



**CHRIST THE
REDEEMER**

CATHOLIC EDUCATION TRUST

Frequently Asked Questions Staff, Parents, Carers

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1. Context of this document

As part of the consultation regarding academy status, this document contains key questions and answers, regarding the implications of becoming an academy school within the Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust as this relates to St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School.

2. Academy/MAT/Trust explanations

a) What is an Academy Trust?

Academies or Academy Trusts are classed as independent state schools, which have the freedom to determine their own policies on such things as the curriculum taught, school hours, term dates and staff pay. This is enabled by the Academies Act 2010. Primary, secondary and special schools are all able to apply to convert into an Academy and are accountable to the Secretary of State - not to the Local Authority.

b) Who runs an Academy?

The Academy is run by an Academy Trust. This is a legal body which operates as a charitable organisation and a company limited by guarantee. The Academy Trust has a formal agreement, or contract with the Department for Education (DfE). The Academy Trust consists of Members and a Board of Directors, also known as Trustees, who are the Governors of the Trust.

c) What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi-Academy Trust is the most formalised type of collaborative structure available for Academies. Within a MAT, all schools become academies and are governed by one Academy Trust. The schools' Local Governing Bodies will operate subject to the control of the MAT which has ultimate responsibility for the running of the individual academies. The MAT will be accountable and responsible for the performance of each of the Academies in the group and may delegate its decision-making powers to the Local Governing Boards of the individual academies. Catholic Education Trust (CET) is the name Catholic MATs often use to distinguish their Catholic nature.

d) What will the responsibilities of the Board of Directors be?

The Academy Trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) will enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the Academy. The Academy Trust (made up of Members and Directors) has a strategic role in running the Academy and is accountable to the Secretary of State. In a Catholic academy or MAT, the Bishop will be responsible for appointing both the Members and Directors. It is the Board of Directors that manages the Academy on behalf of the members of the Academy Trust.

The key responsibilities are to:

- ensure the quality of educational provision
- challenge and monitor the performance of the Academy
- manage the Academy Trust's finances and property
- employ staff

e) Why can't we be a standalone academy?

It is no longer possible for schools to convert to standalone academies. The government's directive is for all schools to become part of a family of schools by 2030 (ie. part of a MAT) and the Diocese have reiterated this with a recent letter from the Archbishop to all Headteachers and Chairs of Governor.

3. Conversion decision

a) Who decides which schools convert to an Academy?

The decision for any school to become an Academy rests with its Governing Body, and Governors should base this on what is best for the children. Before a decision is taken on academy status, the staff and parents/carers whose children attend the school in question, will be consulted on their views and opinions.

b) Why is this being considered?

Gaining academy status would give us the autonomy to continue to build on the excellent practice within our school to ensure high standards of education for all our young people both now and in the future. As a member of a strong Catholic MAT, there will be greater opportunities for working more closely with other local Catholic schools to benefit our pupils and secure a strong sustainable future.

4. St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School's Ethos

a) Will St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School lose its character or ethos?

No. Whilst we would be working in a larger family of schools with a very similar Catholic ethos as ourselves, becoming an academy would provide us with greater freedoms to continue to provide high quality learning experiences. Each school is able to retain its own special and unique qualities whilst benefitting from sharing ideas and expertise from a strong team.

We anticipate that this opportunity to work even more closely together with a supportive Catholic MAT would further strengthen and support the ethos and traditions of St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School.

- b) Would St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School join a Catholic MAT in this Diocese?

Yes, St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School would join a Catholic MAT. The Bishop has told Catholic schools in this Diocese that we can only become academies within the Archdiocese of Southwark and that each MAT should be identified broadly by geographical area and cross-phase (Primary and Secondary together). There is no defined guidance from the Diocese as to which MAT each school will eventually belong. However, Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust will bring together schools from across the Kingston, Richmond Deaneries and potentially in the future the Wandsworth Deanery. To get an understanding of this Trust and its benefits, please see the link in the below section called 'To find out more...'

- c) Which other schools will be part of phase one when forming the MAT to which we would probably belong?

