

## St. Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Academy Trust Frequently Asked Questions

### Introduction

The aim of this Frequently Asked Questions document is to provide a response to some of the questions that have been raised during this period of discernment. The answers are designed to give initial clarity to school leaders and Governors prior to broader conversations and discussions as part of the discernment. School leaders and Governors remain welcome to contact the CSEL c/o [hcollier@stoccat.org.uk](mailto:hcollier@stoccat.org.uk) should they wish to.

### 1) Academy status

#### 1.1 Who is the RSC (Regional Schools Commissioner) and what do they do?

The RSC of our region is Vicky Beer. Vicky Beer started in her role on 1 November 2015 and was previously a member of the Headteacher Board (HTB) for Lancashire and West Yorkshire. From September the RSCs will be redesignated as Regional Directors, and from September STOC will be part of the new North West Region, as the Department for Education will be reorganising the regions for the new academic year. The RSA has overall responsibility for Academy Trusts and their performance.

#### 1.2 What are the Advisory Boards and how regularly do they meet?

The Advisory board is responsible for advising and challenging RSCs on academy related decisions. Members of the Advisory Board have been elected and tend to be former academy headteachers and CEOs of multi-academy trusts. They do not include headteachers of local authority-maintained schools. They meet once, or sometimes twice, a month depending on the business needs of the RSC region, and they consider applications for academy status and applications relating to MAT growth.

#### 1.3 How do the RSC's interact with the Salford Diocese?

Each trust has a point of contact within the RSC's office. The RSC has appointed a senior DfE officer to the role of Diocesan Trust Relationship Manager, this point of contact will meet with Diocesan officers and Trust CSELs regularly to discuss Trust progress and development and the broader Diocesan growth strategy.

#### 1.4. How are Diocesan CAT's different from other Trusts?

The Bishop, has overall responsibility for education across the Diocese of Salford. He is what is known as the "person of significant control". The Bishop appoints the Members and then Trust Board Directors are appointed on his behalf by Diocesan Trustees who form the Trustees Schools Committee and oversee all CAT related matters on behalf of the Members. Our CATs also work with the Catholic Education Service, and we firmly remain part of the Catholic family nationally.

### 2) Becoming an Academy

#### 2.1 Regarding the different routes to academisation (Directed Academy Order of Voluntary Conversion) – what are the differences in the two routes to academisation?

There are some similarities and some differences in the two routes towards academisation. Essentially, schools with a DAO are matched with a sponsor by the RSC (instead of schools agreeing them themselves) and the ways in which financial reserves or surpluses are dealt with are different. STOC would be the sponsor of a school that received a DAO in our footprint. In terms of consultation, schools with DAOs do not need to legally consult parents or staff (except in consequence of TUPE), there is a legal 'duty to inform' instead. Where schools wish to join STOC they need to secure Stage 1 and Stage 2 Conditional Consent approval by submitting the appropriate documentation for consideration to the Trustees Schools Committee. Stage 2 application involves Governing Bodies formally resolving to convert to academy status. Once Stage 2 Conditional Consent is approved the school will then work with the CAT to complete the DfE application to convert form which is then presented to the Advisory Board at RSC level for approval. At that point the actual conversion process takes place. It can take around twelve months from stage 1 agreement to conversion.

#### 2.2 Would the MAT adopt CES policies in all areas, even if these are not locally agreed with the local associations?

As a Catholic Trust STOC would adopt CES policies. A period of consultation has already taken place with professional associations at regional level around CES policies and they are now in use across STOC schools. Schools who join STOC would also adopt these policies. The CSEL regularly meets with professional associations to consider policies and other employee related issues.

