

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 questions regarding the conversion process. The answers are designed to provide some clarity to school leaders and Governors prior to broader conversations, and discussions in line with the published growth plan. School leaders and Governors remain welcome to contact admin@stoccat.org.uk for further information.

1) Academy Status

1.1 Who is the RD (Regional Director) and what do they do?

The RD 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. The STOC footprint is part of the Northwest Region, which has overall responsibility for Academy Trusts and their performance.

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

The Advisory board is responsible for advising and challenging RD's 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 meet once, or sometimes twice, a month depending on the business needs of the RD and region, to consider applications for academy status and applications relating to Multi Academy Trust growth.

1.3 How do the RD's interact with the Salford Diocese?

Each trust has a point of contact within the RD's office. The RD 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 CSEL's 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 CAT Members and the Trust Board Directors are appointed on his behalf by Diocesan Trustees who form the Trustees Schools Committee and oversee all Catholic Academy Trust related matters on behalf of the Members. Our CAT's also work with the Catholic Education Service, and 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 two routes towards academisation. Schools with a DAO are matched with a sponsor by the RD (instead of schools selecting for 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 are not required to legally consult parents or staff (except in consequence of TUPE), there is a legal 'duty to inform' instead. Where schools join STOC as part of the published growth plan they still need to secure Stage 1 and Stage 2 Conditional Consent approval by submitting the appropriate documentation for consideration to the Trustees Schools Committee. Schools who convert as part of the published growth plan will receive their Stage 1 automatically from the Diocese, this is known as "being in scope". Stage 2 approval 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 RD level for approval. At that point, the actual conversion process takes place. From stage 1 approval to conversion will take approximately 12 months. It can take around twelve months from stage 1 approval to conversion. Further details of this process can be found on the [Trust website](#).

2.2 *Would the Multi Academy Trust adopt CES policies in all areas, even if these are not locally agreed with the local associations?*

As a Catholic Trust STOC adopts CES policies. A period of consultation has already taken place with professional associations at regional level around CES policies. These are now in use across STOC schools. Schools who join STOC would also be required to adopt these policies. Trust leaders regularly meet 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 from 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's name, current and post conversion to include RC as the formal abbreviation for Roman Catholic. At the end of the name, separated by a hyphen or semi-colon, the wording a Voluntary Academy will be added. This will be the new 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.

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

Each school will become an academy 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 focus on clarity of mission and school direction. Holding the Headteacher to account for school performance and the use of resources delegated to the school. The Trust recognises the diverse nature of the communities each school serves and is committed to retaining these unique identities. The Trust Board are

very much aware that each school serves and works within its own local context and values the 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. 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, allowing for 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 practical given many staff live locally to their school. The opportunity to be mobile and work across schools is something is being considered for longer term planning as it has many benefits. This would only ever be considered if there 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 strategic Trust areas.

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 continue to be led and managed by the headteacher who is the lead school improver and local governors.

2.8 *Who will employ staff?*

The Trust will become the employer of all staff. Regarding appointments, the Trust operates a recruitment management and approval process for all posts. This allows for effective recruitment to be conducted, but also safeguards employees across the organisation. 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 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. Members are known as “Trustees” within our Diocesan context.

The Trust Board of Directors are responsible for providing;



- Strategic leadership of the Academy Trust - the board defines the trust vision for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable objects. It establishes and fosters the trust's culture and sets and champions the trust strategy including determining what governance functions are delegated to the local tier.
- Accountability and assurance - the board has robust effective oversight of the operations and performance of the Academy Trust, including the provision of education, pupil welfare, and ensuring appropriate use of funding and effective financial performance as well as keeping their estate safe and well-maintained.
- Engagement: - the board has strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders. The board strives to include parents, schools and communities to ensure decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement.

This governance and leadership model is one of the key structural elements intended specifically to strengthen and protect our Catholic schools. In the CAT model all of the major decision makers and holders of responsibility and influence, are appointed directly on behalf of the Bishop to ensure that all schools remain true to their distinctive vision and mission. The key to successfully delivering this model is to create positive relationships and strong communication channels 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 created by the diocese is the retention of governance at school level. We in Salford, regard local governance as a corner stone for the 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. As noted above, Local Governing Bodies are responsible for the clarity of mission and school direction, making Headteachers accountable for school performance and the use of resources delegated to the school.

