

SAINT MARTIN'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

CONSULTATION STATEMENT FOR STAKEHOLDERS

ACADEMY STATUS

DECEMBER 2011

What is being proposed?

The Governing Body of Saint Martin's Catholic School is considering a proposal of converting to Academy status in 2012 and registering an official interest in so doing as soon as practicable.

Any decision on whether or not to convert to Academy status will be taken by the Governing Body based on what is considered best for our school, our students, our staff and the wider Catholic community. As part of the decision making process the Governing Body is committed to undertaking full consultation with all interested parties and will take their views into account before any final decision is taken. The purpose of this statement is, therefore, to introduce the proposal to you, signpost you to where you can find additional information and inform you how you can take part in the consultation.

It should be noted that at the end of the process all schools retain the right to withdraw the application to convert to an Academy and remain unchanged.

What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state-funded school which operates independently within the requirements of national codes of practice for state schools, however, unlike a state school it receives its funding directly from central government rather than through a local authority. The first Academies, established under the previous Labour Government, required a sponsoring organisation and had the sole objective of raising standards within the school. Under new legislation introduced by the present coalition government schools that are either 'outstanding' or 'good with outstanding features' are now also eligible to convert to Academy status. It is the current intention of the government that all state schools should become Academies by 2014.

Why convert?

Schools have always operated within a changing educational landscape and the introduction by the coalition government of the Academies programme means that for the collective of Catholic Schools to do nothing is not a viable option. It is the Government's vision that the majority of schools in England will, over time, convert to Academy status and will cease to be 'maintained' by their Local Authority. To date the funding for maintained schools has been routed through Local Authorities who have 'top sliced' that funding to construct and deliver a set of support services, such as legal advice, across all their maintained schools. Local Authorities are adapting to this new climate by selling services in packages. So even remaining as we are, a Voluntary Aided (VA) school under the Local Authority would look different in the future.

Receiving funding directly from the DfE would mean that we could receive back up to 10% (indicative figure provided from the DfE) of the funding that the LA presently takes. There are

some services which we would buy back from the Local Authority out of this additional funding. However, the remaining additional resources would provide the Governing Body with the freedom to be able to exercise its own judgement over best value opportunities for this school.

What will change?

Conversion to Academy Status for Catholic Schools will not be as significant as for Local Authority Maintained Schools. The Governing Bodies of Voluntary Aided Catholic Schools already manage their school finances and have responsibility for employment and admissions. Under the Diocesan model, governance of our school would remain largely unchanged as the majority of governors would be appointed by our Trustees - the Dominican Sisters - and the Diocese. There would also be staff and parent governors as now.

A number of other elements would remain unchanged. An Academy would still be bound by the statutory codes for Special Educational Needs and the admissions criteria for Saint Martin's would remain unchanged. The pay and conditions of staff will remain in line with National and Local Authority agreements. As now, decisions such as the school start and finish times, length of the school day, policy on pupil discipline or the school uniform can only change with consultation and full agreement of the Governing Body.

We will continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, however, an Academy is not bound by the prescriptions of the national curriculum and Governors are conscious that this freedom could offer an additional safeguard from a secular agenda which may not accord with Catholic/Christian teachings.

Our school has excellent relationships with the Local Authority and works well in partnership with other local schools - particularly the Catholic Schools in our Holy Trinity cluster. That commitment to wider partnership working will remain and we will work with our Local Authority and local area schools partnership (HASP) in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support.

What are the challenges?

As mentioned already a number of the challenges facing maintained schools converting to Academy status have already been embraced by Voluntary Aided schools.

However, there are the perceptions of schools "going it alone" and of a "two tier" system with a disregard for disadvantaged schools and the notion of instability for staff in terms of pay and conditions. The Nottingham Diocesan model addresses all of these challenges; no school may convert without their agreement; all schools have the opportunity to convert as part of a family of schools and schools facing difficulties will be supported. The model is underpinned by a commitment to work for the good of all diocesan schools.

Of course, no school can convert without the consent of the Trustees - in the case of Saint Martin's these are appointed by the Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of Saint Catherine of Siena of King William's Town, South Africa. We are currently in the process of carrying out due consultation with the Order as well as obtaining full permission for conversion to an Academy from Bishop Malcolm McMahon.

How will the consultation work?

The consultation period will run from Thursday 8th December 2011 until noon on 16th January 2012.

The Governing Body is consulting with stakeholders including:

- The Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of Saint Catherine of Siena of King William's Town, South Africa
- The Nottingham Diocesan Education Service
- The Parish Priests and the Catholic Communities of South Leicestershire including: Saint Peter's Hinckley; Saint Peter and Saint Paul's Earl Shilton; Our Lady and Saint Gregory's Market Bosworth; Saint Pius X Narborough, Our Lady of Victories and Saint Alphonsus Lutterworth, as well as our nearest Warwickshire parish - Our Lady of the Angels Nuneaton
- The Church of England Diocesan Education Service for Leicester and Leicestershire
- School Governors
- Staff including staff unions and associations
- Parents and known future parents
- Students
- The Parent Teacher & Friends Association (PTFA) of Saint Martin's
- The Leicestershire Local Authority
- Elected representatives (local MPs, Councillors, Parish Councillors)
- Hinckley Area Schools Partnership
- North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
- The wider local community including groups associated with the School in any way

How can I make my views known?

The Governing Body would appreciate responses to this consultation by **16th January 2012**.

You are invited to submit your comments and views using the following e-mail to our Chair of Governors, Mr Steve Smith: ssmith29@st-martins.leics.sch.uk

All views will be noted and included in the final considerations of the Governing Body.

Before I give my views where can I find out more information?

We have set up a dedicated Academy Consultation page on the school website: www.st-martins.leics.sch.uk which includes all documents we think may be helpful when considering your views on the proposal.

Finally

We feel it is worthwhile to emphasise the importance we attach to the provision of a Catholic Secondary School in South Leicestershire delivering outstanding quality education for all based on strong Christian principles in accordance with our school motto Veritas. It remains the Governing Body's aspiration that Saint Martin's will ultimately provide 11-18 educational opportunities for our students.