

Unity of Purpose



In Education

DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY

STRATEGY FOR ACADEMISATION

June 2024

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Educational Vision | 3 |
| A Diocesan Vision for Education | 4 |
| The Journey Towards Academisation | 4 |
| Supporting Our Collective Mission | 5 |
| Timeline for Academy Conversion | 7 |
| Principles and Practice for the Appointment of Senior Leaders | 9 |
| Useful Documentation Roadmap for Academisation | 11 |
| Indicative Target Timescales for Conversion – Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Multi Academy Trust | 12 |

Educational Vision

The Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education reminds us that the Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church and must begin from the principle that its educational programme is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person – it leads the pupil on to a personal integration of faith and life and is an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils and its other members, but also to society.¹ Catholic Schools must strive to enable each child to attain personal excellence in their studies, through the formation of their human values and the development of their understanding of God's purpose in their life.

"Together with and in connection with the family, the school provides catechesis with possibilities that are not to be neglected...This, of course, concerns first and foremost the Catholic school: it would no longer deserve this title if, no matter how much it shone for its high level of teaching in non-religious matters, there were justification for reproaching it for negligence or deviation in strictly religious education... The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils." ²

The Diocesan Bishop holds Canonical responsibility for the provision of all Catholic education within his diocese, including maintained schools, academies and other independent schools, non-maintained schools and sixth form colleges. His primary responsibility is to ensure that his schools and academies are being conducted in accordance with the teachings and discipline of the Catholic Church.

In Catholic voluntary aided (VA) schools, the Diocesan Bishop's oversight is exercised through his Diocesan Education Service in close partnership with the local authority. This recognises that in VA schools, it is the local authority which holds the statutory responsibility for monitoring effectiveness and intervention. In Catholic voluntary academies, the Diocesan Bishop's oversight is exercised through his Diocesan Education Service in close partnership with the relevant Catholic multi academy trust company. This recognises that in academies, it is the academy trust company which holds responsibility for monitoring effectiveness and intervention.

¹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, 1977

² *St. John Paul II 'Catechesi Tradendae' 69*

A Diocesan Vision for Education

In September 2023, Bishop Mark and Diocesan Trustees confirmed the vision for Catholic Education in Shrewsbury Diocese - that all Diocesan schools would become members of one of the already established Catholic Multi Academy Trust Companies. The alignment of schools to Multi Academy Trust Companies is based upon existing Deaneries, with the ambition that all schools will become academies by 2030. The Catholic Multi Academy Trust Companies and aligned Deaneries are outlined below:

Corpus Christi Catholic Multi Academy Trust Company

- Stockport & Tameside Deanery
- South Trafford and Wythenshawe Deanery

Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust Company

- Warrington & Runcorn Deanery
- Wallasey & West Wirral Deanery
- Birkenhead and East Wirral Deanery

Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Multi Academy Trust Company

- Central Cheshire Deanery
- Ellesmere Port & Chester Deanery
- Shrewsbury & West Shropshire, Telford and East Shropshire Deaneries

The Journey Towards Academisation

There have been many 'chapters' within the provision of Catholic education in our country, with the Catholic Church acting as the first provider of schools and universities in England. The earliest schools were cathedral and monastic schools established from the late sixth century onwards and at the Reformation in the 16th century, the Catholic Church's role as a provider of public education was forced to go underground or abroad until the 1800s.

In 1944 the educational landscape across England and Wales changed forever with the passing of the Education Act 1944, known also as the 'Butler Act'. This act promised 'secondary education for all' and continued the 'Dual System' of voluntary (Church) schools providing education alongside local authority schools, but now with equality of revenue funding through the local authorities, whilst retaining their distinctively Catholic ethos through various legal protections which continue to apply to Catholic schools to this day. The settlement between Church and State meant that the funding of Catholic schools was shared by the Catholic foundations of the schools (in most cases the Dioceses or religious orders) and by the Government. The first Catholic sponsored academies opened in 2005 and from 2011 some voluntary aided Catholic schools began to convert to academies.

We now stand as co-creators in shaping the future of Catholic education across our Diocese, and in his message to Headteachers and Governors in October 2023, Bishop Mark outlined the mission that we seek to continue together:

“When academisation was first proposed as a pathway for schools in this country, I left our schools free to make the decision as to whether this new arrangement for finance and governance would serve the mission of our schools in the great diversity of our Diocese. But it has now become increasingly clear that academisation is now the path for all of the schools in England, and this is now the moment when we must be ready to rise to this challenge...because we believe in Catholic education. We have that desire to continue the mission from the revival of Catholic schools in the mid nineteenth century until the mid twenty first century towards which these new plans look.”³

Supporting our Collective Mission

The government acknowledges that schools with a religious character make a significant contribution to the education sector with a third of state funded schools having a designated religious character. It has ensured that the legal protections for academies with a religious character relating to religious education and collective worship are equivalent to those in the current maintained sector. This will mean that where academies deliver religious education and collective worship in a way that reflects their religious character, they and their religious bodies can be confident that conducting these activities is protected in law.

