

QUESTIONS FROM THE ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HYTHE GOVERNORS' FOR THE KCSP M.A.T. TEAM

SCHOOL'S ETHOS AND VISION:

1. How would joining this MAT affect our school's values and strategic vision?

The Trust has an overarching agreed vision statement and strategy, which was consulted on by all stakeholders and is in the process of being finalised and agreed. This draft statement and strategy document is attached (please see Appendix 1) and reflects what all Catholic schools do; it would serve not to detract from, but only to enhance, the vision and mission of St Augustine's as partners in the process of securing excellent education for all in our Catholic schools.

2. Would we need to change our school's mission statement, and if so, at what stage of the process?

The school would not be expected to change its mission statement as each of our schools maintain their own mission statement which pertains to a school's individual character. The school's current mission statement 'Loving, Learning, Achieving, Believing' certainly fits with the Catholic mission of the Trust in enabling life in all of its fulness.

3. How would the school's ethos and character be affected?

The only difference would be that the school would become part of a larger collaborative Catholic partnership which supports all to maintain their character and ethos.

4. What changes are parents likely to see at the school?

In reality parents/carers see little change. The Headteacher remains as the leader of day-to-day school life, who with meets parents/carers and speaks to children, as happens now. An exception might be if a large issue arises, for instance a complaint which cannot be resolved by the Headteacher and may then be escalated to the Trust office/CEO.

5. How would the school's Admissions policy change?

There is a Trust Admissions policy that the school would be required to switch over to once a period of public consultation had taken place, as is required by the School Admissions Code. There are two versions of the primary policy depending upon whether or not a school is oversubscribed with Catholic applicants (or likely in the near future to be oversubscribed with Catholic applicants). The policy was developed with the Education Commission and is designed to make the process as simple as possible for parents/carers and Catholic Priests, whereby a reference from the Priest is only required where oversubscription is an issue. Broadly speaking, the oversubscription criteria is as follows:

- a) Looked after Catholic children
- b) Baptised Catholic children
- c) Other looked after children
- d) Children who will have siblings at the school at the date of entry

- e) *Children of staff*
- f) *Children enrolled in the catechumenate and children whose families are members of other Christian denominations*
- g) *Children of other faiths*
- h) *Other children*

This is broadly the same as your existing policy. The key change would be that you would not seek a priest's reference for Catholic children unless you were regularly oversubscribed with Catholic applicants, which we understand is not the case.

6. Would the catchment area be affected or reduced?

No.

7. What input do parents get on the academisation decision?

Parent/carers are vital to the good education of the children and their support of a school is invaluable to their children and to the community. Parents/carers are consulted and kept informed of the process as partners in the education of their children but are not decision makers in the process of academisation.

8. What tend to be the main concerns from parents, staff and governors when a school changes to become an academy?

Different stakeholders tend to have different questions:

Parents/carers do not often raise any concerns.

The impact on Staff and Governors is greater and their thoughts will be myriad as is illustrated in the questions and answers below.

The main concerns generally are usually around autonomy, pay & conditions and finance.

9. How do you manage these, and what impact do these have on parent-teacher and on teacher-leadership relationships?

Our experience so far has been that it has not had any negative impact on relationships between parents/carers and teachers. Leaders have become increasingly clear about the partnership and collaborative approach within the Trust and this is generally shared positively with staff.

10. How do you encourage schools within the MAT to be independent of thought, unique and individual?

We value the unique qualities of our schools and enable schools to work with a high degree of independence. The Trust will intervene and give support if the school is seen to be struggling in any way, for example if it is not performing effectively in order to ensure at least good outcomes for every pupil including PP and SEND, is not responding effectively to staff or parental concerns, or is moving away from its Catholic mission.

11. Would the school still have the freedom to fundraise for its chosen charities, or would there be any implications for this from being part of KCSP?

This would remain with the school although our expectation is that schools would carefully consider the appropriateness of charities that they support in a Catholic context, as they undoubtedly do now.

12. What specific support does the KCSP MAT team offer for Catholic Life in schools?

Catholic life is central to our Catholic partnership. We strive to ensure that all of our policies, our interactions, decisions and ways of working are underpinned by the Gospel.

