



Monday 10th September 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

Consultation on the conversion of St Francis Xavier School to become an academy and a member of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust

I am writing to you on behalf of the Governing Body of our school to seek your views about the plans for us to convert to become an academy and join the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust.

Background

The Diocese of Middlesbrough is the provider of education at 54 Catholic schools and academies spread across seven local authority areas, providing Catholic education to some 17,514 children and young people. In the central region of the diocese we provide education to approximately 7,000 children and young people and employ a large number of teachers as well as a range of support staff.

The Bishop, along with staff in the diocese have been working closely with all diocesan schools over the last eighteen months to review our governance and leadership structures to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of all of our children, young people, staff and the schools that serve our communities.

The Catholic schools within the diocese will form three Catholic Academy Trusts serving the north, centre and south of the diocesan region. The northern trust, the 'Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust' and the southern trust, the 'St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy Trust' have already been formed. As this letter explains the final diocesan trust – the 'St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust' serves the central diocesan areas of North Yorkshire, the East Riding and York.

The Bishop has instructed his foundation governors to work with the diocese to form the new St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust. The diocese has also been working very positively with ourselves (the one Catholic and Church of England School in the region). We would now like to hear your views as parents, carers, school staff and other stakeholders on our plans so they can be considered and included in our future thinking.

We have also been working with the Anglican Diocese of Leeds, Department for Education and the local authorities in North Yorkshire, York and the East Riding.

Although 'academies' have been around for over a decade, the structure, accountability, operations and most noticeably the numbers of academies have developed dramatically in the last 4 to 5 years. In 2008 there were 83 academies whilst today there are almost 7,000 academies across the country.

Consultation on the plans for our school to become an academy within the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust

Our school governors welcome the potential for improvement that academy status can bring through a closer collaborative approach, allowing expertise and resources to be shared. Three

key areas the Diocese and our schools across the region are collectively keen to improve upon are governance, leadership and use of resources in order to further improve outcomes for pupils.

Therefore, we are today commencing consultation on a programme for the twenty Roman Catholic Schools and one Roman Catholic / Church of England school in the diocesan central region to become academies and merge to form a multi-academy Trust. This multi-academy trust has the support of the Department of Education, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough, the Anglican Diocese of Leeds and the governing bodies of the 21 schools.

The multi-academy trust will be called the 'St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust' and will employ a Chief Executive Officer who will provide dynamic and inspirational leadership to the Trust, ensuring the very highest standards of performance for all of our schools and that resources are directed appropriately towards need.

Supported by a team of highly qualified school improvement experts, this new structure will allow us to share expertise across the 21 schools more effectively and provide greater opportunities for staff development and training, and as a result; ensure that all of our schools provide the very best for our children and young people. Equally each school will continue to develop its own unique character, and ethos with a dedicated leadership and staff team serving their local community.

The newly formed St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust Board will consist of a group of twelve highly skilled individuals that have a clear understanding of their role in raising standards across all of our schools and protecting and promoting our Catholic ethos. These individuals will be approved by the Diocese and the Department for Education prior to appointment. It is envisaged that each individual school will also continue to have its own Local Governing Body who will have responsibility for the day to day oversight and governance of the school.

Consultation with stakeholders is therefore to gather your views as we shape the development of the new multi-academy trust and to ensure that these are taken into account as we develop our exciting and innovative plans. Consultation begins today, Monday 10th September 2018 and closes at 5pm on Friday 28th September 2018.

We have provided some frequently asked questions and a consultation response form within this letter. We will of course keep you updated on progress as we move forward with this proposal and are anticipating that this change will take place from 1st September 2019.

There will be two informal consultation drop-in sessions for parents/carers should you have any further questions:

Monday 24 September 2018 from 5-6pm at St Francis Xavier School, Richmond

Tuesday 25 September 2018 from 9-10am at St Mary's RC Primary School, Richmond

Yours sincerely

Dr J Whiston
Chair of Governors of St Francis Xavier School

The Diocese of Middlesbrough

St Margaret Clitherow Multi Academy Trust Consultation Feedback Form

Please let us know your views regarding the proposed conversion of St Francis Xavier School to become an academy and a member of the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust

Name.....

Email
address.....

Telephone
number.....

Parent/guardian Staff Other (please indicate)

Your written response should be handed in or posted to the school office and marked "Private and Confidential" to be received no later than **5pm Friday 28th September 2018.**

Alternatively, you may email your consultation feedback to MATConsultation@sfxschool.org.uk

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the consultation.

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust

Frequently Asked Questions

1 Why is the school and Diocese proposing to develop a multi-academy Trust of twenty Catholic schools and one Roman Catholic/Church of England?

Over the last 18 months, extensive work has been undertaken to test and assess the benefits of the Diocese's proposal to develop a multi-academy trust model. The Bishop of

Middlesbrough and diocese believe that by schools working together more closely we can further improve the education of our children and young people across the region.

In the central region of the diocese there are currently twenty Voluntary Aided Maintained Catholic schools and one Roman Catholic and Church of England School (RC/CE) and the proposal is to develop a Catholic Academy Trust comprising all of these schools with the aspiration that this trust, the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust (SMCCAT) is established in 2019.

The proposal to develop the Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust is aimed to further improve;

- outcomes for pupils
- the quality of developmental opportunities for staff
- support and challenge for governors, trustees and senior leaders
- the level of resources available to Catholic and RC/CE Schools in the region through increased efficiency in the pooling and targeting of resources.

A group of Catholic head teachers / Roman Catholic and Church of England head teachers and Governors have made a significant contribution to the formulation of the current proposals and have consulted widely with our family of schools across the region.

