



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON
EDUCATION SERVICE

VOLUNTARY-AIDED SCHOOLS CONVERTING TO ACADEMY STATUS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CONTENTS

1. Academy Status	3
2. Catholic Education Trusts (CET)	5
3. Accountability.....	8
4. The conversion process.....	10
5. Organisation and Governance.....	11
6. Resources/Financial.....	13
7. Teaching and standards in schools.....	14
8. School pupils	15
9. Services.....	18
10. Finances and resources.....	18
11. Impact on staff	19
12. Post Academisation	20

1. Academy Status

1.1. What is an academy?

Academies are publicly funded schools which operate outside of Local Authority control. They receive their funding directly from central government, through the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), rather than through a Local Authority. Academies have more freedom than other State schools over their finances, the curriculum, length of terms and school days and teachers' pay and conditions.

Academies are inspected by Ofsted. They have to follow the same rules on admissions, educational needs and exclusions as other state schools and students sit the same exams.

1.2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is responsible for running the academy. It has three layers of governance: members, who are best viewed as guardians of the constitution; directors/trustees, who are legally responsible for the running of the Trust and the local governors who are responsible for monitoring standards in the individual schools in the Trust. The five 'Members' of the two Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT) or Catholic Education Trusts (CETS) as we know them in the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton are the Diocesan Ordinary, the Chair of the Academies Partnership Committee, the Diocese's Chief Operating Officer, the Vicar General and one of the Directors from the other Trust.

1.3. What is the background to academies?

Academies were originally a policy of the Labour government in the 2000s but the policy of establishing Academies has been carried on by successive administrations. The present administration sees schools coming together as academies in MATS providing mutual school to school support and benefitting from economies of scale of joint working arrangements as the best way for schools to be successful. Under the terms of the Academies and Adoption Act 2016, the Regional Directors (RD) scrutinise the performance of all schools.

[Regional Directors' decision making framework - GOV. UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

1.4. How do schools benefit from becoming academies?

Greater control over the curriculum allows flexibility in terms of the balance and mix of subjects. A curriculum tailored to the needs of a Catholic school could be more fully developed. Stronger collaboration between schools in multi-academy trusts (MAT) is seen as a benefit; schools can more readily appoint new staff to be shared to work across the schools in the MAT and deliver functions that individual schools would struggle to afford. Once operating as an academy, the school receives the same per pupil funding as other state schools. However, it also gains control of all of its budget rather than it being routed through

the LA and therefore is able to determine for itself how to spend the entirety of its budget. Catholic schools would not have to pay the 10% currently required towards the cost of capital works and the MAT receives an annual capital building allowance, once it is large enough, rather than having to bid for capital funds. The Department for Education pays £25,000 towards conversion costs. Some MATS have also benefitted from access to a MAT Development and Improvement Fund.

1.5. Why are our schools converting to academy status and why have we established two CETs?

The CET model allows us to protect our Catholic schools, their identity and governance arrangements into the future. our CETs can better support the long terms goals of developing our future leaders of Catholic education in the Diocese and securing improvements in schools standards across the board by developing and resourcing a strategic vision for leadership development and by pooling expertise and knowledge on standards and developing robust school to school arrangements for school improvement.

The decision to create Catholic Education Trusts (CETs) was taken by the Diocesan Charity Trustees in 2015. It was agreed at the outset that diocesan trusts would be collaborative ventures, providing excellent educational opportunities and life-fulfilling experiences within Christ-centred communities.

The Academies Partnership Committee (APC) and the Diocesan Education Service (DES) recently undertook a robust review of the two-trust model, in conjunction with both Bosco CET and Xavier CET. The unanimous agreement was that the current model is the best fit within our diocese.

1.6. We are a good/outstanding school and work well in partnership already so why shouldn't we stay as we are?

Relationships with local authorities have changed regardless as they have reconfigured the level of support and the way they provide this support to schools. In addition, the local educational environment has changed, with the role of local authorities in relation to schools being reduced over the past few years. The CET model provides us with the opportunity to safeguard the future of all our Catholic schools. Working alone does not allow for the same economies of scale to be made and the family of schools will be directly on hand if something does go wrong with additional support and strategic oversight as required. Even good and outstanding schools can find that they have difficulties from time to time. In our view, it is better to take positive steps to secure the future of all our Catholic schools from a position of strength rather than to have to retrieve the situation if things do go wrong.

