



St Michael's Catholic College
Multi Academy Trust Consultation Report

November 2023

*Presented by the Principal to the
Full Governing Body*

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Key:

- *SMCC= St Michael's Catholic College
- *BPCC = Bonus Pastor Catholic College
- *OLSPN= Our Lady and St Philip Neri
- *SA= St Anthony's Catholic Primary

Summary

Our community cares deeply about St Michael's Catholic College and wants the best for our staff and students. Our staff are passionately committed to the school and to the students they serve. Respondents to the consultation across all stakeholder groups were considered and focused generally on personal details which were influenced by common misconceptions. There is a relatively low level of awareness of the benefits of a single academy trust forming/joining a multi academy trust amongst respondents and attendees of consultation meetings, but these misconceptions were addressed in our meetings. Our staff have benefited from an informal consultation event with staff Governors and a number of updates to the whole staff and union representatives, including a presentation on the recent inset day in October and no staff attended the consultation evening on 5th October 2023. We have made a commitment to protect terms and conditions for all staff, now and in the future.

This consultation was coordinated across the 4 founding schools with all responses shared. It is clear that the staff of St Michael's Catholic College trust the leadership and governance to make the right choices to secure the future for our students, staff and families.

Next steps

Following a review of this consultation report and the full consultation responses, the Governing Board will decide on how to proceed, in line with established Governing Board protocols for voting.

The consultation

What we consulted on

St Michael's Catholic College (and the 3 other founding schools BPCC/OLSPN/SA) ran a 6-week consultation from 11th September 2023 inviting views from all stakeholders on the proposal to become a Catholic-Academy Trust (CAT).

Who we consulted

We invited views from parents and carers, all staff (teaching and non-teaching), students, community partners and any other interested parties. We sent a letter to all stakeholders on 11th September 2023 and invited responses via a google form on the same day.

The responses were collated together across all 4 schools.

Responses received:

- Total responses – 18 across all 4 schools (*see appendix 1*)

Negative responses- 3

Positive responses- 2

Neutral responses- 3

Logistical questioning- 9

Given the number of families and staff across the 4 schools, the responses represent well below 1% of potential respondents. We can assume the lack of response means that there is no widespread concern regarding our plans and that on the whole stakeholders have been well informed throughout.

The consultation meetings were coordinated and took place at all 4 schools on Thursday 5th October 2023.

St Michael's had 2 parents attend and all other founding schools had very few attendees (less than 5 in each school).

At the meeting the Principal presented the rationale for forming the trust, the Diocesan policy on MAT formation and addressed questions received online and some of the FAQs. A copy of the presentation was also sent to all parents on the 19th October, just before half term with a reminder that the consultation closed on in the October half term and a further link to the google form for any remaining questions.

In addition to the online responses, Bonus Pastor Catholic College received a letter on 14th October 2023 (*see appendix 4*) from **Cllr Chris Barnham** *Lewisham Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Labour Councillor for Crofton Park Ward*. In his letter Cllr Barnham expresses his disappointment in the plans. Bonus Pastor believe this disappointment is based on a political ideology against Multi Academy Trusts and issues the LA has had with other schools forming a MAT, rather than what is right for the Bonus Pastor Catholic College as an individual school.

How we consulted

The fundamental purpose of the consultation process was to seek views on the proposal to convert St Michael's from a single academy trust into a Catholic multi academy trust with 3 other founding schools, to make sure that the Governing Board make a fully informed decision.

There is no statutory period required for the consultation – many similar consultations last approximately 4 weeks, some as little as 2 weeks. Our process lasted 6 weeks. Multiple opportunities were provided, and taken up, for each stakeholder group to engage directly with the Principal and Governors to ask questions and receive answers.

We sent 3 letters home (*see appendix 3*) regarding our plans including an invite to respond via a

google form and the opportunity to attend a face-to-face consultation meeting. We also placed our consultation letter on our website.

We are satisfied that the consultation process has been adequate and meaningful, evidenced by the further information we provided in response to matters raised by consultees. The consultation ran from 11th September for 6 weeks. Views were invited to be submitted via the consultation google form, including the option to ask questions and receive updates.

