



Archdiocese of Birmingham

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL FOR CONVERSION TO MULTI-ACADEMY COMPANY STATUS



**Our Lady of Fatima
Catholic Primary School**



**St Ambrose
Catholic Primary School**



**St Joseph's
Catholic Primary School**



**St Mary's
Catholic Primary School**



**St Wulstan's
Catholic Primary School**



**Hagley Catholic
High School**

What is being proposed?

The Governing Bodies of:

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School, Harborne
St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, Kidderminster
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Stourbridge
St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Brierley Hill
St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School, Stourport on Severn
Hagley Catholic High School, Hagley

are proposing to convert to Academy status in 2014 and form the

St Nicholas Owen Multi-Academy Company.

The decision is based on our aim to achieve the best for our schools, students, staff and the Catholic community by securing Catholic education for Catholic children both now and in the future. The proposal has the approval of the Archbishop of Birmingham.

As part of the process of applying to become an Academy, each Governing Body has committed to full consultation with all stakeholders, in order to take their views into account regarding the changes ahead. The purpose of this document is, therefore, to introduce the proposals to you and inform you how you can take part in the consultation process.

Why St Nicholas Owen Multi-Academy Company?

St Nicholas Owen was born into a Protestant country at the time of Henry VIII. He became a carpenter and served the Jesuit priests in England for two decades by constructing hiding places for them in mansions throughout the country. He played a vital part in preserving our Catholic faith, and has strong links with our local centre of pilgrimage at Harvington.

As our Multi-Academy Company has a principal aim of securing Catholic education for Catholic children within the local area, it is particularly fitting that the name should reflect that of a man so inextricably linked with both preserving our Catholic faith and our immediate locality.

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state-funded school which operates independently within the requirements of national codes of practice for state schools; however, unlike a state school it receives its funding directly from central government rather than through a local authority.

The first academies required a sponsoring organisation and had the sole objective of raising standards within the school. Under current legislation, introduced by the present Government, schools that are either 'outstanding' or 'good with outstanding features' are now also eligible to convert to Academy status together with their partner schools.

What is a Multi-Academy Company?

The Catholic Education Service of England and Wales (CES) have taken time to consider whether Academy conversion could take place whilst safeguarding the distinctive identity of Catholic schools and how schools could remain supported and not isolated. Following lengthy discussions between the CES, the Archdiocese of Birmingham Diocesan Education Service (DES) and the Department for Education (DfE) a model has been developed which involves a family of schools forming a 'Multi-Academy Company' under a diocesan umbrella called the Dominic Barberi Trust. The essential principles of the model are that no schools are left behind, it involves no external business sponsorship and there will be no change to the distinctive nature of any of the schools in the Company.

What are the benefits of conversion?

Schools have always operated within a changing educational landscape and the introduction by the government of the Academies programme means that for the collective of Catholic schools to do nothing is not a viable option. It is the Government's vision that the majority of schools in England will over time convert to Academy status and will cease to be maintained by their Local Authority (LA). To date, the funding for maintained schools has been routed through LAs who have "top sliced" that funding to construct and deliver a set of support services, such as HR and legal advice, across all their maintained schools. LAs are adapting to this new climate by selling services in packages. So even remaining as we are, a Voluntary Aided school, under the LA, would look different in the future. Receiving funding directly from the DfE would enable our schools to receive back the funding that the LA currently top slices. There are some services which we would then buy back from the LA out of this additional funding. However, the remaining additional resources would provide the governing bodies with an opportunity to prioritise spending for each individual school. In addition, the Diocesan Multi-Academy Company model will enable our schools to share resources and services more effectively and to provide consistent and continuous support for young people in keeping with our ethos and mission.

The governors of the schools have identified the benefits of being in a Multi-Academy Company (MAC) as helping to:

- Secure and preserve the Catholic ethos and character in the schools through ecclesial communion.

