

## **SECTION 1: Academy Information**

### **What is an Academy?**

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority, but their funding and accountability is directly with the DfE (Department for Education).

### **Why is St Paul's proposing to become an Academy and form Ascension Catholic Academy Trust?**

In September 2017, the Diocese of Westminster published its strategy for Catholic Academy Trusts <https://education.rcdow.org.uk/academies-homepage-new/>

The Strategy sets out the reasons, benefits and structure of the Catholic Academy Trusts across the Diocese. The aim of the Diocese's Strategy is "to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education."

The School has also been working with its neighbouring Catholic Schools for a number of years, building trust amongst school leaders and delivering improvements.

The School is converting to an Academy and joining and forming the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust, as a natural extension of the collaborative approach that has already been developed and a platform for enhancing this in the future, at a time of growing pressure on Schools and threats to Catholic education.

### **What is the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust?**

The Ascension Catholic Academy Trust is a Multi/Catholic Academy Trust under the Trusteeship of the Diocese of Westminster.

It will initially comprise of the following schools:

- Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School (Staines-upon-Thames)
- St Ignatius Catholic Primary School (Sunbury-on-Thames)
- St Michael Catholic Primary School and Nursery (Ashford)
- St Paul's Catholic College (Sunbury-on-Thames)
- St Richard Reynolds Catholic Primary School (Twickenham)
- St Richard Reynolds Catholic College (Twickenham)

The Board of Directors will be responsible for the quality of education in the schools, as well as the use of public money and the use of all Trust sites under various leases. It is the employer of the staff in all of the Trust schools.

### **Will the Ascension CAT expand to include other schools in future?**

Yes, the Diocesan plan is for all Catholic schools that are not yet academies to eventually join one of the Diocesan CATs based on the 11 Families of Schools.

The other Catholic schools in Family 4 (Hounslow, Richmond and Surrey) that have not yet converted to academies will be welcomed into the Ascension CAT, when the Governors of each school decide the time is right for them to join.

### **Is it expected that a child at one of the Primary schools in the Trust will be expected to go to one of the Secondary schools in the Ascension CAT?**

No. A Catholic Academy Trust is not a 'through school'. Parents will continue to be able to make their own decisions about their desired secondary destination for their children.

They will remain in a fortunate situation to have a number of strong options for Catholic Secondary Education in the surrounding area.

### **Is the School being forced to become an Academy?**

No. The Governors of St Paul's have responded to the Diocese of Westminster Catholic Academy Trust Strategy, completed the required due diligence exercise and together with our partner schools, submitted an application to the Regional Schools Commission to form the Ascension CAT.

### **Can the School still progress with this vision during an ongoing Pandemic?**

We believe we have the capacity to deliver operational and strategic developments during this time. Covid-19 has removed neither the need nor the capacity to develop the future of our school and to work collaboratively with Catholic partners to secure the future of Catholic education for Richmond and Surrey families.

### **How will St Paul's benefit from forming the Ascension CAT?**

The aim of the Diocese's CAT Strategy is to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education.

We expect existing and prospective children in Schools in the Ascension CAT will benefit in a number of ways, including;

- Enhanced collaboration and partnership bringing educational benefits and increased attainment across the Trust schools;
- Increased accountability and performance through the challenge and support of a Catholic Executive Officer (CEO);
- Increased savings and efficiencies at a time of growing financial pressures;

- Increased CPD opportunities and career pathways for staff;
- Improved retention and development of the best Catholic teachers and Leaders;
- No longer required to fund 10% of the cost of building projects and can reclaim VAT on capital works.
- Clear, robust and effective Governance at Trust and Local Advisory Council levels;
- Secured Catholic education within in Family 4 in the Diocese of Westminster for generations to come.

### **What are the Governance arrangements of Ascension CAT?**

The Diocese of Westminster has nominated 5 Members who will own the Memorandum and Articles and Association of the Trust, registered with Companies House.

The Members include Cardinal Vincent Nichols - the Archbishop of the Diocese of Westminster; Canon Michael Dunne - Chair of the Education Commission of the Diocese of Westminster; Mr. Paolo Camoletto, - Chief Operating Officer/Financial Secretary of the Diocese of Westminster and Mr. Peter Sweeney - Director of Education for the Diocese of Westminster.

The Members appoint a Board of Foundation Directors with strategic oversight for the Trust and Schools.