2. Catholic Education Trusts (CET)

2.1. How does the CET model work?

The CET model has been designed to maintain the identity of each school in the trust as separate academies each retaining a Local Governing Committee (LGC), headteacher/head of school and its own budget. The Trust is the employer of all the staff in the CET. A Scheme of Delegation is put in place between the CET Board and the LGC to enable each school to operate in much the same way as it does now, but the Trust has overall responsibility for standards and as such, all schools in the Trust are required to work together to improve standards across all schools in the Trust.

2.2. What are the particular advantages of the CET model?

CETs provide a formal framework for collaboration, shared curriculum expertise across schools and enhanced opportunities for sharing good practice in a variety of settings and phases. Curriculum support for secondary schools by primaries and for primaries by secondaries in targeted areas — with possible cross-phase teaching — will enhance pupils' learning and enrich professional practice.

Formal collaboration frameworks allow for more shared planning more shared examples of good practice. more shared resources and more shared assessment and moderation.

Inbuilt collaboration facilitates mentoring systems to enhance teaching and learning and enriches school-to-school support.

Shared curriculum events such as Science Days, Languages Days and shared concerts, sports events, Masses etc become much more practicable.

Greater opportunities for career progression enable schools to grow their own leaders. The Ambition Institute research shows that MATS have much higher rates of promotion from classroom teacher to middle leadership, particularly at primary school, than non-MAT schools.

Improved recruitment and retention. The evidence is that CETs, with the flexibility and career progression opportunities they allow, attract more applications.

In short, CETs systemically enrich professional dialogue and practice, thereby improving pupils' learning experience.

2.3. Why are schools being allocated to a CET in a predefined geographical area rather than being allowed to form smaller groupings themselves?

The need for planned geography lies at the heart of the Diocesan academisation programme for four main reasons:

- Growth cannot be sporadic or dictated solely by local or generational circumstance. Any CET created can accommodate local relationships via a hub model, but it cannot be haphazard, because in those circumstances, it will lose its underpinning coherence and so be much less likely to last.
- A CET has to be scalable. It must be able to grow to the right size without being allowed to grow too big. Any CET that is too small will not get sufficient economies of scale and the benefits of enhanced collaboration and sharing of expertise. Any CET that is too big will get diseconomies of scale and lose tightness of collaboration and sharing of expertise. This has to be planned to accommodate the right level of scalability.
- Closely related to this, it has to be sustainable. Any CET has to have the capacity to hit critical mass and survive and thrive on its own internal resources. CETs that are too small, or in any other sense limited, will stand less chance of surviving and thriving.
- Finally, the Trustees are advocating this academisation plan as their strategy for the future. For that reason, it has to be generationally coherent. We need to leave something behind that can be peopled and understood by those who follow in, let us say, forty years' time. CETs are therefore designed along deanery and local authority lines, so that they have an immediately recognisable and intelligible ecclesial and local structure.

2.4. Will primary schools lose their identity and be swallowed up by the secondary schools?

No. Each school will become an academy in its own right and will be part of the CET. Each school will retain its school name, headteacher/head of school, budget and local governing committee.

2.5. Will schools lose their individuality when they become part of a CET?

No. CETs enshrine the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity which underpin Catholic Social Teaching. Subsidiarity — decisions are best made by those who are closest to their effects — is key: its express purpose is to avoid excessive centralisation. Our pupils are best served if schools keep their individual charism.

2.6. Which other schools in the diocese are joining CETs?

We have a wide range of Christ-centred, nurturing and successful schools in our Diocese. They include:

Sixty-four state-funded schools comprising of fifty-three primary schools and eleven secondary schools.

