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Voluntary Aided 11-18 Roman Catholic School for Girls
Headteacher: Ms Julia Waters BSc (Hons) MA

Crescent Road, Wimbledon, London SW20 8HA
020 8255 2688 / www.ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk

24th April 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

Development of a Catholic Multi Academy Trust – Catholic Schools in Merton, Sutton and Part of Croydon

We are writing to provide you with details of ongoing strategic discussions taking place, within the Archdiocese of Southwark, regarding the future governance of our Catholic schools.

For a number of years now under successive Governments, the education landscape has seen the growth of academies and as governors we have closely observed the progression.

Academies are state-funded schools that are run by charitable trusts rather than being maintained by the Local Authority. Academies receive funding directly from the Government as opposed to maintained schools who receive funding through the Local Authority. More information on academies can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>.

You may recall that in the early stages of the academies programme, schools that were underperforming were directed by the Government to convert to academy status under a 'sponsor' arrangement. However, in more recent years, there has been more of a focus on Good and Outstanding schools choosing to become academies as part of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). The Government's intention is for successful schools like ours, to work in partnership with similar schools, to secure the best possible outcomes for our children and young people.

Our school has always worked collaboratively and in partnership with other Catholic schools within our Archdiocese and more widely. We now have a chance to explore whether it is in the best interests of our entire school community to formalise this partnership by joining a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust that we will establish with other Catholic primary and secondary schools.

For a number of years, we have worked with 14 other like-minded Catholic schools across the areas of Merton, Sutton, and Croydon. These schools are:

Wimbledon College
St Philomena's Catholic High School for Girls
St Mary's RC Infants School
St Mary's RC Junior School
St Elphege's RC Infants' School
St Elphege's RC Junior School
Regina Coeli Catholic Primary School
St Cecilia's Catholic Primary School
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

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Ursuline High School
WIMBLEDON
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St John Fisher RC Primary School
St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School
St Mary's Catholic Primary School

All schools involved in this partnership have worked together to develop a shared vision around advancing and securing Catholic education as well as the values which will underpin the development of proposals to establish a new Catholic Academy Trust. Our vision and values are:

Vision

Christ at the Centre

Our Catholic schools will be places of excellence providing service and witness to our students, their families and the wider community.

Mission

The mission of the Trust is to provide our students with a well-rounded Catholic education that fully develops each person with an emphasis on academic excellence and flourishing personal development regardless of background or prior attainment. The Trust will provide exemplary levels of support to our schools to ensure the highest quality of education through ambitious, impactful leadership, governance and financial management. The Trust will ensure sustainable recruitment, retention and professional development of staff at all levels to enable a well-qualified and expert staff community.

Values

The below values aim to underpin the policy and decision-making of our Trust.

Service and Faith in Action

We reflect the distinctive Catholic nature of our schools in our policy and practice. We firmly embed Catholic Social Teaching in the life of our schools. We provide opportunities for all our communities to deepen, explore and live out their Charism, faith and spirituality.

Family and Student Centred

Our distinct Catholic nature rooted in the Gospel values seeks to accompany students and families of all faiths. We respect and provide for the diverse needs of all our students and their families.

Inclusion and Diversity

We value, listen and respond to the needs of our diverse communities. We aim for our staff and Local Governing Boards (LGB) and Directors to reflect the communities we serve.





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Ethical Leadership

The Trust operates through the principles of ethical leadership. Integrity, respect, trust, fairness, transparency and honesty.

The Archdiocese of Southwark has reviewed our early development work and vision for the Trust, and they have confirmed their support for our group of schools to develop more detailed plans that can be presented to our school community and the Regional Advisory Board for our area. Further information on the Archdiocese of Southwark’s approach to the academies programme can be found here: <https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/academisation/>.

We are meeting regularly as a group of schools and have established a ‘Steering Group’ to develop plans jointly with a view to presenting a more detailed proposal to the Archdiocese and relevant government agencies in the Summer Term 2023. This would be with a view to establish the new Catholic Academy Trust at some time in 2024.

If governors continue to be satisfied that pursuing the establishment of a new Catholic Academy Trust is in the best interests of our school, we will begin a more formal period of consultation with the entire school community whereby more detailed plans will be shared and feedback collated.

The timing for the establishment of the new Catholic Academy Trust and any decisions on the conversion process for each school is still under discussion with the Archdiocese, and so it is not possible to outline exactly when the school might join the new academy trust. However, we wanted to make sure you are fully informed of our thinking at this stage before any firm timetable and formal consultation takes place.

In advance of the formal consultation period, and to help guide us as we develop our plans, we would welcome your early feedback on any areas that you would like more detailed information on as part of the formal consultation information. Our wish is to be as transparent as possible throughout this process and therefore your early involvement is welcomed.

If you have any suggestions, please feel free to contact Ms Waters via her PA, Lydia Torch at lydia.torch@ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk

We will endeavour to keep you informed as our discussions progress over the next few months.

Yours faithfully

Julia Waters
Headteacher

Claire Thorogood
Chair of Governors

