



**St Cuthbert Mayne**  
Catholic Junior School

**Proposed Academy  
Conversion of St Cuthbert  
Mayne Catholic Junior  
School**

**Consultation Report for  
the Governing Body**

November 2023

### ***Document Control Sheet***

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# Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2. SCOPE AND TIMING OF STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION.....	4
3. METHODOLOGY.....	4
4. CONSULTATION MEETING CHRONOLOGY.....	5
5. COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES.....	5
6. FINDINGS FROM THE CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRES.....	5
7. REFLECTIONS ON THE CONSULTATION .....	6
8. SUMMARY .....	6
9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	7
10. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	7

# Appendices

APPENDIX A – ST CUTHBERT MAYNE CONSULTATION LEAFLET

APPENDIX B – ST CUTHBERT MAYNE CONSULTATION PRESENTATION

APPENDIX C – QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS

## **1. Introduction**

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In September 2017, the Diocese of Westminster published its strategy for Catholic Academy Trusts <http://rcdow.org.uk/education/academies/>

The aim of the Diocese's CAT Strategy is to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education.

The Governors and Headteacher of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School have been considering the benefits of converting to an Academy for some time, including collaborative work with ASCAT (All Saints Catholic Academy Trust) and the other Catholic Schools in the Dacorum Hub to enhance collaboration.

A first step to achieving this was to complete the Diocese's Due Diligence process, including independent Finance and Standards reports. The Diocese Project Board subsequently confirmed that the school had met the requirements and issued the Diocese Letter of Consent to convert allowing the schools to submit their application to convert and join the Dacorum Hub in June 2024.

The Governors and Headteacher of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School discussed the strategy, its implications and opportunities for the school and passed a resolution to submit a conversion application to the Regional Directors (RD) Headteachers Board (HTB) to proceed with the next phase of the conversion process.

The school embarked on the conversion process including a consultation exercise with the school's stakeholders, commencing in September 2023 and received its Academy Order from the RD in October 2023, representing DfE consent to convert.

The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. The Governors of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School firmly believe that they know what is best for the school and wished to invite comments from stakeholders on this proposal.

This report therefore sets out results of the consultation exercise commissioned by the Governors of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School to listen to the views of stakeholders.

A subsequent meeting of the Governing Body in December 2023 will consider the findings of this report.

## **2. Scope and timing of Stakeholder Consultation**

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The Governors devised and implemented a consultation exercise which sought the views of parents, staff, and the wider community on whether the school should become an Academy and join the existing ASCAT (All Saints Catholic Academy Trust).

The consultation period opened on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and ended on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

## **3. Methodology**

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The Governors of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School developed a consultation plan and FAQs leaflet, which identified all the school's stakeholders to be contacted at the start of the exercise and provided them with background information about the Diocese CAT Strategy and ASCAT to inform the debate.

The Headteacher wrote to all parents and staff on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to start the consultation exercise, invite them to attend consultation meetings and direct them to accessing the consultation leaflet on the school's website.

Staff and parents were invited to attend consultation meetings to find out more about the proposed conversion to an Academy and ASCAT.

Emails were also sent to both officer and elected representatives of Hertfordshire County (HCC), as well as the local MP, neighbouring Secondary, Primary and Nursery Schools and other partners.

The consultation materials also contained a response form which stakeholders were invited to complete and submit by the end of the consultation period.

The Consultation Leaflet produced by Governors is attached as **Appendix A** to this report.

#### **4. Consultation Meeting Chronology**

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The letters to parents and staff invited them to submit questions, and to attend the appropriate consultation meetings scheduled below:

- Staff – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October at 3.45pm; and
- Parents – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October at 6pm

The meetings were attended by the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, several governors from the Governing Body, the CEO and Director of Governance for ASCAT and the Academy Implementation Officer from the Diocese.

The staff meeting was attended by eleven members of staff (including two online) and the later meeting with parents had two parents attending.

The Headteacher of JFK Catholic School and a Governor from St Roses Catholic Infant School attended the parents event.