We believe that following the consultation we have heard the views of our community, and the governors are now in the position to consider the views before deciding and voting to proceed.

Appendix 1: St Benedict Consultation Questionnaire responses

Relationship to School/s	Questions	Other comments
A parent/carer	Why St Benedict and not SELCAT? And why are you joining with the schools listed and not, e.g. Good Shepherd which is in the same parish?	
A member of staff	Are you able to provide a timeline of the different milestones and a completion date?	
A parent/carer	I have no question I just wanted to thank you for everything	Thank you
A parent/carer	No question	It's a good innovation and I wish the pupils would learn more from each other.
A parent/carer	I think the school should stay as it currently is.	
A parent/carer	Good	
A parent/carer	If it isn't broke why fix it? The school is outstanding - the CAT trust would have 'more freedom on the curriculum' thus the power to change it - why put the school in the position to potentially change its curriculum? It's teaching? It's management? I think it is far too risky. So why is the school taking the risk? What is in it for the actual school the needs of the pupils and staff? Also, as St Michaels is the most performing school out of the current schools listed in the CAT trust, no doubt St Michaels would lose teachers to 'training' 'consults' at the other schools even our head teacher. Who I wouldn't be surprised would then become a head or really involved in another school at the detriment of St Michaels and its staff and students (I have seen this all before)? This does not sit well as I know schools in academy trusts fall by the way side, so my question is why is the school considering this, what direct benefit is this to our school? Other than being in the CAT trust? As I haven't seen anything highlighted in the letter from the governors that states the benefit to the school, its staff, it's students and what they will get this out of it?	Too many Catholic schools are losing their great reputations and their way. I have been involved with 3 schools (not including St Michaels) I have seen these kinds of initiatives introduced and the school does suffer no doubt about it, especially if the school is well performing. How many great Catholic schools are now in special measures. Now if a school is not well performing then of course they would jump into this, but a school that is excellent should not. I don't expect my opinion to count at all, it seems the governors have already made up their minds. So I will be that person if what I am warning against does happen, I will state I put this in writing, I warned against this and who knows down the road there could be petitions, groups against this formed as in my opinion it's so easy to foresee what is going to happen
A parent/carer	Will you be able to retain staff? What support will be in place to support EHCP children and others on the SEN register? Are the staff happy with this move? What rights do staff have to sick pay	I am not convinced by this proposal.

Appendix 1: St Benedict Consultation Questionnaire responses

	Etc. Can you guarantee my child's learning, mental health and wellbeing will not be impacted?	
A parent/carer	What will the additional admin cost be and how will this impact the school budget (e.g., a CEO and CFO won't be cheap)?	
A parent/carer	If the academy is independent of the local authority, will the music curriculum still be fulfilled by Southwark Music Service, or will other arrangements be in place? Will the children be eligible to access opportunities available through Southwark Music Service? Will the free healthy school meals continue?	
A parent/carer	How will this benefit St Michael Catholic	
A parent/carer	Would criteria for admission change based on the fact that a primary school is in the trust? As time moves on is it an expectation that more Catholic schools join this trust?	
A parent/carer	Will the Trust have a CEO? But what if eventually it turns out it's the wrong person, not acting in our school and students' interest? We have an amazing Headteacher and staff. Why do we want to risk and opt for a centralised governance so that staff, parents and students may feel distant and sidelined?	I am very concerned. My children went to a primary school which then developed into an Academy Trust. Things deteriorated along the years. From outstanding the school became good. Accountability narrowed, parents and students felt sidelined. The school lost its familiar dedicated atmosphere and adopted a more executive model. The headteacher counted much less than before.
Lewisham Headteacher	How will the formation of a MAT impact on the Admissions Policy of Bonus Pastor for Year 7 admissions? Can the MAT assure local Catholic schools that there will not be a preference given to Catholic schools within the MAT for Admissions, over schools that have not made the decision to join the St Benedict's MAT?	