Of these, thirty-five primary schools and six secondary schools are voluntary aided (VA) and maintained through local authorities. A further twelve primary schools and three secondary schools are academies under the Xavier Catholic Education Trust with six primary schools and

two secondary school academies under the Bosco Catholic Education Trust. Our Diocese includes twelve independent schools and one independent non-maintained specialist school.

Just over a third of all Diocesan schools are already in a CET. Diocesan schools are not just schools within the Diocese: they are schools that are under the control of the Diocesan Bishop. Bishop Richard believes that joining a CET is the best and most prudent future for our schools.

2.7. How will academisation affect links between our school and local schools?

Schools will still have the opportunity to work with other schools, outside of the CET, as they decide best. This plan does not curtail that opportunity. We wish to maintain a positive working relationship with each LA and for our schools to work collaboratively with Catholic as well as other local schools that are not Diocesan schools.

2.8. Isn't taking the schools out of Local Authority control a risky move?

Catholic schools are not, and have never been, under Local Authority (LA) control.

Catholic schools are Voluntary Aided (VA) not Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools. The governors of Catholic VA schools are the employers of the staff, and are able to set the length of a school day and term times, following consultation with parents. The decision to admit children to the school is already made by the Governing body and not the Local Authority. All of these will be unchanged when a Catholic school goes into a CET.

Our schools have a good relationship with the relevant LAs and it is envisaged that this will continue. Thus, where the LA is offering a good service that gives the best value for money, the schools will be able to 'buy in' to receive what is on offer, through a traded service.

2.9. How can CETs better respond to falling rolls than VA schools?

When schools come together in CETs they become part of the same legal organisation. The CET can drive down costs for schools through a more flexible approach to sharing staff, resources and even classes and pupils to meet the challenges of balancing budgets against a declining roll. A CET is the vehicle for enhanced collaboration and innovative solutions. The determination, resilience, creativity and ingenuity of CET leaders will be key to finding sustainable solutions to continue to provide a rich Catholic education in these challenging times. The CEO's oversight of a group of schools will allow for a more co-ordinated approach in mitigating risks.

However, CETs will not ultimately save a school from closure. A CET cannot resist the inevitable tide of pupil numbers declining to unviable numbers.

3. Accountability

3.1. Some people have suggested that there is less transparency or accountability for academies, how will the diocese ensure that future management regimes will not run the school in a way that takes money away from vital teaching and learning to pay themselves?

Academies are more accountable than other types of school. Academies have to produce independently-audited annual accounts. These have to be lodged at Companies House by the end of each year and are a matter of public record. The Trust Board in each CET has oversight of the finances of each school within the Trust. The Diocese currently requires all academies to share this information in a timely manner so that the Members are able to satisfy themselves that there are no concerns that they have not been made aware of.

Academies are accountable to the Secretary of State for Education through the Regional Director (RD). The RD oversees each application for conversion and the appointment of Trustees, thus ensuring that there are robust governance and systems of accountability within each MAT.

The accountability, governance and management structures of the CET are further documented in its "Scheme of Delegation".

3.2. Who regulates the CET and where is the transparency and accountability? What is to stop school leaders paying themselves 'over the top' salaries and wasting money on non-education items? How will we know?

CETs within the Diocesan framework will be held to account by the Diocese whose primary focus will be on ensuring the best outcomes for children. The Diocese holds annual meetings with each CET to verify the reliability of the financial standard.

The Scheme of Delegation defines the roles and responsibilities of each body and individuals with delegated authority within the CET. Parents will continue to be represented on Local Governing Committees.

3.3. In relation to academisation, will taking the school outside the control of the local education authority leave the school vulnerable to financial mismanagement etc? What checks or safety net will be in place if things do go wrong?

Please see points already made above.

In addition, Academies and MATS are subject to strict financial control by HM Treasury through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

A Master Funding Agreement between the DfE and the MAT sets out the conditions that the MAT and the Academies must observe if funding is to be paid, one of which is the compliance with the ESFA's "Academies Financial Handbook".

The Handbook, primarily for Chief Accounting Officers (CAOs) and Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) details the main financial and governance requirements (monitoring, reporting financial planning internal control, internal scrutiny, transparency), delegated authorities and audit requirements. In the view of many academies, LA Maintained schools do not have the same level of financial scrutiny and therefore accountability.

