

# St Wilfrid's Catholic School

*'The best for all; the best from all'*

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Diocese of Arundel & Brighton and West Sussex County Council

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Dear Parents and Carers,

After careful consideration and preliminary discussion with the Diocese, our schools have decided that they wish to explore conversion to Academy status and, in particular, to form a Catholic multi-academy trust with the following schools:

**Lewes Deanery:** St Paul's, St Joseph's, St Wilfrid's, Annecy, St Pancras  
**Crawley Deanery:** St Wilfrid's, St Peter's, St John's, St Robert Southwell, St Francis of Assisi, Our Lady Queen of Heaven  
**Mayfield Deanery:** St Philip's, St Mary's

This would be called the **Teresa Catholic Education Trust** after Saint Teresa of Calcutta. This was chosen by students, from Year 2 to Year 13, representing our schools at a conference in the first half of this term.

You may also know that Bishop Richard, the Diocesan Education Service and the Diocesan Academies Strategic Board are working closely together to develop a model of Catholic Multi Academy Trusts across the Diocese.

We are writing to consult with staff, parents, local community partners to determine whether the schools should proceed with the first step in this process, which is the conversion to Academy status, and we would very much welcome your views on the matter.

## What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded state schools that are independent of the Local Authority and receive funding directly from central government. The School will still be a Catholic School under the authority of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton and its religious designation will not change.

## Why is this being considered?

As a successful Voluntary Aided School, gaining Academy status would give us the autonomy to continue to develop our School and continue to achieve high standards. As a multi-academy trust, there will be greater opportunities for working more closely with other local Catholic schools and the wider community of schools.

## What are the advantages of conversion?

The Government is clear that the greater freedoms enjoyed by Academies are designed to allow schools to develop and to build on individual strengths in response to the needs of the community. In addition, we believe that formal partnership as a multi-academy trust (MAT) with the primary and secondary schools detailed above will have a number of benefits for all schools.



### **The MAT will:**

- Formalise and strengthen our existing partnership work with other Catholic schools which will enhance our catholicity, reinforce our shared values and promote a culture of openness and trust;
- Support the continuity of Catholic education in this area for students from 4 to 18 years and ease their transition from primary to secondary school;
- Enable all schools both to access and to deliver peer-led school-to-school support, sharing outstanding teaching and learning expertise across the Trust schools;
- Provide additional opportunities to share resources and facilities, developing a collaborative way of working and 'joined-up' provision for the benefit of all of our students and families;
- Secure additional finance to invest in resources for our students and schools by providing access to funding that the LA would otherwise receive and spend on our behalf;
- Enable member schools to respond more effectively to the budget pressures all schools are facing by securing economies of scale whilst retaining individual school autonomy;
- Reduce the impact of any future reduction in LA services by developing our own capacity to meet the needs of our students or commissioning our own specialist support services – for example, to support students with special educational needs (SEN).

### **What are the benefits to the community?**

By working together collaboratively, the schools will be better placed to support the work of the parishes. The development of the MAT will also give strength to the Catholic voice and viewpoint within local communities and the education sector. By supporting each other in the promotion of Gospel values, we will develop a future generation that demonstrates these values in their everyday lives.

### **What are the disadvantages of conversion?**

- Greater freedoms do bring additional responsibilities including statutory duties as an academy trust company, but the school is confident that we can manage these.
- All schools are also facing financial challenges during this time – we recognise the need to develop a sustainable model to develop Catholic education especially after the introduction of the national funding formula.
- We may lose some links within the local authorities but many of their services and capacity have declined in recent years especially relating to school to school support. We also have the freedom to buy back the best services and retain the strong links with other local schools.
- The MAT becomes the employer which includes TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) transfers across two local authorities. We will be looking to maintain the terms and conditions including existing pay scales and support and develop the staff in our schools.
- There is increased financial accountability, directly to the DfE and Education Funding Agency, including increased reporting. We will develop the capacity to lead this area within the MAT and support individual schools appropriately.

### **Will any changes to the school be made as a result of conversion?**

We do not intend to make any changes to the school as a result of the conversion, apart from taking advantage of the opportunities outlined above to work more closely with other schools in the MAT. Please be assured that the Catholic character, ethos and values would remain unchanged, should the Academy conversion take place. Indeed, we anticipate that this opportunity to work even more closely together within a supportive Catholic Multi-Academy Trust would further strengthen and support the school's ethos and traditions.

### **How to take part in the consultation process?**

At this stage, we are not committing the school to conversion to Academy status. We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision.

We would like to know what you think of our plans and are inviting you to take part in this consultation.



Your views are important to us, so please take the opportunity to complete the response form quickly and simply online by following the link to the survey online - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/consultteresacet>

The closing date for the receipt of all feedback is **7th December 2016** after which date the Governors will meet to consider how to proceed.

We will also be holding a meeting in each deanery where you can hear more about the proposals, take part in a question and answer session and raise any queries you may have. We will announce the dates of these events in the near future.

If you are unable to make this meeting but would like to ask any questions, or make any comments, please note these under the 'additional comments' section of the consultation response form and we will publish responses to frequently asked questions.

Many thanks in anticipation for your involvement in the consultation process and we look forward to hearing your views on this new and exciting opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Michael Ferry  
Headteacher



Phillip Gidman  
Chair of Governors

