

Bishop Challoner Catholic School

Section 1: Academy Information

Which Schools are proposing to form the new Catholic Academy Trust (CAT) in east London?

Bishop Challoner Catholic School is proposing to form the Family 9 Catholic Academy Trust with St Annes's and Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School (Tower Hamlets), St Monica's Catholic Primary School (Hackney), Cardinal Pole Catholic School (Hackney) and St Elizabeth School (Tower Hamlets).

Bishop Challoner Catholic School has received the consent of the Diocese of Westminster and the Regional Director (RD) to convert to an academy.

The proposed CAT is part of the Diocese of Westminster CAT Strategy in which it hopes all Schools in the Diocese's 11 Families (across 17 London Borough and 2 Counties) will join CATs to protect, secure and develop Catholic Education for the future. Hackney and Tower Hamlets Schools are in Family 9 in the Diocese Family of Schools.

Why is Bishop Challoner proposing to form the Family 9 CAT?

The Governors have been actively considering forming a CAT with our partner school in Hackney and Tower Hamlets and have investigated it thoroughly. We believe that forming a CAT is now in the best interest of our school.

Some of the reasons for this, include;

- The Headteacher and Governors believe that converting and forming a Catholic Trust will deliver the best future for our school.
- This is the wish of the Cardinal Vincent Nichols, and part of the Diocese of Westminster wider CAT strategy to protect all Catholic school in the Diocese.
- The Headteacher and Governors believe forming a CAT will allow the school to secure strategic school to school support and development through sharing the very best of our leadership, management, teaching and learning, pastoral and spiritual development for the benefit of all schools in the CAT.
- Catholic schools currently work as 'islands' and by coming together in solidarity we will be stronger, more robust and more resilient for the future:
- Catholic education is facing many threats both nationally and across the Diocese, in terms of declining rolls and increased financial pressures for all public services.
- With government borrowing already at unprecedented levels, prospects for an increase in school funding in the short to medium terms are extremely low.

- We face a growing need to protect, secure, and develop the Church's mission in Catholic education, working together to grow our resilience and overcome other future threats.
- Behind the scenes, very little will change for pupils, staff and parents. The changes will bring in closer working practices to Governance and back office functions.

How will Bishop Challoner Catholic School benefit from joining the Family 9 CAT?

The aim of the Diocese's CAT Strategy is to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education.

Prospective children in schools in CATs will benefit in a number of ways, including;

- Enhanced collaboration and partnership across the schools
- Increased savings and efficiencies at a time of growing financial pressures
- Improved teaching, learning, pastoral and spiritual development for each child through increased collaboration, challenge and support
- Increased CPD opportunities and career pathways for staff
- Improved retention and development of the best Catholic teachers and Leaders
- Clear, robust and effective Governance at Trust, CEO and Local Advisory Council levels
- Secured Catholic education across the Diocese for generations to come.

Why is Bishop Challoner Catholic School now proposing to become an Academy and join the Family 9 CAT?

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors believe the time is right to move forward after careful consideration and a thoughtful journey.

In September 2017 the Diocese of Westminster published its strategy for Catholic Academy Trusts <https://education.rcdow.org.uk/academies-homepage-new/>

The Diocese's Strategy sets out the reasons, benefits and structure of the Catholic Academy Trusts that the Family 9 Schools in Hackney and Tower Hamlets could form. The Diocese is clearly minded to continue to increase the speed of its Academisation programme, and by choosing to form a Trust under our 'own steam', we are able to shape our own future.

We also believe the time is right in terms of reductions in funding and support from local authorities.

Will the CAT expand to include more schools over time?

Yes, the Family 9 CAT will expand to embrace all Catholic schools in Hackney and Tower Hamlets

who wish to become Academies under the Diocese of Westminster CAT programme.

How will the Governance arrangements of the Family 9 Catholic Academy Trust work?

The Diocese of Westminster has nominated 5 Members who own the Memorandum and Articles and Association of the Trust, registered with Companies House.

The Members include Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of the Diocese of Westminster, The Auxiliary Bishop with responsibility for education, the Chair of the Education Commission of the Diocese of Westminster, the Financial Secretary of the Diocese of Westminster and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Westminster.

What work has been done by governors to explore all options?

Governors have conducted a number of activities over several years to ensure we reach the best decision for our school.

These include:

- Discussions with other local schools to understand their strategy and journey.
- Attendance at specific training and information sessions for Governors research on other CATs
- Research on academisation based on information from a variety of sources.
- Presentations and Q&A from various CATs on a number of different subjects
- Presentation and discussion covering the pros and cons of all the options for the future of the school.
- Due diligence processes with the Diocese of Westminster.

The Members have appointed a Board of Foundation Directors with strategic oversight for the Trust and Schools. The Foundation Directors are currently comprised of Governors associated with schools who wish to serve on the Trust Board.

Each School will retain a Local Governing Body which, with the Headteacher, will be responsible for the day to day running of the school.

The Local Governing Body will have powers delegated from the CAT Board of Directors under an agreed Scheme of Delegation and are accountable to the Board.

Will the School retain its individual ethos?

Yes, the Diocese is very clear that the individual name, ethos, character and good practices of each

school are retained and that all the schools operate as equals supporting each other.

Each school is seen as central to its own community with the skills of each being used in a supportive way for all the others. Every school gives and receives support from one another.

