



A DIOCESAN FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

A Vision for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Leeds

1. Introduction

- 1.2 From the time of the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy in 1850, the provision of, and support for, Catholic schools has been central to the life and mission of the Church in England and Wales. Ever since then, we have been required to work together as a Catholic community to rise to the political, economic and social challenges and opportunities which the Church's mission in education has had to face. This mission has always taken place in a testing and changing context and our contemporary situation is no exception.
- 1.3 In the course of my visits to parishes over the past three years, I have met with the Chairs of Governors and Headteachers of the primary schools and academies located within those parishes to listen to their hopes and concerns. It has been a great encouragement to me to learn of the wonderful commitment and energy that exists in our diocesan schools. What has also emerged is a desire for greater clarity about the expectations on primary and secondary schools in relation to the development of the five multi-academy trusts within the diocese.
- 1.4 It is now just over six years since the Diocese of Leeds published its guidance for governors in October 2011, *'Building the Future: Considering Multi-Academy Trusts'*. This document presented a very clear description of 'how' schools could convert to academy status and proposed a framework of how five multi-academy trusts could be structured to offer parents a provision of Catholic education for 3-19 years. The framework recognised that for each multi-academy trust to have sufficient capacity to realise the benefits of their status, there would need to be more than one secondary school in each trust together with their associated clusters of feeder primary schools.

1.5 Despite the clarity of the guidance and framework though, it was clear from my conversations with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors that they were unsure of the vision which underpinned the proposals for the academy framework. I have been asked my views therefore on the academy programme and the proposed structure for the diocese.

2. The Vision

2.1 My answer, I hope, has been clear. Vision must come before structures. What is of most concern to me is that all our schools (whether voluntary-aided or academy status) keep clear before them their purpose: 'to assist the Church in its mission of making Christ known to all people; to assist parents, who are the primary educators of their children, in the education and religious formation of their children; to be at the service of the local Church - the diocese, the parish and the Christian home; and, to be a service to society' (*Christ at the Centre*, 2nd Edition, 2012, published by CTS). The most effective multi-academy trusts and voluntary-aided schools have a clarity of purpose, a clear vision of what they are trying to achieve and of the educational mission which is at the heart of all that they do, each and every day. This clarity of purpose needs to be owned not just by schools individually but as a diocesan 'family' of schools.

2.2 In the context of the current and foreseeable opportunities offered by the state for the provision of Catholic schools in England, it is important, first and foremost, that Catholic schools strengthen their solidarity and collaborate effectively with each other in order to achieve their purpose and their mission. It is also essential that Catholic schools collaborate as members, or as family groups, of one diocesan family of schools. This solidarity is essential not only 'when' and 'where' institutional circumstances require it as a reactive or pragmatic measure to a particular difficulty or specific need. Rather, this solidarity and collaboration needs to be strategic, structured and resilient, forged from a common vision; the vision of an effective and robust diocesan family of schools that exist to serve the educational mission of the Church in this diocese and in this country.

2.3 My vision for this diocesan family of schools is that it will be comprised of clusters or 'family groups' of Catholic schools based on the five multi-academy trusts and include our two Catholic higher education institutions, Notre Dame Sixth Form College and Leeds Trinity University, as well as our specialist

school, St John's School for the Deaf. The five family groups of schools will not be exclusive or work in isolation from each other but collaborate within a strategic and structured framework that will develop the capacity to sustain improvement in all aspects of education across the family of diocesan schools, and in partnership with our higher education institutions and specialist school.

2.4 I believe that the formation of these family groups of schools should be a priority and be comprised initially of both our five multi-academy trusts and our current diocesan voluntary aided schools. The formation of schools and multi-academy trusts into family groups serving the various areas of the diocese, united by a common framework, will allow for better collaboration and create more opportunities to develop concrete, durable and sustainable partnerships among the schools and with their local deaneries and parishes.

3. The Role of our Multi-Academy Trusts

3.1 From my conversations with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors, I have learned that, for a variety of reasons, a large number of our diocesan schools have held back from making the step to convert to academy status and becoming a member of one of our diocesan multi-academy trusts, though in principle they can see the arguments for doing so. There are fears that joining one of the trusts may lead to a loss of self-determination and centralisation. As a result of the hesitancy, there is an insufficient number of primary schools and secondary colleges in each of the five multi-academy trusts for these trusts to create the capacity to achieve their full potential, both individually and as a group of trusts working collaboratively. This is one of the reasons why I think this vision for our diocesan family of schools needs to be made clear.