Appendix 1: St Benedict Consultation Questionnaire responses

A parent/carer	<p>From my experience as parent of a Y9 student at St Michael's I have been very happy with how the College is run and overall with the SLT and Head. I am hence slightly worried about this move to a MAT Model. I would like to ask some questions and raise some points about the MAT. My first Question is Who are the members? How were they appointed? 2. Will there be a CEO? Who appointed the CEO? How are interviews being conducted? How many stages of the interview? Which</p>	
	<p>references and credentials are being used when appointing new staff and SLT of the MAT? Will a CEO be on Probation? The College is already performing very well. What will change moving forward? How will SEND pupils be founded? Will admissions policies change? What will happen to staff pay and conditions? What are the legal documents? and can parent access them? How many governing body meetings should be held during the process? When will we find out how much funding we will receive from the DfE? Will staff be transferred? What is 'TUPE' and what does it do? Post-conversion Are all staff required to have new DBS checks on conversion? Can we get a clear understanding of the main changes and how these will affect the day to day running of the school? Lastly will the Curriculum change? Thanks</p>	
A parent/carer	<p>Will this new change affect the way teachings are delivered to my child?</p>	
A parent/carer	<p>Why this Academy? Why not e.g., SELCAT? Will St. Michael's stay as a weekly timetable or will it go to a two-week timetable? What changes will affect the students?</p>	
A parent/carer	No	No

Appendix 2: St Michael's Consultation Evening Thursday 5th October 2023

There were two parents present.

Andrew Hurley, Staff Governor attended on behalf of the Governing body.

Felicity Corcoran welcomed those present and explained the format of the meeting and that she will present key information and will respond to the questions raised on the online form. Additional copies of the FAQs sent out to all stakeholders on 11th September with the consultation were available.

Background:

- Everything we do and all decisions we make are informed by our Salesian ethos and what is best for our students.
- St Michael's is a standalone Single Academy Trust and is under the umbrella of Southwark Diocese.
- It is important that everyone is aware of the Southwark Diocese Multi Academy Trust strategy which is that they are currently working to get all diocesan schools into Catholic Academy Trusts by 2030. Many other Catholic dioceses across the country have done or are doing the same thing.
- This started from a place where there were too many single academy trusts, across SE London in particular, and the viability of those schools was scrutinised, and the local authorities are increasingly not able to provide non-academy Catholic schools with the quality of support and services they need e.g., Southwark LA has recently deleted the Director of Education post. Therefore, a decision was made to encourage all Catholic schools in the diocese to form Multi Academy Trusts.
- St Michael's had the option to join SELCAT which is a recently formed MAT in the diocese (currently ten schools across SE London), but we have also been given the opportunity by the diocese to explore the idea of being a founding school, and start another MAT which has been called St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust.
- The name has been chosen as St Benedict is the patron saint of students, which demonstrated that the focus of the founding schools is on our children and also because the rule of St Benedict ensures everyone's role in a community is valued. Therefore, schools in the trust will retain their uniqueness but will benefit from the support of being part of a multi school community.
- We can't promise that a MAT will come in and answer every problem, but there is strength in numbers and this is an opportunity to grow our partnership into a MAT that offers long term sustainable high-quality support for our group of schools. The idea that MATs are only put in charge of failing schools is not the case anymore.

Response to the questions raised online/in the meeting:

What is in it for Outstanding schools, with a good budget etc.?

We want to be in control of our own destiny, we do not want to be directed into somewhere else. It is very clear that, this is what will happen if we don't do anything as regardless of the government agenda the Diocese is clear that this is their long-term strategy for all Diocesan schools.

Will you have a high staff turnover?

Staff are involved in the consultation and have been given an opportunity to feedback and ask

questions, they are clear that we cannot sit around and wait to be directed to join a MAT that is already formed and of the benefits of being involved in creating a MAT with partner schools. This gives us the opportunity to collaborate with schools we have good working relationships with.

Why St Benedict rather than SELCAT? And why with the schools listed and not others

There are 64 schools in South East London in Southwark Diocese, our initial concern with SELCAT was that the majority of schools in SELCAT are in boroughs a bit further away from us and they already have relationships which we do not have. Therefore, we went to the Diocese with a proposal that to demonstrate that there are too many schools for one trust and as a result we were given go ahead to explore forming a second MAT with partner schools. A number of other feeder/partner schools are interested in joining at a later stage, therefore we have decided to proceed initially with 4 founding schools and grow from there.