3.4. An argument for academies is achieving economies of scale but how is that principle going to be different to how the local authority operates now and how will the CET do a better job? What are the success criteria? How will success be measured and who will be accountable? Will these processes be transparent?

Economies of scale will only really be achieved when the schools go into the CET as it is through things like bulk purchasing power for resources, reduction of duplication and the use of common service providers across the CET that will make the difference. Resources can also be shared in the knowledge that schools are working closely with other schools who are part of the same legal entity. The CET board will be accountable for the oversight of this across CET schools. Savings that the CET achieves over time will be used to further support the education of the children. The LA model rarely enables schools to benefit from savings to be made beyond that of working with the LA, whereas with the Diocesan approach there is the possibility of cross-CET, Diocesan and national-level agreements as they search for economies of scale. The funding of the CET will be solely focused on educational provision and not on the wider range of services provided by an LA.

Schools already buy in some services from local authorities other than their own (e.g., clerking and governing support) but other services (e.g., HR and payroll) are not always easy to separate out from each other.

Converting to an academy gives independence from the Local Authorities' decisions, services and control, and provides an opportunity to find equal or better services elsewhere at less cost.

Financial due diligence has to be carried out on each school converting to become an academy and this is highlighting those areas where economies of scale might be best achieved. Headteachers will be consulted on their preferences whether to stay with a current provider or decide to change. The annual audited accounts that must be published and these will provide a transparent overview of the financial health of the schools in the CET.

4. The conversion process

4.1. What is the process for schools to become academies?

Initially, schools are asked to approach the Director of Education and/or the CEO of the CET in their area. They can also seek advice from the Academies Partnership Committee (APC). The role of the APC is to scrutinise applications from schools wishing to join a CET, taking into account due diligence undertaken by the CET, meetings with the school(s) and Trust Officers and advice from diocesan officers in order to make recommendations to the Bishop through the Director, Education Service.

The final Stage is the signing of the Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State. The Department for Education says it expects conversions to take a minimum of three to four months from registering an interest through to signing of the Funding Agreement.

4.2. To what extent has an analysis of the risks and challenges of conversion been carried out and what mitigations are in place to avoid or minimise the impact of these?

Financial, academic and legal due diligence are undertaken on each school applying to convert. Advice, support and guidance is also available through the Academies Working Group at the Catholic Education Service (CES), Department for Education, Regional Director and through links that have been identified with other Catholic Dioceses. These inputs are considered in order to ensure a smooth and informed process can be undertaken. This approach will be further enhanced through the work of the Academies Partnership Committee. This will help to ensure that schools are consistently supported as they proceed towards academisation.

4.3. What do you see as the benefits for our school becoming an academy? What evidence do you have to support of these assertions?

Greater financial control, strengthening of Governance and oversight. Increased accountability. The benefits as already indicated in question 3.4 around economies of scale when the CET is in place. Increased professional development opportunities, wider access to resources and ensuring that good practice does not stay in just one school.

4.4. What do you see as the disadvantages of our school becoming an academy?

Some might see a reduction in individual autonomy by the school as it is held to account by the Trust board. Some might have the perception of the reduced status of each individual school but that is something we are keen to avoid.

4.5. How should parents, parishioners, teachers and other stakeholders be consulted? What opportunities should there be to enable different opinions to be voiced and heard?

Appropriate legal advice should be obtained prior to a school commencing the consultation. Advice received to date indicates that there is no prescribed format or timescale for the consultation but it should be informed by the views of stakeholders. Typically, schools approach parents informing them of the decision being made, the thinking behind it and inviting comment. In response to requests for further discussion and information schools may also run an information evening for parents. Schools will always consult staff who work at the school about the proposed development.

4.6. Who gets the final say?

Bishop Richard has shared his vision for the Catholic schools in his Diocese. The approval of the Diocesan Trustees must be obtained to any application by a Catholic school to become an academy. That approval is conditional on schools fulfilling the Bishop's wishes and in particular becoming an academy as part of a CET.

