



The Marist Catholic Primary School

Together, Achieving, Loving, Learning

Head Teacher: Mrs Kate Licence

head@marist.surrey.sch.uk

Deputy Head : Miss Juliette Kelly

20th March 2017

To All Marist Parents, Carers and Staff
From Herbert Abela, Chair of Marist Governors and Mrs Kate Licence, Head Teacher

RE: Consultation to convert to Academy status and to join a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) called the Xavier Catholic Education Trust.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE OPEN MEETING ON MONDAY 13TH MARCH 2017 AND FROM CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORMS FROM PARENTS/CARERS

Dear Parents and Carers of Marist pupils and staff of the Marist School, please find below a list of questions asked at the Open Meeting held on 13th March 2017 at the school as part of the Academy Consultation.

Those presenting information and answering questions were:

Mrs Kate Licence	Head Teacher of the Marist School
Mrs Laura Plastow	Vice Chair of the Marist School Governing Body
Mrs Ani Magill	Chief Executive Officer of the Xavier Catholic Education Trust
Mr Peter O'Brien	Chair of the Xavier Catholic Education Trust Board of Directors

Please note in the interests of clarity:

In the context of the Marist School, the terms Multi Academy Trust; MAT; Xavier Catholic Education Trust and CET refer to the same entity. In our case this is the Xavier Catholic Education Trust which is a Multi Academy Trust.

SECTION A: FROM THE OPEN MEETING ON MONDAY 13TH MARCH 2017

The questions asked by parents, carers and staff were:

Question 1

Will the Marist and the Xavier Trust (MAT) stop using the 2014 National Curriculum as we have heard that Academies can opt not to teach the National Curriculum?

It is correct that Academies can choose not to teach the 2014 National Curriculum. In the case of the Xavier Trust the decision has been taken to continue to follow the 2014 National Curriculum. No change to this approach is envisaged. It makes sense to follow the National Curriculum as Ofsted is judging schools based on the 2014 National Curriculum.

Question 2

Will all schools in the Xavier Trust follow the same curriculum or is there a risk that some schools in the Xavier Trust will be stretched more than others meaning that some children are at a disadvantage in some schools when moving from Junior to Senior school?

The Trust expects all schools in the Trust to 'Strive for excellence' and supports all schools in their pursuit of this for all children. No school is viewed differently in terms of expectations and support. One of the ways in which this consistency of approach is applied is through Trust INSET days attended by all schools in which all year teachers plan together for their year, leaving the session with a common understanding of the depth and breadth of the plans.

Question 3

Not long ago we attended a parents and carers evening regarding the School Improvement Plan which we understood to be important and pressing. How does this initiative fit with the School Improvement Plan and will it distract time and attention from this school improvement initiative?

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) remains of high importance to ensure that learning outcomes improve for Marist pupils. There is no change to the pace and direction of this plan with the five key SIP objectives remaining key. These five objectives are based on evidence and data (SATs, Ofsted and DABCEC Inspections) and must be seen through to completion. Surrey Local Education Authority (LA) and Babcock (our Surrey LA-approved Improvement Partner) will continue to come into the school next term and meet with staff and governors to support and monitor the required improvements.

The conversion to Academy status, if approved by the Marist Governing Body, is a piece of work which will run in parallel to the SIP. The Xavier Trust have offered to support the Marist School (Governors and Staff) through this conversion, should the decision be favourable. Governors and the Head Teacher have gratefully accepted

this offer which will ensure that the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team are not distracted from their core purpose- the education of our Marist children and currently, the five SIP objectives.

Question 4

How is the MAT (Catholic Education Trust in our case) funded?

For non-academy Voluntary Aided Schools, the Government (Department for Education) gives its funding for education to the Local Authority (Surrey) in our case. The Local Authority (LA) gives the money to the schools. It keeps some money back to pay for the services it procures on behalf of the schools and provides to them.

For Academies, the Government (Department for Education) gives the funding straight to each MAT. In this model the money does not go via the Local Authority (LA) and the LA does not hold money back for the provision of services. This means that the MAT has the flexibility to choose its providers for services including for those schools previously received from the LA. The MAT uses its volume buying power to secure services for the schools in the MAT. The MAT may decide to buy some services from the LA rather than from a third-party contractor depending on the comparative value of this. The MAT is also open to schools continuing to use their existing suppliers where a school prefers to do this.

