



## **The Marist Catholic Primary School**

### **Proposal that The Marist Catholic Primary School becomes part of the Xavier Catholic Education (Multi-Academy) Trust**

**Document audience: All parents, carers and staff of The Marist Catholic Primary School**

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## **Frequently asked Questions and Answers**

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## **1. Context of this document**

As part of the consultation regarding academy status this document contains key questions and answers, regarding the implications of becoming an academy school within the Xavier Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), as this relates to The Marist Catholic Primary School.

The document is part of a series of communications which will take place with staff, parents/carers and other stakeholders in the provision of Catholic education to our Marist pupils.

## **2. Academy/MAT explanations**

### a) What is an Academy?

Academies are classed as independent state schools, which have the freedom to determine their own policies on such things as the curriculum taught, school hours, term dates and staff pay. This is enabled by the Academies Act 2010. Primary, secondary and special schools are all able to apply to convert into an academy and are accountable to the Secretary of State - not to the County Council.

### b) Who runs an Academy?

The academy is run by an Academy Trust. This is a legal body which operates as a charitable organisation and a company limited by guarantee. The Trust has a formal agreement, or contract with the Department for Education (DfE). The Academy Trust consists of Members and a Board of Directors, also known as Trustees, who are the governors of the Trust.

### c) What is Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

A multi-academy trust is the most formalised type of collaborative structure available for academies. Within a multi-academy trust all schools become academies and are governed by one academy trust. The schools' local governing bodies will operate subject to the control of the multi-academy trust which has ultimate responsibility for the running of the individual academies. The multi-academy trust will be accountable and responsible for the performance of the each of the academies in the group and may delegate its decision-making powers to the local governing boards of the individual academies.

d) What will the Board of Directors be responsible for?

The academy trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) will enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the academy. The academy trust (made up of members and directors) has a strategic role in running the academy and is accountable to the Secretary of State. In a Catholic academy or MAT the Bishop will be responsible for appointing both the members and directors. It is the board of directors that manages the academy on behalf of the members of the academy trust. The key responsibilities are to:

- ensure the quality of educational provision;
- challenge and monitor the performance of the academy;
- manage the academy trust's finances and property;
- employ staff.

### **3. Conversion decision**

a) Who decides which schools convert to an academy?

The decision for any school to become an academy rests with its governing body and governors should base this on what is best for the children. Before a decision is taken on academy status, the staff and parents/carers whose children attend the school in question will be consulted on their views and opinions.

b) Why is this being considered?

Gaining Academy status would give us the autonomy to continue to develop our school and raise standards. As a member of a strong Catholic Multi Academy Trust there will be greater opportunities for working more closely with other local Catholic schools to benefit our pupils and secure a strong sustainable future.

### **4. Marist Catholic Ethos**

a) Will The Marist School lose its character or ethos?

No. Whilst we would be working in a larger family of schools with a very similar Catholic ethos as ourselves, becoming an academy would provide us with greater freedoms to continue to provide high quality learning experiences. Each school is able to retain its own special and unique qualities whilst benefitting from sharing ideas and expertise from a strong team.

We anticipate that this opportunity to work even more closely together with a supportive Catholic Multi Academy Trust would further strengthen and support The Marist's ethos and traditions.

b) Would The Marist Catholic Primary School join a Catholic MAT in this Diocese?

Yes, The Marist would join a Catholic MAT. The Bishop has told Catholic Schools in this diocese that we can only become academies in deaneries within the Diocese and that each MAT should cover two deaneries and be cross-phase (Primary and Secondary together). In our case this brings together the Woking and Weybridge Deaneries and this is called the Xavier Trust. To get an understanding of this Trust and its benefits please see the link in the below section called 'To find out more...'

c) Which other schools form the MAT to which we would probably belong?

The following schools are already part of the Xavier Catholic Education Trust (MAT):

Primary schools:

- Cardinal Newman School, Hersham;
- Holy Family School, Addlestone;
- St Alban's School, Molesey;
- St Anne's School, Chertsey;
- St Augustine's School, Camberley;
- St Charles Borromeo School, Weybridge;
- St Hugh of Lincoln School, Woking

Secondary schools:

- Salesian School, Chertsey;
- St John the Baptist School, Woking

d) What is the Mission Statement of the Xavier Catholic Education Trust?

The Trust's mission is 'to provide an outstanding Catholic education for all the children in our schools. We will follow the example and teachings of Christ and everything we do will be inspired by gospel values. We will strive for excellence in all areas of our work and cherish every child in our care.'

## 5. **Academy funding**

a) How is an Academy funded?

Academies are given the money directly that would have been given to the County Council. This means that academies can choose how to spend the money given.