Our school will retain a Local Governing Body who, alongside the Headteacher, will be responsible for the day to day running of the School.

The Local Governing Body will have powers delegated by the Ascension CAT Board of Directors under an agreed Scheme of Delegation and will be accountable to the Board.

The Headteachers of each of the Trust schools are accountable to the CEO, who in turn is accountable to the Trust Board.

Most day-to-day operations of the School will be delegated to the Headteacher and the Local Governing Body which will continue to include staff, parent and community representatives.

### **Who are the Directors of the Ascension CAT?**

Foundation Governors with the necessary skills and experience to serve the proposed Ascension CAT were invited to apply to the Diocese to become Foundation Directors on the Trust Board.

The 8 Foundation Directors appointed in December 2021 are:

- Mr Alan Fernandes

- Miss Catherine Munro
- Mrs Keri Goddard
- Mr Michael Metcalf
- Mr Howard Hughes
- Mrs Amy James
- Mr Peter Manns
- Father Nigel Griffin

The Foundation Directors will serve on a Shadow Board of Directors to oversee the set-up of the Ascension Trust until it is formally established.

### **Who will be the Catholic Executive Officer (CEO)?**

Richard Burke, the Principal of St Richard Reynolds Catholic College was appointed by the Diocese following an application and interview process in the summer of 2021.

Mr Burke will share the post of CEO with his role as Principal of St Richard Reynolds Catholic College.

### **Will the School retain its individual character?**

Yes, the Diocese is very clear that the individual ethos, character and good practices of each school are retained and that all the schools operate as equals supporting each other.

Each school is seen as central to its own community with the skills of each being used in a supportive way for all the others.

The proposed schools to form the Ascension CAT are all successful Catholic schools in their own right, each with their own distinct and individual character.

### **When will St Paul's become an Academy convert and join the Trust?**

We would expect that the process will take 4-6 months, work is underway and the planned conversion date is 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.

### **Why is there a consultation?**

The Academies Act 2010 requires either the school to consult "such persons as they think appropriate" on whether the school should become an academy.

The Governing Body is therefore working with the Diocese and the Trust to consult with all key stakeholders about the proposed academy conversion including parents, staff, pupils and other schools over a 4-week period from **7<sup>th</sup> March – 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2022**.

## **Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority to become an Academy?**

No. The Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the Local Authority to approve plans for the school to become an Academy.

## **What form of relationship will exist between the Local Authority and the school?**

This is for individual Academies or Catholic Academy Trusts to determine – there is no statutory requirement for any formal relationship between Local Authorities and Academies.

Academies are directly funded and accountable to Central Government (Department for Education and the Education Skills Funding Agency).

The Local Authority retains statutory duties for aspects of Special Educational Needs, admissions co-ordination and provision of home-to-school transport. Local Authorities are also expected to play a key strategic role locally in areas such as pupil place planning admissions and sharing good practice.

Our school has a good relationship with Surrey Council and will seek to maintain this in the future.

## **Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted inspection regime?**

Schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way.

## **What is the process for St Paul's School to form the Ascension CAT?**

The conversion process includes the following key legal processes:

- Consulting with school stakeholders on the proposal;
- Agreeing the Memorandum and Articles of Association to establish the Catholic Academy;
- Putting in place a Master Funding Agreement and separate Supplementary Funding Agreements (SFAs) between the Trust and the Secretary of State for Education for each School;
- Transferring the employment of the staff from the local authority to the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust following a statutory process (TUPE);
- Setting up financial and administrative systems for the CAT, independent of the Local Authority;
- Agreeing a Commercial Transfer Agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts from the local authority to the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust;

- Arranging a 125-year lease for the land and buildings with the Diocese and/or local authority.

### **Who will make the final decision?**

It is a decision for the Governing Body. Governors are inviting views from parents and staff on the proposal. The findings from the consultation exercise will be reported to Governors and subsequently made available on the School's website.

The findings from the consultation are one of a number of factors Governors will consider.

### **SECTION 2: Staff Issues**

#### **Does the school have to hold consultation with staff?**

Under employment legislation the Governing Body, which is the current employer, will need to conduct a TUPE\* consultation with all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) and the relevant unions as part of the staff transfer process.

