

Our Ref: SAS/AW

1st May 2024

To: School and College Headteachers/Principals and Chairs of Governing Boards and Local Governing Boards

Dear Colleagues

Update on our Diocesan Academy Trusts

I thought it would be useful to provide an update on the implementation of the Bishop's Vision for education, 'Rebuilding the Church, fit for future generations' and the growth of our diocesan CATs.

We have reviewed and updated the sequencing plans so they take into account those schools that are now part of their trust and refines the sequencing where necessary. I hope this is useful. We provided the whole sequencing period up to 2030 because that is what was asked for and, as we move forward, further updates and refinement will be needed. Schools that wish to begin a conversation earlier than shown in the sequencing plan, are encouraged to contact me or the relevant CAT in the first instance. The sequencing plans may be found on the diocesan website <https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/education/academy-trusts-strategy/>

Previously, the bishop has articulated why he believes the future of his diocesan schools are best supported by the CAT model. There is a wealth of information on the page referred to above and it may be timely to revisit them which will give you the context to our undertaking.

On a number of occasions when addressing different audiences, the bishop has reiterated his 'wish and expectation', that all maintained schools in diocesan trusteeship will join a CAT. Foundation governors, serving on behalf of the bishop, have a number of responsibilities. Specifically: they are required to respond to the needs of the Catholic community as a whole; secure the long-term future of Catholic education; and act in accordance with the mind of the bishop. It is against this backdrop that we expect governing boards to make the formal resolution to initiate the journey into a trust as determined by the sequencing plans.

Whilst cognisant of a full range of variables, delivering the bishop's vision remains front and centre of our work because this strategy assists in the renewal of the church's mission through its schools. We are very grateful for the co-operation and collaboration of governors and school leaders either by becoming part of the CAT or building a closer relationship with it. The benefits have been widely articulated, especially at information sessions and workshops and I hope some of you have been engaged in them. The capacity and strength of being together (solidarity) has proved a significant driver in building up the diocesan schools' system where 'one voice' can better articulate the very significant role our sector has in shaping Catholic education at a local, regional and national level. We must not forget either that increasing numbers of our schools continue to work alongside our CATs and benefit from their core offer.

Our current position

There are now (at the time of writing) 45 schools in a trust or a conversion date has been agreed before July 2024 (23% of the diocesan estate). Each trust is beginning to establish a track record for system improvement and support schools in their procurement of infrastructure, for example.

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Whilst the published growth plan is being implemented, some schools are journeying into a trust at an earlier stage because they have identified the benefits of being part of a CAT for themselves. The bishop is committed to his vision and we will continue to implement the sequencing plans, regardless of political changes that may come later in the year.

What impact are our trusts having?

Without doubt, the alignment of our three trusts is raising the profile and having an impact on how our schools work and make a difference to the communities they serve. Each trust has a range of social media platforms that increasingly articulate the impact of the work being undertaken as well as regular meetings, briefings and online/e-news.

There is increasing interest from different types of staff in schools (teachers, technicians, support staff, business administrators, etc) about what it is like to work in one of our Catholic academy trusts and the opportunities for further high-quality professional development they are starting to provide. The conversations are becoming increasingly sophisticated. We will be addressing how we reach directly to all our school communities in the coming months, so that all who work with and in our schools get access to relevant information provided already to governors and school leaders.

Ongoing engagement

We will also be holding another session for governors later this term. Our clergy are being provided with another opportunity to find out more. In the head and chair briefing sessions later this summer term (dates already provided), each of the trusts will present specifically on the impact they are having and the current work streams at diocesan and regional level that are being undertaken.

As our CATs continue to grow we are keen to recruit additional Foundation Directors. There is an appetite to recruit across the diocesan footprint, and current (or former) governors who have made a positive and significant impact in securing excellent outcomes for our diocesan family of schools are encouraged to consider discussing this further. For more information about this, please ask those considering it to contact the education team directly.

The education team are grateful for your co-operation and help in the work to deliver the bishop's vision. It is important and timely in so many ways. You are warmly invited to contact members of the education team who will be happy to help or advise across the full range of work that you do every day.

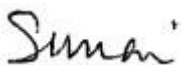
As always, my thanks for the incredible work that you are doing for our children and their families.

As mentioned above the governor sessions will take place as follows:

- Thursday, 27th June 2024, 4.00 pm – 6.00 pm at Sacred Heart Primary School, Westhoughton
- Saturday, 6th July 2024, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm at St John Henry Newman College, Oldham

Links to book onto one of the sessions will be sent out, via the Education Department's weekly Briefing Notes, in due course.

Yours sincerely



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