We work closely with the Diocese to ensure a good understanding of what being part of our Catholic schools means for each person and this is shared at all of our schools.

The CEO meets regularly with the Archbishop, the Director of Education for the Education Commission, the Deans and the Priests of the Archdiocese, as well as with the RE advisors of the Education Commission. Prayer and reflection are a part of Trust meetings along with regular CPD on the theme of Catholic Life, we hold Trust-wide Masses and we offer support to our schools in their own development and with the sustaining of Catholic Life in partnership with the Education Commission. There is a specific strategic objective which commits us to working to bring Christ to all. We would acknowledge this is a work in progress and we would welcome St Augustine's joining that joint endeavour

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE:

13. How is the curriculum managed? At MAT level or at school level?

Essentially at school level. The Trust has an overarching agreed curriculum intent statement which promotes a curriculum which offers life in all its fulness:

*I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full
John 10: Chapter 10. V 10.*

Inspired by Jesus Christ's example and the Gospel values of love, joy and compassion, we nurture and develop the whole child so that each unique individual grows constantly in confidence, and has the knowledge, skills and self-esteem to achieve their true potential. All children will access a rich, ambitious, challenging curriculum; one that is broad, balanced and relevant, fostering curiosity, creativity and a lifelong love of learning. It will prepare them well for each stage of education, employment or training and enable them, as educated citizens, to contribute to creating a better world.

Each of our schools has published its own overall curriculum intent statement, which sits within the Trust's statement. The Trust does not mandate the content of its schools' curricula or dictate how it should be taught but leaders and staff are expected to have the highest aspirations for all pupils. The curriculum that is planned and delivered must reflect this and be of the very highest quality. All our schools have chosen to base their curriculum on the National Curriculum and to ensure that what they offer is at least as ambitious as this, if not more so. They are required to publish information on their website about their intent, implementation and impact for each subject.

As for all Catholic schools, we expect our schools to ensure that 10% of the curriculum time in primary and 5% in Sixth Forms is set aside for teaching the Religious Education curriculum.

Early Years:

The Trust, in collaboration with strategic partners Early Excellence, has drawn together a shared vision and set of agreed key principles to ensure greater consistency across our EYFS settings and improve leadership, pedagogy and assessment in the Early Years. The principles are based on proven research including national and international best practice, but schools have the freedom to design the learning opportunities for each of the seven areas taking account of their own particular context and the children's specific interests.

14. How would the curriculum be affected by joining the MAT?

The Trust would seek to support the curriculum that the school has in place, assuming that it is compliant with the expectations of a broad and balanced approach and would be judged at least 'Good' by Ofsted. We do always look to supporting our schools in developing an excellent curriculum and moving to outstanding judgements. From time to time the SI Team may make suggestions of where good practice can be shared or research has shown areas which can be enhanced. We also hope that being part of the partnership stimulates exchanges of ideas with other schools for improving each school's curriculum

15. How would pupils' progress be gathered, measured and monitored?

The Trust is keen to ensure that any data collected in the school and from the school by the Trust is proportionate and useful for keeping the Board informed of the progress and outcomes of the children and to enable leaders to hold staff to account appropriately.
At Primary level: The Trust asks for 3 data drops across the year of the Core subjects including Science and RE and of progress in Early Years towards GLD. Phonics Data is similarly gathered. There is a tracking system suggested by the Trust (FFT) and we currently use the Early Excellence Assessment Tracker (EExAT) to gather Early Years data.

16. Is educational performance data for each school in the academy transparent and available to other schools within the multi-academy trust? How would it be shared?

Educational performance data for each school in the Trust is transparent. All KCSP schools use Fischer Family Trust (FFT) Aspire to track and monitor pupil progress and attainment. With their permission, which all have granted, schools can also see each other's data. This helps drive improvement by providing more up-to-date and usable comparative data

17. What independent evidence is there that schools show rising performance when they join the KCSP MAT?

Please see schools' Ofsted reports, published data from 2019, and our schools' Denominational inspection reports. There is no national or academic evidence we are aware of as to whether or not that joining a MAT per se improves performance but we are confident all Partnership schools do benefit because of the way we organise and run KCSP

18. How could weaknesses in other schools in the MAT impact St Augustine's, in terms of allocation of resources and support?