#### 2.4 Do schools need the word 'Academy' in their titles?



It is a requirement of our Bishop that the words Catholic, Voluntary and Academy are included in the formal name of any new academy. The Diocese has adopted a naming convention which requires the school name, current and post conversion to include RC as the formal abbreviation for Roman Catholic and then include at the end of the name, separated by a hyphen or semi-colon, a Voluntary Academy. This is the registered school name linked to a new URN number, but there is no expectation that "a voluntary academy" is used in day to day branding. For example, the last school that joined STOC, St Gabriel's, is now called St Gabriel's RC High School; a voluntary academy.

#### 2.5 How will we ensure schools keep their unique identity?

Each school will become an academy in its own right and will be part of the Trust. The scheme of delegation protects the uniqueness of each school. Under this scheme of delegation, the Local Governing Body's responsibilities include ensuring that the Catholic ethos is strong and the voice of the parish is maintained. The Trust recognises the distinct nature of the communities each school serves and is committed to retaining these unique identities. Directors and the CSEL are very much aware that each school serves and works within its own local context. It is this unique charism of each school that is so important.

#### 2.6 How will membership of the Trust affect staff?

All teaching staff will transfer to the Trust on their existing terms and conditions of employment. STOC has been in negotiations with Unison to ensure the support staff terms and conditions are optimal for staff. At the point of conversion support staff will have the best possible green book terms and conditions which may be an improvement on their current terms and conditions. This process would be known as a "measure" at the point of conversion. These are expected to be broadly consistent with CES contracts and policies, reflecting some local flexibility. STOC will follow the burgundy and green book conditions for staff.

Staff do not need to worry about being moved to other schools in the Trust. This is not something that is really practical given that many staff live locally to their school. The opportunity to work across schools is something that in the longer term has many benefits, but would only ever be done if for example it was a development opportunity.

Across STOC CPD networks will provide real professional development benefits. More formal networks with a focus on subjects, leadership and safeguarding for example ensure staff can discuss with likeminded colleagues how best to improve practice and skills. These networks are targeted at Trust wide areas of need.

As part of STOC staff and schools are not isolated. This has already been seen to be of great benefit during OFSTED inspections.

#### 2.7 How will membership of the Trust affect our children and young people?

There is no day-to-day difference for our children and young people. Schools joining the Trust will be supported and given greater opportunities for collaboration and the sharing of good practice through appropriate development networks. Each school will still be led and managed by the headteacher and local governors. It is anticipated that the Trust structure will provide greater opportunities for curricular activities and possibly transition and allow pupils to come together.

#### 2.8 Who will employ staff?

The Trust will become the employer of staff. Regarding appointments, the level of the appointment will determine who is responsible for the recruitment procedures. Given recruitment challenges some of this process has been handled centrally, which has resulted in significant increase in potential candidates. Members of any Catholic MAT must ensure that all appointments to academies within a MAT comply with the Bishops' Memorandum of Understanding regarding key appointments and Trust leaders work in liaison with the Diocesan Department for Education for all reserved posts.

#### 2.9 How will the Trust be structured, in terms of leadership and governance?

The Trust governance model consists of Members, Trust Board of Directors and Local Governing Bodies. The Members are appointed by the Bishop who has ultimate control over the academy trust, with the ability to appoint the majority of the Foundation Directors and the right to amend the trust's Articles of Association.

The Trust Board of Directors are responsible for the same three core governance functions performed by the governing body in a maintained school: setting the direction, holding the executive leaders to account and ensuring financial probity and value for money. As charity trustees, they must also ensure that they are complying with charity law requirements. This governance and leadership model is one of the key structural elements intended specifically to strengthen and protect our Catholic schools for generations to come. Unlike the current model where diocesan

schools are Voluntary Aided but maintained by an LA, the CAT model sees all of the major decision makers and holders of responsibility and influence, being appointed directly on behalf of the Bishop to ensure that all schools remain true to their distinctive vision and mission. The key relationship for a successful delivery of this is the creation of positive relationships and good communication between each Trust and the Diocesan Department for Education. All parties, since the creation of our three CATs, have committed to ensuring that regular communication, recognition of each other's roles and a shared aspiration for excellence remain central to such relationships developing even more as each of our Trusts grow.