All of the measures introduced, provide reassurance to religious bodies that their role in maintaining and developing the religious character of their schools is protected in the long term and gives confidence to schools that their unique religious character will be protected once they become academies.

There exist many benefits to a ‘trust led’ model for our Diocesan schools which include:

- A clear, shared vision and mission for the Catholic life of all schools, supporting each other in the formation of staff and children so that all may live life and live it to the full
- The preservation and protection of Catholic education for future generations
- An aligned and collaborative approach to Catholic Social Teaching, anchored to the shared mission of educational excellence for all
- Collaboration to recruit, retain and train excellent teachers, leaders and support staff
- Structured opportunities to share pedagogy and practice in relation to learning, teaching and ambitious curricula, benefitting from high quality professional development to improve outcomes for children
- Economies of scale which will save time and money which in turn can be invested into strengthening the formation and education of children

³ Bishop Mark’s address to Headteachers and governors: 2,3,5 October 2023

- Central team efficiency in supporting governance, HR, legal services and wider support services
- Building a self-sufficient Trust led system in the absence and reduction of Local Authority services

Naturally, there have been questions asked regarding school and leadership autonomy, governance responsibilities and employee contractual arrangements.

It remains a Diocesan expectation that on joining a Diocesan Multi Academy Trust Company, individual schools will always retain their own identity and charism as, through the principles of subsidiarity, they serve their local communities, continuing to transform the lives of the children in their care. Legally binding documents such as the Articles of Association and the Scheme of Delegation are provided by the Catholic Education Service for all Catholic Multi Academy Trust Companies in our country. These, along with other documents, detail with clarity the roles and responsibilities of all members of a Catholic MAT community so that it flourishes, providing a commitment to working together which will help realise the aim set out in Canon Law:

“Education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person, so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society. Children and young people are therefore to be cared for in such a way that their physical, moral and intellectual talents may develop in a harmonious manner, so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and the right use of freedom, and be formed to take an active part in social life.”⁴

As a Diocese, we remain committed to this ambition, and to the mission of the Church through a Trust led system of opportunity, formation, and unity of purpose in education.

⁴ Canon 795

Timeline for Academy Conversion

What is the purpose of the Academy Timeline?

- The timeline provides *indicative target timescales* to ensure that Bishop Mark's vision for Education in the Diocese of Shrewsbury is fully implemented.
- The timeline will support governing boards, school leaders, staff, pupils and parents in their preparations as they look to join their Catholic Academy Trust.
- The timeline provides clarity and certainty for Trust Boards as they formulate and finalise their growth and acquisition plans.
- The timeline will support local and regional planning conversations with diocesan education partners such as the DfE, Local Authorities and Regional Directors.

How has the timeline been formulated?

In formulating the conversion timeline many variables have been considered including:

- Local Authority capacity to continue to support maintained schools
- Individual schools' preferred timescales for conversion
- Access to DfE Funding (Educational Investment Areas) currently available for schools in Halton, Manchester, Tameside & Wirral Local Authorities
- Trust capacity to onboard individual and groups of schools
- Individual school circumstances
- Schools seen as 'capacity givers' or 'capacity takers' as outlined by the DfE
- Recent Ofsted and CSI inspection outcomes
- Forthcoming 'windows' for future Ofsted and CSI inspections
- Finance issues
- Other local issues

An individual school's position with the timeline should not be viewed in isolation, and there exists a connectivity between the placing and positioning of schools within the timeline and the indicative date aligned to each individual school. We anticipate groups of schools collaborating together through a hub model of partnership working.

Are the aligned dates fixed in time?

This is an indicative timeline. We are all aware that the education landscape remains both dynamic and fluid, and that individual school circumstances can change in response to many factors such as those listed above. We have to be realistic that as we embark upon this journey together, there will undoubtedly be flexibility required at certain, as yet unknown, future moments in time when we may be required to respond to situations and circumstances that remain out of our immediate control. Notwithstanding such eventualities, we remain committed to the ambition and vision for education within our Diocese.

What is meant by a Hub Model?

Definition

A Hub is a group of schools within a defined geographical area that will engage in positive partnership workings with each other. Hub workings will be overseen by the Multi Academy Trust and will be shaped by local context and priorities. It is not envisaged that Hubs will transition into future Multi Academy Trusts and it is anticipated that these operational ways of working will look different within and across each Multi Academy Trust considering the following:

- A Hub Model of working should be shaped by local needs and identified priorities of schools.
- Each Hub Model of working would be determined by MAT CEOs, in discussion with Diocesan Officers and Headteachers.
- Any leadership roles required to support Hub workings will be discussed and approved with Diocesan Officers in advance and will be fully informed by the Bishops Memorandum.

Hub Leadership Roles

Any leadership roles across a 'hub' area must be explored and agreed by the Diocese before proceeding for Director consideration and approval.

Principles and Practice for the Appointment of Senior Leaders

(Approved by Diocesan Trustees November 2023)

These principles and practices are to inform the appointment of Senior Leaders in schools and academies and are aligned to Diocesan Protocols on Staffing and Recruitment.