The Bishop of Middleborough has chosen the Catholic Multi-Academy Trust model as it fits his vision of no school operating in isolation and schools working closely and more deeply in permanent arrangements with their family of schools.

2 What are the principles behind the thinking?

We have identified the following principles which will underpin the development of the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust.

By converting to become an academy and join the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust we aim to ensure that no schools will operate in isolation and that we are empowered to work together more closely and more deeply in permanent arrangements with our family of schools.

Within the new arrangements the lines of accountability will be clear and we will receive more challenge and support from a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will have responsibility across the Trust:

- i) to provide wider strategic direction and accountability
- ii) the authority to quickly affect change where it is needed.

It is intended that the new arrangements will lead to improved outcomes across all schools within the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust.

By being formally part of a family of schools we will ensure that academies have the funding they need to do the work they have been given. For example, the new Trust arrangements should enable all schools to be able to afford to appoint to the essential roles which enable all pupils to achieve their full potential.

The new arrangements will provide the formal mechanisms to identify 'best practice' and enable this to be shared effectively.

The new arrangements will ensure that there continues to be a strong focus on local governance and our Governing Body will continue to focus on providing the very best education for our children and young people.

The new arrangements will ensure that all school leaders are given the appropriate levels of support to fulfil their roles effectively. This is particularly the case with regard to school improvement and financial management, including clarity on the roles of the Accounting Officer.

3 What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school, funded directly by the Department for Education, instead of the local authority. Originally, underperforming schools were turned into Academies to help the school improve rapidly, however in 2010, the Government extended the opportunity to convert to Academy status to all schools that are successful and performing well, and as a result there are now almost 7,000 academies in the country, including an increasing number in our region.

An academy is a charitable trust run by a board of trustees. Academies are rightly expected to work with and support other schools, including lower-performing schools.

Should you wish to know more about the Government's policy, the Department for Education has its own Academies bookmark on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

4 How will Governance work?

The Trust will be governed by a Board of Directors and each school within the Trust will continue to have a Local Governing Body (LGB). It is expected that each school LGB will report to the Trust Board and have responsibility for decision making in line with the Trust's scheme of delegation.

The trust will have a Board of up to twelve Directors appointed by the Diocese with particular skills and expertise to help it run efficiently, effectively and compliantly.

Although the Board would have a number of legal and regulatory powers it may delegate many of its powers to Local Governing Bodies and Committees. Local Governing Bodies would continue to have a mixture of representatives from parent, staff and local communities.

Each Head Teacher would still be responsible for running their own school. The Head Teachers will work together with the Chief Executive Officer to develop plans for partnership working and collaboration.

5 Has this approach been tried anywhere else?

A Catholic Academy Trust, the St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy Trust has been formed in the south of the diocesan region and in the north of the diocesan region the formation of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust is nearing completion. Catholic Academy Trusts have also been established in Leeds and Nottingham.

6 When will the Trust's Board of Governors be formed?

The Project Steering Group are continuing with their work in steering the operational aspects of this work and the Diocese are now looking to appoint the Shadow Board of Directors to guide aspects of the work in developing the Trust.

The Shadow Board will be comprised of 12 people. There will be 7 Foundation Governors appointed by the Bishop who will be practising Roman Catholics, one Foundation Church of England Governor appointed by the Church of England Diocese, 3 non-foundation Governors and, once appointed, the Chief Executive Officer.

It is planned that the Shadow Board will advertise and run the recruitment process for the posts of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer before the end of December in order that they can take up post before the Trust is established in August/September 2019.

It is then likely that the full Board of Governors will be then be appointed in the Summer term 2019.

7 How will the children benefit?

When the schools convert to academy status and establish the SMCCAT, the children will still wear the same uniforms as before and will be taught in the same classrooms by the same teaching staff and they won't notice any immediate difference. Each school will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children.

However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, mostly as a result of new training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the children's education. In particular, the children will benefit from the sharing of excellent and innovative practice in teaching and learning between the partner schools. They will also have wider opportunities to learn new skills and experience new activities.

8 What will be the impact on staff?

Currently, all staff in Voluntary Aided Schools are employed by the individual Governing Bodies. After conversion, all staff will be employed by the new SMCCAT. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions (TUPE). Staff will be provided further information on how they are affected.

Being part of the SMCCAT will also provide greater opportunities for career progression and development. Already staff are working together on a range of teaching, learning, curriculum and pupil support projects and the SMCCAT will strengthen these links.

9 How will funding work?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. The whole of the school budget would come direct to the school from central Government. As part of a multi-academy trust, we may also achieve greater efficiencies through increased buying power and joint commissioning of services; such as school equipment, catering and cleaning. All schools will contribute to the central SMCCAT costs.

10 How will admissions to the school be affected?

The application process for parents and carers will remain the same. The multi-academy trust will become the admitting authority for the schools but each would have its own admissions policy as now. Any future policy changes would need to be clear and fair and in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient school places locally and to coordinate the admissions process for all schools.

11 Will our responsibilities in relation to SEND and exclusions change?

Responsibilities as an academy in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

12 Will the Curriculum be changed?

Each school will continue to teach a varied and vibrant curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils. As part of the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy trust schools will be able to share best practice more easily and learn from each other.

One of the aims in forming the Trust is to ensure that pupils receive the very best teaching and learning experience and for the curriculum offer to meet the needs of all pupils. As is the case now, any changes that may be made will be well thought through and part of the normal cycle of reviewing what the pupils are taught.