The following schools are seeking to convert in Phase 1:

Primary schools:

- Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School, Tolworth
- Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School, New Malden
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Kingston
- St Agatha's Catholic Primary School, Kingston
- St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School, Richmond
- St Osmund's Catholic Primary School, Richmond

Secondary schools:

- Richard Challoner School, New Malden

Richard Challoner School and St Agatha's Catholic Primary School are both Standalone Academy Trusts (SATS) and as such they do not formally need to consult stakeholders as they are just requesting to join the MAT. The other schools listed above are Voluntary Aided schools and therefore a formal consultation is required.

- d) What is the mission statement of the Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust?

As a family of schools, our vision is to be a beacon of exceptional Catholic education in which our young people flourish and fulfil their God-given potential. With Gospel values at the heart of our mission, we will cherish the unique nature of every member of our community so that our young people leave prepared and inspired to make a positive contribution to society.

- e) What are the guiding principles of Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust?

Faith in Action

Through our Catholic faith we are inspired to promote the spiritual, emotional, social and academic growth of our communities. We will:

- embed Catholic social teaching within the curriculum and wider life of our schools.
- provide opportunities for all our young people and staff to deepen and explore their faith.
- reflect the distinctive Catholic nature of our schools in policy and practice.

Exceptional Education

All our young people will be exposed to exceptional teaching and high-quality learning experiences so that they fulfil their God-given potential. We will:

- provide a wide range of inspiring opportunities both in and out of the classroom.
- ensure every school provides a relevant, rich, and broad curriculum that inspires a love of learning.
- through collaborative working, ensure we are at the cutting edge of educational practice.

Service

Through fellowship and service, we are a beacon to our wider communities. We will:

- make decisions with honesty, integrity, and transparency for the Common Good of all our schools and the communities they serve.
- develop and maintain a culture of inclusion and diversity so that all members of the Catholic Education Trust feel proud of their identity.
- ensure staff development and well-being is central in achieving our aims.

5. Academy funding

- a) How is an Academy funded?

Academies are given the money directly that would have been given to the Local Authority (LA). This means that Academies can choose how to spend the money given.

- b) Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the LA as a maintained school, plus additions to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the LA. The Government is clear that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies have greater freedom on how they use their budgets, alongside the other freedoms that they enjoy. Within the Trust there is also the opportunity to reduce costs through efficient use of resources and through exercising its greater buying power.

- c) Do we have to cover the full cost to convert to an Academy?

No, the Department for Education (DfE) will pay a flat-rate grant of £25,000 for each VA school to fund conversion. Total costs will vary from school to school but from our research this is usually enough to cover the cost of conversion; for example the legal work and financial administration surrounding conversion. This funding will not increase the school's disposable income.

- d) My child has special education needs. How can I be confident that he/she will be given the same level of support, attention and care?

The Academies Act 2010 requires Academies to follow the same statutory framework for special needs as local authority schools. Academies receive the same level of additional funding to support those children. The school will continue to work with the Local Authority with regards to children who have an ECH Plan in the same way they do currently.

- e) Will we have to raise our own capital funding as an Academy?

No. All schools, including Academies, will be able to apply for Government capital funding. This is done through the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

- f) What happens to St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School's PTA funds and fundraising?

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School's PTA current and future funds remain with the St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School's PTA for use by St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School as per the current spending decision mechanism.

6. Academy admissions

- a) Are there any rules relating to admissions that Academies and Maintained schools must follow?

Yes. Academies must follow the law for school admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were a Maintained school.

- b) Would there be any implications for admissions?

No. As a Voluntary Aided school the Governing Body is already responsible for setting its own admissions policy and this would not change as an Academy. It is important to note that although the responsibility to set a policy lies with the Governors, admissions policies must be approved by the Diocese. Applications for school places would continue to be made through the LA which has a statutory duty to ensure that there is a school place for every child.

7. Academy inspections

- a) Are academies free from Ofsted inspection?

No. Academies are subject to the same inspection regulations as all Maintained schools. The only difference anyone would notice, is that an Academy is officially a new school, so the first time an Academy is inspected the report would say 'not applicable' next to the date of the previous inspection.

- b) Will staff be expected to change which school they work in?

No. The existing staff will be contracted to work within St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School, (there are no mobility clauses in the contracts). In the future, the Trust may request a teacher to move but this would not happen without their consent. This applies to newly recruited teachers as well. Staff would only move with their consent and the Headteacher concerned would also have to agree to the move. In the spirit of mutual support some individuals may have/wish to visit other schools to provide support on a particular matter but only at both their and the Headteacher's agreement. The close geographical proximity means this can be done quite easily.