3.2 The principles of solidarity and subsidiarity must be maintained within our vision. Without doubt, the Catholic multi-academy trust model which we have in place has a huge potential to further the vision of an effective and strong diocesan 'family' of schools and colleges whilst maintaining these key principles.

3.3 The principle of subsidiarity is embedded in the scheme of delegation which operates within our multi-academy trust model and ensures that the distinctiveness of our schools and their relationship to their parish communities is preserved. It also ensures that decisions are taken at the most immediate local level as far as good governance allows.

- 3.4 The principle of solidarity is embedded in the structural and organisational potential which the five multi-academy trusts have with one another for: accelerating school improvement, in particular the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and the achievements of children and young people; supporting and developing, leadership and management skills (particularly 'system leadership'), for substantially improving the offer and outcomes for pupils both spiritually, academically and culturally; and, for developing more effective shared services (e.g. human resources, legal facilities and financial support, chaplaincy teams, etc.), services which will be beneficial to the interests of the whole family of diocesan schools. But to achieve this potential fully, this vision needs to be owned and developed in solidarity by all of our schools within the Diocese of Leeds.
- 3.5 In building the conviction among schools that together they can realise this potential, we need as a matter of urgency to develop joint collaboration of our voluntary aided schools, and particularly of those highly successful local partnerships of schools which already exist, with the five diocesan multi-academy trusts. This will provide greater opportunities for raising standards, for improved training, sharing resources and expertise, and creating the economies of scale in the purchasing of school services which are critical at a time when available funding is so low.
- 3.6 It is my wish therefore that all of our voluntary aided primary and secondary schools join one of our five multi-academy trusts and that they begin (if they are not already doing so) to create strong collaborative partnerships with those trusts and to engage in discussions with the Vicariate for Education about the process and timing of their conversion to academy status. The timing of conversion will need to be considered so that each multi-academy trust grows in a structured way and that there is the capacity within the trust to support its growth.
- 3.7 Joining these multi-academy trusts is not just about the pragmatic benefits which academy status might bring for an individual school or group of schools but about the strategic and structural solidarity which the trusts can achieve in securing the future for Catholic education in the Diocese of Leeds. Membership of one of the five diocesan multi-academy trusts will ensure that this solidarity will be expressed by a partnership and collaboration between our schools which is strategic, structured, resilient and accountable.

3.8 In the white paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, published in March 2016, legislative proposals were set out to make it mandatory for all publically funded schools to become academies. Although these proposals were withdrawn by the government in May 2016, it is still government policy that the majority of schools in England should become academies, though the deadline of achieving this by 2022 has been withdrawn. Significantly, the white paper also proposed that most schools would form or join multi-academy trusts.

3.9 Unless there is a dramatic reversal of this policy by both of the two main political parties in parliament, all the current and foreseeable signs indicate that most schools and colleges will need at some point to move towards academy status. This is evident from the fact that the direct funding of academies by central government has resulted in most local authorities no longer having the capacity to provide adequate resources to support the schools they maintained.

4. The Way Ahead – Solidarity and Collaboration

4.1 One of the great dangers we face, is our schools becoming isolated and unsupported. As a diocesan family of schools, we need to ensure that there are secure strategies and structures within that family which can provide the help and assistance needed to any of our individual schools, or groups of schools, that become vulnerable, in need of significant support or intervention. No school should find itself alone or abandoned when it is in need of support.

4.2 Another danger, is that the effective partnerships of schools which have been developed become fragmented. Where there is a strong partnership of schools already in existence it would be desirable that the voluntary-aided schools in that partnership consider the conversion to academy status together. It is clear to me that there are some fine examples of these collaborative partnerships already in place in our diocese, i.e., the Catholic Schools Partnership Teaching Schools Alliance in Bradford and Keighley, the Leeds Catholic Schools' Association, etc. I do not wish to see any existing partnerships of Catholic schools diminished; the effective collaboration they have forged as local groups of schools is to be treasured and is one of the strengths that they can bring to the family groups of schools. When these partnerships join a diocesan multi-academy trust, the experience and contribution which they bring will enhance and increase the overall capacity of that trust and local family group of schools to create the structural and organisational potential outlined in 3.4 above.