The buying power of the MAT is underpinned by the fact that, between SJB and The Salesian School there are 3000 pupils.

Question 5

If we stop buying some services from the LA, doesn't this mean we will be buying at commercial rates?

Yes, but the Trust believes that competitive commercial rates are available to schools (jointly or individually) due to the Trust buying-power. A school may also want to use a small local concern it has used for many years and from which good service and value for money has been evident.

Question 6

How does the Trust apportion the available funding between the 9 or 10 schools?

In the Xavier Trust the model is the same as it would have been under the LA i.e. that the same rules of apportionment apply.

Capital costs are applied for under a different model. Each school applies to the Diocese for what it needs. The Xavier Trust has supported its schools in thinking ahead on this by undertaking Condition Surveys of each school.

Question 7

What happens to Marist PTA funds and fundraising?

Marist PTA current and future funds remain with the Marist PTA for use by the Marist as per the current spend decision mechanism.

Question 8

Will provision for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) still be in place from the Surrey LA?

Yes, the Local Authority (LA) will continue to have a legal responsibility for SEND. Some schools may continue to buy specialist services (SEND/ Behaviour support-related etc.) from the Surrey LA. Some schools may decide to purchase independently. The school rather than the MAT will decide what is best for the school as not all schools need the same level of specialist service.

Question 9

Which services do the schools have to buy from the MAT (Trust)?

Each school can choose which services it buys from the Trust and which it buys independently. The MAT is concerned that it supports Head Teachers rather than makes belonging to the Trust onerous to the Head Teacher and School. This is the reason why a flexible approach has been adopted by the Trust. The Trust has asked all Head Teachers which tasks are onerous or stressful for them and take up time that would be better spent in the classroom or on improving pupil outcomes.

Question 10

How big will the central admin and procurement team be who will administer these centrally purchased services?

At the moment, there are 3 members of staff and this is not planned to change significantly. The Trust wants to keep this overhead 'light' as every penny is seen as the children's money. The Trust wants as much money as possible made available for the children, their learning and well-being. The overhead 'slice' percentage (called partnership agreement) which the Marist would pay for services would be 2.5% which is significantly lower than the % of the government's money kept by the LA for service provision to the Marist currently.

Question 11

Will the staff Terms and Conditions of employment be affected?

TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006) will apply. MATs can change the Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) of the staff after 3 years but the Xavier Trust has decided that T&Cs will not be changed. The Marist staff will have contracts of employment with the Xavier MAT and these will not have mobility clauses which means their place of employment remains as it is. The Trust will not force any Head Teacher or member of staff who does not want to move to another school in the Trust to do so against their will or agreement from their Head Teacher.

Question 12

Would it be a correct assumption to believe that belonging to a MAT (Trust) would be of benefit to recruiting and retaining good teachers?

Yes, the Xavier Trust is already seeing the benefits of this where aspirational teachers are moving between schools within the Trust (sideways or upwards) where previously, they might have been lost to a school or to the Catholic education system as a whole.

Another example is that between SJB and the Salesian School, which are the senior schools in the Xavier Trust, there are currently 66 trainee teachers in the two schools. The Xavier MAT is in touch with and advertising in the South Farnham MAT which is training 130 trainees currently. The MAT as a whole has greater scope to take on good trainees and find a suitable role for them among the 9 schools than a single school would have where budget might be prohibitive.

Question 13

What about staff pensions? Would the staff pension liability be underwritten?

Yes, pensions will be underwritten by the government. The Trust will undertake an independent actuarial review to ensure clarity on the matter.

Separately staff have been provided with information via their own Q&A update as part of the consultation.

Question 14

St Dunstan's School decided not to join the MAT. Why was that?

It would not be right for us to explain why St Dunstan's decided not to join the Trust but you might like to ask them directly. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body of the Marist School met with the Chair of the Governing Body of St Dunstan's and are satisfied that the factors mentioned to us which contributed to St Dunstan's choice at this point in time, were not relevant to the Marist's decision.

What we can say is that the feedback from all 9 schools in the Trust is already very positive.

Question 15

The slide showing the Benefits of Academy status and being part of a MAT showed very high level, vague benefits. Can you be more specific? Is what we are showing more of an aspiration as the Trust only has 6 months' experience?

