



DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON

Developing Catholic Education

January 2017



Diocese of Northampton – Developing Catholic Education

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We believe that children and young people in our Catholic schools deserve the very best educational opportunities and life fulfilling experiences, within communities which have the teaching of Christ and his Church at the centre.
- 1.2 To this end, the Trustees of the Diocese of Northampton established the expansion and development of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) across the Diocese through the continued development of close area working to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education.
- 1.3 This seeks to ensure that every school within the Diocese sits within a network of collaboration such that each institution both gives and receives support.

2. The Mission of Catholic Education

- 2.1 The commitment to working together through MATs will help realise further the aim of Catholic education as set out by his Church:

Education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person, so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society. Children and young people are therefore to be cared for in such a way that their physical, moral and intellectual talents may develop in a harmonious manner, so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and the right use of freedom, and be formed to take an active part in social life. *Canon 795¹*

- 2.2 Every Catholic school is an equally valued member of the diocesan family of schools. The Bishop is, by virtue of the authority given to him in Canon law, the head and father of that family.

The Diocesan bishop has the right to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools in his territoryand has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools...Those who are in charge of Catholic schools under the supervision of the local ordinary, that the formation given in them, in its academic standards, are at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area. *Canon 806*

- 2.3 The Bishop, together with the Trustees of the Diocese, have set out a Memorandum of Understanding that ensures each MAT is conducted in accordance with Canon Law and the teaching of the Catholic Church, and in compliance with the Trust Deed of the Diocese of Northampton. In this way every Catholic MAT will be at the service of the Church's mission in education.

1. Canon Law is the codified system of laws and legal principles promulgated by the authority of the Catholic Church to properly regulate and organise the Church's life and mission.

3. Why the move to Academies?

3.1 CATHOLIC EDUCATION – no future without the Trinity

Stand at the crossroads, says the Lord, and look, for the ancient way;

ask for the good way and take it; so shall you be safe and prosper. (Jeremiah 6:16)

We are at a crossroads where decisions must be made in a time of significant change. We need to stand and take the time to reflect and consider. The ancient way is our very rootedness in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Asking for the good way, which will allow us to prosper, is what we need to have at the heart of our prayer and discussions, so that we may indeed achieve what is for the common good of all.

3.2 Since 1944 we have been used to the Voluntary Aided system. The Church provided the schools, and directed them, while the Local Authority and government maintained them. We usually had good relationships with the LA to our mutual advantage. As well in our diocese we have established strong more formal local partnerships of our Catholic schools. It is however, government policy that the majority of schools in this country should become academies in forthcoming years. While recent statements have withdrawn the mandatory nature of this, all the legislative elements necessary are in place for schools to become academies.

- The direct funding of Academies has reduced the capacity of Local Authorities to provide adequate resources to support schools. This may have implications in the future for Catholic schools if an Academy Order (mandating academisation) is issued to all maintained schools in any Local Authority;
- There are increased powers of intervention in struggling schools that receive a warning notice about their performance. These powers mean that schools need proactive, robust action that will bring change at a rapid pace. We need to place secure structures around vulnerable schools in order to help them flourish;
- Financing schools and services is increasingly demanding. Budget management and changes to the national funding formulae are causing significant challenges for many schools. Schools will need to be able to operate with slimmer services as well as working with others to create economies of scale.

3.3 To be true to our nature as Catholic school communities made in the image of God we must ensure that we have strong and mutually supportive relationships with the Diocese and with our local partnership of Catholic schools. The structure of a Multi Academy Trusts enables us to be true to who are, in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and living in that essential supportive relationship with one another as a community of Catholic schools.

4. Establishing and joining existing Multi Academy Trusts

4.1 The establishment of Multi Academy Trusts in the Diocese seeks to ensure that Catholic schools will be better enabled to work together. Isolation and fragmentation compromise

the Church's mission in education. The academisation process develops and enhances the clear working relationships already established in area groups between local Catholic schools to assist with school improvement, leadership recruitment and formation, governance and co-operation.

- 4.2 Within a changing landscape of national education policy and provision we need to reinforce and develop the relationships between our schools. We are at our best when we work together, for each other and in service of the dignity of the individual and the common good, embracing both solidarity and subsidiarity. This is essential to all decisions and actions undertaken by Catholic schools in our Diocese.
- 4.3 Within our current Academy Trusts there is wide range of expertise that can help to support schools joining Trusts or groups of schools establishing a MAT. We will seek to draw upon this.
- 4.4 One of the significant advantages of academisation is that the delivery of services to schools will be improved through partnership with key providers, for example in the areas of school improvement, succession planning and training. There will also be opportunities for more effective centralised services, such as in HR and in legal and financial support.

