

## **Frequently asked Question and Answers**

### **Q. As an Academy will it cost more to buy back services from the Local Authority?**

- A. Local Authorities are in the process of developing their proposals on charging Academies for 'bought back' services. It looks very likely that Local Authorities are going to charge Academies more for their services. However, there are a number of Local Authority services which we presently contribute to the funding of through the top slicing of funds that we do not use extensively and where therefore clear savings can be made. For instance Behaviour Support, School Improvement Partners and Education Welfare.

In addition, the 'economies of scale' that are referred to which Local Authorities can achieve could be replaced by the Diocese buying in services on behalf of schools in the Diocese.

However, we will cost all the services and if it is more expensive to buy back services that will be taken into account by the Governing Bodies when they consider whether to convert to Academy status.

### **Q. What is the position of other Catholic Schools in the Diocese?**

- A. One Catholic School cluster in Nottingham has already converted in September. Another in Nottingham began consulting in July. A group of schools in Derbyshire have completed their consultation in July. Some clusters in Lincolnshire are looking at starting consultation in September and October. Two families of schools in Leicestershire are going to consultation.

### **Q. Given that converting to Academy status seems to be broadly positive why are some staff in other schools striking against Academy status?**

- A. One teaching union are opposed to Academies because they have concerns that once a school has become an Academy and becomes the staff employer there could be detrimental changes to pay and conditions.

The Governing Bodies of our schools as Voluntary Aided Catholic Schools already employ the staff and already have the freedom to change pay and conditions. This, however, has never happened and Bishop Malcolm is clear that there will be no change to pay and conditions as part of any conversion to Academy status.

### **Q. What assurances have we that costs in the future might not get out of hand and leave us financially vulnerable to a predatory sponsor?**

- A. Our group of schools appointed a joint School Business Manager in September. Our schools are already used to running their own finances and operating within our annual budgets. The expertise developed will be made available to support the financial management of all our schools.

The terms of the Funding Agreement with the Department for Education are that it will run for 7 years and this provides longer term security.

### **Q. In order to buy in services from elsewhere will we have to employ people to procure the services and manage the contracts?**

- A. Expertise in relation to procurement and contract management already exists within our schools but it may be necessary to bring in more resource to support the admin and finance functions across the schools.

### **Q. Can you explain how we will support other schools?**

- A. As part of the application to convert we will have to set out how we will support other schools to raise standards. However, we will also continue to work in partnership as we do now with the other Catholic Schools in the Diocese.

### **Q. Can schools in the Trust buy in different services from different organisations?**

- A. Yes, individual schools will be able to buy in different services from different suppliers if they wish.

### **Q. What safeguards will be built in to prevent the Trust Executive Committee from taking decisions that the schools are not comfortable with?**

- A. Firstly, it will be for each individual school to determine what decision making powers to delegate to the Executive Committee. Secondly, there will be a balance of representation on the Executive Trust between

the Diocesan and schools representatives and thirdly each school regardless of size will have equal representation on the Committee. This will probably be the Head and Chair of Governors.

We are genuine in our statement that we are committed to all being equal partners.

**Q. Can the Local Governing Bodies continue to run by their own rules?**

A. Yes, and indeed we fully expect that to be the case. There may be some harmonisation between the schools on issues such as HR policies and admin/finance operating systems but each school's central autonomy will not be compromised.

**Q. What will be the effect on public transport arrangements?**

A. This will be unchanged. The Local Authorities remain statutorily responsible for transport arrangements.

**Q. Communication with parents from our schools is very good. Will that continue and will the role of parent governors remain the same?**

A. Parents and the relationships of our schools with them are of paramount importance and that will not change. Communications are very important and that is why we are actively listening to your views and concerns and engaging similarly with the staff and our parishes.

The Governance of Catholic Academies under the Diocesan model will change very little. There will still be foundation governors, staff governors and parent governors. The only change will be that Local Authority foundation governors will no longer be required.

**Q. What arrangements will there be to ensure accountability and to quality assure standards?**

A. The chief element for ensuring accountability and quality assuring standards will be unchanged. Namely that Academies are still all subject to Ofsted inspections and our results will be published by the Department for Education. In addition, we will remain subject to the Diocesan Section 44 inspections.

**Q. Who will sit on the Academy Trust Executive Committee?**

A. There will be majority of foundation governors and each school would be represented at least by their Head and Chair of Governors.

**Q. This consultation process is appreciated but isn't this a case of when and not if we convert?**

A. Now is the perfect opportunity for stakeholders to voice their opinions. It is unlikely that there will be any additional consultation after this period closes. However, there will be a full analysis of the results and that will be presented to the Governing Bodies for their consideration together with an analysis of the pros and cons of converting.

Each Governing Body will separately have the opportunity to decide for themselves based on that information whether to endorse proceeding to the application stage.

**Q. Could other schools join into our Trust proposal?**

A. Theoretically yes, but that would be very unlikely. Each Catholic School in the Diocese will be working in partnership with their own family of schools. We may provide some specific support for certain other schools but they would remain outside of the formal Trust arrangements.

**Q. Are we consulting with pupils?**

A. Yes. We all have discussions planned with our student councils.