

**Our Lady and All Saints Multi Academy Company
Consultation Information for Parents and Parishioners**



September 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 Archdiocese of Birmingham – Statements of Intent

“The Trustees of the Archbishop have requested that all schools under the Diocesan Trust Deed work towards becoming ‘academy ready’. This means that the Archdiocese sees the long term future of its schools as forming and being part of a Multi Academy company with other Catholic schools in their local area.” *Birmingham Diocesan Education Service (BDES) www.bdes.org.uk*

In September 2018 the BDES, on behalf of the Trustees of the Archbishop, announced,

“We would expect that within 12 months all School and MAC Leadership Teams will be clear on their membership within a MAC School grouping and that all Local Governing Bodies will have a formally agreed conversion plan. The aim is that all Governing Bodies will be ready to convert by the latest September 2020. This will achieve our aim to secure, protect and improve our Schools, by bringing Catholic Education (3 – 19) into coherent and sustainable school improvement structures in their local areas.” *BDES September 2018 Newsletter.*

1.2 What is being proposed?

The Governing Bodies of:

- Guardian Angels Catholic Primary, Birmingham
- Our Lady’s Catholic Primary, Birmingham
- Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Primary, Solihull
- Our Lady of the Wayside Catholic Primary, Solihull
- St Andrew’s Catholic Primary, Solihull
- St Anne’s Catholic Primary, Solihull
- St Anthony’s Catholic Primary, Solihull
- St Augustine’s Catholic Primary, Solihull
- St Edward’s Catholic Primary, Warwickshire
- St George & St Teresa’s Catholic Primary, Solihull
- St John the Baptist Catholic Primary, Solihull
- St Peter’s Catholic Secondary, Solihull
- St Wilfrid’s Catholic Primary, Birmingham

are proposing to convert to academy status in 2020 and form a multi academy company (MAC). This decision is based on our aim to achieve the best for our schools, pupils, staff and Catholic communities. The proposal has had the approval of the Archbishop of Birmingham. As part of the process of applying to become an academy, the Governing Bodies have committed to full consultation with all stakeholders in order to take their views into account regarding the changes ahead. The purpose of this document is, therefore, to introduce the proposals to you, signpost you to where you can find additional information and inform you how you can take part in the consultation.

1.3 What is an Academy?

An academy is an independent state school, however, unlike a state school it receives its funding directly from central government rather than through a local authority. This means that all academies are still schools that exist to provide education to pupils and are subject to government control rather than local authority control. They are accountable to the Department of Education and ultimately to the Secretary of State for Education for providing high quality education.

An academy is a charitable company. This means an academy is both a company and charity. The company is limited by guarantee not by shares, and as such, is not profit making and does not pay dividends to shareholders. Being a company means that an academy must be registered with Companies House and must operate within the legal framework for a limited company, including filing company accounts annually.

1.4 What is a Multi Academy?

A multi academy is a structure where the charitable company and board of directors oversee the running of two or more schools, rather than an individual school. The board of directors takes on a similar role to that which the local authority fulfils for maintained schools – overseeing the strategic direction of the schools. The multi academy structure is the only structure under which schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham can convert to become academies, it is not possible to convert as a single school. The model involves a family of schools forming a multi academy company – our Multi Academy Company will be referred to as ‘Our Lady and All Saints Multi Academy Company’. The essential principles of the model are that no schools are left behind, it involves no external business sponsorship and there will be no change to the distinctive nature of any of the schools within Our Lady and All Saints Multi Academy Company.

2. Changing Educational Landscape

2.1 Academy Strategy – National and Diocesan Perspective

Schools have always operated within a changing educational landscape and successful schools adapt and develop accordingly. It has been the vision of successive governments to encourage and to support schools in England to cease being ‘maintained’ by their local authority and to move to academy status. Converting schools to academies is central to the Department for Education’s approach to improving the quality of education. The October 2018 School Census shows that there are 8,166,038 pupils studying in state funded schools in England. Of these, 4,091,312 pupils are studying in an academy or free school. Therefore, as of October 2018, 50.1% of pupils studying in state-funded schools in England were in an academy or free school.

To ensure Catholic education is protected within our communities for the long term, the Archdiocese of Birmingham's Academy Strategy is to develop a number of Catholic multi academy companies of which there are currently 18, supporting 106 schools. Birmingham Diocesan Schools educate over 78,000 pupils 62% of whom will be in a multi academy company by January 2020. The Diocesan Academy Strategy is for all schools to be in, or have a plan to join, a multi academy company by September 2020.

