



Tuesday 7th January 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

For some time now, the Governing Body has been considering how we can maximise and futureproof potential opportunities for our pupils and staff. The Governing Body's priority is to ensure our school continues to provide an excellent education for our children, whilst also continuing to be at the heart of our community.

In October 2019, Bishop Robert Byrne of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle formally announced the Diocesan wish for greater collaboration between schools and academies and the expansion of Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). This announcement coincided with our strategic thinking, as during the Autumn term, governors had been exploring the possibility of forming a MAT with partner schools within our Diocese.

What is an Academy?

There are now over 6,000 academies in the country, including many schools in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle as well as in Durham, Gateshead and Sunderland local authorities.

Academies are state schools, funded directly from central government. Academy status gives schools more freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance. However, Catholic Academies continue to be accountable to the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle as well as the local community. All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules, as other schools, on special educational needs, exclusions and admissions.

Since June 2012, when we became a stand-alone academy (SAT), we have benefited greatly by gaining almost £5million of capital grants. These centrally funded grants have improved the fabric of the school, heating and lighting, windows and roofs. This has, in turn, meant that we have been able to focus our school budget on delivering the best possible education for your child.

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is formed when two or more academies legally come together in partnership. Each school can keep its own name and it is possible for other academies to join a Trust in the future. The formally established partnership, that joining a MAT provides, ensures that the schools therein can share skills and best practice and make optimum use of resources; ensuring best value for money for all.

In many ways, our pupils will not notice any immediate difference as they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms and with the same teaching staff. However, in time, our pupils



will benefit from the enhanced learning experiences provided by working collaboratively, utilising the many skills and strengths of each school within the MAT.

Therefore, having carefully considered a range of presented options, our Governing Body has resolved to join the MAT originally formed by Cardinal Hume Catholic School: The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust (hereinafter referred to as “the Trust”) and we are envisaging a completion date of March 2020.

The name for the Trust is currently under review, however, the Trust currently has the following academies working together:

Our Lady Queen of Peace RC Primary School, Houghton-le-Spring
St Anne's RC Primary School, Gateshead
St Bede's RC Primary School, Washington
St John Boste RC Primary School, Washington
St Joseph's RC Primary School, Washington
St Michael's RC Primary School, Houghton-le-Spring
St Robert of Newminster Roman Catholic School, Washington

Along with our school, the following academies have commenced the legal process of joining the Trust and hope to have this completed within the Spring term of 2020:

St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon on Tyne
Sacred Heart, Gateshead
St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, Prudhoe
Durham Martyrs MAT

About the Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust

The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust was established in February 2012 by Cardinal Hume Catholic School; a local, highly successful school, judged to be outstanding by Ofsted in 2007 and 2014.

The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the schools within the Trust and is accountable to the Bishop, providing visionary strategic leadership, a focus on continuous improvement, high quality governance and a strong Catholic ethos with a caring and supportive culture.

Vision, Values and Ethos

The Trust's aim is to build upon the existing strengths of the partnership and to offer outstanding education provision so that every child succeeds and reaches their potential. 'Every child, every opportunity' is the foundation on which the Trust is built. As a Trust, it values the close working and supportive relationships held with parents and carers.



What are the main benefits for schools within the Trust?

- Access to high performing staff, including collaborative leadership sharply focussed on securing excellence.
- Moderation of standards across the partnership of schools to ensure the highest quality provision.
- Opportunities to further demonstrate value for money without impinging on quality.
- Educational benefits for students as a result of additional freedoms available to academies in terms of the curriculum offered and prioritised resources.
- The opportunity to work in close and formalised partnership with other schools and share expertise and services that will benefit all our students and staff.
- Sharing resources and expertise allows us to target funding towards improving front line teaching and learning, the facilities and teaching environment.
- Building on Catholic ethos and protecting Catholic education and values.

Governance and Admission arrangements

The Trust Board will provide strong and effective strategic governance to all the schools in the Trust including our school. Within the Trust each school will have a Local Academy Board with specific powers delegated from the central Trust Board. We have a very effective Governing Body and it will retain many powers to influence the direction of our school.

The Trust will be responsible (in accordance with Diocesan policy) for setting the admissions arrangements for our schools. It must be stressed however the admissions criteria must have regard to the National Admissions Code of Practice. There are no plans to change the admissions criteria for our school.

In conclusion, we are firmly of the belief that joining the Trust will provide a raft of learning and teaching opportunities to benefit our pupils and further enhance our successful reputation within the community. We will retain our school name and, as importantly, our distinctive catholic ethos.

We trust you have found this letter of interest and we will endeavour to furnish you with information as our journey progresses.

Yours faithfully,

Mr N.Harrison – Headteacher

Mrs J. Leech - Chair of Governors