A distinctive feature of the CAT governance structure the diocese has created is the retention of governance at school level. Many MATs and CATs nationally have removed this tier of governance. We in Salford however regard local governance as the corner stone for the very important principles of 'Subsidiarity and Solidarity'. Individuals who sit on Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) are referred to as 'local governors'. Local Governing Bodies are a committee of the Board of Directors. Directors delegate certain governance functions to local governors and this is detailed in the Trust scheme of delegation and then outlined in LGB terms of reference. This will make it clear what responsibilities are retained by the board of directors of the trust (the Trust Board) and the responsibilities given to each Local Governing Body.

The Local Governing Body will be responsible for the Catholic Life of the academy, day to day oversight of the management of the academy and compliance with the Trust and the academy's policies and practices, standards, and ensuring the academy fulfils its responsibilities to pupils and their families, being at the heart of the relationship between the school and its local parish community. The terms of reference for Local Governing Bodies have been amended for implementation in September 2022 to better clarify the role of local governors.

The Trust Board and Senior Executive Leader determine the strategy for the Trust, secure school improvement and academy turnaround overseeing performance and standards, ensure good practice holding leadership to account. The Trust Board will be supported and advised by an Executive Team led by the Chief Executive Officer, also known as a Catholic Senior Executive Leader.

Every MAT needs to have a Senior Executive Leader who is also the Accounting Officer. The Accounting Officer has a statutory responsibility to parliament for ensuring that the Trust's accounts are completed, and that the Trust Board adheres to the Academy Trust Handbook. The Accounting Officer cannot delegate this responsibility to anyone else. Every MAT must also have a Chief Financial Officer who is responsible for the day-to-day management of financial processes.

As a single employer the Trust looks to ensure equity for staff who fulfil the same role in different schools across STOC. This process of alignment has begun, but tends to occur when vacancies arise.

### **3) Land, buildings and estates**

#### **3.1 How will the ownership of the land be managed?**

The ownership of sites used as Catholic schools is held by the Diocese, usually the corporate property holding trustee set up by the Diocesan Trustees. This arrangement will not change when the schools become academies. The Church's ownership of the land is acknowledged in the Church Supplemental Agreement which is signed by the Diocese and the Secretary of State for Education. The schools and in turn the Trust will continue to be responsible for the day to day management and maintenance of the sites and the Trust will have access to a standard capital allocation to enable significant works to be carried out when needed.

In the case of any religious order school, the Order will remain the site trustees, who will also be a party to the Church Supplemental Agreement. In some cases, the playing fields used by the school will be owned by the local authority. They will be expected to grant a 125-year lease of the playing fields to the Trust.

#### **3.2 How will my school estate be developed?**

Trusts receive funding through a process called "School Condition Allocation" (SCA). As part of the STOC estates strategy we will regularly review need to ensure each school is in the best possible condition. Trust reserves can be used to improve estates through a bidding process. Prior to conversion schools will be made aware of whether they are in credit or deficit to the Salford Diocesan Schools Building Programme.

### **4) Leadership**

#### **4.1 Who will make the decisions on executive positions and the board?**

The scheme of delegation will outline clearly at which level decisions will be made about the operation of the Trust and appointments of key staff both at executive level and academy level. Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher appointments are also supported by the Board of Directors. The CSEL may be involved in other appointments across the Trust dependent on the circumstances.

4.2 What are the levels of autonomy/decision making for:

- Budget/Spending
- Staffing
- Curriculum
- Leadership decisions

The Trust Board is responsible for determining the size and function of the central service fund and for strategic planning across the whole Trust. STOC currently operates with a 5% top-slice taken from a school's GAG. A breakdown of what this is used for is included in Appendix A below. There is currently no intention to increase this top-slice. For 2022/23 there is a much more comprehensive suite of services provided centrally.