2.2. Academy Strategy in the Context of Catholic Education

In considering the formation of a multi academy company, it is helpful to reflect on the context and the distinctiveness of Catholic education. Catholic schools' primary purpose is to support families in the education of their children. Schools must strive to enable each child to attain personal excellence in their studies and through the formation of their human values and understanding of God's purpose in their life. Crossing the threshold of a Catholic school should be like entering into the nurturing comfort of a loving Christian family, where all experience welcome, feel valued and are challenged to grow.

What makes a Catholic school distinctive is that it aims to bring Gospel virtues into every aspect of education, engaging young people with finding value and purpose in their life through an awareness of the beauty, truth and goodness of the Holy Trinity. For many pupils and their families, school life is their gateway to an encounter with Christ.

As an instrument of the Catholic Church, Catholic schools are by their nature collaborative and should always seek to work in partnership with other schools in a spirit of solidarity and never in competition. The spirit of solidarity underpins how the Catholic Dioceses of England have creatively worked together with the State to provide education for over seventy years. The Church's proven history in education reaches back much further, most notable to the 1850's and predates State provision in England. Because of importance the Catholic Church placed on education, they decided that the education of the poor was to be their first priority, often building schools before churches. 1944 marked the passing of the Education Act 1944 where most Catholic schools became 'voluntary aided' schools. This meant they remained part of the state system whilst retaining their distinctively Catholic ethos through various legal protections which continue to apply to Catholic schools to this day.

3. Academy Strategy – Collaborative Model

3.1 Increased Collaboration

Coming together to form a multi academy company would allow for the establishment of transparent working relationships between Catholic schools in our geographical area, moving beyond current informal cooperation into a relationship of dialogue and collaboration, serving the common good in a spirit of solidarity. Our Lady and All Saints MAC would include schools currently within Birmingham Local Authority, Solihull Local Authority and Warwickshire Local Authority.

The benefits of this increased collaboration include:

- Schools leaders can share ideas, expertise and plan to tackle initiatives and challenges together;
- Shared accountability can foster closer cooperation leading to better pupil support and achievement;
- Those responsible for local governance can cooperate to share skills, think strategically and support each other;
- Sharing resources offers schools different ways to use expertise, foster staff development, plan for the future and tackle recruitment challenges;
- Extend the range and broaden the diversity of planned curriculum and extracurricular opportunities:
- Groups of schools can source and fund specialist provision;
- Shared professional development is facilitated (coaching and mentoring can develop expertise within and across the different phases of education);
- Retention of staff with greater opportunities for professional development and career progression;
- Regional provision can be put in place for educational welfare, family support, special educational needs and support for our most vulnerable pupils;
- Shared expertise and skills in growing the Catholic life of the schools and their communities.

3.2 Shared Vision

Moving into a multi academy company will involve change and developing a new educational culture. Growing a new organisation will take time, and for this to be an authentic, positive growth towards a renewal of mission as a Catholic school there must be a shared mission and a common purpose. Since 2018, Headteachers and Governors from across all our schools have been working together to create a shared vision statement.

Our Lady and All Saint's Vision Statement

Our Lady and All Saints Multi Academy Company aims to work together in a spirit of partnership, for the common good of all members and for the good of Catholic education. Collaborative working enables us to share good practice, maximise the use of our assets and resources within our different individual settings, and build the capacity to improve in response to ever changing needs. Our priorities and activities are underpinned by a desire to do the best for all our children, staff, governors, whole community and young people in a Catholic setting.

Stewardship

- This MAC will work together to ensure a strong culture of safeguarding exists throughout all settings, providing protection, security and safety for all.
- Our MAC exists to provide the very best Catholic education to every child in each of its member schools so that every child will reap the benefits of a Catholic Education founded on the pillars of the common good; faith in theory and faith in practice; how Catholicism relates to other faiths and the modern world and the very best academic education.
- This MAC is committed to the education of the whole person and recognises the uniqueness of each individual made in the image and likeness of God.

Parishes and Communities

- All Catholic schools within our MAC exist to further the mission of the Catholic Church to evangelise. Under the leadership of the Archbishop all schools are committed to the common good of the Archdiocese.
- This MAC seeks to create a thriving community that enables its stakeholders: children, parents, staff, governors and our clergy - to be knowledgeable, active and informed participants in their individual schools and parishes and within the MAC as a whole.
- The MAC seeks to use its collective expertise to support all parts of the community on the basis of always being able to offer benevolent, competent trust to those schools, who through facing challenging times may find themselves in a vulnerable position.

