

ACADEMY CONSULTATION – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1: What are our other options to becoming an academy and joining the St Alban Catholic Academies Trust?

A. The school can remain as a VA school maintained by the Local Authority. However, Central Beds are encouraging schools to become academies in the face of huge cuts to their funding. In addition, the Diocese of Northampton is strongly encouraging its schools to join Catholic MATs and will not consent for schools, especially small primary schools, to become stand-alone academies because they do not think they would be financially or educationally viable.

Q2: What experience do the sponsors have in education?

A. There are no sponsors. This is a voluntary academy under the trusteeship the St Alban Catholic Academies Trust and with the full backing of the Diocese of Northampton through the Duns Scotus Trust. Directors are appointed by the Diocese because of their Catholic faith and following a skills analysis.

Q3: Exactly what number of pupils from the predecessor school will be accepted to the school and what happens to those pupils who are not?

A. All existing students will automatically move to be part of the new school. In line with schools already in the Trust, we do not anticipate significant changes to admission arrangements in the future.

Q4: Will you automatically be accepted if you live in the current catchment area?

A. As above

Q5: Will the catchment area remain the same as it is now?

A. As above

Q6: What procedures will be put in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are admitted to the Academy on a fair basis?

A. As above

Q7: What procedures will be put in place to ensure that pupil intake reflects the social and ethnic composition of the neighbourhood?

A. As above

Q8: Will pupils have to take a selection test by aptitude?

A. As above

Q9: Will the Academy's exclusion policy be the same as other local schools?

A. All schools have their own exclusion policy (see website). There will be no immediate change to the school's policy as a result of academy conversion. The exclusion policy of Trust schools will always reflect its Catholic, Christian ethos.

Q10: How would SEND students be catered for and can you give an assurance that current levels of SEND support would be maintained?

A. The school is not seeking to change the way SEND students are supported as a result of academy conversion but national funding changes may lead to a review in the future.

Q11: What will the Academy's relationship with neighbouring schools be?

A. The school will continue to work collaboratively with neighbouring school partnerships including the St Alban Catholic Schools Partnership.

Q12: What effect will academy's conversion have on the curriculum?

A. No detrimental effect. The school will continue to offer a broad-based curriculum defined by quality and the best interests of the children. The school values the importance of the National Curriculum and will continue to follow it closely to support all pupils regardless of need or ability to achieve their full potential

Q13: Will teacher representatives be included on the governing body? If not, how will teachers' views be represented?

A. Yes. Each academy in the Trust has its own Local Governing Body (LGB) and staff are part of the membership

Q14: How will parents' views be represented?

A. Parent representatives are elected to the LGB

Q15: Will the sponsors have a majority on the governing body?

A. There are no sponsors. Foundation members, nominated by the Diocese, will be in majority as they are now.

Q16: Will the Academy have an anti-bullying policy?

A. The schools will maintain all current policies on conversion but in the future, in order to save on work load, we will look to harmonise most policies across the Trust. This will be done through an appropriate process of consultation and collaboration.

Q17: What obligation does the Local Authority have to employees who do not want their contracts to be transferred to an Academy? Do we have any right to be re-deployed and remain employed by the Local Authority?

A. The school is a VA school and staff are currently employed by the governing body and not by the LA

Q18: For current employees, TUPE conditions will apply. Can you give a guarantee that you would not re-negotiate teachers' terms and conditions under "reorganisation"?

A. The school will always work to secure the best possible terms of conditions for all staff. For teaching staff, this is defined by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). We are not seeking to change staff's terms and conditions.

Q19: Would the Academy pay scales remain in line with national agreements, and would future employees be offered the same terms and conditions as transferred staff?

A. The Trust works to national agreements.

Q20: How will parents' and stakeholders' views be taken into account when a decision is made?

A. As now, through responses to consultation

Q21: Can you confirm what percentage of people opposed to the academy it will take to stop the proposal going ahead?

A. There is no percentage. The decision to proceed to academy status will be defined by the potential advantages to our pupils and careful consideration of any disadvantages.

Q22: Will the school uniform change if we convert to academy?

A: The schools do not intend to make any change to their school's uniform (uniforms will remain as they are)

Q23: Will the school's name change if we convert to academy?

A: The school will continue to be known by the same name.

Q24: Will the leadership of the school change?

A: St Mary's Catholic Primary Schools will continue to be led by Mr Steve Chiswell. At St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, governors had already taken decision to engage Mr John Carroll as Headteacher from September 2017 following this year's recruitment process for a new Head.

Q25: Will the school day change because we convert to become an academy?

A: No.

Q26: What are the benefits for my child if the school's convert to a MAT?

