'Loving and Learning Together as Jesus Taught Us''

Consultation on the proposed academisation of **St Catherine's Catholic Primary School**

as part of the **All Saints Catholic Academy Trust**

St. Catherine's Catholic Primary School

All Saints Catholic Academy Trust

Section 1: Academy Information

What are the Governors of St Catherine's Catholic Primary School proposing?

The Governors are proposing that St Catherine's Catholic Primary School converts to an Academy and joins the existing All Saints Catholic Academy Trust (ASCAT).

The school has received the consent of the Diocese of Westminster and the Regional Director (RD) to convert to an academy.

The All Saints CAT has received the consent of the Diocese of Westminster to welcome St Catherine's Catholic Primary School into an expanded CAT.

What is the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust?

The All Saints CAT is part of the Diocese of Westminster Family of CATs and CAT Strategy by 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 All Saints CAT was formed in 2016 and currently encompasses the following 11 schools, in 3 hubs;

St Ursula Hub (Watford and Three Rivers)
Divine Saviour Catholic Primary School
St Joan of Arc Catholic Secondary School
St John's Catholic Primary School
Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

St Albans Hub
St Bernadette Catholic Primary School
St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
St Dominic Catholic Primary School (from 1st June)

St Mark's Hub (Hemel Hempstead)
J F Kennedy Catholic Secondary School
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
St Albert the Great Catholic Primary School
St Rose' Catholic Infant School
St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority, but their funding and accountability is directly with the Department for Education (DfE).

Why is St Catherine's Catholic Primary School proposing to join the All Saints CAT?

The Governors have been actively considering joining a CAT and believe that it is now in the best interest of our school.

There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- It is a requirement of the Cardinal that all Catholic Schools should join a CAT to 'protect secure and develop Catholic Education'
- The Headteacher and Governors believe that converting and joining a Catholic Trust will deliver the best future for our school.
- The Headteacher and Governors believes joining 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 inflationary pressures and a real terms decrease in school funding year of year
- 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 administrative tasks.

How will the school benefit from joining the All Saints 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 several 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 join the All Saints 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 in answering this directive the Governors of St Catherine's have been responsive and through their own considered initiatives are choosing to join and expand a Trust now so that we can shape our own future.

We also believe the time is right in terms of reductions in funding and support from local authorities.

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:

- Discussions with other local schools to understand their strategy and journey.
- Attendance at specific training and information sessions for Governors.
- Research on other CATs.
- Research on academisation based on information from a variety of sources.
- Presentations and Q&A from various CATs on a number of different subjects.
- Presentation and 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 All Saints CAT will expand to embrace all Catholic schools in South West Hertfordshire and Barnet who wish to convert to Academy Status as part of the Diocese's planned Academy Strategy.

How will the Governance arrangements of the All Saints 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 have been recruited on the basis of a wide range of skills and professional experiences, necessary for the effective running of a Trust of schools. Their responsibilities are to each of the Trust's schools equally.

Each School will retain a Local Governing Body which, who with the Headteacher, remain 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 4-6 months, work is underway; the planned conversion date is 1st September 2025.

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 St Catherine's Catholic Primary School is consulting with all key stakeholders about the proposed academy conversion including parents, staff, pupils over a 4-week period commencing 28th April to 2nd June.

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.

The school and the Trust have good relationships with Barnet Council and both seek to maintain and cultivate this in the future.

Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted inspection regime?

Schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way.

Why are St Catherine's joining a Trust with schools in Hertfordshire? There are no other Barnet schools in the Trust.

The Trustees of the Diocese of Westminster are responsible for determining which of its Academy Trusts Voluntary Aided Schools should join. As part of their work over recent years, the Governors have engaged with a number of the Diocese's Catholic Academy Trusts and their CEOs. We were pleased when the Diocese accepted our request earlier this year for ASCAT to be expanded to welcome in the Barnet Catholic Schools. The school is delighted to lead and be the first of the Barnet schools to accept this invitation and to be instrumental in the formation of a Barnet Hub and setting a path for other Barnet schools to follow. The Trust is having productive conversations with other Catholic schools in Barnet and the Diocese's plan, over time would be for all of the Voluntary Aided Catholic Schools in Barnet to become part of ASCAT.

Given the Trust's close proximity to St Catherine's, there are a number of schools within the Trust that St Catherine's already have good working relationships with.

Will joining the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust affect or limit my child's options for Secondary education?

No. The Secondary admission process is a completely separate process. Families will still be expected to apply for Secondary school places in the usual way and will have all of the same options available to them including all of the Secondary schools, Catholic and otherwise, that parents may wish to apply to. There is no advantage gained or lost in respect of this by our school joining the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust.

What is the process for the school to join the All Saints 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 local authority to the All Saints CAT following a statutory process (TUPE*)
- Agreeing a Commercial Transfer Agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts from the local authority to All Saints 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)*

St Catherine's enjoys excellent relationships with the other primary schools in Barnet, will any of these other schools be able to join ASCAT in time?

As previously explained, the Diocese's plan is for all of the Catholic Voluntary Aided schools in Barnet, Primary and Secondary, to join the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust in time. Other non-Catholic local schools would not be able to join the Trust, however, the school will still continue to enjoy excellent working relationships with its local school partners. It is important to the school and to the Trust that St Catherine's continues to be part of successful, collaborative network of Barnet schools.

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

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 can join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). This is administered by Barnet Council 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?

As the current employer, the Governing Body is responsible for informing and consulting with staff.

The Governing Body is responsible for informing the All Saints CAT, as the new employer, of any 'measures' which will impact on their employment.

There are none planned in this case and the All Saints CAT will write to each member of staff confirming that they will transfer under existing terms and conditions.

Section 3: 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 Academies are able to reclaim VAT on capital expenditure, whilst Voluntary Aided Schools are unable to this. Academies are also able to make use of treasury functions to yield a higher interest on schools' reserves and balances, that can be reinvested back into schools.

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?

Currently the school's governing body is its admissions authority. Upon joining the Trust – All Saints CAT will become the admissions authority. Each school in the Trust however, continues to make decisions about their admissions arrangements, and the responsibility for admissions is delegated to the Local Governing Body through the Trust's scheme of delegation.

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.

Do 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. 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 statement of Special Educational Needs 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 6:30pm on 13th May 2025. A separate meeting is being held for staff.

We strongly encourage you to share your opinions as part of the consultation process, by completing the online Academy Consultation Questionnaire by 2nd June 2025. Should you prefer a hard copy of the consultation leaflet or the consultation questionnaire, please collect hard copies from the school office.

Dr Alessia Errico
Chair of Governors
St Catherine's Catholic Primary School