High Quality Catholic Education

- The MAC seeks to develop methods of working that enables shared expertise, the highest standards of pupil work and also professional practice and that places a high value on benevolent and principled leadership.
- This MAC acknowledges that those who are more vulnerable: those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs or disabilities can find making progress and school life challenging. Therefore this MAC identifies, as an absolute priority, the need to use its considerable capacity and expertise to nullify the effects of disadvantage upon the families and children in our community.
- Our MAC has the capacity to provide an exciting, broad and balanced curriculum offer, adapted to reflect our unique settings, providing an outstanding range of opportunities and experiences for children aged two to eighteen.

Resources

- This MAC sees its staff as a most wonderful gift, enabling the highest standards of teaching and learning as well as offering a high quality, benevolent and principled foundation for schools who need to use it.
- Our MAC recognises the importance of supporting and protecting all staff and pupils, ensuring a consideration for their physical and mental health and well-being.
- This MAC aims to facilitate the effective use of our considerable shared resources, ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

4. Frequently Asked Questions

4.1 Will our School name change?

No, our School's name will remain the same. On occasions, for example, on letter headed paper, you may see our School name followed by, 'part of Our Lady and All Saints Multi Academy Company.'

4.2 Will our School uniform change?

No, we will maintain our own identity and our uniform is an important part of our identity. Of course, we may wish to consider changes to our uniform as an individual school.

4.3 Will our admission arrangements change?

No, becoming part of Our Lady and All Saints' Multi Academy Company does not change our current admission arrangements, or those of any other school proposing to join our MAC.

4.4 Will our existing staff be required to work in a different school within Our Lady and All Saints MAC?

No, no existing member of staff will be expected to swap schools and work in another MAC school. One of the benefits identified in other multi academy companies is the increased opportunities a multi academy company can offer in promoting professional and career development within a Catholic educational setting. This will help to secure Catholic education within our local setting.

4.5 What will be the governance structure?

We will continue to have our own Governing Body which will consist of foundation governors (governors appointed by the Archbishop), parent governors and staff governors.

In addition, there will be an Our Lady and All Saints' Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will work on a voluntary basis and will consist of a variety of people with a range of relevant skills, including a:

- knowledge of education
- knowledge of finance and accounting systems
- knowledge of legal and employment issues
- knowledge of property and land issues.

The Archdiocese of Birmingham will ensure that our Foundation Directors are always in the majority, by a minimum of two. They will look to appoint people who bring a balance of skills, to ensure our Board of Directors are able to fulfil their statutory duties. Directors may be co-opted to meet specific skills gaps. Two key roles that must be established are a Finance Director and a Chair of the Board.

The main responsibility of the Board of Directors are:

- Monitoring the MAC's work in terms of Catholic ethos.
- Developing and enhancing the quality of educational provision.
- Challenging and monitoring the performance of the MAC.
- Ensuring the MAC applies with relevant legislation.
- Managing the MAC's finances and property.
- Appointing senior school leaders – Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, and RE Managers.
- Ensuring effective partnerships between the Board of Directors and governing bodies.

4.6 Will all our policies and practices have to be the same for every school within Our Lady and All Saints MAC?

There will, over time, be Our Lady and All Saints MAC policies which apply to all schools within our MAC, for example, policies linked to financial and governance requirements. Policies and practices which are specific to our individual schools and which are highly effective within our community, will remain in place.

4.7 Will our School get more money?

The Secretary of State for Education has made it clear that financially no school should be better, or worse off, because of becoming an academy. Our current School Funding Grant comes via our Local Authority. Our Local Authority retains some of our funding (often referred to as top slicing) to pay for central services e.g. the School Admission Team. In a multi academy company, school funding is paid directly to the multi academy company- there is no involvement of a local authority and a local authority has no say on how the money is allocated or spent. Our Lady and All Saints' Board of Directors will decide on the level of funding to delegate to each school and, like our Local Authority, they will also need to retain some of the grant funding to pay for MAC central services. While acknowledging this, we believe that the new freedoms over how budgets are spent and the economies of scale of working together, means we should get better value for our money.

4.8 Will our School continue to collaborate with schools who are not part of our MAC?

Yes, we have close partnerships with other schools within our local area, partnerships which have been developed and nurtured over many years. Being part of a multi academy company does not affect our relationships with these schools and we will continue to work closely with them to share and develop best practice.

