



St Francis' Catholic Primary School
Station Road
Nailsea
North Somerset
BS48 4PD
Tel: 01275 855373

Head teacher: Mrs Catherine Hunt
Acting Deputy Head teacher: Mr Simon Groves
E-mail: office@stfrancispri.org
Website: <http://www.st-francis.n-somerset.sch.uk/>

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Dear Parent / Carer,

Conversion to Academy status and establishing a Catholic Multi Academy trust

In 2016 and again in 2019, Bishop Declan set out his vision for all his schools to work together and to undertake a due diligence exercise to enable schools to move forward to form Multi Academy trusts (MAT) across the Diocese. Bishop Declan wishes above all else to secure the long-term future of Catholic Education across Clifton Diocese, given the significant challenges that face our schools.

Our governors and school leaders are working with other Catholic Schools in our Newman Partnership to establish a Catholic Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

A diocesan MAT is a charitable company whose Governing Board will oversee the educational and financial performance of a group of our Catholic schools. An Academy is a publicly funded state school run independently and receiving funding directly from central government rather than from the Local Authority. Our school will remain a Catholic School under the authority of Bishop of Clifton when it joins a MAT. Trusts are designed to enable greater freedom for our Catholic Leaders to oversee and lead a group of schools and create opportunities to build and share best practice that benefits all our children and young people.

The key benefits seen by Catholic Multi Academy trusts in other Diocese across the country include:

- Protecting our Catholic vision, ethos and education which aims to enable all our children and young people to fulfil their potential and live life to the full.
- Increase opportunities for our expert teachers and specialist staff to innovate, share knowledge and best practice across our family of schools.
- Provide new leadership and career progression opportunities that will develop and retain great Catholic leaders and continue to benefit from the enormous contribution made by those of other faiths or none in our schools.
- Promote greater job security for all our staff when unforeseen circumstances occur such as pupil numbers falling, long term staff absences. By being part of a bigger organisation we can absorb these changes.
- Creating financial savings and consistency in service provision. These savings can be directed back and invested in the children.
- Avoiding duplication of work for our Leaders. As a single legal entity with our common vision, the trust could establish common systems, practices and policies.
- Access to additional funding for Trust growth and development of buildings to improve the learning environment for our children and young people.

Governors are aware that greater freedoms bring additional responsibilities, as Trust Governors become responsible for the performance and fulfilment of statutory duties for a group of schools not just a single school or college.

The main changes would be:

- The status of the school would change upon conversion from a school overseen by the Local Authority to an independent charitable company.
- The Trust would receive its funding directly from the Department of Education rather than a Local Authority.

“Together in Christ”

- All staff would be employed by the Trust and not by an individual Governing Body.
- The Trust would be governed by a single Trust Board and would be responsible for overseeing the performance of all schools and ensuring compliance with the statutory duties. However, each school would have a Local Governing Body which sits below the Trust Board and works in accordance with the Trust Board's scheme of delegation, which usually includes scrutiny of school's educational data and its allocated budget, holding the Headteacher of the school to account for performance.

As a school in an Ofsted category, St Francis' has a Direct Academy Order from the Secretary of State for Education and we are therefore not in a position to opt out of conversion to an academy or consult stakeholders on whether we become an academy or not. However, the school leaders and governors are fully involved in the formation of the MAT and the interests of the pupils of St Francis' School remains at the heart of all we do.

The Governors do not intend to make any changes on conversion to the name of the school, its unique identity, pupil uniform or its Catholic ethos and values.

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document can be found on the Diocesan website.

We will keep you informed at key stages of the formation of the Multi Academy Trust.

Yours sincerely

Ann Tarr
Chair of Governors

Catherine Hunt
Headteacher