- a) The Diocese must be informed as soon as a vacancy arises so that they are fully involved in process for all reserved posts and equivalents such as Executive Headteacher / Head of school etc. This also applies to any leadership restructures that arise as outlined below.
- b) The Diocese, with school leaders, will conduct a risk assessment when Leadership vacancies arise to ensure current numbers within a school support existing structures.
- c) It is a Diocesan expectation that, wherever possible, all schools will have a substantive Headteacher position and Deputy Headteacher. Certain factors including budget pressures or recruitment difficulties may require the exploration of alternative structures, but full discussion with the Diocese is required prior to any alternative structures being formally proposed and confirmed by schools or trusts.
- d) All substantive senior leadership positions should be subject to an external competitive recruitment process, unless a formal restructure has indicated that the post would have to advertised internally.
- e) Any significant change to leadership structures should follow formal restructure process with job descriptions etc. Consideration must be given to internal applicants and current at-risk posts for possible redeployment.
- f) Faith references are required at the point of current application for all new positions. Historic references cannot be considered.
- g) Substantive Executive Headteacher models should be subject to an external competitive recruitment process unless otherwise agreed by the Diocese. Any Executive Headteacher post will be reserved for a practising Catholic and the job description must allow for them to take the strategic lead on the Catholic Life and Mission of the schools they are responsible for. The position below Executive Headteacher (normally Head of School) must also be reserved for a practising Catholic.
- h) Any position that has the title Deputy Headteacher must be reserved for a practising Catholic even if it is not one of the two most senior posts in the school.
- i) We understand that there may need to be temporary structures to allow for reflection and further review. Any temporary leadership arrangements would normally not last longer than 2 terms before an external competitive recruitment process is undertaken for a substantive post. Any structure in place for longer than 2 years as this may result in position needing to be offered on a permanent basis.

Falling pupil numbers in Primary Schools.

- j) We are undertaking a review of pupil numbers in our primary schools and some schools now have a trend of falling pupil numbers. Our aim would be, as far as it is viable (both financially and educationally), to maintain an educational provision on current sites, but the management structure may need to be reviewed. Any re-structures must consider the current position in other local schools so as to ensure continuity of the local provision. The current ISR of leadership posts may need to be reviewed based on falling pupil numbers. Reorganisation may be best done prior to academy conversion so as schools not managing too much change at once.

Useful Documentation

The following supporting documentation is available on the [Education Department Website](#):

- Unity of Purpose – Bishop Mark’s Address to School Leaders 2.10.23
- The Process of Academisation – Flowchart
- The Process of Academisation - Guidance
- Stage 1 Application for Conditional Consent
- Stage 2 Application for Conditional Consent
- Statement of Guarantee
- Academy Conversion Timescales - Exemplar
- Scheme of Delegation
- Memorandum of Understanding

INDICATIVE TARGET TIMESCALES FOR ACADEMY CONVERSION

Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Multi Academy Trust Company

Central Cheshire Deanery

| School | Indicative Target Timescale |
|--|------------------------------------|
| St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School | 2027-28 |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Congleton (a Voluntary Academy) | Converted |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Crewe | 2027-2028 |
| St Benedict's Catholic Primary School | 1 st January 2025 |
| St Vincent's de Paul Catholic Primary School | 2025-2026 |
| St Alban's Catholic Primary School (a Voluntary Academy) | Converted |
| Christ the King Catholic & CofE Primary School (A Voluntary Academy) | Converted |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Middlewich | 1 st January 2025 |
| St Anne's Catholic Primary School | 2027-2028 |
| St Paul's Catholic Primary School (a Voluntary Academy) | Converted |
| <i>St Thomas More Catholic High School (a Voluntary Academy)</i> | 2026-2027 |
| <i>All Hallows Catholic College (a Voluntary Academy)</i> | Converted |
| St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School | 2027-2028 |
| St Bede's Catholic Primary School | 2027-2028 |
| St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Winsford | Converted |
| <i>St Nicholas Catholic High School</i> | 2027-2028 |

Ellesmere Port & Chester Deanery

| School | Indicative Target Timescale |
|---|------------------------------------|
| St Clare's Catholic Primary School | 2026-2027 |
| St Theresa's Catholic Primary School | 2026-2027 |
| SS Werburgh's & Columba's Catholic Primary School | 2026-2027 |
| St Saviour's Catholic Primary School | 2025-2026 |
| Our Lady, Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School | 2025-2026 |
| St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School | 2025-2026 |
| <i>Ellesmere Port Catholic High School</i> | <i>Converted</i> |
| <i>The Catholic High School (a Voluntary Academy)</i> | 2024-25 |

Shrewsbury West & Shropshire, Telford & East Shropshire Deaneries

| School | Indicative Target Timescale |
|--|------------------------------------|
| St John's Catholic Primary School | 2024-25 |
| Our Lady & St Oswald's Catholic Primary School | 1 st February 2025 |
| Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School | Converted |
| St Luke's Catholic Primary School | 1 st November 2024 |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School | 2025-2026 |
| SS Peter & Paul Catholic Primary School | 1 st November 2024 |
| St Patrick's Catholic Primary School | Converted |
| <i>Holy Trinity Academy</i> | <i>2026-2027</i> |