Budget planning will be managed centrally across the Trust. Each school will receive its GAG funding, along with other funding streams (PP/SEND etc). Headteachers are able to spend their budgets as they would normally do so in line with Trust policy. The Local Governing Body and Headteacher are responsible for managing within their delegated budget and for the staffing of the school in accordance with the agreed staffing structure and the curriculum that is being offered. Where amendments are made to school staffing structures this needs to be done alongside the CSEL as STOC operates as a single employer. Schools within STOC need to ensure that they abide by procurement process.

All schools are unique and serve a local community. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that there is also a need to align some policies, school curriculum decisions will continue to be made at a local level. Operationally, Headteacher and the CSEL meet at least two weekly to discuss curriculum decisions, leadership issues and costings.

4.3 What are the benefits of being part of STOC?

There are many advantages of being part of an academy trust, from working together to preserve and improve Catholic education in the area, to educational, financial and spiritual benefits. Essentially, a group of schools working together in a single body can do lots of things that are harder for stand-alone schools to do. Teachers work and learn together to improve the way they teach and schools can share practices that make a difference to the quality of teaching. Teachers and leaders can work together on the things that matter – like curriculum and assessment. In addition, schools can challenge and support each other to continually improve.

The Multi Academy Trust model allows us to preserve, protect and develop our schools and secure Catholic education in the long term. It will better support the long-term goal of developing our future leaders of education in the Diocese. Improvements in school standards can be secured by developing and resourcing a strategic vision for leadership development, through pooling expertise and knowledge on standards and buying in specialist support as well as facilitate school to school support. Greater control over the curriculum allows flexibility in terms of the balance and mix of subjects. A curriculum tailored to the needs of a Catholic school could be more fully developed. Stronger collaboration between schools in the Trust is beneficial, but this is not expected to be at the expense of retaining and supporting the development of strong local collaborations which will provide a long-term future for the schools as Catholic academies.

4.4 How will the schools in the MAT be linked?

Working in a more formal relationship within a multi academy trust will ensure that all schools are supported and develop resilience by working together, opening up more creative possibilities for sharing good practice. This will be reflected both at school level and at Trust level as strategic partnerships evolve between other local Catholic and non-Catholic multi academy trusts. This further strengthens the Catholic family. The Executive team will seek to establish working groups within the Trust for specific themes and improvement strategies. Excellence through collaboration is a key way in which multi academy trusts support schools to work together for the Common Good.

Each school is now able to contribute to wider STOC development. Headteachers support other schools during recruitment processes, and there has been a real keenness to work together to resolve short term staffing or logistical problems.

Paperwork and documentation are now being aligned to reduce workload, but also aid consistency of approach. All schools use a common improvement plan template, that allows the CSEL and HT's to develop common approaches. This is not at the expense of local contextual development.

It is important to understand that all staff are employed by the Trust Board, so consistency of approach to the management of policy is vital. This is most obviously seen in the way Headteachers are appraised. This is led by the CSEL and supported by LGBs.

## 5) **Governance**

### 5.1 Will Local Governing Boards need to be reconstituted?

The constitution of an LGB in STOC is eight Governors. Four foundation, two parents, one staff and the Headteacher who is appointed as a Foundation Governor. This process will need to take place prior to conversion, so as to ensure that when the schools converts to academy status the LGB is in place

### 5.2 What will be the relationship between governing boards and the board of directors?

The CSEL will lead the LGB Chairs forum, which will receive regular training and will meet prior to each cycle of local governance. Directors have also been assigned to each LGBs to ensure there is effective communication. No school within the Trust should ever feel disenfranchised but supported and empowered by being part of a wider community of schools. Clear Terms of Reference have been created for LGBs, which provides clarity on their exact role and function.

## 6) **Services**

### 6.1 Will HR/Payroll etc. be managed centrally?

STOC has moved to a payroll and HR provider that is independent of Local Authorities. From September 2022 there will an HR adviser based in the STOC central office for three days a week. This will ensure Headteachers can access rapid and effective HR support.