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority, but their funding and accountability is directly with the Department for Education (DfE).

When will Bishop Challoner Catholic School become an Academy?

We would expect that the process will take approximately 8 months, work is underway and the planned conversion date is 1 September 2024.

Why is there a consultation?

The Academies Act 2010 requires the school to consult “such persons as they think appropriate” on whether the school should become an academy.

The Governing Body of Bishop Challoner is consulting with all key stakeholders about the proposed academy conversion including parents, staff, pupils and other schools over a 4-week period commencing Monday 15 January 2024 to Friday 9 February 2024.

Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority to become an Academy?

No. The Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the Local Authority to approve plans for the school to become an Academy.

What form of relationship will exist between the Local Authority and the school?

This is for individual Academies or Catholic Academy Trusts to determine – there is no statutory requirement for any formal relationship between Local Authorities and Academies.

Academies are directly funded and accountable to central government (Department for Education and the Education Skills Funding Agency).

The Local Authority retains statutory duties for aspects of Special Educational Needs, admissions co-ordination and provision of home-to-school transport. Local Authorities are also expected to play a key strategic role locally in areas such as pupil place planning admissions and sharing good practice.

The schools have good relationships with The London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney and will seek to maintain and cultivate this in the future.

Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted inspection regime?

Schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected by Ofsted and the CSI in the same way they are now.

What is the process for Bishop Challoner Catholic School to join the Family 9 CAT?

The conversion process includes the following key legal processes:

- Agreeing the Memorandum and Articles of Association to establish the Company and register it at Companies House.
- Putting in place a Master Funding agreement and separate Supplementary Funding Agreements (SFA) for each School.
- Transferring the employment of the staff from the Governing bodies to the Family 9 CAT following a statutory process (TUPE*).
- Agreeing a Commercial Transfer Agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts from the local authority to Family 9 CAT.
- Arranging a 125-year lease for the land and buildings with the Diocese and/or local authority.
- Establishing finance systems and operations procedures across the schools.

*(*TUPE = Transfer of Undertaking – Protection of Employment)*

Section 2: Staff Issues

Does the school have to hold a TUPE consultation with staff?

Under employment legislation the Governing Body which is the current employer will need to conduct a TUPE consultation with all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) and the relevant unions as part of the staff transfer process.

Can staff pay and conditions change?

No. Whilst Academy Trusts do have the freedom to vary terms and conditions from national ones, the Diocese of Westminster Strategy binds its Catholic Trust to abiding by teachers' and support

staff pay and conditions.

If the school becomes an Academy, who takes responsibility for the pension arrangements?

Teachers working in an academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), just as if they were employed in a Local Authority maintained school.

Non-teaching staff at schools are able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). This is administered by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as at present.

Employees will pay the same rate as at present under both schemes, subject to any nationally imposed changes.

How will the TUPE process work and what specific responsibilities does the Governing Body have?

As the current employer, the Governing Body is responsible for informing and consulting with staff.

The Governing Body is responsible for informing the Family 9 CAT, as the new employer, of any 'measures' which will impact on their employment.

There are none planned in this case and the Family 9 CAT will write to each member of staff confirming that they will transfer under existing terms and conditions.

Section 3: Finance

Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school.

There are other financial advantages, for example VAT is recoverable on normal business activities and capital works.

The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies do have greater freedom to decide how they use their entire budget, and Multi Academy Trusts are able to identify efficiency savings from enhanced partnership working.

Section 4: Admissions

Will becoming an Academy affect our admissions arrangements?

When a school becomes to an Academy it also becomes an admission authority responsible for its own admission arrangements. As the school is forming a Multi Academy Trust – Family 9 CAT will become the admissions authority.

Schools will continue to make decisions about their admissions arrangements at school level.

In the same way as maintained schools, all academies and their schools are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code.

Will Academies have to be a part of the annual coordinated admissions scheme? E.g. when the LA needs to find places for families relocating to the area etc.

Yes - Academy Funding Agreements require them to be in local coordination. That means although the academy will apply its own admission arrangements, the LA will send out offers of places. The Local Authority also coordinates admissions for in-year applications and applications for year groups other than the normal point(s) of entry. This will not affect the Academy's right to determine which applicants have priority for admission. Academies are also required through their Funding Agreements to participate in local fair access protocols which help to ensure that no child is without a school place.

Will the Academies decide to bring in academic selection?

No, there will be no introduction of selection. Schools which already select some or all of their pupils may continue to do so when they become Academies, but schools becoming Academies cannot decide to become new selective schools.

Section 5: Special Education Needs

Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions change?

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

Can a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs nominate an academy as their school of choice?

Yes. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code, and responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

Does becoming an Academy change the way in which exclusions are dealt with?

Academies are required by their Funding Agreement to follow the law and guidance on exclusions as if they were maintained schools. This includes reporting exclusions to the Local Authority. However, Academies do not have to consult the Local Authority before deciding to exclude a pupil and they can arrange their own independent appeals panel.

Section 6: Further Information

How do I find out more about the proposals?

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will host a consultation meeting for parents at **6.00 pm** on **Tuesday, 23 January 2024**.

A separate meeting is being held for staff.

Please complete and return the questionnaire page below to the School office

If you would prefer to complete it online, return it by email to:

consultation@bishop.towerhamlets.sch.uk

Fr David Evans

Chair of Governors

Bishop Challoner Catholic School

January 2024