



**Catholic Primary School & Nursery**

Victoria Park Avenue  
Lea  
Preston  
PR2 1RP  
T 01772 728153

[head@st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:head@st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk)  
[bursar@st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:bursar@st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk)  
[www.st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk](http://www.st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk)  
Headteacher: Mrs. Mia Barlow

**"You are precious in my eyes"**

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers/Guardians/Parishioners

### **Consultation to convert to Academy status and join the Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust**

You may be aware that the Diocese of Lancaster has been working closely with the Department for Education over the last few years to agree a way forward for the Catholic schools in the Diocese to form or join Catholic Multi Academy Trusts. These Multi Academy Trusts will be developed by groups of Catholic primary and secondary schools who wish to join and work together. The vision behind this initiative is set out in Bishop Paul's letter to parishioners of 14th September 2020.

The Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust has been identified by the Diocese and the Department for Education as a suitable Trust to take forward this vision for Catholic education in the Preston area. After careful consideration and preliminary discussion with the Diocese and other Catholic schools in our area, the Governing Body of St. Bernard's Catholic Primary has decided that they wish to explore conversion to academy status and, in particular, to join the Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust on 1st September 2022.

The Bishop's vision is that all Catholic schools in the Preston area will join Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust by 2026. There are currently 7 Catholic schools considering joining the Trust in Wave 1. In addition to ourselves they are:

- St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Preston
- St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Fulwood, Preston
- The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School, Preston
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Preston
- St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Preston
- Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School, Preston

The rationale behind the Bishops vision for academy trusts is to make sure that we protect, preserve and promote Catholic education in the Diocese of Lancaster. The Catholic Multi Academy Trust model will ensure that the uniqueness of each individual school is celebrated and the unique contribution of each is recognised and appreciated. It will also mean that no individual school will be left isolated or vulnerable in a rapidly changing and complex environment. The aim is also to enable greater sharing, adding strength and capacity to the system and ensuring that all schools are supported.

Our Governing Body's priority remains to continue to provide an excellent Catholic education for our children, whilst being at the heart of our community.

Therefore, in line with Diocesan policy, our Governing Body are undertaking consultation with staff, parents and carers, local parishioners and other local schools, both Catholic and non-Catholic, to determine whether St. Bernard's should proceed with an application to convert to become an academy and join Mater Ecclesiae

Catholic Multi Academy Trust. We would like to invite your views on the matter. **This consultation starts on 6th December 2021 and concludes at 3pm Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022.**

At the end of the consultation, the Governing Body will consider the responses before they make their final decision.

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

Please be assured that the Catholic character, ethos and values of St. Bernard's Catholic Primary School would remain unchanged should the proposals be agreed.

We do not intend to make any changes to the day-to-day work of the school following conversion, other than to adjust the governance arrangements and accountability that comes with working within a Multi Academy trust and to bring closer working practices between the schools in the Trust. More information on the process and the answers to many of the questions you may have can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document attached to this letter.

### **How do I learn more and how do I respond to the consultation?**

At this stage we are not committing the school to conversion to academy status or to joining Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust. We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision.

On Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021, Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 the FAQs document will be updated and shared on our website to reflect any questions that are pertinent to our wider community.

Whilst we do not anticipate responding to each and every communication, we will provide answers to questions via the FAQs and we welcome your views. Please be assured your views will be taken into consideration by our Governing Body when they meet to make a final decision.

If you wish to respond to the consultation, we ask that you let us have your views by emailing the attached feedback template to [head@st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:head@st-bernards.lancs.sch.uk) or responding through our APP by 3pm on **Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022**. Please include your name and contact details.

The Governing Body will meet after this date to consider how to proceed and the outcome of the consultation process will be shared on the school's website.

Yours sincerely,



Mia Barlow  
Headteacher



Angela Harding  
Chair of Governors