Are you able to provide a Timeline of the different milestones for completion date: rough timeline?

The plan is for the trust to open by April 2024 or September 2024

If it isn't broke why fix it? The school is outstanding - the CAT trust would have 'more freedom on the curriculum' thus the power to change it - why put the school in the position to potentially change its curriculum? It's teaching? It's management? I think it is far too risky. So why is the school taking the risk?

We are passionate about this because this is what we are focusing on as a group of schools, retaining our individuality, retaining our ethos and culture but also looking for opportunities to share practice. We will not be changing our uniform or identity. If there was no multi academy agenda, we would happily continue the way we are and develop as a more informal federation with partner schools, but we are getting the opportunity to design this in the best possible way for our school to go forward.

I think it is far too risky. So why is the school taking the risk?

It's risky to do nothing and taking a lead in this process means we are not at risk of being in a position where we do not have any choice about joining an existing MAT. Our curriculum will not change because we do not need these types of changes.

What direct benefit is this to our school? Other than being in the CAT trust? As I haven't seen anything highlighted in the letters from the governors that states the benefit to the school, its staff, its students and what they will get this out of it?

This is an opportunity to formalise relationships with other schools. There is also a crisis in inner London boroughs which has not hit St Michael's yet, but there is a fall in the number of Catholic Children in our local area. Although we are still oversubscribed our children are coming from a wide range of primary in schools in both South East London and East London. Parents should be aware that primary schools in Southwark are closing because of low numbers. Forming a MAT would enable us to work closely with our feeder schools to help the situation.

Will you be able to retain staff?

We have spoken to staff, had meetings, conversations etc and they understand the rationale for being involved with the formation of St Benedict MAT. This may also give us the opportunity for staff to be able to work across the trust, which provides an opportunity for progression for our staff and may help to retain them and recruit others.

What support will be in place to support EHCP children and others on the SEN register?

St Michael's has a relatively high number of children with EHCPs (outside of a resource base) and they are incredibly well supported here. We invest in our SEN provision and resources in the local authority are becoming increasingly stretched. Our vision is that we are able to have our own SEN experts in the trust rather than relying on external providers who can be deployed to work with our children which will be a benefit.

What rights do staff have to sick pay etc.?

Terms and conditions to staff contracts will not change. The TUPE process will ensure conditions to staff contracts will not change.

Can you guarantee my child's learning, mental health and wellbeing will not be impacted?

Absolutely – your child will not see anything different as on a day-to-day basis, there will be no obvious changes. But there will be good possibility that we can improve services and support for good mental health and wellbeing by developing support across the trust.

What will the additional admin cost be and how will this impact the school budget (e.g., a CEO and CFO won't be cheap)?

As a single academy trust we are responsible for procuring all services and contracts. This is often expensive as a single school and we miss out on preferential rates and contracts offered to multi academy trusts. Schools who are local authority schools e.g., BPCC, OLASPN, SA pay 5% of their budgets already to the LA and this money will be diverted to the trust once it opens. As SMCC is a SAT and all funding comes to us directly we will pay a staggered rate initially 2% then increasing each year until we reach 5%, this allows for contracts we have in place to come to an end so that we build up to paying the money into the MAT instead of on our own individual contracts and services.

Will the free healthy school meals continue?

Yes - this will continue as it is.

Would criteria for admission change based on the fact that a primary school is in the trust?

As time moves on is it an expectation that more Catholic schools join this trust?

There are no plans to personally make changes to the St Michael's admissions policy that relate to the MAT, but the Diocese are asking all schools to begin consulting on admissions, and to update admissions policies to include applicants providing a certificate of Catholic Practice rather than a priest's attendance at mass SIF form. This is an adaptation across the Diocese to help manage the current fall in Catholic children, but this would happen anyway regardless of whether we were joining a MAT.

