



St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full - John 10:10

Lewis Road | Cheltenham | Gloucestershire | GL51 0HZ

Head Teacher: Mrs N Tippen

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www.st-thomasmore.gloucs.sch.uk

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Governing Body decision to explore conversion to Academy status and establishing a Catholic Multi Academy Trust (MAT)

Since 2016 the Clifton Diocesan Schools Strategy has focused on the seven school partnerships working together collaboratively with an aim of forming future Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). This approach was reiterated in 2019 when the partnerships were asked to work together and to undertake a due diligence exercise to enable schools to move forward with the formation of Catholic MATs to ensure the long-term future of Catholic Education in the Diocese given the significant challenges that our schools face.

All of the Catholic schools in Gloucestershire belong to the Little Way Partnership and as the group began the due diligence exercise, partnership schools were invited to join a working party to explore a Partnership Trust and this working party has been actively involved in this for the last year. Following a key partnership presentation meeting, the Governing Body of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School has agreed to explore conversion to an Academy and working with the other Catholic Schools in our Partnership to establish a Catholic Multi Academy Trust.

A Multi Academy Trust is a charitable company whose Trust Board will oversee the educational and financial performance of a group of our Catholic schools. An Academy is a school run independently so it receives its funding directly from central government rather than from the Local Authority. Our school would remain a Catholic School under the authority of Bishop of Clifton.

Multi Academy Trusts are designed to enable greater freedom for our Catholic leaders to oversee and lead a group of schools and create opportunities to build and share best practice that benefits all our children and young people.

The key benefits seen by Catholic Multi Academy Trusts in other Dioceses across the country include:

- Protecting the Catholic vision, ethos and education which aims to enable all children and young people to fulfil their potential and live life to the full.
- Increasing opportunities for expert teachers and specialist staff to innovate, share knowledge and best practice across families of schools.
- Providing new leadership and career progression opportunities that will develop and retain great Catholic leaders and continue to benefit from the enormous contribution made by those of other faiths or none in schools.
- Promoting greater job security for all staff when unforeseen circumstances occur such as pupil numbers falling, long term staff absences. By being part of a bigger organisation we can absorb these changes.
- Creating financial savings and consistency in service provision. These savings can be directed back and invested in the children.



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- Avoiding duplication of work for Leaders. As a single legal entity with a common vision, the trust could establish common systems, practices and policies.
- Access to additional funding for Trust growth and development of buildings to improve the learning environment for children and young people.

Governors are aware that with greater freedoms it also brings additional responsibilities as Governors become responsible for the performance and fulfilment of statutory duties for a group of schools not just a single school or college.

If the School were to proceed with conversion to an academy and join the partnership trust the main changes would be:

- The status of the school would change upon conversion from a school overseen by the Local Authority to an independent charitable company.
- The Trust would receive its funding directly from the Department of Education rather than a Local Authority.
- All staff would be employed by the Trust and not by an individual Governing Body.
- The Trust would be governed by a single Trust Board and would be responsible for overseeing the performance of all schools and ensuring compliance with the statutory duties. However, each school would have a Local Governing Board which sits below the Trust Board and works in accordance with the Trust Board's scheme of delegation which usually includes scrutiny of each school's educational data and its allocated budget, holding the Head Teacher of the school to account for performance.

The Governors do not intend to make any changes on conversion to the name of our school, its unique identity, pupil uniform or its Catholic ethos and values.

A formal engagement process will be undertaken by the Governors which will invite everyone associated with our school to ask questions and/or share feedback. Following the completion of due diligence and careful consideration of the formal feedback the Governors will then meet to make a final decision.

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document can be found on the Diocesan website

<https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Working-Document-FAQ-August-2020.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Mrs C Hipkiss
Chair of Governors

Mrs N Tippen
Head Teacher