

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust

Frequently Asked Questions

1 Why is the school and Diocese proposing to develop a multi-academy Trust of twenty Catholic schools and one Roman Catholic/Church of England?

Over the last 18 months, extensive work has been undertaken to test and assess the benefits of the Diocese's proposal to develop a multi-academy trust model. The Bishop of Middlesbrough and diocese believe that by schools working together more closely we can further improve the education of our children and young people across the region.

In the central region of the diocese there are currently twenty Voluntary Aided Maintained Catholic schools and one Roman Catholic and Church of England School (RC/CE) and the proposal is to develop a Catholic Academy Trust comprising all of these schools with the aspiration that this trust, the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust (SMCCAT) is established in 2019.

The proposal to develop the Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust is aimed to further improve;

- outcomes for pupils
- the quality of developmental opportunities for staff
- support and challenge for governors, trustees and senior leaders
- the level of resources available to Catholic and RC/CE Schools in the region through increased efficiency in the pooling and targeting of resources.

A group of Catholic head teachers / Roman Catholic and Church of England head teachers and Governors have made a significant contribution to the formulation of the current proposals and have consulted widely with our family of schools across the region.

The Bishop of Middleborough has chosen the Catholic Multi-Academy Trust model as it fits his vision of no school operating in isolation and schools working closely and more deeply in permanent arrangements with their family of schools.

2 What are the principles behind the thinking?

We have identified the following principles which will underpin the development of the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust.

By converting to become an academy and join the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust we aim to ensure that no schools will operate in isolation and that we are empowered to work together more closely and more deeply in permanent arrangements with our family of schools.

Within the new arrangements the lines of accountability will be clear and we will receive more challenge and support from a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will have responsibility across the Trust:

- i) to provide wider strategic direction and accountability
- ii) the authority to quickly affect change where it is needed.

It is intended that the new arrangements will lead to improved outcomes across all schools within the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust

By being formally part of a family of schools we will ensure that academies have the funding they need to do the work they have been given. For example, the new Trust arrangements should enable all schools to be able to afford to appoint to the essential roles which enable all pupils to achieve their full potential.

The new arrangements will provide the formal mechanisms to identify 'best practice' and enable this to be shared effectively.

The new arrangements will ensure that there continues to be a strong focus on local governance and our Governing Body will continue to focus on providing the very best education for our children and young people.

The new arrangements will ensure that all school leaders are given the appropriate levels of support to fulfil their roles effectively. This is particularly the case with regard to school improvement and financial management, including clarity on the roles of the Accounting Officer.

3 What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school, funded directly by the Department for Education, instead of the local authority. Originally, underperforming schools were turned into Academies to help the school improve rapidly, however in 2010, the Government extended the opportunity to convert to Academy status to all schools that are successful and performing well, and as a result there are now almost 7,000 academies in the country, including an increasing number in our region.

An academy is a charitable trust run by a board of trustees. Academies are rightly expected to work with and support other schools, including lower-performing schools.

Should you wish to know more about the Government's policy, the Department for Education has its own Academies bookmark on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

4 How will Governance work?

The Trust will be governed by a Board of Directors and each school within the Trust will continue to have a Local Governing Body (LGB). It is expected that each school LGB will report to the Trust Board and have responsibility for decision making in line with the Trust's scheme of delegation.

The trust will have a Board of up to twelve Directors appointed by the Diocese with particular skills and expertise to help it run efficiently, effectively and compliantly.

Although the Board would have a number of legal and regulatory powers it may delegate many of its powers to Local Governing Bodies and Committees. Local Governing Bodies would continue to have a mixture of representatives from parent, staff and local communities.

Each Head Teacher would still be responsible for running their own school. The Head Teachers will work together with the Chief Executive Officer to develop plans for partnership working and collaboration.

5 Has this approach been tried anywhere else?

A Catholic Academy Trust, the St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy Trust has been formed in the south of the diocesan region and in the north of the diocesan region the formation of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust is nearing completion. Catholic Academy Trusts have also been established in Leeds and Nottingham.

6 When will the Trust's Board of Governors be formed?

The Project Steering Group are continuing with their work in steering the operational aspects of this work and the Diocese are now looking to appoint the Shadow Board of Directors to guide aspects of the work in developing the Trust.

The Shadow Board will be comprised of 12 people. There will be 7 Foundation Governors appointed by the Bishop who will be practising Roman Catholics, one Foundation Church of England Governor appointed by the Church of England Diocese, 3 non-foundation Governors and, once appointed, the Chief Executive Officer.

It is planned that the Shadow Board will advertise and run the recruitment process for the posts of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer before the end of December in order that they can take up post before the Trust is established in August/September 2019.

It is then likely that the full Board of Governors will be then be appointed in the Summer term 2019.

7 How will the children benefit?

When the schools convert to academy status and establish the SMCCAT, the children will still wear the same uniforms as before and will be taught in the same classrooms by the same teaching staff and they won't notice any immediate difference. Each school will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children.

However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, mostly as a result of new training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the children's education. In particular, the children will benefit from the sharing of excellent and innovative practice in teaching and learning between the partner schools. They will also have wider opportunities to learn new skills and experience new activities.

8 What will be the impact on staff?

Currently, all staff in Voluntary Aided Schools are employed by the individual Governing Bodies. After conversion, all staff will be employed by the new SMCCAT. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions (TUPE). Staff will be provided further information on how they are affected.

Being part of the SMCCAT will also provide greater opportunities for career progression and development. Already staff are working together on a range of teaching, learning, curriculum and pupil support projects and the SMCCAT will strengthen these links.

9 How will funding work?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. The whole of the school budget would come direct to the school from central Government. As part of a multi-academy trust, we may also achieve greater efficiencies through increased buying power and joint commissioning of services; such as school equipment, catering and cleaning. All schools will contribute to the central SMCCAT costs.

10 How will admissions to the school be affected?

The application process for parents and carers will remain the same. The multi-academy trust will become the admitting authority for the schools but each would have its own admissions policy as now. Any future policy changes would need to be clear and fair and in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient school places locally and to coordinate the admissions process for all schools.

11 Will our responsibilities in relation to SEND and exclusions change?

Responsibilities as an academy in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

12 Will the Curriculum be changed?

Each school will continue to teach a varied and vibrant curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils. As part of the St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy trust schools will be able to share best practice more easily and learn from each other.

One of the aims in forming the Trust is to ensure that pupils receive the very best teaching and learning experience and for the curriculum offer to meet the needs of all pupils. As is the case now, any changes that may be made will be well thought through and part of the normal cycle of reviewing what the pupils are taught.