4.9 Will there be a chief executive role within our MAC?

Yes, there is a requirement that all new multi academy companies appoint a senior executive leader who has overall responsibility for the quality of education provided by the schools within the multi academy company. This is a paid role. The Archdiocese of Birmingham refer to this post as a Catholic Senior Executive Leader (often shortened to CSEL). Appointed by Our Lady and All Saints' Board of Directors, they will be expected to provide visible strategic leadership across the MAC. They will be responsible for ensuring the schools within our MAC provide sustainable, outstanding and inclusive education and financial performance, while preserving and developing our MAC's Catholic character. In addition to the CSEL, there will be a paid Chief Financial Officer (CFO) whose role will be to ensure resources are properly accounted for and managed across the MAC.

4.10 What will be the role of our Parish and our Parish Priest?

Our School was built to serve the families of our Parish and to work in partnership with them to share in the central mission of the Church, which is to proclaim Jesus and His Gospel in the world today and, in so doing, hand on our faith to our children. This core purpose of Catholic education will not change and we will continue to strive to ensure we serve the needs of our Parish and we educate our children in a manner that is permeated by the Catholic faith. The role of the parish priest with regard to the parish school has a long history, and is defined in Church law, local policy and custom. Our Parish Priest, along with our Head teacher and wider Governing Body, ensure our children are educated to the authentic purpose of a Catholic school. Their role is integrated into the strategic planning, and pastoral activity of our School. Becoming an Multi Academy company will not change, or lessen, their role within our School and the community we serve.

4.11 Will our Head teacher still be responsible for the leadership and management of our School?

Yes, our Head teacher will continue to be responsible for the leadership and management of our School. They will be supported by the Catholic Senior Executive Leader and will be accountable to our Governing Body and Our Lady and All Saints' Board of Directors.

5. Next Steps

5.1 Consultation

The consultation period runs from Monday 16th September 2019 to Monday 14th October 2019. We will be consulting with; parents, staff, parishioners and other schools. Consultation evenings have also been arranged for:

School	Day and Date	Time
Guardian Angels	Thursday 19 th September	2:30pm
Our Lady's	Monday 16 th September	2:30pm
Our Lady of Compassion	Wednesday 18 th September	6:00pm
Our Lady of the Wayside	Tuesday 17 th September	7:00pm
St Andrew's	Tuesday 17 th September	6:00pm
St Anne's	Monday 16 th September	6:30pm
St Anthony's	Tuesday 17 th September	6:00pm
St Augustine's	Tuesday 17 th September	7:00pm
St Edward's	Thursday 19 th September	6:00pm
St George & St Teresa's	Tuesday 17 th September	7:00pm
St John the Baptist	Tuesday 17 th September	2:30pm
St Peter's	Tuesday 17 th September	6:00pm
St Wilfrid's	Thursday 19 th September	6:00pm

You can also share your views and suggestions by emailing – macconsultation@olaas.co.uk

All consultation responses will be carefully considered. Following consultation a consultation outcome report will be published which will be made available to all stakeholders.

5.2 Timescales

The process of academisation is lengthy and complex, particularly with so many schools involved. No fixed date has been set for conversion, but we are hopeful that we will become part of Our Lady and All Saints MAC in 2020.

Appendix 1 - Birmingham Archdiocese's Academy Strategy

- Only groups of Catholic schools can join together to form a Multi Academy Company (MAC). Each school retains their head teacher who will be responsible for delivering education within that school.
- No provision within the agreements negotiated by the Diocesan Education Service (DES) exists for schools to form single academies, or to form Multi Academy Companies with non-Catholic schools.
- The proposed academies do not involve any form of external sponsorship. The DES is opposed to this.
- Strategic control of the MAC rests with a board of volunteer directors, a sort of 'super' governing body. The majority of the directors would be appointed by the Diocese as Foundation Directors – in much the same way that the majority of governors on the governing body today are foundation governors, in place to represent the Church's interests.
- Each school would retain its own identity and would continue to have a Local Governing Body working closely with the head teacher and the school community. Governors are still responsible for school performance, admissions, budgetary oversight, staff recruitment up Senior Leadership positions and maintaining links with the local parish that the school serves.
- Staff currently employed by each school would transfer to being employed by the MAC. Current staff would have their terms and conditions protected under the TUPE legislation and continue to work in their school. New staff could be employed under different terms and conditions.
- The Multi Academy structure around education for pupils aged 3 – 19 is the preferred model and all schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham have been asked to convert or planned to convert by September 2020.
- The DES will act as a facilitator for groups of schools, based on geographical areas, that wish to become a MAC.
- The aim is to secure, protect and continue to improve Catholic education as the Church has seen as its mission for over 150 years.