In terms of other schools joining, once the MAT is up and running it is planned that the next wave of schools will join when due diligence shows it is right for them to do so. This involves getting both Diocesan and Department of Education approval.

Who will be in charge of the Trust?

It is hoped that this will be confirmed over the next week or so, hopefully one of the Headteachers currently involved, who are all very experienced and able. The Trust Board is being put together and any leadership roles would initially be interim and part time positions and are ring fenced to the founding schools.

Update to the meeting 30/11/23: Jonathan Ronan Head of Bonus Pastor has been appointed as interim CEO for 2 days a week. The Heads of the 3 other founding schools Felicity Corcoran (SMCC), Joanne Hawthorne (SA) and Matthew Ringham (OLASPN) will form with Jonathan Roan the Headteacher board, meeting every 3 weeks to be involved in all stages of trust planning and development with the trustees.

The Diocese have clear guidelines for the recruitment of Directors to the trust board and oversee this part of the process as they do currently with foundation governors. The clear position is also each school in the MAT will retain its own local governing board.

Noel Campbell, recently retired Headteacher of St Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School has been taken up the role as the Chair of trustees and Shireen Razey, Executive Principal of Christ the King Sixth Form is the Vice Chair of trustees. These appointments are welcomed by the founding Headteachers who are pleased that such experienced Catholic Leaders will be leading the St Benedict Trust Board.

What will happen to other local Catholic schools?

We hope that this will help schools currently struggling to continue, and alleviate some of the issues some schools are facing. They will have the choice of what Trust they would like to join. We project that we will grow to approx. 20 schools over a few years.

What happens if it doesn't work, in say 2 years?

By being in a MAT we are safe from being taken over by a big chain, the Trust will support us. We are starting with four strong schools; we will have to take on schools eventually that need more support, but this will be in the longer term.



St Michael's Catholic College

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Tel: 020 7237 6432

www.stmichaelscollege.org.uk

Principal: Ms Felicity Corcoran
Vice Principal: Ms Charlotte Sayed
Vice Principal: Ms Joanna Nottage

26th June 2023

Dear Parents / Carers,

The Archdiocese of Southwark intends for all its schools in the diocese to explore partnerships and closer ways of working with other Catholic schools. Over recent months, we have been liaising with local Catholic schools, with whom we already have strong and established connections, building closer working partnerships and sharing good practice. As part of this we have been exploring the option of forming a Catholic Academy Trust, with the approval of the diocese.

As a family of schools, we feel it is imperative to be in control of our schools' futures, while we still have the opportunity to be part of the founding design and vision for a new Catholic Academy Trust. We want to adopt the model that serves us best and include the partners we want to work with for the benefit of the students in our care. Therefore, we have submitted an application to the Department for Education to be considered for the formation of a new Catholic Academy Trust serving Catholic schools in our local area and community.

The suggested name of the trust is St Benedict's Catholic Academy Trust, however, please be reassured that all schools in the proposed trust will retain their individual name and identity but will work together to continue to strengthen our already successful partnership work. The patron saint of the trust, St Benedict, was chosen by the schools because St Benedict is the patron saint of school children and students, and because of his promotion of community living. It is vitally important to the school leaders and governors that our children are at the centre of all decision making and that our school community has a voice in the decision-making processes.

When we return after the summer holiday, a full consultation period will commence; this will include a series of meetings (dates to be published in due course) where all stakeholders including parents and staff will have the opportunity to find out more about our plans and ask any questions they may have.

Whilst this is a positive step forward, it should be noted that no firm decision has been made at this time, other than to submit the application and during the consultation we will be keen to hear your thoughts so we can continue to work together to secure the best for St Michael's.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via my PA Valerie Ferguson
v.ferguson@stmichaelscollege.org.uk

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Ms F. Corcoran
Principal



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11th September 2023

Dear Stakeholders,

You may recall that we wrote to you in June, about the possibility of St Michael's Catholic College becoming part of a Catholic Academy Trust, called St Benedict. We are now at the stage of formal consultation which means we would like to know your views.

Proposal

The Governing body of St Michael's Catholic College is proposing to move from single academy status to multi academy trust status, with three other local schools, forming St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust within the Archdiocese of Southwark.