- Offer quality Catholic education across the primary and secondary phase, which meets the expectations of Catholic parents, whilst ensuring existing secondary school options remain unaffected.
- Continue to raise the quality of education through individual schools having accountability for standards but committing to collective responsibility for improving provision in all schools in order to promote achievement and improve pupil performance.
- Secure the quality of teaching and learning through the educational pathway for pupils from age 4-19 years.
- Facilitate the sharing of good practice and successful strategies for improving quality.
- Improve the quality and impact of strategic thinking and planning.
- Support governor training and development opportunities.
- Strengthen capacity through providing wider career and vocational opportunities and leadership formation.
- Extend the range and broaden the diversity of planned curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities.
- Strengthen existing partnerships with other schools and providers, e.g. those with other neighbouring schools and other Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- Improve the range of response to individual pupils' needs, including those with special educational needs.
- Address community cohesion and social inclusion issues particularly improving the performance of potentially higher achieving pupils and those pupils with low aspiration.
- Use the MAC as the basis for exploring improved liaison, collaboration and partnership working with any external agencies.
- Ensure effective use of new technologies to enhance teaching and learning.
- Ensure best value in the use of finance and resources.
- Improve the sharing and economies of scale regarding resources.

What will change?

Conversion to Academy Status for Catholic Schools will not be as significant as for Local Authority Maintained Schools. The governing bodies of Voluntary Aided Catholic Schools already manage their school finances and have responsibility for employment and admissions.

Under the Diocesan model, governance of our schools would remain largely unchanged as the majority of governors would be appointed by the Diocese and there would be staff and parent governors as now. The only difference would be the establishment of an overarching Multi-Academy Company Executive Board, consisting of representatives from school governing bodies and from the Diocese.

For many years the Catholic schools in the area have worked together to ensure that Catholic education is of a high quality. We now have the opportunity to work together in a supportive Multi-Academy Company. This will give us the opportunity to share good teaching and learning practices, join together to buy resources and develop a collaborative way of working for the benefit of all our children and families.

We have a vision for Catholic education that goes beyond individual schools and changes our perception from 'my school', to 'our schools'. The challenge for us all is "How can we share our gifts and talents to ensure all education for all of our children is 'Outstanding'?" A number of other elements would remain unchanged. Each Academy would still be bound by the statutory codes for Special Educational Needs and the admissions criteria and catchment areas for each school would remain unchanged. There would be no change to the pay and conditions (in line with current Government policy) of staff.

All our schools will continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, and because an Academy is not bound by the prescriptions of the national curriculum, Governors are conscious that this freedom could offer an additional safeguard from a secular agenda which may not accord with Catholic teaching. Our commitment to wider partnership working will remain and we will continue to work with our Local Authorities across a wide range of schools in an atmosphere of mutual support.

What are the challenges?

As mentioned already a number of the challenges facing maintained schools converting to Academy status have already been embraced by Voluntary Aided schools. However, there are the perceptions of schools 'going it alone' and of a 'two tier' system with a disregard for disadvantaged schools and the notion of instability for staff in terms of pay and conditions.

The Diocesan model addresses all of these challenges; no school may convert on its own; all schools have the opportunity to convert as part of a family of schools and schools facing difficulties will be supported. In addition, no school can convert without the consent of the Trustees who will ensure that all schools are legally committed to converting under the same conditions, safeguarding pay and conditions for staff.

Further Information

The DES (Diocesan Education Service) Model for Catholic Schools to become Academies is as follows:

