



**Minutes of Parent's Consultation Meeting regarding Conversion to MAC
status
Thursday 5th December at 7.00pm**

AM opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She then explained that there would be three parts to the meeting:

- A general introduction into MACs and Diocesan views
- Processes and complexities of joining a MAC
- Questions

The meeting began with an explanation regarding forced academies, stand alone academies and MAC status. Parents were advised that the Diocese approached St. Mary's in the summer and asked that we give consideration to joining the 'Dudley' MAC and following that meeting we are now consulting with parents and stakeholders. Any decision that is ultimately made will be for the benefit of St. Mary's. Schools will not lose their own identity.

Questions

1. How is it legally binding?
It is a Ltd company. We sign a legal agreement.
2. Will this lead to every school becoming a private school?
There will be less and less a role for the Local Authority – their support will not be there. The Birmingham Diocese have looked at what will best protect our schools. A group of schools can support each other and respond quickly to difficulties and implement early intervention strategies.
3. Is it privatisation?
No. Funding will come directly into school and not via the Local Authority.
4. This school has a solid reputation but I don't feel the same way about Bishop Milner? Why would we join a poor school?
The status of all schools will vary from time to time. We should support each other.
5. Why have we not considered Hagley?
We are now consulting with all stakeholders and will look at all options.
6. Who will be on MAC committee? Who controls the money?
Money is still allocated to each school. The MAC committee are appointed – this is not a paid position. Composition of MAC committee discussed.

7. Would a school be at risk of losing out on funding to another school in the MAC?
No. All schools have an equal voice/role. Secondary schools do not lead the MAC. There is an opportunity to share good practice. Everything to work equitably for everyone.

Fr Cecil discussed a meeting he attended with AM at Bishop Milner. He confirmed it isn't a pyramid and the secondary school is not at the top. All schools have an equal voice.

8. Are there any MAC representatives here tonight?
No. This meeting is for our parents. MAC representatives would be involved further down the line. They were not asked to attend whilst we are simply gathering views.

9. Only heard tonight that Hagley may be an option. Can we advise other parents?
Can parents vote?
Yes we will advise parents. We are listening and will keep you informed as we have more to share. Parents will not be involved in a vote.

10. Why was Hagley not an option at the start?
We have had many discussions over the past two years. The Diocese directly requested that we consider this option. We will consider views, discuss and decide what's right for St. Mary's. The consultation has been extended. Consultation will end on 8th January 2014 and a full governing body will take place on 9th January 2014. There are a lot of issues and it is complicated.

Questions submitted in writing as part of consultation

1. Admissions criteria regarding Hagley. What would happen?
We have an assurance that this will not change – cannot without the approval of the Diocese. Bishop Milner and Hagley will still remain open options as will any other secondary school. We do not have anything in writing but have assurances from the DSE and both HTs of the secondary schools. Hagley have indicated that they still want to maintain their involvement with us regardless of which MAC we enter. Being in a MAC would not guarantee admission to that secondary school – admission criteria does not change.
2. Advantages/Disadvantages?
Advantages – benefit of scale eg. finances
Professional development
Support and maintain strong faith schools.

Long term aim – to remain a strong catholic school.

3. What about changing pay and conditions for staff? I know some schools where there have been wholesale resignations.
Why would we want to lose our excellent staff? It would not be in our interests. There is a risk with sponsored stand alone academies but we would be a strong 'team' of schools. Fr Cecil discussed how important it is to secure strong faith schools in an increasingly secular environment. Diocese has refused to move forward until they and their legal team were satisfied all their requirements were incorporated into the legal documentation.
4. Will the curriculum change?
Not as a result of the MAC – no directive. It would be what is right for each school but schools would share good practice.
5. School Building Fund: This 10% funding will no longer apply.
The funding will be changing anyway. We will not be worse off. The situation is changing – LA support is reducing. Schools will still have own budgets.
6. Will teachers from underperforming schools be made to move to good schools or vice versa?
This is about professional development. Will it lead to mediocrity for all? No it's about raising standards for all.
Discussion about the links we already have with other schools. Y6 teacher meeting with her counterparts.
7. We already have strong links with Hagley and know their teachers come into school so was surprised. Are Hagley looking at forming a MAC? Yes but we are unable to give any details.

Fr Cecil reported that whilst we meet regularly with Catholic schools we also meet with non-Catholic schools and this will continue regardless of MAC status.
8. Is joining a MAC a 'lifelong' commitment?
It is a legal commitment – not sure. We will have to find out.
Could you swap? Possibly but why and it would be very expensive. We are funded to convert to MAC status and would be unlikely to be funded again. This is why we are not taking the decision lightly.
9. Worry that the church will have control of the budget – will this affect the rich and varied curriculum?

No. We as a governing body have control of the budget and we are guided by the Headteacher on curriculum matters.

10. Can you quantify how much a child's marks will improve if we became a MAC?

When you become a MAC the next Ofsted inspection will be different because the status of the school will have changed. MAC status is new so not sure how many have been inspected yet.

Fr Cecil – Church is choosing MAC status to safeguard Catholic education rather than improving outcomes. Improving attainment is always at the heart of what we do.

11. Why consult after decision has been made?

We have to be guided in the process by the DSC. We could not hold this meeting until we had considered as a governing body. Consultation is important to us and we are, and are willing to, listen to all views.

12. What is the next thing that we (parents) will hear? Will it be the decision?

No. There is likely to be a further meeting for parents but no definite plan yet.

13. Fear that admissions criteria will change. Further discussions. Confirmation that we would stress that admissions criteria remains unchanged.

Currently LA and Diocese have to approve admissions criteria? Will it change?

Diocese have to approve admissions criteria and several years in advance. Diocese will remain in control.

14. When will next meeting with parents be?

Difficult to agree at present. Governors meeting on 9th January will be to discuss consultation. We will agree a date for parents soon.

15. Can we ensure parents know we are considering Hagley option.

Parents indicated that they now felt involved in the process rather than excluded.

Next meeting will be arranged – parents asked to talk to others about the process.