### 6.2 Which services will be managed centrally?

Many services are now managed centrally. STOC has developed a number of key partnerships. Health and Safety compliance is now managed through a service level agreement. We are in the process of appointing Directors of Education, and Digital/IT to support key priorities. Policy review and delivery is managed by our Executive Assistant. Recruitment onboarding for new staff will also be managed centrally. Appendix A outlines central services that are provided through the top-slice.

### 6.3 If we need to sign a 3-year ICT contract, should we? What about catering and cleaning? We are looking to go out to tender. Do we wait?

Having collective buying power is an important way that the Trust can make savings by economies of scale. However, system and process consistency are almost more important. Where a school is considering buying into a longer-term SLA with an external provider, this may novate to STOC at the point of conversion. If schools are now considering joining STOC it is advisable to discuss any potential SLAs as part of the due diligence process prior to agreeing and committing to anything.

## 7) **Finances and Resources**

### 7.1 What will happen to the existing school reserves? Any transfer of assets?

Assets transfer to the Trust, as the legal entity. All physical assets would remain in the school. It would be helpful for schools to have an asset register in place so that the correct accounting valuation and treatment can be put through the accounts. Contracts and SLAs will be reviewed and those being retained will novate to the Trust. These contracts and assets would then be listed on what is called the Collective Transfer Agreement.

Local Authorities normally take around 4 months to finalise the balances for the schools. Any balance then transfers to the Trust. This will be the in-year balance. Depending on when a school transfers in the year will depend on when PPG and other grants get paid to the Trust or via the LA. This is due to LAs working on Apr - Mar and Trusts Sep to Aug.

Bank accounts that schools currently hold that are not LA accounts would need to be closed and then transferred to the Trust. This is to ensure that statutory guidance within the Academy Trust handbook is followed.

Where schools propose to convert with significant reserves broad conversations would take place during the period of due diligence to ascertain where these reserves would have been used. For example, some schools have accrued reserves mindful of life cycle replacement of assets such as 3G pitches, or Estate needs. The Trust would continue to support this process at the point of conversion as appropriate. Trust reserves are in place to ensure each school has what they need to deliver their planned curriculum. Reserves also need to be at the appropriate threshold as laid out in the reserves policy.

Schools also need to be aware of any potential balances (credit/debit) that exist with regard to the Salford Diocesan Schools Building Programme. Debits to the scheme would need to be paid back, and credits would be reimbursed over an agreed period of time.

**7.2 What will happen to schools with deficits?**

Where a school with a deficit is to open as a sponsored academy, the deficit remains with the LA, to be funded from its core budget. A recovery plan may, in rare circumstances, also need to be agreed with the Education & Skills Funding Agency. At the point a school was considering converting to join STOC the CSEL would support the process of managing deficit reduction.

**7.3 What level of top-slice will there be?**

STOC currently operates a 5% top-slice.

**7.4 What will schools get for this top-slice?**

The Trust will be clear on what central services are offered in return for the funding element retained by the Trust. The top-slice funds all central team salaries, all school improvement costings, the apprenticeship levy and Diocesan levy. HR and Payroll costs are also drawn from the top-slice. It is important to also be aware of the running costs of the trust, and this includes fees that are payable for annual accounts and reporting systems. The benefits of being in a Trust include procurement, but this will depend on the services being considered. It should be remembered that being part of a Catholic multi academy trust is not purely an alternative service level arrangement but the benefits and implications go much deeper than that; it is a way of reinforcing the vision of the schools as being part of a single Catholic family of schools.