Background and Rationale

Our school is one of four Catholic schools in Lewisham and Southwark that have jointly prepared plans to establish a new Catholic Academy Trust (CAT) called St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust. The four schools that propose to form St Benedict CAT are:

St Michael's Catholic College
Bonus Pastor Catholic College
Our Lady and St Philip Neri Primary School
St Anthony's Catholic School

The Archdiocese of Southwark has also made clear its intentions for all Catholic schools to join one of a number of local Catholic Academy Trusts. Our Governing Body has been working closely with the local schools identified above, establishing a shared vision for the future of our schools.

After much research it was decided that it was in the best interests of our school community to adopt the Catholic Academy Trust model and governors are now consulting on this proposal. As an Outstanding school performing well, the Governors along with the Principal are keen that the school has full control of when and how it moves forward with the diocesan strategy, with the added advantage of being involved in the initial establishment and development of the Trust.

Advantages of Multi Academy Trust Status

The CAT's role will be to provide support to our school ensuring that we continue to be a strong, high performing, inclusive School. As Governors, we believe that the opportunity to work with new partners and schools, collaborating to ensure standards across the Trust are consistently high, is an exciting proposition. However, we will continue to actively work with all local schools and current partners, maintaining our relationships with schools beyond the Trust. Governors have made it clear that Catholic Academy Trust status will add to our school's unique character rather than alter it.



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Joining a CAT makes working in partnership with the schools in the Trust easier as one legal entity. For example, joint resourcing decisions can be made, joint specific training sessions can be undertaken

across a number of schools, we can make purchases or commission services as a group of schools rather than individually to secure better deals.

There will also be in place a small CAT central team, focused on supporting all the schools in the CAT. This central team will work very closely with the schools and will come to know our individual strengths and characteristics, being able to identify where we can access support, knowledge and capacity quickly from within the Trust, allowing us to continually improve.

The Governing body of each school has been clear that the individual character of each school must be protected. This has been a common theme throughout the development of plans for the CAT and we will continue to ensure that this is a priority.

Points for consideration and responsibilities

As St Michael's has been an academy for 11 years, we already have expertise in successfully managing the additional responsibilities placed on academies in terms of financial management, the school estate and reporting. On a day-to-day basis the school community will not notice the difference when we become part of the Catholic Academy Trust.

The additional responsibilities will be covered by a small central team at CAT level to ensure that there is minimal impact in school. For example, over time, an Accounting Officer (the CEO) and a Chief Finance Officer will be appointed to ensure compliance with company and charity law on behalf of the Trust Board.

Governors acknowledge that staff in school may be concerned that a change of employer will mean a change in their terms and conditions of employment on transfer. Governors have reassured staff at this very early stage that this is a 'non-negotiable' in terms of the proposal and we would not pursue joining a Catholic Academy Trust if this was being considered.

Feedback

We would like to make sure that the entire school and wider community has an opportunity to ask questions about what Catholic Academy Trust Status means for St Michael's Catholic College. We will be holding a meeting whereby we would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about this. The meeting will take place in school on the following date:

Thursday 5th October 2023 at 6pm

The consultation will run from 11th September to 23rd October 2023.

We have included a link below to a Google form where you can provide feedback and ask questions. We would be grateful if you could submit any comments or questions to us by **Monday 25th September 2023**.



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<https://forms.gle/qmCgfRcGy7udgw1C8>

Additional Information

We have some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - please see attached.

Finally, we would like to thank you for your continued support of St Michael's Catholic

College. Please be assured that our Governors and the Principal act with the preservation of a high-quality Catholic education for the children of our community at the heart of everything that they do.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Governors

Principal



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Principal: Ms Felicity Corcoran
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|

3rd October 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Catholic Academy Trust Consultation

A reminder that there is an opportunity to attend a meeting this Thursday 5th October at 6pm as part of the consultation in relation to St Michael's Catholic College becoming part of a Catholic Academy Trust, called St Benedict.