*(\*TUPE = Transfer of Undertaking – Protection of Employment)*

#### **Can the school alter teachers' pay and conditions?**

The terms and conditions of staff are protected on transfer under TUPE regulations. Academies do have the freedom to vary terms and conditions for new staff but the Diocese Strategy commits the Trust to abiding by Teachers' pay and conditions and Support Staff pay and conditions.

#### **If the school becomes an Academy, who takes responsibility for the pension arrangements?**

Teachers working in an academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), just as if they were employed in a Local Authority maintained school.

Non-teaching staff at schools are able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) administered by Surrey Council as at present.

Employees will pay the same rate as at present under both schemes, subject to any nationally imposed changes.

#### **How will the TUPE process work and what specific responsibilities does the Governing Body have?**

As the current employer, the Governing Body is responsible for informing and

consulting with staff. The Governing Body is responsible for informing the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust as the new employer of any 'measures' which will impact on their employment.

At this stage we do not envisage any measures. The Diocese Strategy commits the Trust to abiding by Teachers' pay and conditions and Support Staff pay and conditions.

### SECTION 3: Finance

#### **Will we get more money as an Academy?**

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies do have greater freedom to decide how they use their entire budget, and Multi Academy Trusts are able to identify efficiency savings from enhanced partnership working. It is also true that on becoming an Academy, a Voluntary Aided school, such as our own, is no longer liable to pay the Governors' 10% of funded capital works and will be able to claim back VAT on all capital works – something the school is unable to do if it remains Voluntary Aided. This will provide additional flexibility for Governors with regard to its use of the school budget and building funds.

### SECTION 4: Admissions

#### **Will becoming an Academy affect our admissions arrangements?**

When a school becomes an Academy, it also becomes, as it is already a Catholic School, an admission authority responsible for its own admission arrangements. As the school is joining a Multi Academy Trust – the Ascension CAT will become the admissions authority.

In the same way as maintained schools, all academies and their schools are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code.

Each Academy will be able to retain its own admissions arrangements and oversubscription criteria.

#### **Will Academies have to be a part of the annual coordinated admissions scheme? E.g. when the LA needs to find places for families relocating to the area etc.**

Yes - Academy Funding Agreements require them to be in local coordination. That means although the academy will apply its own admission arrangements, the LA will send out offers of places. The Local Authority also coordinates admissions for in-year applications and applications for year groups other than the normal point(s) of entry.

This will not affect the Academy's right to determine which applicants have priority for admission. Academies are also required through their Funding Agreements to participate in local fair access protocols, which help to ensure that no child is without a school place.

**Will the school decide to bring in academic selection?**

No, there will be no introduction of selection. Schools which already select some or all of their pupils may continue to do so when they become Academies, but schools becoming Academies cannot decide to become newly selective schools.

**SECTION 5: Special Education Needs**

**Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions change?**

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

**Can a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs nominate an academy as their school of choice?**

Yes. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code and responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs. It will be just the same as we are now as a maintained school.

**Does becoming an Academy change the way in which exclusions are dealt with?**

Academies are required by their Funding Agreement to follow the law and guidance on exclusions as if they were maintained schools. This includes reporting exclusions to the Local authority. However, Academies do not have to consult the Local Authority before deciding to exclude a pupil and they can arrange their own independent appeals panel.

**SECTION 6: Further Information**

**How do I find out more about the proposals?**

St Paul's is holding consultation events as part of the conversion process.

Come along to the consultation meeting being held for parents of pupils at the School at 6pm on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022 in the school hall.

A separate meeting will be held for staff.

**Please complete and return the questionnaire page below in person or by post to**

**the School office by 21<sup>st</sup> of March**

**If you would prefer to complete it and return it by email, then please send to  
consultation@st-pauls.surrey.sch.uk**

***Lyndon Rodrigues  
Chair of Governors  
St Paul's Catholic College  
07 March 2022***

## St. Paul's Catholic College Academy Consultation Questionnaire

<b>1) Please tick the box(es) that best represent you?</b>	
Parent	
Employee at the School	
Member of the Community/Local Resident	
Local Authority Employee	
Other	

<b>2) Do you agree that St. Paul's should convert to an Academy and form the Ascension CAT (by entering into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State)?</b>	
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Undecided	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
<b>Please give your reasons below</b>	

<b>3) Do you have any other comments to make about the proposal for St. Paul's to convert to an Academy and form the Ascension CAT?</b>