One potential benefit is that job vacancies will also be advertised internally, so that staff can benefit from career progression within the Trust, along with staff development opportunities which will help retention across all schools.

8. Staff pay, pensions and TUPE

- a) Will the staff Terms and Conditions of employment be affected?

TUPE (Regulations 2006) will apply meaning that no existing member of staff will be worse off as a result of the Trust. Academy Trusts can change the Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) of the staff after 3 years but Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust has decided that T&Cs will not be

changed for existing employees. The St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School staff will have contracts of employment with the Trust and these will not have mobility clauses, meaning staff places of employment remains as they are. The Trust will not force any Headteacher 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.

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

Yes, we hope to see early benefits of this within the Trust, 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. There will also be opportunities for staff to work across the schools to support the development of central services for example leading subject networks etc.

- c) What about staff pensions? Would the staff pension liability be underwritten?

Yes, pensions will be underwritten by the Government and are as such protected.

9. Staff pay, progression & salaries

- a) Will staff pay change?

No. Staff the TUPE process (Regulations 2006) will ensure that no existing member of staff will be lose pay as a result of being part of an Academy Trust.

- b) Will the Trust continue to follow the national pay scales for teachers?

Yes. We will ensure that the Trust teachers are paid in line with other teachers locally and nationally by following the national pay scales and salary progression model. Pay will continue to be performance related as it is currently within the school.

- c) What about support staff pay and salary progression?

We will ensure that the support staff within the schools are paid fairly and comparably based on their role. The TUPE regulations will ensure that no existing member of support staff will lose pay as a result of being part of an Academy Trust.

10. Advantages

- a) What are the advantages of achieving Academy status within the Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust?

- Freedom to develop further a curriculum that meets the needs of all our pupils.
- Support the continuity of Catholic education in this area for pupils from 4 to 18 years and ease pupils' transition from primary to secondary school.
- Keep all the features of the school that are valued so highly by our pupils, parents and staff, but use the additional freedoms that Academy status brings, to enhance our provision for all.
- Flexibility to direct funding to the specific requirements of our school in order to preserve and develop the best of what we do as a school in challenging economic times.
- Converting to Academy status may provide the best route for us to build on our many strengths and become an even better school.
- Formalise and strengthen our existing partnership work with other Catholic schools which will offer greater opportunities to develop our staff and gain from experience.

- Being part of the Trust will enable us both to access and to deliver peer-led, school-to-school support, sharing outstanding teaching and learning expertise across the Trust schools so that we continue to improve our teaching and learning. All schools joining the Trust in phase one are either Outstanding or Good.
- Loosens the bond with the Local Authority leaving more choice for the individual school eg. Resources and support
- Provide additional opportunities to share resources and facilities, developing a collaborative way of working and 'joined-up' provision for the benefit of all of our pupils and families.
- The ability to respond more effectively to the budget pressures all schools are facing, by securing economies of scale whilst retaining individual school autonomy.
- Other freedoms, such as the ability to introduce some flexibility to staff pay and conditions which could help us recruit and retain the very best people (currently pay and conditions are set nationally by the government; as a MAT we are free to deviate from these should we feel it justified; this provides flexibility that VA schools don't currently have – don't worry TUPE regulations mean that current staff will not be any worse off in terms of either pay or conditions after conversion.)

11. Disadvantages

a) Are there disadvantages in achieving Academy status?

- Perception that 'old-style' Academies were created to replace underperforming schools.
- Uncertainty about future Government policy.
- Financial risks – an Academy cannot go into deficit.
- Autonomy brings associated responsibility in areas such as asset management and financial reporting.

12. Miscellaneous Q&As

Will St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School and Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust stop using the 2014 National Curriculum as we have heard that Academies can opt not to teach it?

It is correct that Academies can choose not to teach the 2014 National Curriculum. In the case of the 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.