The Headteacher gave a presentation to staff covering issues such as the Diocese's vision for the CAT programme, the advantages of forming a Dacorum Hub within ASCAT, why this is being considered now, the conversion process and next steps.

The full presentation given to Staff is enclosed as **Appendix B** to this report.

Attendees were then given an opportunity to ask any questions they might have.

The questions asked and answers provided at the above meetings are included in **Appendix C** to this report.

#### **5. Completed Questionnaires**

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Seven completed questionnaires were returned by stakeholders.

Of the 7 respondents:

- 2 (28.6%) respondents 'Strongly agreed' with the proposal
- 3 (42.9%) respondents 'Agreed' with the proposal
- 1 (14.3%) respondent 'Disagreed' with the proposal
- 1 (14.3%) respondent 'Strongly disagreed' with the proposal

#### **6. Findings from the Consultation Questionnaires**

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This section sets out the additional comments offered by the respondents.

## **Q2) Respondents were asked to consider the proposal that St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School should convert to an Academy and join the ASCAT**

The respondents who indicated that they either ‘Strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the proposal, gave the following reasons.

- “Future benefits for Catholic education in Dacorum.”
- “Financially it makes sense, the school remains individual in its ethos, and I trust the judgement of the Headteacher.”
- “I believe it will strengthen the local Catholic community of schools.”
- “The claiming back of VAT should provide better financial situation. The pooling of resources should also help.”
- “Long term, I feel the school will benefit from the ‘power’ of being in a member of a large group, both financially and educationally. Some areas of finance that are currently restrictive under the Voluntary Aided system could be addressed with academy status.”

The respondents who indicated that they either ‘Strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ with the proposal, gave the following reasons.

- “I prefer ordinary state school status.”
- “SCM in my opinion should remain an independent school.”

## **Q3) Respondents were given the opportunity to make any other comments about the proposed conversion**

The respondents who indicated that they either ‘Strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the proposal, offered the following additional comments.

- “I would hope this would not affect the school’s ability to provide the current extra-curricular activities or affect the planned rebuild.”
- “On a personal note, I would hope that the strong Dominican heritage, ethos and values of St Cuthbert Mayne would continue.”

The respondents who indicated that they either ‘Strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ with the proposal, did not offer any additional comments.

## **7. Reflections on the Consultation**

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The staff and parents’ response to the consultation was positive and no significant concerns were identified which had not been anticipated by Governors, ASCAT and the Diocese.

A significant proportion of responses (71.5%) ‘Agreed’ or ‘Strongly Agreed’ with the proposal.

The lack of significant opposition to the proposal indicates that the St Cuthbert Mayne community has been well informed on the proposed changes and benefits of forming the CAT.

## **8. Summary**

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This report summarises the findings of the genuine, open, and honest consultation exercise undertaken by Governors to ascertain the views of parents, staff, and other stakeholders on the conversion of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School to an Academy and to join the existing ASCAT.

This report evidences the comprehensive approach taken to raise awareness of the consultation exercise in the community, to provide background information on the issues and to host staff and parents' meetings to allow stakeholders to find out about the Diocese's Strategy and ask questions.

Although most respondents were in favour of the proposal, with only two against, the number of returned response forms was a little disappointing. The school and Trust should continue to communicate with staff and parents about this to ensure that the community remains updated and engaged.

However, the range of questions asked at the parents and staff meetings (and listed in **Appendix C**) was positive and showed the willingness of attendees to engage with Governors and ASCAT on this matter.

## **9. Acknowledgements**

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The Governors and Headteacher of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to the staff and parents who took part in the consultation by listening to the presentations, asking clarification questions and who took the time to contribute their views.

## **10. Recommendations**

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It is recommended that the Governors of St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School:

- (i) Approve the contents of this report.
- (ii) Recognise that they have fulfilled their duty to undertake a Statutory Section 10 stakeholder consultation exercise on the proposed conversion.
- (iii) Publish this report on the school's website as a record of the consultation and feedback to the participants and wider stakeholders.
- (iv) Continue to share updates and engage with staff and parents on this matter; and
- (v) Proceed to the next stage of the conversion process not having identified any barriers to the schools' conversion and proposal to join ASCAT.