

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

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Our Ref: SAS/AW

21st September 2022

Dear Colleagues

In March this year the Diocesan Department for Education published a document called 'Rebuilding the Church' to begin discussion and discernment regarding if and how we might align and further develop our family of schools in the light of our growing experience of Catholic Academy Trusts.

We have subsequently engaged in a full range of activities to provide information to colleagues in all schools in the Diocese including answering questions and presenting testimonials of board representatives and school leaders already part of our three CATs. They shared their experiences of the conversion process and their school already being part of the CAT. These activities concluded at the end of the summer term and feedback was very positive.

There were three main areas of interest expressed when the Diocesan Education Team met with governors, school leaders and members of the clergy. These were:

- how the local governing board in a CAT would work;
- how the autonomy of school leaders, in particular the headteacher, would continue to operate effectively and
- what the structure of the CATs might look like in the future as each Trust grows.

These topics were explored and explained in more detail in the online and face to face sessions provided in May and June. They are all legitimate questions but ones that we were able to give reassurance about, given our experience to date.

Since the Diocesan CATs were established, all of our schools have, in one way or another, already become part of their associated CAT. These Trusts are now the vehicles for providing significant support to our schools, whether academies or voluntary-aided, and ensuring we maintain the sense of being one family of schools in Salford. We have not forced the growth of the Trusts but there is a steady stream of schools exploring and pursuing the option of voluntary conversion. (By the end of the year, over 30 schools will be voluntary academies across our trusts.)

Shortly after we began our period of discernment exercise, the Schools' Bill was published in April and laid before parliament in June, setting out the Government's intention for a fully MAT landscape in England by 2030. On the basis that this Bill will become law, the Bishop and Trustees will have had the key decision of whether to work to a fully CAT system in the Diocese of Salford made for them. Nevertheless, even if the direction of travel is set for us, it is important that we keep control of the process.

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Simon A Smith

Director and Episcopal Delegate for Education

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With the endorsement of Bishop John, the purpose of this letter, therefore, is to affirm that the current diocesan CAT strategy is to be followed and that the Diocesan Department for Education will, as and when necessary, work to wholly implement a fully MAT model by 2030.

The transition to a complete MAT model will be planned and implemented carefully; we aim to apply a gradual and pragmatic process. The principles of solidarity and subsidiarity must always be central. Governing Boards will consequently have a key role to play in working with the Department for Education and the CAT, to plan for academisation. Foundation governors will continue their essential work in steering and supporting their school in many ways but especially in preserving its distinctive Catholic nature.

We all commit to and work towards our common mission 'that each may come, have life, and have it to the fullest' (John 10-10). This will continue to bind all of us together in order to bring the light of Christ into the lives of all within our care as we 'rebuild the Church, fit for future generations'.

Please contact members of the diocesan team if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S A Smith". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

S A Smith

Director and Episcopal Delegate for Education
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