Will all schools in the Trust follow the same curriculum or is there a risk that some schools in the 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 provide an exceptional education, and it supports all schools in their pursuit of this, for all children. No school is viewed differently in terms of expectations and support. We won't be imposing a set curriculum on schools that are successfully delivering excellent outcomes for all. We will however seek to provide opportunities for subject leads from all schools to come together to plan and develop their curricula collaboratively; this will inevitably lead to even greater consistency over time. Another way in which this consistency of approach will be applied, is through Trust INSET days to which all schools attend and 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. Collaboration across schools is a key part of our development plan for example, setting up subject networks to develop curriculum and pedagogy.

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

For non-academy Voluntary Aided Schools, the Government (Department for Education) gives its funding for education to the Local Authority (ie. Kingston, Richmond etc.). 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 LA, and the LA does not hold money back for the provision of services. This means that the Trust has the flexibility to choose its providers for services, including for those schools where they were previously received from the LA. The Trust uses its volume buying power to secure services for the schools in the Trust. The Trust may decide to buy some services from the LA rather than from a third-party contractor depending on the comparative value of this. The Trust is also open to schools continuing to use their existing suppliers where a school prefers to do so; for example if a school has a really great supplier who offers good value for money they should be able to continue using them.

As it grows, the buying power of the Trust will be further underpinned by the fact that, between all the Christ the Redeemer Schools there will be over 5000 pupils.

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's buying-power. A school may also want to use a small local contractor it has used for many years, and from which good service and value for money has been evident.

How does the Trust apportion the available funding between the 7 or more schools?

In the 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. Under the current model, each school applies to the Diocese for what it needs (VASCA). As an Academy Trust with just under 3000 students, St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School will be able to access the conditions funds by applying directly to the DfE for a grant to help improve facilities. As it grows, the Academy Trust will become eligible to receive an amount of capital funding directly from the central government for capital improvement across the estate. This is in addition to the direct capital funding each school will still receive (DFC – Devolved Formula Capital).

As part of the due diligence undertaken by the Trust prior to formation, Conditions Surveys are being carried out. The Trust will support its schools in planning ahead for capital investment using the results of these surveys.

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

Yes, the 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 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.

Which services do the schools have to buy from the Trust?

Each school can choose which services it buys from the Trust and those it buys independently. The Trust is concerned that it supports Headteachers, rather than making belonging onerous to the Headteachers and Schools. 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 and will be starting with those.

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

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 percentage (called Partnership Agreement) which St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School would pay for services, would be a proportion of the school's per pupil funding received by the government. It will be initially charged at a rate of 2% for Primary Schools and 2% or £120K whichever is lower for Secondary Schools. The percentage partnership agreement will grow only as Headteachers request additional centralised services.

The aim is to centralise some of the key financial systems such as payroll, financial management software etc. to take away some of the administrative burden currently placed on schools. This will also enable the MAT to conduct appropriate monitoring of finances across all its schools.

Can you be more specific on the benefits of Academy status?

- The Trust believes it has Directors with exceptional skill sets, all of whom are showing themselves to be committed to excellence (including Finance, HR and Education).
- The LA's ability to support and fund schools through their improvement plans is reducing dramatically. The Government last year announced their aspiration for all maintained schools to join strong Academy Trusts. The Diocese have also echoed that aspiration for the Catholic Schools within Southwark. It makes sense to get ahead of the curve.
- With schools' budgets already being over 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.
- Headteachers 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.

Can you expand upon the negatives?

- 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.
- An Academy is not permitted to go into budget deficit. This would not be a situation the Trust would want to allow to happen, and has 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.

Other possible negatives include:

- An increase in paperwork at a central Trust level, with an increase in time spent on self-auditing and response to Audits. This is something which has been planned for, and is necessary.
- The accountability placed on the CEO as a result of the Trust governance model. Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust believes that the governance and processes overseen by the

Chair of the Board of Directors, the Board of 7 Directors and the Diocesan appointed Members, will be rigorous enough to support and challenge the CEO.

- 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.

Will St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School lose its individuality?

No, St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School 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.

I understand the financial benefits, however, what happens if 2 or more schools in our Trust 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 Trust receives capital funding each year, a proportion of which will be held to the end of the year to cover any unforeseen costs.

13. How to find out more

DfE information:

[What is an academy and what are the benefits? - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/20/what-is-an-academy-and-what-are-the-benefits/)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/convert-to-an-academy-documents-for-schools>

Parliamentary:

[March 2022 schools White Paper \(England\) - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/library/publications/publication/2022-03-01-march-2022-schools-white-paper-england/)