

Archdiocese of Birmingham

## St Mary's Catholic Primary School

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## Academy Consultation FAQ:

### What is an academy?

Academies are still state schools, but they're funded and operated a little differently than maintained schools.

Instead of being funded by the local authority, academy trusts are paid directly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This means that academies have more control over how they do things, compared to schools that aren't academies.

Academies don't charge fees.

### ... a multi-academy trust/company (MAT/MAC)?

Academy trusts are not-for-profit companies. They have trustees/directors who are responsible for their performance, in the same way that local authority (LA) maintained schools have governors.

The trustees are both company directors and charity trustees, and the academy company employs the school staff.

We're proposing to join an existing multi-academy trust. This means that we'll be part of a community of schools that are governed by one board of directors. Each school in the trust will also have its own local governing body, with some delegated governance responsibilities for that particular school. The trust will also employ a team of central staff to support the group of schools and drive school improvement. As part of a trust with multiple schools, our school will have the opportunity to collaborate and share resources with the other schools across the trust.

### ... the benefit of academisation for our school?

The benefits for our school will include:

- Improved teaching and learning for our pupils, because:
  - Teaching expertise and resources can be shared across the trust
  - There will be more training opportunities for our staff
- Greater freedom in deciding how to spend government funding
- The opportunity to collaborate
- Greater financial efficiency
  - By procuring goods and services at a larger scale across the trust
  - By sharing staff, including specialist staff who work centrally for the trust, like a school improvement team or pastoral team

### ... the reason we're looking to join The Pope Francis Multi Academy Company?

The Pope Francis Catholic MAC (PFMAC) is a well-established academy company that was formed in 2014, the PFMAC is a medium size trust of 11 schools and has undergone recent growth and developed the support

services. The company will continue to grow but is limited to Catholic schools and will not grow to a significant size, this means there will continue to be a close working relationship with the MAC and it's schools.

The PFMAC has a good record of school improvement and is able to offer support and collaborative working with it's other schools, while St Mary's will also be able to continue local partnership arrangements in Bicester.

## On money ...

### ... will the trust or trustees make a profit from the school?

No. Academy trusts are charities, and any surplus or other income must be used to benefit pupils.

### ... will the trust take any money away from our school?

The trust will receive our school's money known as the general annual grant (GAG). It will collect a proportion of this funding as a contribution to pay for some central services before passing on the rest to our school. The PFMAC bases its contribution on a percentage of pupil-based funding, excluding any elements that are specifically for deprivation or additional needs.

- The PFMAC will carefully consider the funding needs and allocations of each academy.
- The PFMAC support team provides systems and services that cover Education and School Improvement, Finance, HR, Operations (including H&S and Premises) and Governance
- The PFMAC does not top-slice or pool other funding outside of the GAG e.g., Pupil Premium and Sports Funding.

### ... will our school get more money as an academy?

The amount of funding allocated per pupil at our school won't change. We'll get the same funds that we would have done as a maintained school.

However, we'll be able to negotiate our own contracts for products and services, which means we'll have the opportunity to find better services and prices.

### ... how much is academy conversion going to cost?

The costs associated with conversion to academy such as legal costs and systems are covered by a separate grant from the ESFA.

## When our school is an academy ...

### ... will it still be inspected by Ofsted?

Academies are inspected by Ofsted and are held to the same standards as other state-run schools.

### ... will it follow the National Curriculum?

Academies don't have to follow the National Curriculum however most academies continue to follow this.

### ... will we change our name/logo/uniform?

There are currently no plans to change the uniform or logo, the signage for the school will change from Oxfordshire County Council to The Pope Frances Catholic MAC.

### ... will our term times change?

The term dates will be set in line with Oxfordshire County Council, the PFMAC has an inset for all schools at the start of the academic year.

### **... will our catchment area or admissions policy change?**

The catchment area and admissions policy will remain the same.

## **How will academisation affect ...**

### **... our pupils?**

Pupils are unlikely to notice a large difference on a day-to-day basis.

### **... our provision for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)?**

Academies continue to work with the local authority on SEND provision and pupils with special educational needs that are eligible for additional support will continue to have this funded by Oxfordshire County Council.

### **... our school staff?**

The PFMAC complies with the nationally agreed salary scales for teachers and support staff. Staff will continue to contribute to the TPS and LGPS pension schemes and PFMAC uses/complies with existing OCC staffing policies. Following the academy application process and confirmation from the DFE, a formal TUPE consultation process would begin involving the teaching and support staff unions.

### **... our school's religious character?**

As a Catholic Multi Academy Company, the PFMAC works closely with the Archdiocese of Birmingham to ensure the Catholic ethos of the school is maintained, the school will continue to have Section 48 inspections.