

The Good Shepherd Catholic Trust



C/O The Palmer Catholic Academy

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The following is the response of the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust to the 'save St Bede's school' leaflet which has been circulated to encourage parents to lobby the Governing Body on 26th March 2020.

(leaflet in full shown as Appendix A)

The Good Shepherd Trust response:

Leaflet claim:-Under the new proposals, all the key decisions will be made by an unelected, unaccountable board of trustees.

Response: As the trust website states, the scheme of delegation for the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust is clearly and wholly based upon subsidiarity; the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level. This has been shared and discussed at parent meetings, staff meetings and union meetings. The school will continue to set its own budget, decide its own staffing structure, appoint its own teachers and support staff, design and implement its own curriculum, control its school uniform, school term dates and every other 'key decision' that is important to parents.

Leaflet claim: - school management is refusing to allow the staff and parents to have a formal vote on supporting the academy conversion or not;

Response: Parents of our Catholic schools have never been in a position to decide the long-term, strategic direction of Catholic Schools in any area, be it curriculum, assessment, leadership structure etc. That responsibility remains the preserve of the Governing Body which works closely with the Headteacher and senior leaders.

Leaflet claim:-None of the Trustees live or work in the area or have children at the school.

Response: As with Catholic schools within the Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham group, the Governing Body have been specifically asked to consider submitting an application for a willing and appropriate member of their Governing Body to apply to join the Board of Trustees. The school's NEU representative was present at the meeting at St Bede's, with the school's senior leadership and chair of governors, when the chair of trustees of the Good Shepherd Trust specifically asked that governors of St Bede's would be willing to offer one of their members to be a trustee.

I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. (Jer 3:15)



Leaflet claim: - Last year the trust increased the spending on those earning between £60k and £90k by 50%.

Response: These figures (available in the trusts published accounts for 2018-2019) refer to the salaries of Head teachers and senior leaders in our Catholic Schools. The increase in the number of staff in the band £60K - £90K is as a result of the trust growing (the headteachers and senior staff of the joining schools retain their salaries, so there will, naturally, be an increase in numbers of senior staff shown as being paid in that higher bracket) and the senior leadership team within the second academy joining the Trust in 2018. As trusts grow and add further schools, this will be reflected in the changes to the annual accounts that are published on the website and at Companies House. These changes will reflect new Headteachers and senior leaders joining the Trust who are paid on the appropriate salary scale for their role.

Leaflet claim: - One of the schools, now in the Good Shepherd Trust was rated as Outstanding before they converted to become an academy.

Response: This 'Good' inspection judgment for the previously 'outstanding' school was in 2012, 6 years before they joined the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust in 2018. At this stage in 2012, it was a 'standalone' academy which is the status that the Diocese of Brentwood and the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust are working to avoid. Schools that are not part of a professional and formal network with other Catholic schools are left potentially vulnerable and do not benefit from the collaboration and sharing of good practice that a multi academy trust brings.

Leaflet claim: - Another went from being rated 'good' to being rated 'inadequate' and then put in special measures.

Response: This 'inadequate' inspection judgment was 18 months before the school joined the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust, in July 2018. At the time of its 'inadequate' rating, it was a 'standalone' academy which, in part, is what the Diocese of Brentwood and the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust are working to avoid. Isolated schools that are not part of a professional and formal network of other Catholic schools are left vulnerable and do not benefit from the collaboration and sharing of good practice that a multi academy trust brings. Within 5 months of being part of the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust, this school was upgraded to 'Requires Improvement', partly due to the support it had received and it is on track to be a 'good' school in all areas at its next inspection. This form of intensive support and collaboration for our Catholic colleagues and pupils who attend one of our family of Catholic schools is a moral duty for Catholic school leaders. The Good Shepherd Catholic Trust helps to ensure this formal support is available to all of the Catholic schools in our area.

Leaflet claim: - It also has a deficit of £74k that must be picked up by all the schools in the trust.