4.7. The Diocese covers the whole of Surrey and Sussex, and 4 Local Authorities- how is it possible that a CEO can possibly know what is best for a local school and the others in the CET? All the schools are so different.

There is real value in schools which are different to each other in make-up, working together and sharing ideas to maintain and improve practice across the whole. The uniting factor is the Catholic nature of each school, based on Gospel values and a mission to the Common Good.

5. Organisation and Governance

5.1. What about Governance, does that change?

Each school will retain its own 'Local Governing Committee' (LGC). The CET will have a Board of Directors made up of a majority of Foundation Directors appointed by the Bishop. The Board of Directors takes on the responsibility of being the admission authority for the academies in the Trust and the employer of all staff employed within each academy. Under a scheme of delegation, the functions associated with this responsibility will be carried out by the LGC, e.g., recruiting staff for the individual academy (other than senior posts such as the headteacher), having an admission panel to apply the admission criteria etc.

5.2. What will be the status of the school governors?

Schools within a CET will have Local Governors' Committees for each school with an overarching Board of Directors. The Governors are a mixture of Foundation Governors and elected Parent and Staff Governors.

The School will comply with all directives issued by the Bishop and the Memorandum of Understanding has the status of a directive issued by the Bishop. The School will adopt and will comply with all policies of the Diocese and the Bishop communicated to the School from time to time.

Foundation Governors are appointed by the Bishop; they can be 'removed' by the Diocese if their position becomes untenable because they fail to adhere to the requirements.

5.3. When a school converts, will the governors have to resign, will there be sufficient governors to take their place and will the new governors have the necessary skills?

Existing governors do not have to resign, the Local Governing Committee will still exist. We need to retain all good and willing governors. Succession planning for governors has always been important and will continue to be so and we hope that the emphasis in the role of governors in the CET on making a difference to standards in schools and overseeing the Catholic Life of the school will prove more attractive to people who are considering the role of governor.

5.4. What safeguards will be built in to prevent the CET from taking decisions that the schools are not comfortable with?

Firstly, there will be a scheme of delegation between the CET Board and individual school Local Governing Committee. Secondly, the Members will be responsible for ensuring that the Trust is operating for the good of all the schools in the Trust and will hold the Directors to account on this.

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

Yes. Parents and the relationships of our schools with them are of paramount importance and that will not change.

5.6. Who will have overall responsibility for our school? Will it still be the Headteacher or a CEO? If the latter, how will the CEO liaise with parents? Who will be responsible for ensuring that the standard of education and the school ethos will be maintained?

Each school will continue to have their own Headteacher or Head of School (as suits each school's size and circumstance best) and that Headteacher will report on standards to the CEO/Board of Directors. The Headteacher, Governors and Directors would be responsible for maintaining the Catholic ethos of the school; the day to day running of the school, as now, would be the responsibility of the Headteacher.

6. Resources/Financial

6.1. Is the decision to convert to an academy primarily driven by a need to share resources amongst schools in the Diocese rather than to be of benefit to each individual school?

The motivation behind the decision to convert are explained in the Bishop's vision statement of December 2022. The intention is that all schools will over time benefit from giving and receiving. It is an opportunity to future-proof Catholic education. It is also an opportunity to strengthen and support the governance and leadership in our schools.

6.2. What is the cost of academisation for the school and how will this be funded?

The cost varies from school to school depending on the amount of legal work that needs to be completed. Some schools with complicated land issues may end up with a higher bill, however, all schools converting to become an Academy within a MAT receive a grant of £25,000 which will cover the costs involved.

6.3. Where will the money from the economies of scale be spent?

On the educational provision for the children.

Each school within the CET will see the financial reports which show the benefit to each school of core services provided by the CET. Savings would be reflected in the school's budget. How will allocation of funds to activities supporting educational goals be decided upon? Each school will receive their own funding and Trust priorities will be agreed at Board level. Local Governing Committees and Headteachers will remain responsible for their budgets and decisions on curriculum resources.