The Trust Board and Senior Catholic Executive Leader (CSEL) determine the strategy for the Trust. The 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 trusts 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 or equivalent who is responsible for the day-to-day management of financial processes.



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 trust 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 at the point of conversion. 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 funding (called School Condition 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?

The Trust 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 appointment of key staff at executive level and academy level. Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher appointments are also supported by the Board of Directors. Member of the Trust Strategic Leadership Group and other central leaders may be involved in additional appointments across the Trust, dependent on the circumstances.

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

- Budget
- Staffing
- Curriculum
- Leadership decisions
- Central Service Charges

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 now operates several complimentary funding models All schools have a proportion of their GAG funding reserved to pay for the central services the Trust provides. This is 5% one form entry primary schools, 5.75% of 1.5 form entry and 6.5% for two from entry primary schools. For secondary schools this central service charge is 7%. Alongside

this several function levies are operation. These are for technology (1.5-2% of GAG) and School Improvement (0,5%). These levies allow the Trust to provide better support in a more cost-efficient manner and have been calculated based on what average school spend in these areas. The STOC Offer and Levy documents are available on the Trust website and can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Financial forecasting is managed centrally across the Trust. Each school will receive its delegated GAG funding, along with the totality of other funding streams (PP/SEND etc). Headteachers have the autonomy to allocate their budgets as they would normally do so in line with Trust policy. The Local Governing Body and Headteacher are responsible for managing spending within their delegated budget. Where amendments are made to school staffing structures this needs to be done in conjunction with the central function as STOC operates as a single employer. Schools within STOC need to ensure that they comply with procurement processes given rules around aggregation and exemption.

All schools are unique and serve a local community. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that there is also a need to align policies, school curriculum decisions will continue to be made at a local level.

4.3 *What are the benefits of being part of STOC?*

There are substantial 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 achieve 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 –such as curriculum and assessment. In addition, schools can challenge and support each other for continuous improvement. The Trust has been keen to develop effective services across its four key functions (Finance, Operations, Information and Performance) to ensure school leaders and school communities are supported.

4.4 *How will the schools in the Multi Academy Trust 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, offering 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 Strategic Leadership Group will seek to establish working groups within the Trust for specific themes and targeted strategies. Excellence through collaboration is the way forward to enable Multi-Academy Trusts to support schools in working 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 enthusiasm to work together to resolve short term staffing and logistical problems.

Key areas have been aligned to provide consistency. For example, the Trust provides an ICT managed service for all schools, which includes technical support, equipment replacement and statutory compliances in digital and technical safety.

5) Governance

5.1 Will local governing boards need to be reconstituted?

The constitution of a Primary Local Governing Body will be in accordance with Diocesan guidelines. For those schools joining after September 2023, this will be five foundation governors, two parent governors, one staff governor, and ex officio parish priest and the Headteacher as an ex-officio foundation governor. The constitution of a Secondary Local Governing Body will be in accordance with Diocesan guidelines. For those schools joining after September 2023, this will be six foundation governors, two parent governors, one staff governor and the Headteacher as an ex-officio foundation governor. A parish priest, where appropriate will fulfil the role of a foundation governor.

For those Local Governing Bodies formed prior to September 2023, the constitution was 4 foundation governors, a Headteacher as a foundation governor, 2 parents and a staff governor. In a primary school, one of the foundation governor's places will be taken by the parish priest. A different constitution may be adopted at any time by the Directors with prior written approval of the Diocese. A different constitution will exist where an appropriate memorandum of understanding is in place which would be context specific.

The foundation governors on the Local Governing Body will be those appointed by the Bishop. The Directors (all or any of them) shall also be entitled to serve on the Local Governing Body and attend any meetings of the Local Governing Body. Any Director attending a meeting of the Local Governing Body shall count towards the quorum for the purposes of that meeting and shall be entitled to vote on any resolution being considered by the Local Governing Body.

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. No school within the Trust should ever feel disenfranchised, they should feel supported and empowered by being part of a wider community of schools. Clear Terms of Reference have been created for LGB's, which provide clarity on their exact role and function.



