

# St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

*'Learning, achieving and growing together with Jesus'*

## Diocese of Northampton

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Headteacher: Mrs S. Murphy-Dutton



Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Dear Parents

### **Consultation on Conversion to Academy Status**

You may well be aware that the government is encouraging all schools to convert to academy status. After careful consideration and discussion with the Diocese, the school's Governing Body has decided that they wish to convert to academy status and, in particular, to form a Multi Academy Trust with a number of the other Slough Catholic Schools. Initially, this would be with St Joseph's Catholic High School and St Anthony's Catholic Primary School and Nursery. The name of the Trust would be the St. Peter Catholic Academies Trust. The Diocese is supportive of this and is actively encouraging the creation of the Multi Academy Trust. We are at the start of the process and currently, our aim would be to convert to become an academy on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

We are writing to staff, parents, the parishes we serve and other local community partners to invite views.

#### **What is an academy?**

Academies are publicly funded state schools which are independent of the Local Authority and receive funding directly from central government. The school would still be a Catholic School under the authority of the Bishop of Northampton and its religious designation would not change.

#### **Why are we looking to become an academy?**

As a successful Voluntary Aided school, gaining academy status would give us the autonomy to continue to develop our school and to continue to achieve high standards. As a Multi Academy Trust, there would be greater opportunities for working more closely with other local Catholic schools and the wider community of schools. The benefits of a school-led system where local schools collaborate is highlighted in the recent White Paper "[Educational Excellence Everywhere](#)".

#### **What are the advantages of conversion?**

The government is clear that the greater freedoms enjoyed by academies are designed to allow schools to develop and to build on individual strengths in response to the needs of the community.

We feel that the additional freedoms and flexibilities, and the formal partnership across the Multi Academy Trust, would support the Governors in securing the long term future of our school and in sustaining and enriching Catholic education in Slough, strengthening the voice of the Church and the right to a Catholic education. The Multi Academy Trust would provide a framework of support and greater opportunity for collaboration, reinforcing the family of Catholic schools in Slough.

In addition, the pooling of resources would support the development of teaching, learning and management practice across the schools and provide opportunities for shared learning and the efficient

use of services, all of which would be to the benefit of the children in the schools. There are also some financial benefits such as being able to recover VAT on capital projects, something we cannot do currently.

### **What are the disadvantages of conversion?**

Greater freedoms do bring additional responsibilities, including statutory duties as an academy trust company, but we are confident that we can manage these effectively, particularly by sharing the management of many of these responsibilities across the Multi Academy Trust.

### **Will any changes to the school be made as a result of conversion?**

Please be assured that the unique religious character, ethos and values of the school would remain unchanged should academy conversion take place.

It is unlikely that there would be any noticeable changes on a day to day basis. The schools in the Multi Academy Trust would continue to function as individual schools. There are no proposals to change the names of any of the schools, nor to change uniforms, admission arrangements or the general management and planning of the school day for our children and students. The school would still be known as St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School. Staff would transfer across to the employment of the Multi Academy Trust at the point of conversion and it is our hope that present staff would remain with us and continue to serve the schools as they do now. There would be detailed consultation with staff as part of this transfer process.

### **How to take part in the consultation process**

We are consulting with a number of stakeholders, including you to seek your views and we will consider carefully all responses that we receive.

If you would like to respond to this consultation, we would ask that you let us have your views by [post@stethelberts.slough.sch.uk](mailto:post@stethelberts.slough.sch.uk) by Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July at 5pm.

The consultation will close on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July and any responses received will be reviewed by the Governing Body.

Yours faithfully

**Mr Mike Coote**  
Chair of Governors

**Mrs Sarah Murphy**  
Headteacher

