



*'A happy and holy place of learning  
and the centre of a thriving community'*

St Benet's RC Primary School  
St Benet's Way  
Ouston  
Chester-le-Street  
Durham  
DH2 1QX

Website: [www.st-benets.durham.sch.uk](http://www.st-benets.durham.sch.uk)

Email: [stbenets@durhamlearning.net](mailto:stbenets@durhamlearning.net)

Telephone: 0191 4105857

Head teacher: Miss C Harper

Deputy Head Teacher: Mrs C Canham

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Proposal that St Benet's joins Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust  
(previously Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust)**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Context**

As advised in the parish newsletter dated 22nd December 2019 and our school January newsletter, the Diocesan Academy Policy has been revised with the aim that all Diocesan schools will become academies within one of four Diocesan Education Trusts by July 2022.

Underpinning the Diocesan Academy Policy is the desire and need to ensure the promotion, preservation, protection and future development of Catholic education within the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle so that it is fit for the mission of the Church.

There are 156 schools in our diocese educating 53,600 children. 45 of our schools are currently academies. The implementation of this policy will happen in two stages:

Stage 1: consolidation of existing academies and trusts into one base trust; and

Stage 2: conversion of voluntary aided schools to academy status within their regional trust.

Whenever voluntary aided schools convert to academy status, they will join their regional trust as equal partners with all schools within the trust.

All schools in the region will be included in the process from the outset. In establishing these trust structures and having a single system in the Diocese, the aim is to ensure that the children and young people in our schools will continue to receive the very best educational opportunities and life fulfilling experiences, within communities which have the teachings of Christ and his Church at the very centre.

A Catholic trust model where every school has its place will mean that no individual school will be left isolated or vulnerable in a rapidly changing environment. It will ensure that the uniqueness of each individual school is celebrated and the unique contribution of each is recognised and appreciated.

In order for this policy to be fulfilled, the Bishop expects all schools to continue to work together as a Diocesan family for the good of Catholic education in the Diocese.

Through the trust structures the aim is to facilitate greater sharing, adding strength and capacity to the system and ensuring that all schools are supported and included.





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The Diocese believe that in this way the Diocese will better fulfil the mission of Catholic education within the Church.

For some time now, the Local Governing Body of St Benet's has been considering how we can maximise and futureproof potential opportunities for our pupils and staff. Governors have been exploring the possibility of formally joining an existing Multi Academy Trust (MAT), as we believe our successful approach to partnership working can be furthered by joining a local MAT. The Governing Body's priority is to ensure our school continues to provide an excellent education for our children, whilst also continuing to be at the heart of our community.

It was therefore also very timely that Bishop Robert Byrne of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle formally announced the Diocesan wish for greater collaboration between schools and academies and the expansion of Catholic MATs.

### **What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**

A MAT is formed when two or more academies legally come together in partnership. Each school keeps its own name and it is possible for other academies to join the Trust in the future. The partnership ensures that the schools can share skills and best practice and make optimum use of resources ensuring best value for money for each school.

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference, they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. However, in time the children will perhaps notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn for example and have greater links with each school within the Trust.

Therefore, in line with Diocesan policy, it is the intention of our Governors that St Benet's joins the MAT originally formed by Cardinal Hume Catholic School: The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust, soon to be known as Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust. Many of you will already know that Cardinal Hume Catholic School is a local, highly successful, outstanding school.

The Trinity Catholic MAT currently has the following academies working together in the Trust:

**Cardinal Hume Catholic School**

**Our Lady Queen of Peace RC Primary School, Houghton-le-Spring**

**St Anne's RC Primary School, Gateshead**

**St Bede's RC Primary School, Washington**

**St John Boste RC Primary School, Washington**

**St Joseph's RC Primary School, Washington**

**St Michael's RC Primary School, Houghton-le-Spring**

**St Robert of Newminster Roman Catholic School, Washington**





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The following academies also have commenced the legal process of joining The Trinity Catholic MAT and hope to have this completed within the Spring term of 2020:

**St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon on Tyne**

**Sacred Heart, Gateshead**

**St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, Prudhoe**

**St Leonard's Catholic School Durham**

**St Bede's Catholic Academy Lanchester**

The following primary schools are also consulting at this time on joining The Trinity Catholic MAT and hope to have this completed along the same time scales as ourselves:

**Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, Esh Winning**

**St Bede's, Sacriston**

**St Cuthbert's, Chester-le-Street**

**St Godric's, Durham**

**St Joseph's, Ushaw Moor**

**St Michael's, Esh Village**

### **About the Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust**

The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust, was established in February 2012 by Cardinal Hume Catholic School, judged to be outstanding by Ofsted in 2007 and 2014.

The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the schools within the MAT and accountable to the Bishop, providing visionary strategic leadership, a focus on continuous improvement, high quality governance and a strong Catholic ethos with a caring and supportive culture. Cardinal Hume's Teaching School: Trinity North East Teaching School Alliance means that professional development of staff is central to the work of the Trust.

### **Vision, Values and Ethos**

The Trust's aim is to build upon the existing strengths of the partnership with our schools and to offer outstanding education provision so that every child succeeds and reaches their potential.

'Every child, every opportunity' is the foundation on which the Trust is built.

As a Trust, it values the close working and supportive relationships held with parents and carers.

### **What are the main benefits for schools within the Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust?**

- Access to high performing staff, including an "outstanding" Trust leadership team who are sharply focussed on securing excellence.
- Moderation of standards across the partnership of schools to ensure the highest quality provision.
- Greater control over school finances, as funding comes directly to school from central government.
- Educational benefits for students as a result of additional freedoms available to academies in terms of the curriculum we offer, and how we prioritise resources.





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- The opportunity to work in close and formalised partnership with other schools and share expertise and services that will benefit all of our students and staff.
- Sharing resources and expertise allows us to target funding towards improving front line teaching and learning, the facilities and teaching environment.
- Develop our own solutions collaboratively.
- Building on Catholic ethos and protecting Catholic education and values.

### **Governance**

The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust Board will provide strong and effective governance to all of the schools in the Trust including our school. Within the Multi Academy Trust each school will have a Local Governing Committee with specific powers delegated from the central Trust Board.

### **Will admissions arrangements change?**

Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust is responsible (in accordance with Diocesan policy) for setting the admissions arrangements for our schools. It must be stressed however the admissions criteria must have regard to the National Admissions Code of Practice. There are no plans to change the admissions criteria for our school.

### **When would the school change to become part of The Trinity Catholic MAT?**

We would aim for a transfer date of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

### **How can you respond?**

The Trustees would very much like to hear your opinion. Should you like to provide written feedback, we have provided a response form attached to this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Catherine Harper  
Headteacher

Bernadette Davison  
Chair of Governors





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### Proposal to join The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust Feedback Form

Please let us know your views regarding our school becoming part of The Trinity Catholic Multi Academy Trust.

Name.....

Contact details.....

Parent/Carer Staff Other please state.....

Your written response should be emailed to [stbenets@durhamlearning.net](mailto:stbenets@durhamlearning.net) by no later than **3pm** on **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020**. Thank you for taking the time to respond.