6.4. How will a school going into the CET be funded? Will the school be audited and be required to publish its accounts? Will the school receive the same amount of money as all other schools in the Diocese? If not, how will the money be allocated? Will the school receive more or less money as an academy? Who will control what the money will be spent on?

All academies are audited and have to publish their accounts on school websites. Academies have received more money than maintained schools in their budgets as historically they have not been 'top-sliced' by local authorities first. Money will continue to be allocated based on pupil headcount and other factors such as pupil premium and SEND, as now. Lines of delegation for spending will be clearly stated within the school's financial regulations.

In addition to the Master Funding Agreement, each Academy enters into its own Supplementary Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State. Reporting and auditing requirements are detailed in the Financial Accounting Handbook

7. Teaching and standards in schools

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

The chief element for ensuring accountability and assuring standards will be unchanged. Academies are all still subject to Ofsted inspections and their results are published by the DfE. Additionally, as Catholic academies we would remain subject to the Catholic School Inspection framework. The CET, as the accountable body, is expected to build a strong school improvement model and apply this robustly across all schools in the Trust. The LGC will have a responsibility for ensure that standards in each academy are monitored and evaluated effectively. It is in the interests of all the academies in a CET to ensure that each individual academy is successful.

7.2. Will there be any impact on front-line teaching time?

There will be no impact. The teaching of pupils will remain the schools' first priority. Teachers will not be required to work in other schools in the same CET; they will remain class teachers in their own schools, as they are now. However, there will be opportunities for outstanding teachers to promote best practice across other schools in the Trust and be part of system leadership and change if they wish to/there are opportunities for this. There will also be opportunities for the CET to recruit staff to work across a group of schools, e.g., specialist language teachers, special needs teachers, family support workers, etc.

7.3. What impact will academisation have on the curriculum and will the CET continue to value a well-rounded education?

It is envisaged that all schools within the Diocese would continue to teach the National Curriculum (NC) and give 10% time to RE, as now. There is no reason to think that a broad and balanced curriculum and high expectations of standards across the board will not continue. Academies do have more control over their own curriculums and are not bound by NC per se but in order to ensure pupils are ready for their next stage of education, they follow NC. Schools within the CET would agree if there would be common Schemes of Work for particular subjects or whether each school will determine their own. For most schools, there may not be any noticeable changes to curriculum other than that which may evolve over time as a result of sharing best practice across the schools.

7.4. Has any school's academic performance dropped after converting into an academy within a CET? Will there be a continuous review/monitoring of the academic performance of schools?

The experience of the Diocese is that schools working as part of a CET have maintained standards and, in many cases, improved, following conversion. Continuous monitoring of academic performance of pupils continues, by the CET, individual schools and by the diocesan Education Service. N.B.: It must be recognised that standards have been affected by the Covid and post-Covid disruption and that there have been changes to the OFSTED framework, with an overall reduction nationally in the % of Outstanding schools.

7.5. How will joining with other schools in the CET improve standards in teaching and learning?

It is a recognised fact of educational research that where collaboration rather than inter-school competition exists, schools generally make significantly more progress. We have been working collaboratively with other Catholic and LA schools, both sharing ideas and supporting leadership. Any substantial collaborative work that involves a sharing of expertise benefits a school. Being part of a CET would only serve to consolidate this work further.

7.6. What is the staff retention plan to actively engage teachers and other staff to avoid them leaving?

Catholic schools often attract high quality candidates as a result of fair and equitably-applied Pay Policies and Performance Management processes. This information is in the public domain in the form of OFSTED reports, Pay Policies and any advertisements for teaching or support staff.

As CETs will maintain the current staff pay and conditions and job security will be enhanced, we do not believe that this will be an issue. We are also fortunate to have many staff who are committed to working in the Catholic sector.

Quality Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, good career development prospects, access to a wide range of resources and strong leadership support will all contribute to the ongoing retention and development of staff.

8. School pupils

8.1. How will additional support services currently provided by the LA be funded by the CET?

CETs can purchase services from the Local Authority, if they choose to do so, or they can purchase them from other sources if these are better,

8.2. What measures are in place to ensure access and quality of these services is as good or better than the current situation? (e.g., support for students with learning differences.)