- 4.3 In this diocese we have further opportunities for collaboration and partnership that allow us to offer our children and students an even richer experience of Catholic education and to strengthen and promote their participation in Catholic higher education. In encouraging the aspirations of students we need to come together with all of our diocesan educational partners. Principally among these are Notre Dame Sixth Form College and Leeds Trinity University.
- 4.4 The Catholic Education Service is working with the Department for Education to develop a process allowing sixth form colleges to convert to academy status. Whatever the outcome of these discussions, Notre Dame Sixth Form College will be a key element of the diocese's educational provision within its Catholic family of schools.
- 4.5 So too, we are fortunate to have Leeds Trinity University within the Catholic life-long educational family of our diocese and forms a part of the Catholic Church's higher educational provision in this country. The University already has representation on each of our multi-academy trust boards and is a strategic partner together with the diocesan Teaching Schools. With the development of the five multi-academy trusts there is a strategic opportunity for all of our schools to work more closely with the University in the training, recruitment, retention and career progression of our school leaders and teachers.
- 4.6 As the national educational landscape develops, full partnership working will provide opportunities for the developing North-East Regional Catholic Education Hub to work with Leeds Trinity University. This 'Education Hub' is comprised of 5 Catholic dioceses (including the Diocese of Leeds), 36 Teaching Schools (to date), and will serve a total of 67 secondary schools and 369 primary schools.

5. The Next Steps

- 5.1 The inclusion of all of our schools as academies into the five families of schools as multi-academy trusts will not alone of course guarantee improvement. Only a sustained focus by the multi-academy trusts on ensuring genuine collaboration across schools, in particular school-to-school support, will have the greatest success in securing the development of a self-sustaining, self-improving system where leaders and teachers extend their moral and professional accountabilities to schools beyond their own.

- 5.2 I believe that the multi-academy trust model which we have in place in our diocese has the potential to help us create the long-term solidarity we need to achieve this and to maintain an effective and collaborative diocesan family of Catholic schools. The five family groups of schools, together with our two Catholic institutes of higher education, working as one diocesan family, will give us the strategic strength and confidence we need for the future. What we need to do now is to build on this vision together.
- 5.3 The framework for these five family groups of schools in the Diocese of Leeds will be modelled on the clusters of schools drawn up for the multi-academy trusts in the appendix to the 2011 paper '*Building the Future*'. An amended list of these five clusters is provided at the end of this document.
- 5.4 Any school which believes it should join a neighbouring family of schools rather than the one designated in the framework, can make a case for this. However, the overall framework of five multi-academy trusts will not be changed. At this stage, the number of primary and secondary schools in each family group is needed to create the capacity for each multi-academy trust to be viable and sustainable, and to reach their full potential.
- 5.5 I ask all of our schools, and partnerships of schools, which are not currently members (or do not have existing plans for becoming members) of one of our five multi-academy trusts, to begin to engage in discussions about taking this vision forward with their designated family of schools identified in the framework, and with the Vicariate for Education. More information about how the Vicariate will support these discussions will be sent to you in due course.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The challenges and opportunities we face as a diocesan family of schools in the future will undoubtedly, as today, take place in the context of a shifting backdrop of government education policy and financial provision. This is why it is essential that, while we respect the principle of subsidiarity and the power of local decision making, we create also solidarity and strong partnerships between our schools where they are lacking, strengthen those that exist, and fortify and develop collaboration in a strategic, structured and resilient way across all of our diocesan family of schools. We may make mistakes and encounter difficulties along the road but I am confident that we can make this journey together.

6.2 My conviction comes from the faith that we share as one family in the Church; faith in Lord Jesus Christ who will guide us with His light and sustain us with His grace as we make this journey. The strength of any family is in the quality of its relationships. This is evident when its members, respecting the dignity of each, work together for the good of one another and in the service of the common good. This too will be our strength in the years ahead if, as a diocesan family of schools, we are able to build relationships, forge solidarity and develop a collaborative framework of family groups of schools that is resilient to present and future challenges, and provides us with the confidence to take advantage of new opportunities.

I ask you to give this vision that I have outlined your careful thought and to make it the subject of your prayers and both the priority and objective of your school communities.

**✠ Marcus
Bishop of Leeds**

Feast of the Chair of St Peter the Apostle, 22nd February 2018



FRAMEWORK FOR THE FIVE FAMILY GROUPS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

I. FAMILY GROUP - Bradford (Blessed Christopher Wharton Catholic Academy Trust)

Primary Schools

1. Our Lady of Victories Catholic Primary Academy, Keighley
2. St Joseph Catholic Primary Academy, Keighley
3. St Anne Catholic Primary Academy, Keighley
4. St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary Academy, Buttershaw
5. St Walburga Catholic Primary Academy, Bradford
6. St Winefride Catholic Primary Academy, Wibsey
7. Our Lady & St Brendan Catholic Primary School, Idle
8. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Bingley
9. St Anthony Catholic Primary School, Clayton
10. St Anthony Catholic Primary School, Shipley
11. St Clare Catholic Primary School Catholic Primary School, Fagley
12. St Columba Catholic Primary School, Dudley Hill
13. St Cuthbert & First Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Bradford
14. St Francis Catholic Primary School, Eccleshill
15. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Bradford
16. St Mary & St Peter Catholic Primary School, Bradford
17. St Matthew Catholic Primary School, Allerton
18. St William Catholic Primary School, Bradford