5 The structure of MATs

5.1 As Cardinal Hume stated:

“The church is *communion*, meaning a community, a fellowship, a communion and much more. The Trinity is the perfect relationship of love given and received. Structures in the Church and relationships should reflect and express this communion”

What is said of the Church must be able to be seen in each of our schools.

5.2 As Catholic schools, the Directors of all Academies are accountable to the Diocesan Bishop and Founder Member of the Multi Academy Trust to ensure that the Academy is conducted as a Catholic school in accordance with the Code of Canon Law

5.3 The Diocesan Bishop has the right to appoint Foundation Directors and he also has the right to appoint Academy Foundation Representatives.

5.4 Through the appointment of Foundation Directors to the Board of Directors the Diocesan Bishop's purpose is to bind together all of the academy communities beyond their own boundaries to:

-secure the quality of Catholic education;

-strengthen the Church; and

-benefit the common good in accordance with the message of the Gospel.

5.5 Through the appointment of Academy Foundation Representatives to the Academy

Committee the Diocesan Bishop's purpose is to:

- strengthen the voice of the local Catholic community in determining the strategic direction of the Academy;
- build parental and parish commitment to the Academy;
- protect the history and traditions of the Academy in a changing educational landscape.

5.5 Duns Scotus Trust (DST) has been established to act as a founding member and “holding company” for any academy trust company established to run Catholic schools in the Diocese. Duns Scotus Trust is not a holding company in a legal sense as there is no control exercised by DST over the academy companies. This remains with the Bishop as required under Canon Law.

5.2 Trust boards of a Catholic MAT are accountable for Catholic life, standards, finance and premises to the Dun Scotus Trust. The Dun Scotus Trust Board’s focus is the advancement of the mission of the Catholic Church in the Diocese by such means as the Bishop may think fit and proper by:

- Establishing, monitoring, supporting and developing Multi Academy Trusts within the Diocese;
- Supporting Catholic Academies in accordance with the principles and subject to the regulations and the discipline of the Catholic Church.

5.3 The Dun Scotus Trust Board ensures that every academy shall deliver education in accordance with:

- The teachings, practices and tenets of the Catholic Church;
- Canon Law and the Trust Deed;
- Any Diocesan directives for the time being in force.

5.4 The Duns Scotus Trust is informed by the school strategic planning group comprising of Chairs of Trust boards and Executive Head teachers or Chief Education Officers. (figure 2. Governance across the Diocese)

5.5 The Academy Trust has a Board of Directors who are accountable for all schools in the Trust. Each school has a school committee (formerly the school Governing body). Trust wide committees for Catholic life, standards and finance/resources scrutinise and monitor these aspects across all schools in the Trust and report to the main Board of Directors. The Directors of the Trust and the representatives on school committees (formerly governors) need to know what each other’s roles and responsibilities are in order to ensure that these are fulfilled. This area of oversight and support is critical and requires a process of recruitment for Directors and Representatives. (Figure 1. Governance in a MAT)

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6 Building capacity for school development within MATs and across the Diocese

6.1 All MATs will be required to review and develop capacity for school to school improvement with a named lead for standards across the Trust.

6.2 Currently schools work within partnerships with Catholic and local schools to promote school development and conduct peer review. Some will use teaching schools to access accredited senior, middle and specialist subject support and access to National leaders of Excellence and National Leaders of Governors. Teaching schools can access additional funding to enable school to school support and provide bespoke training for teachers, leaders and governors. St Thomas More teaching school will provide a base for developing a localised hub model of support in the form of specialist leaders working within schools across the diocese.

Figure 1. Governance in a Multi Academy Trust

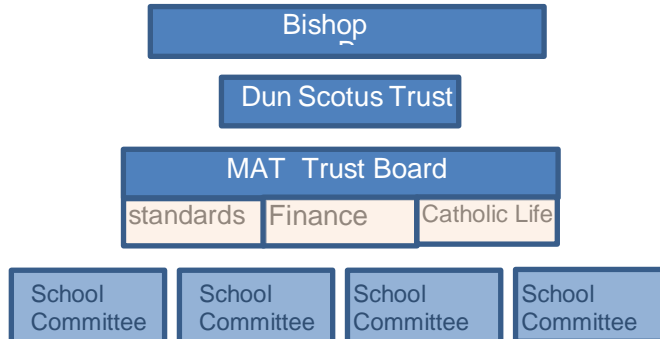


Figure 2. Governance across the Diocese

