

## **Parents FAQs in Response to Consultation on Academy Conversion**

What are the other options to an Academy?

Schools can remain as a VA school unless the Regional Schools Director has issued a direct Academy Order in response to a school going into an Ofsted category. It is the Bishop's wish however, that all Catholic schools in the diocese work together within the two major MATs of St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust in the south and Our Lady Immaculate in the north.

What experience does St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust (STCAT) have in education?

The Trust is now four years old, with the predecessor Trusts dating back a further four years. Over that time the Trust has seen the two RI schools go to Good, and has seen further schools entering the Trust in difficult circumstances go on to be stabilised and thrive. The impact on children in those schools has been transformative, with combined results from Trust schools going from significantly below average when the schools first joined the Trust to significantly above average now. This is only possible thanks to quality training of staff, strong leadership and the sharing of great practice.

Is there a financial benefit for the school?

There is a financial benefit to academy status for the school:

- The schools will no longer have to pay 10% on building projects
- The schools will be able to claim back VAT on building projects
- The school will benefit from combined purchasing power of the Trust.

Exactly what number of local pupils will be accepted to the school and what happens to those pupils who are not?

There will be no changes to admissions arrangements

Will you automatically be accepted if you live in the current catchment area?

As above

Will the catchment area remain the same as it is now?

As above

What procedures will be put in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are admitted to the Academy on a fair basis?

As above

Will pupils have to take a selection test by aptitude?

As above

For parents who do not want to send their children to the Academy, who will pay the transport costs of getting them to other schools which are still under Local Authority control?

This is a decision for parents. There will be no change in our schools beyond arrangements for governance, enhanced professional support and finance and we would not envisage any reason to withdraw pupils. However, where a parent chooses to do so any support for transport will be determined by Local Authorities.

Will the Academy's exclusion policy be the same as other local schools?

The Trust exclusion policy is on the Trust website and is adopted from The Key. It is therefore likely to be the same as many schools across the country.

Will the Academy have an anti-bullying policy? Yes

How would SEND pupils be catered for and can you give an assurance that current levels of SEND support and behaviour support staff would be maintained?

Trust leaders will support the school to ensure SEND pupils are supported in accordance with their best practice and Education and Healthcare Plans where these apply. We have a highly skilled strategic leader who has been successful in supporting many schools improve their SEND provision. We would not wish for the status quo to be maintained, we are seeking to improve provision.

Will staff representatives be included on the governing body? If not, how will teachers' views be represented?

Yes. The school will have its own Local Academy Committee that reports to the Trust directors and staff are part of the membership

How will parents' views be represented?

Elected membership

Who will have the majority on the governing body?

Foundation directors appointed by the bishop and trustees, will be in majority as they are now

What staffing structures and pastoral care will be in place?

No changes are planned as a consequence of the conversion to Academy Status. However, we are supporting the school to improve, and it may be that there are changes that are required to improve provision. Any changes will be carefully considered and appropriately planned.

Will the existing head teacher be appointed head of the new school? If not, why? When will the new principal be in place and how will they be appointed/by whom? Yes

How will parents' and stakeholders' views be taken into account when a decision is made about an Academy?

Governors will consider stakeholder responses to consultation

Can you confirm what percentage of people opposed to the Academy it will take to stop the proposal going ahead?

Governors will decide taking into account the feedback from the consultation. There is no percentage. The decision to proceed to academy status will be defined by the potential advantages and careful consideration of any disadvantages for our children.

Will the school uniform change if we convert to academy?

The uniform will not change as a consequence of conversion to an academy.

Will the school's name change if we convert to academy? No.

Will the school day change if we convert to academy? No.

What are the benefits for my child if the school joins STCAT?

The pupils will benefit from strengthened links across the schools of the Trust, as staff will be sharing professional development activities and opportunities to share good practice, leading to a continuously improving quality of education. The catholicity and distinctive ethos of school is supported along with a strong focus on continuously improving educational standards. We have already seen in schools that have converted a strong improvement in outcomes for children thanks to better teaching, better support and a better curriculum.

Will the school still teach the National Curriculum?

Yes. The school values the National Curriculum and all pupils will continue to receive a broad and balanced curriculum, that supports all pupils regardless of need or ability.

Who will make the decisions in each school?

The Headteacher is responsible for the day to day business of the school, as at present and the Governing Body will continue to exist, but in a slightly different way. It will be known as the schools Local Academy Committee and a board of directors selected for their relevant skills, sits above the LAC, monitoring their performance.