Part of joining a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust presupposes the desire for the 'common good'. All our schools are treated with equality in mind. However, one school would not be advantaged at the expense of another.

19. Would becoming an academy affect the Ofsted cycle?

Our understanding is that following a conversion to become an Academy, Ofsted would visit 3 years after conversion. However, Ofsted reserve the right to inspect a school at any point should they have reason.

ACADEMY / M.A.T. GOVERNANCE:

20. What is the governance structure of the Diocesan MAT? What is the role of the governance professional? Who are the trustees; and who are the members?

Please see Appendix 1. The governance professional combines the role of Clerk (to the Board) with oversight and support of governance generally (much as KCC governor support, but more of it and better) plus data protection. Please also see our Scheme of Delegation detailed in Appendix 2 and which indicates where the responsibility for decisions lies.

21. Legal accountability appears to rest with the Trustees. Is this correct, and who are they?

The Directors hold legal responsibility. They are all volunteers appointed as Trust Directors and are currently all Foundation Directors (Please see Appendix 3).

22. What would the impact be on St Augustine's Board of Governors? Would we need to be disbanded/regrouped? What changes would there be to our role, responsibilities and liabilities?

When the school becomes an academy, the existing local governing body will stand down. At this time serving governors will be given the opportunity to put themselves forward to serve on the newly formed Local Governance Committee (LGC). Responsibilities of the new Committee Members (members of the LGC) are governed by the Scheme of Delegation. The process to stand down the existing local governing body, and formation of the new Local Governance Committee is outlined in Appendix 4.

23. How would we feed into the Multi-Academy Trust Board, if at all?

All Governance Committees send a 'summary slide' which is reviewed by the Trust Board following a governance meeting. In addition, agendas and minutes of meetings are all uploaded to 'Governor Hub' where they can be viewed by Directors and the CEO. There are regular update meetings between the school, the Board and the Director of Governance. From time to time a director will visit the governance committee meetings as an observer. Our arrangements already offer more communication channels than exist for a VA school with the LA, but we are always trying to improve them.

24. How does the academy trust ensure collaboration between schools, staff and governors?

The Trust is a partnership of schools who understand the value of collaboration and interaction. Interactions of course varies from school to school due to capacity and individual relationships. As a Trust we endeavour to facilitate collaboration and mutual supportive relationships e.g., through communications such as newsletters and bulletins, leaders' briefings and meetings, line management by the CEO via frequent phone calls, meetings, school visits by the CEO and the Central Team, joint Masses where possible, learning hubs, moderations, CPD opportunities and Trust events. Knowledge of our schools also enables us to pass on knowledge of where good practice can be seen, so that schools can make visits and share their ideas.

25. What would happen to our existing cooperation with the Hythe area schools' collaboration network?

This would not be affected and the school could continue to collaborate locally as it does now.

26. Any other implications for current collaborations with our other educational contacts or services?

We would need to understand what educational contracts you have in mind, but if they are the usual SLA type contracts for EP support or sports coaching for example, they would all continue as before.

27. How would academisation impact the management of the school estate – grounds and facilities?

Existing arrangements for the school estate can remain in place e.g., grounds maintenance. The Trust will commission detailed surveys including topographical and condition. This will inform allocation of our capital grant.

The Trust also contracts centrally to ensure that all required statutory testing is undertaken in a timely manner and transition to this will be based on your existing arrangements.

There are partnership-wide contracts in place for gas and electricity which take advantage of our considerable buying power. We would expect the school to join these as and when existing contracts permit.

One of these contracts is for cleaning whereas we understand you employ your cleaners direct. We are reviewing our contract arrangements but would want to bring you into the next contract.