- Groups of Catholic schools can join together to form Multi Academy Companies (MAC's). Each Academy (school) retains a Principal (Headteacher) who will be responsible for delivering education within that school.
- There is no provision within the agreements negotiated by the Diocesan Education Service for schools to form single academies, or to form Multi Academy Companies with non-Catholic schools.
- The proposed Academies do not involve any form of external sponsorship. The Diocesan Education Service is opposed to this.
- Strategic control of this Company rests with a board of directors, a sort of 'super' governing body. The majority of the directors would be appointed by the Diocese – in much the same way that the majority of governors on the governing body today are foundation governors, in place to represent the Church's interests. The remainder would be composed of staff, Principals and parents, again very similar to a current governing body.
- Each Academy would retain its own identity and would have an Academy committee responsible for day to day issues, such as maintaining contact with the local parish, and staffing appointments up to the level of Vice Principal (Deputy Head) and being accountable for external examinations. Each school would continue to retain and use their present name except that they would now be called Academy rather than School. The uniforms, badges, colours, logos etc. would be unchanged.
- Parents will still be free to apply to the secondary school of their choice. Places will continue to be allocated according to the published admissions criteria of each school.
- Staff currently employed by the schools would transfer to being employed by the MAC. Current staff would have their terms and conditions protected under the TUPE legislation. New staff could be employed under different terms and conditions. The view of the DES is that, whilst nationally negotiated terms and conditions exist, it would be preferable for MAC's to work within their framework.
- Locally, schools are still free to enter into partnerships and agreements with other bodies for example, use of playing fields or shared resources, or formal contracts.
- The Diocesan Education Service has no power to force schools to go down the Academy route. However, schools judged as failing by the Office for the Schools Commissioner will be forced down the Academy route by the Department for Education.
- The Diocesan Education Service will act as a facilitator for groups of schools that wish to become a MAC. They will not however force schools together. This has a consequence in that, if a school later wants to join an existing MAC, the DES will not compel that MAC to accept them.

Finally

We feel it is important to emphasise the distinctiveness of the Archdiocese of Birmingham Multi Academy Company proposal. It is underpinned by a commitment to work for the good of all diocesan schools, to ensure that none are left in a vulnerable position, and our Catholic identity and ethos are maintained and strengthened. Furthermore, our schools **will maintain their own identities**, together with their commitment to working with others within and beyond our local area for the benefit of all concerned.

The freedoms, with the resources that Academy status will bring, would be major factors in enabling our schools to continue to provide the best possible education for our young people and to serve our Catholic community.

How will the consultation work and how can I make my views known?

The consultation period will run from Monday 24th February 2014 to Friday 28th March 2014. During this period there will be an opportunity for parents/carers to raise any questions or to seek further information relating to this proposal, including an information evening at each of the schools concerned (please see details below).

Any parents/carers who are unable to attend the meeting at their Primary School are welcome to attend the meeting at Hagley Catholic High School.

Parents/carers with children at both a Primary School and at Hagley Catholic High School are welcome to attend one or both of these meetings.

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School, Harborne

Information evening for parents/carers 6.30 to 7.30 pm on Tuesday 25th Feb 2014.

Comments and questions may also be sent by email to **enquiry@olfatima.bham.sch.uk** or sent directly to the Headteacher.

St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, Kidderminster

Information evening for parents/carers 6.30 to 7.30 pm on Tuesday 25th Feb 2014.

Comments and questions may also be sent by email to **stamconsult@gmail.com** or sent directly to the Headteacher.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Stourbridge

Information evening for parents/carers 6.30 to 7.30 pm on Tuesday 25th Feb 2014.

Comments and questions may also be sent by email to **sjoconsult14@gmail.com** or sent directly to the Headteacher.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Brierley Hill

Information evening for parents/carers 6.30 to 7.30 pm on Tuesday 25th Feb 2014.

Comments and questions may also be sent by email to **smbhconsult@gmail.com** or sent directly to the Headteacher.

St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School, Stourport on Severn

Information evening for parents/carers 7.00 to 8.00 pm on Tuesday 25th Feb 2014. Comments and questions may also be sent by email to

consultation@wulsev.worcs.sch.uk or sent directly to the Headteacher.

Hagley Catholic High School

Information evening for parents/carers 7.00 to 8.00 pm on Monday 3rd March 2014.

Comments and questions may also be sent by email to

MAC_conversion@hagleyrc.worcs.sch.uk or sent directly to the Headteacher.

On a wider scale, the governing bodies are consulting with all our stakeholders including:

- Parish Priests and the Catholic Community
- School Governors
- Staff and Representative Associations
- Parents/carers
- Pupils
- Dudley, Birmingham and Worcestershire Local Authorities
- The wider local community
- Elected representatives (local MPs, Councillors)

The proposals described above are centred on our aim to achieve the very best for our Schools, Pupils, Staff and the Catholic Community as a whole by securing Catholic education for Catholic children of all ages both now and over the long term future.