



SS Peter and Paul's
Catholic Primary School

A member of the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust

Interview with Susan Johnson, Head of SS Peter and Paul's (SSPP), regarding their Academisation

1. Why did you and your governing body convert to an academy and join the Good Shepherd Catholic Trust (GSCT) on 01/09/19?

The Governing Body at SSPP voted unanimously to join the GSCT on 1/9/19. The Leadership at SSPP consulted informally with the Governing body over a period of time, prior to the conversion. The Governors were kept informed of the Bishops vision on this matter and were well prepared for the conversion to academy status.

2. What did you and your governing body see as positive drivers for change?

All stakeholders agreed that the importance of protecting Catholic education in the Diocese was bigger than any of our schools. As Catholics we believe that working collaboratively and sharing good practice can only be a strength. We also felt that with the demise of the

Local Authority, it was important to put measures in place to procure services as a Trust and share the expertise we have within the Trust.

3. What are the key reservations you and your governing body had about conversion and joining the GSCT?

The leadership of the school was concerned about the prospect of losing autonomy and SSPP losing it's unique nature. This has not been the case at all; the school operates from a leadership level in exactly the same way as before. There is no difference to the leadership and management of the school.

4. During consultation, did you have much engagement with parents?

I was open and transparent with parents and reassured them that this was a positive step for SSPP. The parents attended meetings and asked questions, but have always been supportive of the decision made and have not noticed any difference to their children's education or the way the school is led.

5. How did your staff feel about joining the trust in relation to them personally?

Some staff were initially concerned about the TUPE process, they asked if their terms and conditions of employment would change and if they would still have continuous service. They also enquired about Maternity leave. All their questions were answered with the unions present, and the staff were pleased and reassured that no changes would be taking place to these areas. The unions were also supportive in my school, the meetings were well attended but not difficult or contentious in any way.

If I could do anything differently, I may not have joined in the first phase. However, schools joining in the second phase, will benefit from the hard work within the setting up period; any teething problems will have been resolved .

SUMMARY TO DATE

- 1 September 2018 - The GSCT was formed with one secondary school and one primary school
- 8 September 2018 - Bishop Alan Williams issued his statement of intent for all Diocesan schools in his Pastoral Letter to be part of a CMAT
- 21 November 2019 - Governors and Headteacher approved for St Bede's to explore joining the GSCT
- 9 January 2020 - Staff Information Meeting with the Trust and Governors
- 13 January 2020 - Staff Q&A with Governors
- 6 February 2020 - Parent Information Meeting with the Trust and Governors
- 2 March - Formal Consultation starts
- 12 March - Staff Meeting with the Governors
- 16 March - Parent Meeting with the Trust and Governors
- 27 March - Headteacher's letter sent to parents postponing the deadline of the consultation period



Facts + Figures

Number of Catholic Primary Schools who have converted in the Brentwood Diocese:

Out of the 65 Catholic Primary Schools, 31 have now converted.

Number of CMATs in the Diocese:

6 CMATs, with 2 more who are in the planning stage.

Number of Catholic schools in England.

There are 2,117 Catholic schools in England which make up 10% of the national total of state funded schools. 1,714 of which are primary schools.

Number of Catholic Primary Schools in England who have become academies:

24% or 408 Catholic Primary Schools have become academies out of a total of 1,714

Number of CMATs in England

There are 83 CMATs in England. There has been an 8% increase in academy numbers since the 2018 census. 28% of Catholic state funded schools are now academies, educating 32% of Catholic pupils. Nationally, 51% of state educated children are now in academies.

(Source: 2019 CES Census data <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/images/CensusDigestEngland2019.pdf>)

Q: What do the teachers think of Academisation?

A: Some have indicated they can see the benefits of academisation, whereas some have demonstrated that they have concerns.

Although teachers' voices inform the debate, they are not tasked with making the decision, which lies with the Governing Body, who are responsible for the school's long-term strategic direction.

Q: Are there examples of Trusts improving schools?

A: Yes, plenty. We have St Aidan's in Ilford who came out of 'Special Measures' as a school in the GSCT and Farnham Green, which improved from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good' as a member of another Trust.

Q: Why do we want to collaborate?

A: We have much we can learn from others, particularly with regard to Key Stage 1, where we want to see our children's progress accelerate. As a member of the Trust, we can have joint Teaching and Learning reviews, shared policies and targeted training. We also have some strengths, which would be great to share. The opportunities identified for collaboration are deeper in a CMAT than elsewhere. We want to collaborate because we are a Catholic School and we want to share the Lord's love.

Q: Where do the Unions stand?

A: The NEU is opposed to academies out of principle. This is a political stance. They say you are going from public to private control. On the contrary, the Trust is a not-for-profit charitable trust funded with public money.

Q: Why join now?

A: We want to be in at the infancy stage so that we can help shape the policies along with any systems that are being implemented.

Q: Will there be any savings for us?

A: It stands to reason that a group of schools has more buying power than an individual school. In addition, the money can go further: i.e. there may be no 'saving' but a better quality of service can be purchased for the same amount of money spent. The schools in the CMAT are already reporting that they are enjoying better services.

Money cannot be taken from one school's budget to compensate for a short fall in a school elsewhere.

Q: Was the whole process rushed?

A: The Head teacher first shared the Bishop's vision for all schools in the Catholic Diocese of Brentwood to become academies and join MATS in June 2016 in a newsletter. It has featured in some newsletters and termly letters since that date. The school has been mindful of the vision for some time. This school year, 2019/20, we have formally engaged with the process.

Q. Have the Bishops in any Dioceses instructed their schools to convert rather than left it to Governing Bodies to decide. Is this the case in Westminster?

A. As far as we are aware, Westminster are not forcing schools, however every school in the diocese has been allocated to a family of schools locally.

The next obvious step is for those families to become MATs. In general most bishops have simply set out their vision and asked schools to enact it over a period of time.

If you have any queries, please email mats@st-bedes.redbridge.co.uk and we will aim to reply via email.

"Together, we have decided to postpone the deadline of the consultation period to the end of the second week after the school reopens to all its pupils, whatever date that may be. Following the extended consultation, governors will meet a week later in order to vote on the proposal once they have carefully considered all responses received. In the meantime, channels of communication remain open and responses are still being accepted."

Mr Nott
Headteacher's letter (27/03/20)