



**St Philip Howard**  
Catholic High School

Specialist Humanities School

29 April 2016

Dear Parents/Carers

### **Consultation to Convert to Academy Status**

As I am sure you are aware, the Government is encouraging all schools to consider converting to Academy status. For the past sixteen months the Diocesan Education Service has been working closely with the Diocesan Academies Strategic Board and, since his installation last May, with Bishop Richard, in order to develop a coherent model of cluster Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) across the Diocese.

Bishop Richard and the diocesan Trustees have a clear vision for Catholic education within Arundel and Brighton. Five cross-phase Catholic MATs will be created across the diocese and arranged broadly geographically. Each MAT will comprise primary and secondary schools drawn from two or more deaneries. The aim is to cement and to develop both intra- and inter-deanery relationships. The provision of coherent, all through Catholic education from 4-18 is a great strength of the Catholic education system and we must all look forward together. It is Bishop Richard's wish that, over time, schools from Worthing and Cathedral deaneries will form a cross-phase Catholic MAT accordingly.

Like the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Diocese wishes the Worthing and Cathedral MAT to begin with a small number of schools and to grow over time from a position of strength. To this end, it is recommended that the MAT begins with a limited number of schools drawn from Worthing and Cathedral schools, with a view to expanding the cross-phase MAT further as soon as is appropriate. All schools within Worthing and Cathedral deaneries will have the opportunity to be fully involved in shaping the MAT from the outset and to enjoy full membership of the MAT over time.

After careful consideration and preliminary discussion with the Diocese, the Governing Body of St. Philip Howard School (SPH) has decided that they wish to explore conversion to Academy status and, over time, to form a Catholic Multi Academy Trust with schools within the Cathedral and Worthing Deaneries.

We are writing to consult with staff, parents, local community partners, parishes and feeder schools to determine whether SPH should proceed with the first step in this process, which is the conversion to Academy status, and we would very much welcome your views on the matter.

#### *What is an Academy?*

Academies are publicly funded state schools that are independent of the Local Authority and receive funding directly from central government. SPH will still be a Catholic School under the authority of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton and its religious designation will not change.

#### *Why is this being considered?*

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 will be greater opportunities for working more closely with other Worthing and Cathedral Catholic schools and the wider community of schools.

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*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. In addition, we believe that formal partnership as a Catholic multi-academy trust (MAT) will have a number of benefits for all schools. The MAT will:

- formalise and strengthen our existing partnership work with other Catholic schools in the Worthing and Cathedral deaneries, which will enhance our Catholicity, reinforce our shared values and promote a culture of openness and trust;
- support the continuity of Catholic education in the Worthing and Cathedral area for pupils from 4 to 18 years and ease their transition from primary to secondary school;
- enable all schools to both access and deliver peer-led school-to-school support, sharing outstanding teaching and learning expertise across the Trust schools;
- 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;
- secure additional finance to invest in resources for our pupils and schools by providing access to funding that the Local Authority (LA) would otherwise receive and spend on our behalf;
- enable member schools to respond more effectively to the budget pressures all schools are facing by securing economies of scale whilst retaining individual school autonomy;
- reduce the impact of any future reduction in LA services by developing our own capacity to meet the needs of our pupils or commissioning our own specialist support services – for example, to support pupils with SEN.

*What are the benefits to the community?*

By working together collaboratively, the schools will be better placed to support the work of the parishes within the Worthing and Cathedral deaneries. The development of the MAT will also give strength to the Catholic voice and viewpoint within local communities and the education sector. By supporting each other in the promotion of gospel values we will develop a future generation that demonstrates these values in their everyday lives.

*What are the disadvantages of conversion?*

Greater freedoms do bring additional responsibilities including statutory duties as an academy trust company, but the school is confident that we can manage these.

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

We do not intend to make any changes to the school as a result of the conversion, apart from taking advantage of the opportunities outlined above to work more closely with other schools in the MAT. Please be assured that the Catholic character, ethos and values of the school would remain unchanged, should the Academy conversion take place. Indeed, we anticipate that this opportunity to work even more closely together within a supportive Catholic Multi-Academy Trust would further strengthen and support SPH's ethos and traditions.

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

At this stage, we are not committing SPH to conversion to Academy status. We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision. We would like to know what you think of our plans and are inviting you to take part in this consultation. Your views are important to us, so please take the opportunity to complete the response form quickly and simply online at <http://www.sphcs.co.uk/docs/mat/>.

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Should you prefer to complete the form overleaf in hard copy, please ensure that this is returned to the school office. The closing date for the receipt of all forms is 9am on Friday 20 May 2016 after which date the Governors will meet to consider how to proceed.

We will also be holding a meeting at school where you can hear more about the proposals, take part in a question and answer session and raise any queries you may have. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, 10 May at 7pm in the school hall and we very much hope that you will join us.

If you are unable to make this meeting but would like to ask any questions or make any comments, please note these under the 'additional comments' section of the consultation response form, either online or in hard copy, and we will ensure that they are raised at the meeting.

Many thanks in anticipation for your involvement in the consultation process and we look forward to hearing your views on this new and exciting opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DC', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Carter  
**Headteacher**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MG', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Grabowski  
**Chair of Governors**



## Multi-Academy Trust Consultation Response Form

School: St Philip Howard Catholic High School

Name of person responding (optional) .....

Please indicate the reason for your interest in the MAT Consultation:

- Parent/Carer of student(s)
- Parent/Carer of prospective future student
- Member of School staff
- Local Authority employee: (Name of LA) .....
- Student
- Former student
- Staff of other local school or college
- Member of local community

Other (please specify) .....

Please indicate your response by ticking the box next to the appropriate statement below:

- I support the proposal to convert to Academy status and to form a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
- I do not support the proposal to convert to Academy status and to form a Catholic Multi- Academy Trust

Additional comments, if required.

Please comment in the space below on the proposal to convert to Academy status and to form a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and continue over the page if necessary.

An online version of this survey form is available at <http://www.sphcs.co.uk/docs/mat/>.

***Thank you for your response.***