation process and we look forward to hearing your views on this new and exciting opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Derek Croghan
Headteacher

Yours sincerely



Michael Madden
Chair of Governors

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Multi-Academy Trust Consultation Response Form

School: St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

Name of person responding (optional)

Please indicate the reason for your interest in the MAT Consultation:

- ☐ Parent/Carer of pupil(s)
 - ☐ Parent/Carer of prospective future pupil
 - ☐ Member of School staff
 - ☐ Local Authority employee: (Name of LA)
 - ☐ Former pupil
 - ☐ Staff of other local school or college
 - ☐ Member of local community
- Other (please specify)

Please indicate your response by ticking the box next to the appropriate statement below:

- ☐ I support the proposal to convert to Academy status and to join Bosco Catholic Education Trust
- ☐ I do not support the proposal to convert to Academy status

Additional comments, if required.

Please comment in the space below on the proposal to convert to Academy status and join Bosco Catholic Education Trust and continue over the page if necessary.

An online version of this survey form will be made available from Tuesday the 21st of November.

Thank you for your response.

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