At the meeting I will give a short presentation about the rationale for St Michael's joining the trust and then I will be around afterwards with one of our Governors to answer any questions. The presentation will start at 6pm and anyone attending is asked to arrive from 5:45pm onwards so that we can keep to time. Please note there is no parking available on the college site.

If you would like to attend this meeting, you must confirm your attendance by emailing my PA Mrs Valerie Ferguson v.ferguson@stmichaelscollege.org.uk by 3pm on Thursday 5th October so that we can plan for the numbers attending.

If you are unable to attend but have questions or comments in relation to the Academy Trust consultation you can provide feedback via a google form using the following link up to the 25th October <https://forms.gle/qmCgfRcGy7udgw1C8>

Thank you for your continued support of St Michael's Catholic College.

Your sincerely

Ms F. Corcoran
Principal

Appendix 4: St Benedict's Catholic Academy Trust

Frequently Asked Questions September 2023

What is a Catholic-Academy Trust?

A Catholic Academy Trust (CAT) is a group of Catholic schools overseen by an educational charity. Our CAT is proposed to be formed by a partnership between primary and secondary schools across SE London. Our charity trust board will be recruited based on skills, and can include Governors from our schools. Rather than being funded by and accountable to the local authority, a CAT is directly funded by and accountable to the Department for Education. Academies are still part of the community and serve children and families in a particular area and retain the same responsibilities as any maintained school as part of the learning community. Outstanding CATs also help to support other schools within the Diocese. The Trust is accountable for all of the schools that are a part of it, and through Schemes of Delegation decide which powers are retained by the Trust and which are delegated to individual schools.

Why are we considering forming a Catholic Academy Trust?

The education landscape is changing and there is uncertainty about the Government's intentions regarding the academisation of schools at this present moment. What we do know is that Archbishop of Southwark is keen for all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Southwark to become part of CATs:

"It is my hope that this will establish a focus for productive conversations with governing bodies and colleagues in local schools in forming a framework of a small number of Catholic academy trusts across the Diocese in the coming months and years. I urge all of you to engage in discussions with an open heart to do what will strengthen Catholic education here in the Archdiocese of Southwark." **June 22**

By implementing strong families of schools across the Diocese, Catholic Education is protected for the next generation.

The Diocesan Trustees have indicated that the Diocese of Southwark will have up to 6 CATs across the Diocese. There are currently 2 – Kent Catholic Schools Partnership (KCSP) and South East London Catholic Academy Trust (SELCAT). This proposed CAT will join the family of Southwark CATs.

By joining the proposed trust now, our schools can influence and shape the CAT, providing an opportunity to protect Catholic education in our communities and support each other. As a group of schools, we already work collaboratively and the CAT will formalise those relationships and further strengthen collaborations.

Who makes the final decision on whether each school converts to an academy?

The Governing Body of each individual school.

Who runs a CAT?

Academy Trusts are charitable organisations and have members as the foundation of the legal structure. Members set up the charity. There will be up to 6 Members of an RCAOS CAT and these will be members of the clergy. Day to day running of the trust is the responsibility of the Board of Directors (The Trust Board). The Board of Directors are responsible for setting the strategic direction, as well as management of the Senior Leadership team. Board of Directors have legal responsibilities to ensure that the CAT is carrying out its purposes for the charitable benefit which is sets out. Each school will retain committees ensuring schools continue to focus on standards and serve their local communities.

How many schools should there be in a CAT?

The Government white paper recommended a minimum criteria of at least 10 schools or 7500 pupils. However, in order to achieve strong financial sustainability, the Diocese is seeking to create Trusts with 20+ schools.

How many schools will be in St Benedict's CAT?

St Benedict's will grow, however the first wave is likely to be four schools. Following the initial conversions, the Trust will work with the Diocese and DFE to grow, ensuring that growth does not impact on schools within the Trust.

What is the timescale for conversion?

If the Regional Director agrees to the CAT, we would expect the first schools to transition into the CAT within 9 months.

Do Academies receive more money than local authority schools?