- b) Will we get more money as an academy?

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the LA as a maintained school plus additions to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the LA. The Government is clear that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies have greater freedom on how they use their budgets, alongside the other freedoms that they enjoy. Within the Trust there is also the opportunity to reduce costs through efficient use of resources and through exercising its greater buying power.

- c) Do we have to cover the full cost to convert to an academy?

No, the Department for Education (DfE) will pay a flat-rate grant of £25,000 to the school's bank account to fund conversion. Total costs will vary from school to school but from our research this is usually enough to cover the cost of conversion.

- d) My child has special education needs. How can I be confident that they will be given the same level of support, attention and care?

The Academies Act 2010 requires Academies to follow the same statutory framework for special needs as local authority schools. Academies receive the same level of additional funding to support those children.

- e) Will we have to raise our own capital funding as an academy?

No. All schools, including academies, will be able to apply for Government capital funding. This is done through the Education Funding Agency.

## **6. Academy admissions**

- a) Are there any rules relating to admissions that academies and maintained schools must follow?

Yes. Academies must follow the law for school admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were a maintained school.

- b) Would there be any implications for admissions?

No. As a Voluntary Aided school the governing body is already responsible for setting its own admissions policy and this would not change as an academy. It is important to note that although the responsibility to set a policy lies with the governors, admissions policies must be approved by the diocese. Applications for school places would continue to be made through the local authority who have a statutory duty to ensure that there is a school place for every child.

## **7. Academy inspections**

a) Are academies free from Ofsted inspection?

No. Academies are subject to the same inspection regulations as all maintained schools. The only difference anyone would notice is that an academy is officially a new school, so the first time an academy is inspected the report would say 'not applicable' next to the date of the previous inspection.

## **8. Advantages**

a) What are the advantages of achieving academy status within the Xavier MAT?

- Freedom to develop further a curriculum that meets the needs of all our pupils.
- Support the continuity of Catholic education in this area for pupils from 4 to 18 years and ease pupils transition from primary to secondary school.
- Keep all the features of the school that are valued so highly by our pupils, parents and staff but use the additional freedoms academy status brings to enhance our provision for all.
- Flexibility to direct funding to the specific requirements of our school in order to preserve and develop the best of what we do as a school in challenging economic times.
- Converting to academy status may provide the best route for us to build on our many strengths and become an even better school.
- Formalise and strengthen our existing partnership work with other Catholic schools which will offer greater opportunities to develop our staff and gain from experience.
- Being part of the MAT will enable us both to access and to deliver peer-led school-to-school support, sharing outstanding teaching and learning expertise across the Trust schools so that we continue to improve our teaching and learning. All schools within the MAT are either Outstanding or Good.
- Provide additional opportunities to share resources and facilities, developing a collaborative way of working and 'joined-up' provision for the benefit of all of our pupils and families;
- Being part of the MAT would enable us to respond more effectively to the budget pressures all schools are facing by securing economies of scale whilst retaining individual school autonomy.
- Other freedoms, such as the ability to introduce some flexibility to staff pay and conditions would help us recruit and retain the very best people.

## 9. Disadvantages

- a) Are there disadvantages in achieving academy status?
- Perception that 'old-style' academies were created to replace underperforming schools.
  - Uncertainty about future government policy.
  - Financial risks – An academy cannot go into deficit.
  - Autonomy brings associated responsibility in areas such as asset management.

## 10. To find out more ...

- a) How do I find out more about academies?

There are several ways you may find out about academies.

### Diocesan website information:

<http://www.abeducationservice.org.uk/ViewArticle/?section=Resources&id=369&subject=Governor%20Resources>

<http://www.abeducationservice.org.uk/ViewArticle/?section=Resources&id=451&subject=Governor%20Resources>

### DfE information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-academy-trusts-establishing-anddeveloping-your-trust> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

### Parliamentary:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commonsselect/education-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/multi-academy-trusts-15-16/>

### The Xavier Catholic Education Trust:

<http://www.xavercet.org.uk/index.html>

## **11. Next Steps for The Marist Catholic School**

- a) Start of process 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017 – Introductory Note from Chair of Governors
- b) Briefing of Staff 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017
- c) 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 6 pm Q&A Evening for parents/carers and staff with the CEO of the Xavier MAT, Marist Governors and Head Teacher.
- d) Opportunity for staff and parents to ask further questions and to receive an explanation to questions.
- e) Opportunity for staff and parents to input suggestions to be considered by governors in the planning phase.
- f) End of consultation 19<sup>th</sup> March 2017
- g) Meeting of the Full Governing Body of The Marist School 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

Chair of Governors Herbert Abela 06.03.2017