- Recognising the Trust has not yet been running for a full year, feedback from Schools' Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors is very positive. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Marist Governing Body have met with a number of these stakeholders during the research phase of this initiative.
- The Trust believes it has Directors with exceptional skill-sets all of who are showing themselves to be committed to excellence (including Estate management, Finance and HR).
- The Local Authority's ability to support and fund schools through their improvement plans is reducing dramatically. The government is pushing for 1000 new academies and LA support around the country including in Surrey is reducing even now. It makes sense to get ahead of the curve.
- With schools' budgets already being 8% lower than 2 years ago, things are anticipated to get worse. The Trust will be of a size to be able to leverage its buying power to buy competitively-priced services.

- Money will be saved on non-teaching and learning related areas and savings will be channelled into better outcomes for all children
- Head Teachers will carry a reduced administrative burden (shared policies, suppliers, budget formats etc) allowing them to develop staff and focus on teaching and learning.
- Schools will share good practice and plan, assess and moderate with stronger reference to each other across schools so that every child benefits from shared best practice.

There is a detailed list of benefits on the PowerPoint presentation made available on the school website.

Question 16

The presentation give this evening seemed to present the benefits and positives. What are the negatives?

There are some negatives mentioned in the fuller PowerPoint presentation pack which was made available on the Marist website to parents and staff. Today's presentation was a small subset of this.

Among the negatives listed were that

- The term 'Academy' had a 'mixed press' as academies had originally been seen to be set up to change the fortunes of failing schools. This is no longer the emphasis the government places on the drive for academies.
- There could be uncertainty in government education policy towards Academies. Catholic schools in the Academy were expressing enthusiasm at being in a strong Catholic Trust precisely as a counter balance to any possible future education funding and model uncertainty.
- An Academy is not permitted to go into budget deficit. This would not be a situation the Xavier Mat would want to allow to happen and had financial procedures in place to ensure it could not move into deficit. Rolling 3 Year budget forecasts are scrutinised in detail on an ongoing basis.

Mrs Ani Magill mentioned 3 more possible negatives to add to the list on the published presentation. These were:

- An increase in paperwork at a central MAT level with an increase in time spent on self-auditing and response to Audits. This was something which was planned for and necessary.
- The accountability placed on the CEO as a result of the Trust governance model. The Xavier MAT believed that the governance and processes overseen by the Chair of the Board of Directors, the Board of 7 Directors and the Steering Group were rigorous enough to support and challenge the CEO. Evidence of the CEO's track-record in school improvement and leadership development beyond her role in SJB was available for parents, carers and staff to evidence. The Trust CEO has held 7 headships while being Head Teacher at SJB.
- Cash flow disciplines would be more challenging for the school. The funding is passed to an academy school on a monthly basis (one twelfth each month) so cash flow has to be managed very carefully, especially when a school first converts. Some schools have found this change quite difficult to manage in the first few months of conversion.

Question 17

Will the Marist lose its individuality?

No, the Marist will retain its own name, uniform, ethos and identity. It will simply gain strength and support in the teaching of the Catholic faith and the Curriculum by being part of a wider family of Catholic Schools.

Question 18

Is there a chance that the Government could change its agenda and reverse the vision to have academies as part of their policy?

As with any government or change in government, this cannot be predicted. What we would say is that this has been part of the Government's policy for some years and although the Government has lifted its 2020 deadline for all schools to convert to Academy status, there is no indication that the policy will change to discourage Academies. This is particularly the case as Academies are no longer created to 'sweep up' and support weaker schools, but are created because the schools themselves have a vision to achieve even more together than each school could in isolation. Currently, signs are that this is a policy which is here to stay as government money seems to be 'following academies' with their focus on the results for children.

HA 16.03.2017/ KL 16.03.2017

SECTION B: FROM CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORMS FROM PARENTS/CARERS

Question 19

I understand the financial benefits, however, what happens if 2 or more schools in our MAT require significant funding at similar times - e.g. building damage, flooding etc. Will we have access to emergency funds/grants?

All the schools are insured under the Government RPA scheme which would cover emergencies such as the ones mentioned. In addition the MAT receives capital funding each year, a proportion of which will be held to the end of the year to cover any unforeseen costs.

Question 20

Will the terms and conditions of teachers remain unchanged? And how can they be safeguarded for the future?

As per question 11: TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006) will apply. MATs can change the Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) of the staff after 3 years but the Xavier Trust has decided that T&Cs will not be changed. Staff pay and Terms and Conditions remain based on the Surrey model.

HL 20.03.2017/ KL 20.03.2017