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Dear Parents & Carers

Decision to Explore Conversion to Academy Status and Establishing a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

In 2016 and again in 2019, Bishop Declan articulated his vision for all his schools to work together and undertake a due diligence exercise in readiness for the establishment of Catholic Multi Academy Trusts. His reason for doing this was to secure the long- term future of Catholic Education across the diocese given the changing educational landscape. Following discussions at governor meetings, careful consideration and preliminary discussion with the Diocese, the School's Governing Board has decided that it now wishes to explore conversion to academy status and work with Newman partner schools to investigate a Catholic multi-academy trust. (A full list of Catholic schools in the Newman Partnership can be found via the Clifton Diocese website: [Partnerships | Clifton Diocese Schools and Colleges](#))

You are probably aware that all other local schools are already members of multi-academy trusts, which is another factor in this decision.

What is a multi-academy trust (MAT)?

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a charitable company whose Governing Board oversees the educational and financial performance of a group of schools. Academies are publicly funded state schools run independently and receive their funding directly from Central Government (rather than via the Local Authority). The School remains a Catholic School under the authority of the Bishop of Clifton and its religious designation does not change.

What are the advantages of conversion and becoming part of a Catholic MAT?

Multi-academy trusts are designed to provide more freedoms for leaders to oversee and manage a group of schools and create opportunities to build and share best practice that benefit all pupils and communities served by the trust. We feel that becoming part of a Catholic MAT would enable our leaders to sustain and strengthen Catholic education and drive accelerated and sustained improvement. The key benefits include:

- Protecting our Catholic vision, ethos and education which aims to enable all pupils to fulfil their potential and live life to the full
- Increasing opportunities for expert teachers and specialist staff to innovate, share knowledge and best practice across our family of Catholic schools.
- Creating cost savings and consistency in service provision through bulk buying power and shared procurement. Savings that can then be invested back into the classroom, for example, buying teaching resources and specialist staff to support children with speech and language, mental health and SEND.
- Providing new leadership and career progression opportunities that will develop and retain great Catholic leaders and continue to benefit from the contribution made by all the members of staff in our schools.

- Promoting greater job security for all staff when unforeseen circumstances occur such as changes in pupil numbers or staff absence. By being part of a bigger organisation staff can be used across establishments.
- Avoiding duplication of work for leaders. As a single legal entity with a common vision the MAT could establish common policies, systems and practice.
- Bidding for additional funding grants only available to academies, for example, the Trust Capacity Fund and Condition Improvement Fund for building works to improve the learning environment.

What are the disadvantages of becoming a MAT?

Greater freedoms do bring additional responsibilities for a MAT Governing Board as it becomes responsible for the performance and fulfilment of statutory duties for a group of schools, not just a single school or college. The investigative work will establish the degree to which, by working collaboratively, these responsibilities can be managed effectively and efficiently.

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

The main changes relate to the legal status of the School, for example:

- The status of the School would change upon conversion from a School overseen by the Local Authority to an independent charitable company.
- The MAT would contract directly with the Department for Education to receive its funding rather than through the Local Authority.
- Staff would be employed by the MAT not an individual governing body.
- The MAT as a single legal entity would be governed by a single Governing Board responsible for overseeing the performance of all schools and ensuring compliance with the statutory duties. However, local governing bodies sit beneath the board and work in accordance with the Governing Board's Scheme of Delegation and committee structure which usually includes the scrutiny of a school's educational data and its allocated budget, holding the headteacher to account for performance.

In embarking on the exploration of this move please be assured that the Governors do not intend to make any changes on conversion to the name of the School, its unique identity, pupils' uniform or its Catholic ethos and values. This means that from a day-to-day perspective the leadership of the School and staff engagement with parents and pupils would continue as it does now.

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document can be found via the Clifton Diocese website: Working-Documents-FAQ-August-2020.pdf (cliftondiocese.com)

What happens next?

A formal consultation process will be undertaken by the Governors which will invite everyone associated with our School to submit their views, ask questions and share feedback. Following the completion of due diligence and careful consideration of the formal consultation feedback, the Governors will then meet to make a final decision.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Flexman

GBath

Chair of Governors

Headteacher



"Together we love, together we hope, together we learn."