**8) Other questions**

**8.1 Who is responsible for Headteacher appraisal?**

The CSEL is currently the appraiser of Headteachers currently, though this may change as the Trust grows. The LGB Chair is also part of the target setting, mid year review and end of year review process. The CSEL reports to the Trust Board on Headteacher performance through the Directors pay committee. An external adviser continues to be used to support Headteacher appraisal, and there is generally agreement between LGB Chair's and the CSEL with regard to Headteacher performance and pay progression

**8.2 How will we be able to ensure the religious order ethos of the school remains unchanged?**

Each school's distinctiveness and Catholic character will be preserved on conversion. Its formal designation as a Catholic school will be carried over, including any designation as a religious order school. The Order will continue to fulfil its role as site trustees and appoint Foundation Governors to the Local Governing Body. A formal memorandum of understanding between the Diocesan Trustees, the Order and the Trust will be drawn up to acknowledge the protections of particular 'Reserved Matters' for the Order so that their involvement in the school remains unchanged.

**8.3 Will a Headteacher lose all their autonomy in a CAT?**

With STOC or any MAT there have to be some aligned processes, this is to ensure that the Board of Directors and Executive Leaders can fulfil their statutory responsibilities. However, Headteachers are still the lead school improver, and are expected to act with autonomy to ensure they are serving the children and young people in their communities as they should be. In line with the principles of subsidiarity, decisions will always be taken at the most appropriate local level. For example, where a Headteacher feels that it is appropriate to issue a fixed term, or permanent exclusion, this is a local matter. Where the same Headteacher then finds it difficult to secure Governors for a hearing Trust Leaders can support to ensure this can happen within appropriate timescales. Each Headteacher continues to develop their own quality assurance cycles, but it has been apparent that these systems can be more effective if shared across schools. Headteachers, and Heads of Subject continue to choose appropriate phonics or reading schemes or Exam syllabi, again based on their context. In key employment matters Headteachers would, as now, be expected to follow agreed policies and take sound HR advice prior to taking any action.

**8.4 Why is there an increase in focus on academisation?**

The strategic direction of travel, set nationally is towards a more academised system. The recent white paper again shared the preference for all schools to be part of a strong trust. Each Catholic diocese is now grappling with how best to discern and manage this process. As schools we need to engage with national thinking and direction in the most appropriate way.

Appendix A – 2021/22 STOC Central Costings; The are indicative and will be updated for the 2022/23 Academic year in the summer term.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subscription</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Subscriptions	The School Bus (per school)	5,000
Subscriptions	Confederation of School Trusts	828
Subscriptions	NGA	1,698
SIP	Two visits per term (per school)	31,500
SIP	External QA - termly visit (per school)	20,000
Employer related	HR Services @ £11.22 per pupil (3018)	33,862
Employer related	Payroll charges @£5.75 per payslip per month * 415	28,635
Employer related	Performance Review CAT Leaders @ £500*8	4,000
Employer related	Apprentice levy (0.5% per employee)	70,000
Employer related	Legal Advice	20,000
Employer related	Training & Development	20,000
Employer related	TES Subscription - £14,418 10.09.21- 09.09.22	14,418
Governance	Clerking Services - LGB's *6 Schools*6meetings*£290	10,440
Governance	Clerking Services - Trust - Board*7*£400/2 Committees*6*£400/A&R*3*£400	8,800
Governance	Trust Governor (like Governor Hub) (per school)	2,400
MIS	The HeadTeacher Report	780
Support	Marketing support	10,000
Support	H & S SLA - 1/1/22 - 31/12/22	15,600
Statutory/Compliance	ICO Fee (Tier 2 Direct Debit)	55
Statutory/Compliance	Companies House Annual Statement fee	13
Statutory/Compliance	Internal Audit fees	16,800
Statutory/Compliance	External Audit Fees	23,750
Statutory/Compliance	Bank charges	800
Statutory/Compliance	LGPS FRS102 Reports @£500*6	3,000
Finance	PSF Licences (Finance System)	24,826
Finance	Edufin Helpdesk (Finance System Helpdesk)	1,250
Finance	Foresight Licences (Budget Software)	5,850
<b>Total</b>		<b>405,305</b>