6) Organisational Design

STOC works across four core functions. Each of these functions has equal value and weight, in working towards the common goal of making lives better for the children and communities we serve. The functions and their purpose are outlined below;

Finance	Operations	Information	Performance
<p>HR Business Partnering Service: Work with school staff on budget position to ensure stability.</p> <p>This includes; Financial Process in line with the Academy Trust Handbook. budget setting and review to ensure schools work with resources. Focus on maximising revenue for the benefit of pupils.</p> <p>Audit Service: Ensures compliance with statutory requirements.</p> <p>Procurement Service: Ensure best value buying power and compliance with procurement regulations.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>Payroll Service: This being in house has reduced payroll error to less than 1%.</p> <p>HR Service; Provides HR support for all schools in a prompt and professional manner and builds relationships with professional associations.</p> <p>Health and Safety Service; Ensures school leaders are well briefed about compliance issues</p> <p>Estates Service: Provide a first response for critical issues and estates planning to deliver best learning environments for pupils</p>	<p>IT Managed Service: IT technical team provides onsite support for all schools and is supporting cloud migration.</p> <p>Educational IT Service: Provides. staff training for new device rollout and migrate to trust and local SharePoint service.</p> <p>Governance Service: Is centrally housed and managed.</p> <p>Data Service: Trust data is produced centrally to give all leaders the right information at the right time through MIS data compliances (GDPR)</p> <p>PR and Comms Service: Critical incident and complex incident management is handled centrally to protect schools' credibility.</p>	<p>School Evaluation and Service:</p> <p>School Improvement Service:</p> <p>Safeguarding Service: Head of Safeguarding provides guidance as needed and leads on the strategic review and provides support for all schools.</p> <p>Attendance Service: Trust Attendance Leader provides support and challenge where needed.</p>

7) Finances and Resources

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

All reserves from a school transfer to the Trust on conversion. Should schools propose to convert with significant reserves consultation conversations would take place during the period of due diligence to ascertain where these reserves would have been used. The Trust would 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.

Local Authorities normally take around four months to process and confirm final balances for the schools. Any remaining balance will then transfer to the Trust. This will be the in-year balance. Dependant on what point in the year a school transfers determine when PPG and other grants are paid to the Trust or via the LA. This is because the LA's working to an April to March financial year. Whilst the Trust's financial year is September to August. Schools do no need to worry about their cash flow during this period, as it will be managed effectively by the Trust.

Bank accounts that schools currently hold will need to be closed and transferred to the Trust. This is to ensure compliance with the Academy Trust statutory guidance as detailed in the Trust handbook. This does include school fund accounts or other accounts such as Parent/Teacher Associations. Post conversion schools will still be able to access these funds that will be held in the Trust bank account.

Schools also need to be aware of any potential credit or debit balances 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 within an agreed period of time. Assets transfer to the Trust as the legal entity. All physical assets would remain in the school. Contracts and Service Level Agreements 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.

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 certain circumstances, need to be agreed with the Education & Skills Funding Agency. At the point a school is considering converting to join STOC the Strategic Leadership Group will support the process of managing a deficit reduction.



8) Other questions

8.1 Who is responsible for Headteacher appraisal?

Trust leaders are responsible for Headteacher appraisals, and this is done alongside local governors. The Trust uses an external adviser to support this process for all Headteachers. The CSEL reports to Trust Board on Headteacher performance through the Directors pay committee.

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 remains, 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 Catholic Academy Trust

Within STOC there are aligned processes, systems and expectations. This is to ensure that Board of Directors and Executive Leaders can fulfil their statutory responsibilities. 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. Headteacher, 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 consult HR for advice prior to taking any action.

8.4 Has the direction of travel regarding academisation changed, or will it change?

All Catholic dioceses are moving their schools toward larger Academy Trust. This is to safeguard Catholic education for future generations. Whilst the new Labour Government will place less emphasis on all schools being within Academy Trusts, it remains the intention of the Bishop of Salford that all Diocesan schools become part of its three Catholic Academy Trusts, as outlined within each of the Trusts growth plans. As appointees of the Bishop, it is the expectation that foundation governors work in accordance with the will of the Bishop and this direction of travel. The same also applies to school leaders across the Diocese.