Support for SEND and pupils identified as vulnerable will continue at the same levels. Under current legislation, academies, maintained schools, free schools, model schools and studio schools are funded at local and governmental level for these areas. For example, Pupil Premium allocations remain as now, irrespective of school designation.

In terms of direct Educational Health Care provision, there is a duty on each LA to provide support directly to schools, again irrespective of designation. With specialist help such as speech therapy, this is an NHS service and would come under the remit of that area.

Academies, must, since 2013, have due regard and make provision for SEND funds with their agreed Funding Agreement — this information, once in a CET, would be available within the public domain and published on the relevant website.

8.3. Will pupils who need extra assistance continue to receive it at least at current levels and move in line with the LA's policy?

Academies are funded through the ESFA, not through the Local Authority. Academies get the same level of funding for each pupil as local authority schools in the same area; their notional SEND budget is worked out in the same way; they can get top-up funding from the Local Authority in the same way.

All schools have to fund, from their school budgets' notional SEND funding, the first 15 hours of support for a child. Although academies and free schools are outside Local Authority control, LAs still retain their Statutory SEND duties. These include carrying out statutory needs assessments of children with SEND and arranging the special education provision specified in any EHC plan.

8.4. Will pupils be able to continue to benefit from music lessons and instrument hiring from an LA Music Service?

Yes. Music tuition, and the hire of instrument are a bought in LA service (where available) that will continue as integral to the curriculum extension work at the school.

8.5. Will pupils continue to be assessed in line with other primary schools in the LA?

Yes. Children will continue to be formally assessed at the end of EYFS, KSI and KS2.

All EYFS providers must participate in the assessment arrangements outlined in EYFS ARA.

Academies must comply with the requirements for maintained schools within KSI ARA. Academies must choose which LA is responsible for external moderation of their KSI Teacher Assessment.

An academy's funding agreement requires the academy trust to ensure that the KS2 national curriculum assessments are administered in the school according to published guidance.

8.6. If standards at a member school are unsatisfactory, how will the CET address this?

It is in the interests of all the schools in the CET to make sure that no school in the group gets into this position. The CET will have a responsibility to monitor standards across the CET and to ensure that there is a well-resourced Trust wide approach to standards and school improvement. Any strengths and good practice identified should be able to be shared across the CET and similarly weaknesses addressed through the CET school improvement model.

8.7. What will happen about admissions?

Admission arrangements will remain the same as they are now. Academies are subject to the same Admissions Code as other state-funded schools. This sets the rules for fair admissions and prevents schools from selecting on the basis of ability. They also remain part of the Local Authority co-ordinated admissions system. It is a requirement that any Catholic academy adheres to the diocesan standard admissions policies, just as they do now.

8.8. Will parents of children at primary schools still have a choice of which secondary school to send their children?

Yes. There will be no change to admissions policies or in parental choice.

8.9. What will happen about exclusions?

There will be no change to existing policies on exclusions/suspensions. Academies have to follow the law and government guidance on excluding/suspending pupils.

8.10. What is to prevent you changing the length of the school day or term times after conversion?

Changes will not be made in relation to academy conversion. Voluntary-Aided schools have the freedom at the moment to set their own arrangements on termtime, holiday dates and length of school day should they so wish (they are required to consult). However, they usually fit in with local practice. It is to be expected that a CET would also want to fit in with local practice for the convenience of parents and staff. Parents and other stakeholders would be consulted if any changes were to be considered.

9. Services

9.1. What about school meals, grounds staff, and other support obtained the Local Authority?

If the Local Authority offers good quality services providing value for money, a CET may elect to 'buy in' these services. It could also choose to procure these services from other providers. One advantage of a CET is that schools can take on the same provider for certain services with potentially a reduction in cost for that service.

9.2. Will Local Authorities support schools that become academies?

The role of the LA is clearly laid out in legislation, and they retain some Statutory functions for all schools and academies, e.g., for excluded pupils, for children with statements of special educational need. Many LA services are traded for all schools anyway. The LA may provide these support services if enough schools ask for them. Some Local Authorities may choose to cease delivering some services over time and signpost availability in other areas from other providers.