Secondary Schools

19. Holy Family Catholic High School, Keighley
20. St Bede & St Joseph Catholic College, Bradford

**II. FAMILY GROUP - Calderdale/Kirklees
(Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust)**

Primary Schools

1. Sacred Heart Catholic Primary Academy, Sowerby Bridge
2. St Malachy Catholic Primary Academy, Halifax
3. Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, Heckmondwike
4. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Batley Carr
5. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Brighouse
6. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Halifax
7. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Huddersfield
8. St Mary Catholic Primary School, Batley
9. St Mary Catholic Primary School, Halifax
10. St Paulinus Catholic Primary School, Dewsbury
11. St Patrick Catholic Primary School, Birstall
12. St Patrick Catholic Primary School, Elland
13. St Patrick Catholic Primary School (Federation), Huddersfield
14. Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School (Federation), Huddersfield

Secondary Schools

15. All Saints Catholic College, Huddersfield
16. St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy, Dewsbury

**III. FAMILY GROUP - Leeds
(St Gregory the Great Trust Catholic Academy Trust)**

Primary Schools

1. Christ the King Catholic Primary Academy, Bramley
2. Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School, Leeds
3. Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Leeds
4. Holy Rosary & St Anne Catholic Primary School, Leeds
5. Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Leeds
6. Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Primary School, Leeds
7. Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Leeds
8. St Anthony Catholic Primary School, Leeds

9. St Augustine Catholic Primary School, Leeds
10. St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, Beeston
11. St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley
12. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Hunslet
13. St Mary Catholic Primary School, Rothwell
14. St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, Leeds
15. St Paul Catholic Primary School, Leeds
16. St Patrick Catholic Primary School, Leeds
17. St Philip Catholic Primary School, Middleton
18. St Theresa Catholic Primary School, Leeds
19. St Urban Catholic Primary School, Headingley

Secondary Schools

20. Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, Leeds
21. Corpus Christi Catholic College, Leeds
22. Mount St Mary Catholic High School, Leeds

**IV. FAMILY GROUP - North Leeds/ North Yorkshire
(Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust)**

Primary Schools

1. Sacred Heart Catholic Primary Academy, Ilkley
2. St Mary Catholic Primary Academy, Horsforth
3. Holy Name Catholic Primary Academy, Leeds
4. St Peter & St Paul Catholic Primary Academy, Yeadon
5. St Joseph Catholic Primary Academy, Otley
6. St Joseph Catholic Primary Academy, Pudsey
7. St Joseph Catholic Primary Academy, Harrogate
8. St Mary Catholic Primary Academy, Knaresborough
9. St Stephen Catholic Primary Academy, Skipton
10. Barkston Ash Catholic Primary School, Barkston Ash
11. St Edward Catholic Primary School, Boston Spa
12. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Barnoldswick
13. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Tadcaster
14. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Wetherby

15. St Robert Catholic Primary School, Harrogate

16. St Wilfrid Catholic Primary School, Ripon

Secondary Schools

17. St John Fisher Catholic High School, Harrogate

18. St Mary's Catholic Academy, Menston

**V. FAMILY GROUP - Wakefield
(Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust)**

Primary Schools

1. English Martyrs Catholic Primary Academy, Wakefield

2. Holy Family & St Michael Catholic Primary Academy, Pontefract

3. Sacred Heart Catholic Primary Academy, Hemsworth

4. St Austin Catholic Primary Academy, Wakefield

5. St Benedict Catholic Primary Academy, Garforth

6. St Ignatius Catholic Primary Academy, Ossett

7. St John the Baptist Catholic Primary Academy, Normanton

8. St Joseph Catholic Primary Academy, Castleford

9. St Joseph Catholic Primary Academy, Moorthorpe

10. St Joseph Catholic Primary Academy, Pontefract

11. St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Goole

12. St Mary Catholic Primary School, Selby

Secondary Schools

13. Holy Family Catholic High School, Carlton

14. St Thomas à Becket Catholic Academy, Wakefield

15. St Wilfrid Catholic Academy, Pontefract

CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

1. Notre Dame Sixth Form College, Leeds

2. Leeds Trinity University, Horsforth, Leeds

SPECIALIST SCHOOL

1. St John School for the Deaf, Boston Spa