



Bishop Challoner Catholic School

15th December 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

The Diocese has invited its Catholic Schools to look into the possibility of forming Catholic Academy Trusts (CAT). They have shared their expectation that all schools will have engaged in the CAT programme by 2025. Our Governing Board - alongside other Catholic maintained schools in the Deanery - agreed to further pursue the proposition together and we have been meeting regularly in the last few months. Today is simply to keep you informed on what you should expect in the coming months, and to let you know that the Headteacher of each school is sending this same letter to their parents/carers today. The Catholic schools exploring the proposed Hackney and Tower Hamlets Catholic Academy Trust presently include Bishop Challoner Catholic School, Cardinal Pole Catholic School, St Anne's and Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School, St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School, and St Monica's Catholic Primary School.

Any creation of a CAT would only be considered if there were benefits for each school and it is worth emphasising that we are free to make our own choice. There are many potentially attractive elements to being part of a CAT and so we must consider them carefully before deciding what is best for us. This discussion should be seen in a national context where the government 'White Paper' was expressing a similar intent, stating that it planned for all schools to be part of a 'strong' trust. The trend nationally is a growing move towards academisation. At present, 45% of Catholic secondary schools (80% nationally) and 43% of Catholic primaries (40% nationally) are in academies.

It is worth pointing out immediately that forming a CAT would not mean we lose our identity at all; for example, we would not change our uniform, admissions or mission statement, and more fundamentally our school will look and feel exactly the same. Indeed, many of the potential benefits are financial or 'behind the scenes' strategic considerations, and worthy of exploration. At the heart of what we are looking at as a group is how best to enhance, protect and preserve Catholic education in our Deanery.

On 15th January 2024 the consultation process will begin and you will receive further details about the process at that time. The Diocese has appointed a CEO Designate, Jane Heffernan, previously an Executive Headteacher in Hackney for any subsequent Trust that emerges, as well as Foundation Directors. None of these activities or appointments commit those individuals or schools to anything; they are simply part of the exploration process. Each Headteacher can assure their school that there will be ample opportunity for the community to comment and help shape future decisions. Each school must review responses and hold a final full board meeting to debate views before making a final decision.

We remain curious about the advantages of being part of an Academy, and I am grateful for your continued prayer as we work through this together.

Yours sincerely,

Mr JP Morrison
HEADTEACHER

Father David Evans
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS