

# Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School



## **Section 1: Academy Information**

### **What are the Governors of Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School proposing?**

The Governors are proposing that Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School converts to an Academy and forms the St Carlo Catholic Academy Trust with its partner Catholic schools in the Deanery.

The School has received the consent of the Diocese of Westminster and the Regional Director (RD) to convert to an academy and establish a new Catholic Academy Trust (CAT) of Ealing schools.

### **What is the St Carlo Catholic Academy Trust?**

The St Carlo CAT will be part of the Diocese of Westminster CAT Strategy, through which it hopes all Schools in the Diocese's 11 Families (across 17 London Borough and 2 Counties) will join CATs to "protect, secure and develop Catholic Education for the future."

The schools below have all received consent of the Diocese of Westminster and Regional Director to form St Carlo CAT;

- Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School
- Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School
- Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School
- St Anselm's Catholic Primary School
- St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
- St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
- St Raphael's Catholic Primary School
- St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

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

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority. Academies are directly funded by the ESFA and accountability for their performance is directly with the Regional Directors and Department for Education (DfE).

### **Why is Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School proposing to form the St Carlo CAT?**

The Governors and Headteacher have been actively considering becoming part of a CAT for a number of years and believe that the time is now right for our school.

There are a number of reasons for this, including;

- The Governors and Headteacher believe that converting and forming a Catholic Trust of Ealing schools will respond the Cardinal's request that all schools should become academies.
- The Governors and Headteacher believe that forming a CAT will secure strategic school to school support and development through sharing the very best of our leadership, management, teaching and learning, pastoral and spiritual development.
- Catholic schools currently work as 'islands' and by coming together in solidarity we will be stronger, more robust and more resilient for the future:
- Catholic education is facing many threats both nationally and across the Diocese, in terms of declining rolls and increased financial pressures due to Austerity.
- With government borrowing already at unprecedented levels, prospects for an increase in school funding in the short to medium terms are extremely low.
- We face a growing need to protect, secure, and develop the Church's mission in Catholic education, working together to grow our resilience and overcome other future threats.
- Behind the scenes, very little will change for pupils, staff and parents. The changes will bring in closer working practices to Governance and back-office functions.

### **How will the School benefit from forming the St Carlo CAT?**

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

Existing and prospective children in schools within CATs will benefit in a number of ways, including;

- Enhanced collaboration and partnership across the schools
- Increased savings and efficiencies at a time of growing financial pressures
- Improved teaching, learning, pastoral and spiritual development for each child through increased collaboration, challenge and support
- Increased CPD opportunities and career pathways for staff
- Improved retention and development of the best Catholic teachers and Leaders
- Clear, robust and effective Governance at Trust, CEO and Local Governing Body levels
- Secured Catholic education across the Diocese for generations to come.

### **Why is the School now proposing to become an Academy and form the St Carlo CAT?**

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors believe the time is right to move forward after careful consideration and a thoughtful journey.

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

The Diocese's CAT Strategy sets out the reasons, benefits and structure of the Catholic Academy Trusts. The Diocese is clearly minded to continue with and increase the speed of its CAT programme, and by choosing to form a Trust now and under our 'own steam', we are able to shape our own future.

### **What work has been done by governors to explore all options?**

Governors have conducted a number of activities over several years to ensure we reach the best decision for our school.

These include:

- Regular Headteacher and Governor Deanery meetings
- Meetings with the Diocese of Westminster to consider the benefits of collaboration amongst Ealing schools
- Discussions with other schools to understand their strategy and journey.
- Attendance at specific training and information sessions for Headteachers and Governors.
- Research on academisation based on information from a variety of sources.
- Research on other established CAT in the Diocese
- Discussion covering the pros and cons of all the options for the future of the school.
- Due diligence processes with the Diocese of Westminster.

### **Will the CAT expand to include more schools over time?**

Yes, the St Carlo CAT will expand to embrace all Catholic schools in Ealing who wish to become Academies under the Diocese of Westminster CAT programme.

### **How will the Governance arrangements of the St Carlo Catholic Academy Trust work?**

The Diocese of Westminster has nominated 5 Members who 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, Auxiliary Bishop and Chair of the Education Commission of the Diocese of Westminster, Chief Operating Officer/Financial Secretary of the Diocese of Westminster and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Westminster.

The Members have appointed a Board of Foundation Directors with strategic oversight for the Trust and Schools. The Foundation Directors are currently comprised of Foundation Governors associated with schools who wish to serve on the Trust Board.

Each School will retain a Local Governing Body which, with the Headteacher, will be responsible for the day to day running of the school.

The Local Governing Body will have powers delegated from the CAT Board of Directors under an agreed Scheme of Delegation are accountable to the Board.

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

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. Every school gives and receives support from one another.

### **When will the school become an Academy?**

We would expect that the process will take around 12 months, work is underway and the target conversion date is 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

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

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

The Governing Body of Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School is consulting with all key stakeholders about the proposed academy conversion including parents, staff, pupils and other schools over a 6-week period commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> June to 11<sup>th</sup> July.

### **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.

However, all Ealing schools have a good relationship with the London Borough of Ealing and will seek to maintain and cultivate this in the future.

The Schools in the Ealing CAT will continue to buy into the Ealing Learning Partnership and the CAT will continue to adopt all locally and nationally agreed pay and conditions for staff

### **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 the school to form the St Carlo CAT?**

The conversion process includes the following key legal processes:

- Putting in place a Supplementary Funding Agreement (SFA) for the school
- Transferring the employment of the staff from the Governing Body to the St Carlo CAT following a statutory process (TUPE\*)
- Agreeing a Commercial Transfer Agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts from the local authority to St Carlo CAT
- Arranging a 125-year lease for any land held by the local authority and agreeing a Church Supplemental Agreement (CSA) with the Diocese of Westminster for the buildings owned by the Diocese

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

## **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 staff (both teaching and non-teaching) and the relevant unions as part of the staff transfer process.

The TUPE process will provide assurances to staff that they will transfer their employment to the St Carlo CAT on their existing terms and conditions of employment.

### **Will teachers' pay and conditions change?**

No. Whilst Academy Trusts do have the freedom to vary terms and conditions from national ones, the Diocese of Westminster Strategy commits its Catholic Trust to abiding by teachers' 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). This is administered by the London Borough of Ealing 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?**

The Diocese has met with staff and unions to provide assurance that their terms and

conditions of employment will not change and will continue to do so.

As the current employer, the Governing Body is responsible for informing and consulting with staff. The Governing Body is also responsible for informing the St Carlo CAT, as the new employer, of any 'measures' which will impact on their employment.

There are no planned measures in respect and the schools will write to each member of staff confirming that they will transfer under existing terms and conditions.

### **Section: 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. However, the LA withhold a portion of the school's funds as a contribution to council budgets. That would not happen as an Academy, so the total overall funding for the CAT would be higher than the sum total of present funding distributed to each school. There are other financial advantages, for example VAT is recoverable on normal business activities and capital works.

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.

### **Section 4: Admissions**

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

When a school becomes an Academy it also becomes an admission authority responsible for its own admission arrangements. As the school is forming a Multi Academy Trust – St Carlo CAT will become the admissions authority. Schools will continue to make decisions about their admissions arrangements, and a CAT could propose changes in the same way a school currently can.

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.

#### **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 arrangements. 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 Academies 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 new 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 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 will be just the same as they 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?**

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will host a consultation meeting for parents at 5.30pm on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June. A separate meeting is being held for staff.

#### **Please complete and return the questionnaire page on the website to the School office**

If you would prefer to complete it online, return it by email to:  
[consultation@olovrc.com](mailto:consultation@olovrc.com)

*Fr L O'Donovan  
Chair of Governors  
Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School*

## Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School Response form

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|---|--|
| <b>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>Do you agree that Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School should convert to an Academy and form the St Carlo CAT with our partner Catholic schools in Ealing (by entering into a Supplementary Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State)?</b> |  |
| Strongly agree   |  |
| Agree  |  |
| Disagree   |  |
| Strongly disagree  |  |
| <b>Please give your reasons below</b>  |  |
|  |  |

|  |
|--|
| <b>Do you have any other comments to make about the proposal for Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School to convert to an Academy and form the St Carlo CAT with our partner Catholic schools in Ealing</b> |
|  |

If you need more room for comments, please feel free to attach a separate sheet.