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority as a maintained school, plus additions to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the local authority. However, Academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets to best benefit their pupils. Academies receive their funding directly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA – part of the Department for Education) rather than from local authorities. Currently, maintained schools are “top-sliced” by the local authorities as the local authority takes this funding to run some of the services it provides. As an academy school, we would have the freedom (through the Trust) to select the services and providers that would best meet the needs of the students in our care. The CAT will be able to bid for additional funding directly from the government to improve the buildings and ensure the schools are fit for purpose.

Does the Academy cause any further cost to parents?

There is no financial cost to parents. Provision is free of charge.

Is there funding for SEN provision?

SEN funding is provided on the same level and in the same way as it is for Local Authority schools.

Is St Benedict's CAT a profit-making company?

No. Profit making companies are not able to run academy schools and no profit can be made from the operation of academy schools. St Benedict's CAT is a not-for-profit organisation.

How are Academies accountable?

The Academy Trust is accountable to the Department for Education through the requirements of the Funding Agreement. The Funding Agreement requires the Academy Trust to publish proceedings of its meetings. As charitable companies, academy trusts have to ensure that their accounts are independently audited and then the accounts filed with the Education Funding Agency (part of the Department for Education) and at Companies House. The Department for Education wants academy trusts to be at the heart of their communities, and expect them to be established in consultation with local stakeholders. Academies are still subject to the same OFSTED inspection arrangements as other state-maintained schools.

Will the schools still have control over their admissions criteria?

In a CAT, the Trust becomes the admissions body.

Will the primary schools automatically become feeder schools for the secondary schools?

The schools will continue to be part of the LA coordinated admission schemes and at present there are no plans to change the admission policies of any of the schools involved in the Trust.

There has been bad press relating to academies excluding children who are

underperforming and being selective as to those children they accept.

St Benedict's CAT will not exclude children on the basis of ability, nor will it select on this basis. Not only is this something that the Trust would not support or accept, it is also not permissible under the terms of the agreement the Trust would have with the Department for Education.

Will the Trust recognise and engage with trade unions?

Yes. The Trust recognises the role of trade unions and sees positive engagement as critical to the transition process and ongoing success of the academy. They will play an important role in the consultation process on TUPE for staff and all relevant Unions will be involved as part of the consultation process.

Who will we be employed by?

You will no longer be employed by your individual school's Governors, as you are now but will be employed by the CAT. If you are part of the Teachers' Pension Scheme you will still remain part of this and contributions will still continue to be made by yourself and the CAT. If you are part of the Local Government Pension Scheme or similar you will continue to be part of this. If you are not already part of this but wish to join then you are eligible to do this as the CAT becomes a scheme employing authority in its own right.

Will my terms and conditions change?

No. There is no intention to change terms and conditions.

Will we have executive Headteachers?

Each school will continue to have their own Headteacher but it is difficult to predict what may happen in the future. If a Headteacher does leave a school and the CAT finds it difficult to find a replacement then an Executive model could be considered.

Will we keep the same uniform or have a CAT wide uniform?

There will be no CAT wide uniform and each school will continue to have its own uniform as the intention is that each school will maintain its own distinct characteristics.

Will everything be centralised and will there be a CAT TimeTable expectation?

There will be certain services that will be centralised such as HR, Safeguarding Software, Financial Management Systems and Management Information Systems. There will also be certain policies that will be centralised so that there is consistency across the trust.

It is likely that holidays and INSET days will be the same across the trust as this will mean that we will be able to come together to deliver training that is needed. It may also be the case that if there are any Early Career teachers across the trust they may have the same release day so again they can meet and access training and support together.

There will be no central timetable as this will continue to be down to individual schools to arrange for the needs of their children.

Will we still continue to follow the National Curriculum?

Yes, but the Trust would have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum and make sure that what is taught is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs.

Will my school lose its unique ethos and feeling?

No. It is the intention of the Trust that each school will maintain its own ethos so each school can continue to serve their parents and members of their local community. Each school will be its own entity but be part of the St Benedict's family.

Does becoming an academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?

No. Academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that the school will be at the heart

of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

As an academy, will it still work with the local authority (LA)?

Academies are independent of the local authority. However, we may wish to continue working with the LA, other local schools and local partners.

What do I do if I have further questions?

You will need to speak to your Headteacher.