28. Size of MAT: how many schools are in the MAT we would be joining? Which schools are they?

The MAT currently comprises of 24 schools, 19 primaries and 5 secondaries. A full list is available on our website [here: https://www.kcsp.org.uk/special/academies/](https://www.kcsp.org.uk/special/academies/) The schools most local to you are Stella Maris Primary in Folkestone and St Richard's Primary in Dover.

Should all eligible Catholic schools in Kent join the MAT, the number of schools would increase to 32, 26 primaries and 6 secondaries.

29. What will be the likelihood that the MAT will merge into a larger MAT, and should that happen, what will be the impact for our school?

As near nil as can be. Any plans such as that would need to be approved by the Archdiocese and the DfE. The current plans of the Archdiocese are to establish a number of MAT's of similar size to KCSP, so it is highly unlikely that merger to form larger MAT's will take place.

30. Would St Augustine's be joining the KCSP MAT as a standalone school with a headteacher, and would we be able to remain as such indefinitely?

The current plan would be for St Augustine's to join as a stand-alone school with the current Headteacher remaining in place in this role.

There are no fixed plans in place for change as yet but in the future the Trust overall strategy may invite other arrangements. Our key principle is subsidiarity and having structures that keep decisions as local as the can be

31. What are the implications for staff in terms of pay and conditions, employment opportunities? Will teachers' service records be transferred across to the new academy, or will they have to start new ones as if with a new provider?

As has been the case with all previous conversions, all staff transfer over with their existing employment conditions and rights intact (TUPE). Colleagues can remain in the 2 applicable pension

schemes; Teachers and Local Government. Similarly, pay will continue to be determined by national and local schemes, STRB for Teachers and the Kent scheme for support staff. Continuation of service is preserved.

32. How would the kitchen arrangements, including the team, be affected?

We believe you have a contract with an external caterer. KCSP has in place a partnership-wide catering contract with Chartwells. We would look to moving you onto the Chartwell contract when your current contract expires. Previously, staff employed by schools have transferred to Chartwells with protected salary and employment terms. We ensure through the contract that all staff are paid, as a minimum, the Living Foundation wage rate, which was an increase for most staff previously employed by the schools.

33. Who will make decisions relating to personnel management, and what (if any) influence will the MAT have?

There is a defined management structure in place which would not change other than for your Headteacher.

As a single employer for all schools in the MAT it is important for all employed colleagues to be treated the same. We have in place an extensive suite of HR policies that we require all schools to adhere to. In reality, these are unlikely to differ from the ones you have in place.

The partnership contracts with Cantium for HR support (presumably as now), and they would continue to support you through any difficulties.

34. How long will the agreements on staff pay and conditions last?

As per the answer to 31. above, the partnership abides by national and local pay agreements. Although it is impossible to predict the long-term future, we would not anticipate this changing. Key reasons behind this are not only our wish to look after our current employees but also to ensure a competitive position at times of recruitment.

35. Academies are answerable to the Education Secretary & the DoE, rather than to the LA. What does this look like in practice for a school changing to an academy and joining a MAT?

All management transfers from the LA to the MAT. Effectively the Secretary of State 'delegates' the running of the schools to the Multi Academy Trust. Under Canon Law the schools remain under the direction of the Archbishop (Please see Appendix 5).

The Trust is carefully monitored by the DfE via the Regional Schools' Commissioner who meets with the Directors and CEO on a regular basis.

As a school you are unlikely to have any significant contact direct with the Regional Commissioner.

FINANCES:

36. What is the finance model for an academy within this MAT, and how does this differ from what we currently have?

All academies are funded exactly the same as they would have been as a maintained school, and this is ensured by the DfE. There are changes, such as the financial year runs from September to August, and our reporting lines are different.

It is KCSP's desire that all schools are able to maintain balanced budgets whilst being able to appropriately invest in its staffing, CPD, IT and property to name a few key areas. Schools in challenging financial positions are supported in this process by KCSP and we have a good track record

of this. Whilst it is important to maintain adequate reserves, we also encourage schools to spend its funding on the children for which it is intended.

At the time of writing, the reserves of the partnership exceed £6.5M and this again allows us to support our schools and invest in improvements where needed.

It would be useful to both of us to have a more in-depth look at your budget and how it might change.

