
Village Lane
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Telephone: (0191) 917 2484
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Headteacher: Mrs J Black

St. Joseph's RC Primary School
We are children of God: we achieve, believe and care.

Monday 26th November 2018

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

Consultation on Academy Status

Our Lady Queen of Peace RC Primary School, Houghton-le-Spring
St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Gateshead
St Bede's RC Primary School, Washington
St John Boste RC Primary School, Washington
St Joseph's RC Primary School, Washington
St Michael's RC Primary School, Houghton-le-Spring
St Robert of Newminster Catholic School and Sixth Form College, Washington

The Governing Body's priority remains to enable the school to continue to provide an excellent education for our children, whilst continuing to be at the heart of our community.

For some time now, the Governing Bodies of each school mentioned above have been exploring the possibility of converting to academy status, as we believe our successful approach to partnership working can be furthered by joining a local Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

Therefore, having carefully considered a range of options, each Governing Body has decided to consult simultaneously, with their parents, carers, staff and other stakeholders, on whether each school should become an academy and join the MAT originally formed by Cardinal Hume Catholic School: The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust. Many of you will already know that Cardinal Hume Catholic School is a local, highly successful, outstanding school.

We are therefore commencing formal consultation today Monday 26th November 2018, for a period of four school weeks. Consultation will therefore end at 3pm on Friday 21st December 2018.

What is an Academy?

Academies are state schools, funded directly from central government, no longer under the control of the Local Authority. Academy status gives schools more freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance. However Catholic Academies continue to be accountable to the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle as well as the local community. All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules as other schools on special educational needs, exclusions and admissions.

There are now over 6,000 academies in the country, including many schools in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle as well as in Gateshead and Sunderland local authorities.

An academy is part of a charitable trust run by a board of Directors. 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> We have also attached some frequently asked questions to this letter.

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What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is formed when two or more academies legally come together in partnership. Each school keeps its own name and it is possible for other academies to join the Trust in the future. The partnership ensures that the schools can share skills and best practice and make optimum use of resources ensuring best value for money for each school.

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference, they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. However, in time the children will perhaps notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn for example, and have greater links with each school within the Trust.

What additional responsibilities will Academy status bring?

- Additional financial and legal responsibilities – however as The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust is a well-established Trust, arrangements are already fully in place to deal with these responsibilities.
- Currently each individual Governing Body employs each staff team – going forward the Academy Trust would be the employer rather than the local Governing Bodies.
- The Academy Trust would be responsible for admissions rather than the Governing Body (although the Local Authority would still co-ordinate and ensure the Trust adopts clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code).
- The Academy Trust would enter into a 125-year lease for the land, usually owned by the Local Authority. We already have responsibility for the cost of maintaining the land and buildings.

How do I respond to the consultation?

Our Governing Body would very much like to hear your opinion. We will be holding drop in sessions attended by the Head Teacher, Governors and representatives from The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust on:

Monday 10th December 4.30-5.30 at St Joseph's RC Primary School

Tuesday 11th December 2.30-3.15 at St Joseph's RC Primary School

The aim of the drop-in sessions is to hear your views and answer any questions you might have. We have attached to this letter, and published on our website, a list of frequently asked questions for any parent who wishes to know more.

Finally, we have provided a consultation response sheet attached to this letter if you wish to provide a written response to the consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Black
Head Teacher

Mr M Jakeway
Chair of Governors

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Frequently Asked Questions – Academy Status

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St John Boste RC Primary School, Washington
St Joseph's RC Primary School, Washington
St Michael's RC Primary School, Houghton-le-Spring
St Robert of Newminster Catholic School and Sixth Form College, Washington

Our schools are consulting with our parents, carers, students, staff, trade unions and the local community on the proposals to convert to 'Academy' school status and join a multi academy trust (MAT) along with likeminded schools.

To learn more about what this will mean for you, your child and the wider community, we have provided over the next few pages, some frequently asked questions and answers about Academies. The closing date for responses is **3pm on Friday 21st December 2018** and details of how to respond are also included.

About the Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust

The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust, was established in February 2012 by Cardinal Hume Catholic School, judged to be outstanding by Ofsted since 2007.

The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the schools within the MAT and accountable to the Bishop, providing visionary strategic leadership, a focus on continuous improvement, high quality governance and a strong Catholic ethos with a caring and supportive culture.

Cardinal Hume's Teaching School: Trinity North East Teaching School Alliance means that professional development of staff is central to the work of the Trust.

Vision, Values and Ethos

The Trust's aim is to build upon the existing strengths of the partnership with our schools and to offer outstanding education provision so that every child succeeds and reaches their potential.

'Every child, every opportunity' is the foundation on which the Trust is built.

As a Trust, we value the close working and supportive relationships we have with parents and carers.

What are the main benefits for schools within the Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust?

- Access to high performing staff, including an "outstanding" Trust leadership team who are sharply focussed on securing excellence.
- Moderation of standards across the partnership of schools to ensure the highest quality provision.
- Greater control over school finances, as funding comes directly to school from central government.
- Educational benefits for students as a result of additional freedoms available to academies in terms of the curriculum we offer, and how we prioritise resources.

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- The opportunity to work in close and formalised partnership with other schools and share expertise and services that will benefit all of our students and staff.
- Sharing resources and expertise allows us to target funding towards improving front line teaching and learning, the facilities and teaching environment.
- Develop our own solutions collaboratively.
- Building on Catholic ethos and protecting Catholic education and values.

Governance

The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust Board will provide strong and effective governance to all of the schools in the Trust including our school. Within the Multi Academy Trust each school will have a Local Governing Body with specific powers delegated from the central Trust Board.

Will admissions arrangements change?

Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust is responsible (in accordance with Diocesan policy) for setting the admissions arrangements for our schools. It must be stressed however the admissions criteria must have regard to the National Admissions Code of Practice. There are no plans to change the admissions criteria for our school.

When would the school change to become an Academy?

We would aim for 1st June 2019.

What does it mean for staff at the school?

All staff have the right to transfer their employment under TUPE legislation from their current employer, the Governing Body, to The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust. We are also keeping staff updated and offering reassurance that terms and conditions will remain in line with nationally and locally agreed pay and conditions as approved by the Bishop.

How will it affect my child's education?

Each school and The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust are wholly committed to ensuring that every pupil achieves his or her full potential. We are also wholly committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and providing staff with the best professional development. By working in collaboration with other schools within the Trust we will be able to benefit the pupils at each school by sharing resources and expertise.

Will there be any curriculum changes?

There are no plans to impose curriculum changes on our school.

What will happen to the uniform?

There are no plans to make imposed changes to the uniform.

Will the name of the school change?

Our school name will not change.

Will the times of the school day and holidays change?

There are no plans to change the times of the school day or the term dates. Any future changes would be subject to extensive consultation with parents and carers.