A: The pupils of all schools will benefit from strengthened links across the schools to enhance and protect the catholicity and spiritual distinctiveness of each school. There is a strong and focus on driving up educational standards in Trust schools and a clear emphasis on achievement for all, shared expertise and greater opportunities for pupils.

Q27: Will the schools continue to work with the Local Authority?

A: The school will continue to seek the support of the local authority where effective.

Q28: Who will make the decisions in each school?

A: The Headteacher of each school will be responsible for the day to day business of the school, as at present, the Governing Body will continue to exist, however, in a slightly different way and will be referred to as the schools Local Governing Body, and a board of directors will sit above each school's Local Governing Body.

Q29: Will staff be asked/required to work at our partnership schools permanently in teaching roles other than when doing support/INSET i.e. can a member of staff be moved to another school without a choice for the majority of their working time?

A. New school employees will be asked to work at other schools across the Trust if required and current employees will be given the opportunity to work at other schools where a development opportunity arises, however this would be subject to agreement by both parties. The opportunity to do so will provide excellent CPD for many staff.

Q30: Why is the Joint Academy not considering all Catholic Feeder schools?

A. The consultation paper is clear that other Catholic school can join the Trust at a point in the future that is right for that school. This is the strategic vision for the Trust and the Diocese.

Q30: Having read the document re pensions and it says that pensions will be maintained in accordance with national expectations but can you advise further – will my pension with council be maintained or does it now cease?

A. All pensions are maintained by the Trust. You will continue to pay into the pension scheme in the same way.

Q31: Who will be my employer?

A. You will be employed by the St Alban Catholic Academies Trust (SACAT)

Q32: What are the terms and conditions of employment for new staff within SACAT?

A. Existing staff have TUPE'd into the Trust on their existing Terms and conditions. The Burgundy Book (which applies to teachers) and the Green Book (which applies to support staff) are collective agreements and will transfer as current, any future changes will not be binding on the Trust. The Trust intends to continue to apply the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STCPD). The Trust will mirror changes as documents are amended over time, this includes pay awards.

Q33: Will the staff terms and conditions remain the same?

A. It is anticipated that all school staff will transfer from the school's governing body to the Trust and retain their existing terms and conditions and continuity of employment. However, it is intended that the school will **not** have a two-tier workforce and new school employees will be offered terms on the same basis as employees transferred to the Trust from the school with one exception. New teachers joining the Trust (but not any transferring teacher and not any teacher seeking an internal promotion) will be subject to a probationary period of 8 school weeks. This period could be extended by the school for a further 8 school weeks. During the probationary period both the teacher and the Trust could terminate the employment on 1 weeks' notice. Successful completion of the probationary period would be confirmed in writing and once confirmed in writing the notice provisions for the teacher would follow the Burgundy Book. Although subsequent changes are possible following a TUPE transfer, none are planned by the Trust and can only be made if the reason is an 'economic, technical or organisational reason' involving changes in the workforce or workplace.

Q34: Will Job Descriptions be re-written?

A. Job Descriptions will be reviewed in the same way as currently, if necessary following appraisal or due to restructure or a change in business needs.

Q35: Will the length of the school day change?

A. The length and timing of the school day is up to the school as it is now and there are no plans to change it.

Q36: Are we going to work longer hours?

A. There will be no increase in the maximum directed time of 1265 hours that is determined in STPCD.

Q37: Will the term dates change?

A. Term dates will be determined in the same way as they are now in discussions with the Catholic Partnership of Schools and the diocese.

Q38: Who is the Headteacher accountable to in the new structure?

A. In the multi academy structure, the Headteacher is line managed by the LGB, like now, but on an executive basis by the CEO. However, the CEO has to abide by the scheme of delegation.

Q49: Will the unions continue to be recognised?

A. Unions will continue to be recognised. We have strong relations with the Unions, and our Finance Director and CEO have a long track record of excellent relations with local Unions, and no history of conflict. The Trust can confirm its intention to purchase trade union facilities time for at least the next year (All academies have the option annually to purchase trade union facilities time) The Trust will continue to consult with recognised trades unions via their HR Provider, a continuation of consultation arrangements is in place currently.

Q50: Will we receive the same salary?

A. Yes, under TUPE you will be paid the same, and we honour School Teachers Pay and Conditions documents.

Q51: Who will be paying our wages?

A. At the moment, the school receives funding from the LA. This will change because the Trust receives money directly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency - not via the LA. This money will then go to the school from the Trust. The Trust will therefore be paying your wages.

Q52: Which is more cost effective, LA or academy led?

A. We believe an academy system is more cost effective and leaner than a LA system.

Q53: What are the times in the year when a school can convert to an academy?

A. Schools can convert on the first day of any month.