37. What Due Diligence process would we follow?

We would undertake a due diligence process as part of conversion. Part of this is required by the DfE with more detailed work for our own information.

This is not too onerous but would look at the financial health of the school, and outstanding liabilities and claims, particularly from staff or pupils and existing contracts.

It is the desire of the Archbishop to have all schools within MAT's in the near future, and the due diligence process is not designed to prevent that should problems be detected, but rather to be able to support the school going forward.

38. In question 20, we asked who are the members (shareholders) of the MAT; following on from this, are the shares tradeable, and if so, how?

No. Whilst KCSP, like all academies and MATS, is a registered company limited by guarantee, and does not have shares as such. There is nothing that can be traded as with share based limited companies. All academies and Trusts are established under the auspices of the Academies Act 2010. MATS are non-profit making charities and the finances are very closely controlled by both the DfE and its own articles of association.

39. What percentage of our school's annual budget would be taken as "management" by the multi-academy trust, compared to KCC?

When the Trust was established, there was a desire for schools within it to retain a high degree of autonomy. As such KCSP is much "leaner" centrally than most MATS of a similar size. The "top-slice" is 8.5% of the schools Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding. However, half of this directly funds contracts paid centrally but operational at the school. The other half funds the Trust central team and resource that schools can call upon such as school improvement, safeguarding or policy development.

40. What financial efficiencies (in percentage terms) have schools achieved by being part of the KCSP MAT?

Financial efficiencies using conversion as a starting point vary from school to school, depending upon their starting position. However, what can clearly be evidenced is that in pure cash terms, all 24 schools have benefitted from being in the MAT. On top of that, there are undoubted non-cash benefits such as support of the Catholic ethos, school improvement support suite of policies, extensive collaboration, multi-school events and competitions to name but a few.

41. What are the requirements to share resources, including financial resources? Do we keep our own rollover?

KCSP operates a reserves policy in the same way as KCC. This encourages schools to keep appropriate reserves based on their size and risk profile whilst ensuring that income is substantially spent on the pupils for which it is intended. Other than the "top-slice" there is no requirement to share resources. We have a central reserve which is mostly funded from the "top slice".

42. Is financial performance data for each school in the academy transparent and available to other schools within the multi- academy trust?

Yes, it is. Each year schools are provided with detailed financial data for all schools in the MAT as part of a benchmarking exercise. In addition, the Trust's Annual Report and Accounts is a public document and that details some aspects of individual school financial performance.

43. What drives the financial decision making of the Multi- Academy Trust and what input do we as governors have a) before academisation is complete and b) once complete?

Our driver is the continuous improvement of the education provided in our schools. Any MAT has to comply with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook, its funding agreement with the DfE and its Articles of Association. Within those requirements, the detailed financial operations are determined by the Trust Board and more specifically the Finance & Resources sub-committee. Decisions of the Board and its committees are transparent and there is a 2-way information flow between the Trust Board/Committees and the School Governance Committees. School budgets are primarily set at local level. Whilst we are always willing to listen to comments/recommendations, schools not currently part of the MAT would not input into the financial decision-making process.

44. What additional financial support could St Augustine's expect by joining a MAT in terms of: a) school improvements (including estate and capital improvement costs), b) pupils (educational, economic and social), and c) staff?

The school will receive a bespoke package of support tailored to its needs. This will take the form of support from our in-house staff together with 3rd party support where appropriate. Whilst support will in most cases be commissioned and paid by the Trust, the school will not generally receive cash support.

The school will receive an additional capital grant from the Trust equivalent to 2x its own devolved formula capital. This can be spent at the discretion of the school on the maintenance of its estate.

45. What additional workload can we expect for office and finance staff, staff, governors and leaders, during the process of joining the MAT, and what additional financial support is available from the KCSP to cover this?

The conversion process will require input from the school particularly in regard to staffing and existing contracts. Reasonable timescales are applied to this and it has not proven to be problematic in the conversions to date. Support from that process comes from the Trust Office and a named legal support.