Response: No schools have to 'pick up' a deficit that exists within any school. No school budget is impacted in any way by the deficit of one school. Any school within the trust that has a deficit (which is more common in the current climate of reduced school funding) has a budget recovery plan that allows the school to work towards a balanced budget over a set period of time.

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Leaflet claim: - There is clear evidence nationally that in a multi academy trust that your child is more likely to be taught by an unqualified teacher.

The facts regarding the use of unqualified teachers are as follows:

In maintained schools, the following unqualified staff are currently permitted;

- Existing unqualified teachers in nursery classes and at nursery schools
- Instructors with special qualifications or experience
- Overseas-trained teachers (OTTs)
- Teacher trainees who have yet to pass the skills test
- Trainees on an employment-based initial teacher training (EBITT) scheme
- Persons who may carry out specified work under supervision

Academies and Academy Trusts have more freedom to employ unqualified staff, but this remains at the discretion of the Local Governors as they oversee their local staffing structures and recruitment of staff as part of the Scheme of Delegation.

Some roles require qualified teachers across all maintained schools and academies.

- Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)
- Designated teacher for looked after children (LAC)

Leaflet claim: - Staff are more likely to earn less.

Response: TUPE protects the pay and conditions of all staff following conversion, for an initial period of 2 years. The newly published Diocesan 'TUPE+ Catholic' document states that all Brentwood Diocesan Trusts should; Continue to maintain union recognition and not to introduce any future variation to conditions of service except following consultation and negotiation with staff and their representatives (whether at national or local level) and if appropriate in accordance with any collective agreement with a trade union.

Additional response: It is interesting that the leaflet has decided not to reference the school performance data for the schools, which is also included within section C of the published accounts and is perhaps the most important factor for the children in our Catholic schools. The pupil outcomes for the schools prior to joining the trust (2018) and once part of the trust (2019) are significantly stronger across all key measures. There are a number of factors that support this kind of significant improvement in outcomes and it cannot be linked solely to the formation of a CMAT, but as it does not support the leaflet's stance, it has not been referenced.

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Appendix A

SAVE ST BEDE'S SCHOOL

JOIN THE LOBBY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

WHEN
March 26th 4pm-6pm

WHERE
St Bede's school
St Bede's School, Churchill Road, MK9 5LQ

WHAT BECOMING AN ACADEMY MEANS:

ALL KEY DECISIONS WILL BE MADE BY AN UNACCOUNTABLE TRUST BOARD

YOUR SCHOOL'S MONEY BEING DIVERTED AND SPENT ON TRUST SENIOR MANAGEMENT

A HIGHER TURNOVER OF STAFF

CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE TAUGHT BY AN UNQUALIFIED TEACHER

IF THEY VOTE TO CONVERT TO AN ACADEMY THERE IS NO GOING BACK. THE DECISION IS IRREVERSIBLE

SAY NO TO THE ACADEMY TRUST

On the 3rd of April, the governors will be asked to vote on whether the school should become an academy and taken out of local control and handed over to Good Shepherd Catholic Trust.

Out of concern at these proposals, more than half the parents in the school have signed a petition opposing it and the staff have also taken strike action against the plans. Despite this, the school management is refusing to allow the parents and staff to have a formal vote on supporting the academy conversion or not.

Currently, all the key decisions for the school are made by the governing body and the head teacher. Under the new proposal all the key decisions will be made by an unelected, unaccountable board of trustees, none of whom live or work in the area, or have children at the school.

Monies now spent on the school will have to be diverted to pay for the running of the trust and its employees. Last year the trust increased the spending on those earning between £60k and £90k by 50%.

One of the schools that is now in the Good Shepherd Trust was rated as Outstanding before they converted to become an academy. Within 6 months it was downgraded by OFSTED. Another went from being rated 'good' to being rated 'inadequate' and then put in special measures. It also has a deficit of £74k that must be picked up by all the schools in the Trust - including St Bede's, should it become an academy.

There is clear evidence nationally that in a multi-academy trust that your child is more likely to be taught by an unqualified teacher. The staff are more likely to demote, and there is a much higher rate of staff turnover.

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