10. Finances and resources

10.1. What assurances have we that costs in the future might not get out of hand and leave a school financially vulnerable?

Our schools are already used to running their own finances and operating within annual budgets. In order to be approved for academy status by the DfE, schools must demonstrate that they have sound financial systems and appropriate financial expertise to manage their budgets.

10.2. Will each school be responsible for submitting returns to Company House?

The CET will be responsible for presenting one set of consolidated accounts to Companies House on an annual basis.

10.3. Will the new arrangement affect land ownership?

No. Any assets owned by the Diocesan or Religious Order Trustees will remain in their ownership. This is dealt with through a separate legal document called a 'Supplemental Agreement' which is entered into by the Secretary of State, the Diocesan or Religious Order Trustees and the CET.

10.4. What is the position over potential pension deficit costs for employees in the Local Government Scheme?

At the moment, schools already pay towards the reduction of any pension deficit as part of existing arrangements with their Local Government Pension Scheme Administrator. These arrangements will continue as an academy.

10.5. How will capital funding be allocated in future? Will it be retained by individual partners or centrally administered by the Trust?

As an academy, Catholic schools do not have to make the 10% contribution to capital works that VA schools have to. The Government have now also introduced an annual 'capital fund allocation' for Multi-Academy Trusts which enables the Trust to manage its own capital works programme without having to enter a bid for funds. These funds can be 'carried forward' year on year and therefore there is flexibility for the CET to consider significant capital build initiatives.

11. Impact on staff

11.1. What happens to terms and conditions?

The STPCD (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document) must be adhered to. For support staff, local terms and conditions will be tracked. This has been part of discussion with the staff unions to date.

All terms and conditions of employment are protected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 ('TUPE'). This means that, on the day a school becomes an academy, all staff will transfer to the employment of the academy trust, with their terms and conditions as they were before.

11.2. What happens to continuity of service?

When staff transfer to an academy, their length of service is protected. Whilst there is no continuity of service if an employee of an academy leaves and goes to work at a maintained school, it is common practice for school employers to agree contractually to honour years of service. The implications of this will be noted in the 'TUPE measures letter' that will be issued to staff as part of the formal TUPE consultation. There is no expectation that maternity pay is affected as school policies typically reflect statutory benefits.

11.3. Are pensions affected?

Staff will not see any impact on their pensions because of the conversion to academy status. Continuity of service is retained when the staff transferred to the academy. The funding agreement (which is the contract between the academy and the Secretary of State) requires

that the academy ensure that all staff employed at the academy has access to the Teachers Pension Scheme or the Local Government pension Scheme (as applicable).

11.4. What about union recognition?

Trade union recognition will transfer to the academy under TUPE.

12. Post Academisation

12.1. How will the success of conversion into a CET be assessed?

The CET Trust Board and the Diocese, will monitor Catholic life, standards, attainment, finance and risk, staff well-being and turnover. Working together, the CET has the opportunity to develop benchmarks for each of its schools and quickly identify and provide support if concerns are raised.

12.2. What freedom would the academy have in regard to the length of terms and school days arrangement?

Academies can set their own term dates (as can GBs of voluntary aided Catholic schools now). Academies are not bound to teach for 190 days as maintained schools are, but in practice most primaries follow the same academic year as their local schools, with exceptions for INSET days, as now. Parents have to be consulted if the overall length of the school day is to be changed.

12.3. What would happen if the academisation was not a success?

There is no mechanism for an academy to return to local authority control. Generally, academies that are deemed failing or underperforming may be transferred to another MAT or sponsor (known as re-brokering) or subject to other intervention from the relevant Regional Director (RD). However, in the case of Catholic schools, the RD would discuss 'intervention' options with the Diocesan School Commissioner (DSC) as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU between the DfE and the Catholic Church) in order to reach agreement about the most appropriate plan for the school. One key purpose of this CET plan is to ensure support, guidance and direction are in place before any external intervention would be required. Trustees and the Diocese would ensure that any problems arising including a severe decline in standards would be addressed at an early stage.