Once converted, we do use a different financial system and other procedures will differ slightly but the actual workload should not increase and the Trust was very mindful of that when setting out its requirement of schools. Full training and support will be provided for any of the new system. The Trust Office has 3 qualified accountants that support schools on a daily basis.

46. How can we ensure optimum funding levels?

Academy funding does not in the main vary from the funding of maintained schools, other than being paid directly by the DfE as compared to coming via the local authority.

Most funding is determined by pupil numbers as it is now, and along with Pupil Premium is determined from the census that schools complete. Other grant-based funding such as high-needs is accessed as currently on a claim basis.

The Trust is able to support schools with claims to ensure all possible funding is claimed.

47. Does the multi-academy trust have non-school/ educational income that is then used for Educational Need across the Academy Trust's schools? (e.g., residential income from lettings that could provide additional funds for schools?)

No. Our funding comes almost entirely from DFE grants via the top-slice mechanism though we tap other sources where we can. Trust schools as a whole do generate considerable income from other sources but this does vary from school to school. It is one of the guiding principles of the Trust that income generated by a school e.g., by lettings or parental donations, remain with the school which generated it and it is not taken as a Partnership resource to be allocated elsewhere.

48. How does the MAT ensure that executive pay does not reach inappropriately high levels?

Executive pay (currently applies to 4 colleagues) is determined on the same methodology as all other non-teaching colleagues. Roles are evaluated and benchmarked to determine a pay scale with appropriate relativities and consideration of top to bottom ratios considered. Yearly progress is then determined by a performance management process which looks at overall performance together with the achievement of key targets. The process is overseen by the Trust's Pay and Performance Committee which is a sub-committee of the Board. Executive pay is reported to the DfE who closely monitor and are satisfied with it.

49. If we were to change to an academy, would our school have any outstanding liability, money or property to the Augustinian Friars, SOLT, the LEA, or the Diocese? Or anyone else? If so, would this have to be paid back/ returned?

This cannot be answered fully without knowledge of any existing liabilities. For almost all schools that have converted, no liabilities have existed. We have had an example of a school that had a previous loan from the Archdiocese and it was expected that it was continued to be repaid. Academy conversion in itself will not write-off existing debts.

50. What happens to specific funding for pupils, such as Pupil Premium - does it get pooled? What happens to specific high needs funding – does it get pooled?

No, funding such as PP or high needs is targeted at specific pupils and as such it is important that it is evidenced that it is spent on those pupils.

SEN RESPONSIBILITIES:

51. Who exercises the responsibility for delivering an EHCP to a pupil? Currently the LA holds this responsibility; however, if the LA is no longer in charge of a school, then in reality, who oversees, monitors and guarantees the delivery of an EHCP's provision?

Responsibility is primarily with the school as now. SEN funding remains as it is now under the auspices of the LA And will be managed by them in the same way as now

52. Implications of joining a MAT for / Impact on Outreach assistance on SEN from local specialist provisions and STLS (Specialist Teaching and Learning Service)?

This remains as it is now.

The Trust is however working on a strategy to enable additional support across our schools.

53. Implications for admissions – what autonomy over admissions does an academy school have for pupils with SEN, and how could this affect admissions – does it mean pupils with known SEN are more likely not to be admitted?

The Admissions Code of Practice is statutory and remains in place for all our schools. There is no change in the EHCP nominated school process. There would be no effect from joining KCSP

54. Is there any MAT support to secure high needs funding where appropriate, and would this funding stream be operated in the same way as at present?

The system for gaining high needs funding remains the same. However, we do have a network of experienced SENCOs who are willing and able to offer support via a forum and on an individual basis if needed.

HNF in Kent is likely to see massive change and we are in dialogue with KCC as part of that process

55. What MAT training is there on SEN, and what specific support is there for SENCOs and for parents/carers?

The Trust has an established SEN forum and brokers training and support when required.

56. How would joining a MAT benefit the school's support for pupils with SEN, and what specific support can the central team provide on SEN?

The Trust is able to offer a collaborative support network which taps into expertise across all our schools. We are currently part of a joint inclusion training programme across the Trust to further develop and share good practice. There is a new Trust Strategic plan to look at developing SRPs and SEN specialist support