



Frequently Asked Questions

1) Why is our school considering becoming an academy and joining BEBCMAT?

The Bishop of Lancaster has stated that it is his wish that all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lancaster move to become academies as part of Multi Academy Trusts by 2026. He believes that by doing so, this will protect, preserve and promote Catholic education across the Diocese. All Catholic schools will make this move over the next five years. For more details on the Bishop's plan and his letter explaining this, please see the BEBCMAT website.

2) What is an academy?

Academies are state schools, funded directly from central government, no longer under the control of the Local Authority. Academy status gives schools more freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance.

The school will still be a Catholic school under the authority of the Bishop of Lancaster and its religious designation will not change.

All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules as other schools on special educational needs, exclusions and admissions.

An academy is part of a charitable trust run by a board of trustees. Academies are rightly expected to work with and support other schools, including lower-performing schools. Should you wish to know more about the Government's policy, the Department for Education has its own academies bookmark on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

3) What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi Academy Trust is a charitable company and is responsible for overseeing the running of a number of schools. It has three layers of governance: the members (the Bishop of Lancaster, the Episcopal Vicar for Education and the Diocesan Board of Trustees); the Trustees; the local governing bodies.

A MAT is formed when two or more academies legally come together in partnership. Each school keeps its own name and it is possible for other academies to join the Trust in the future. The partnership ensures that the schools can share skills and best practice and make optimum use of resources ensuring best value for money for each school.

We believe that there is greater scrutiny of academies now than for voluntary aided schools and Governors are confident that this will have a positive impact on standards and enable the school to continue to fully engage with its community.

However, we are aware of some difference in opinion as to the effectiveness of Multi Academy Trusts. We would encourage you to consider the arguments for and against and check the accuracy of assertions that are being made before submitting your feedback.

4) What are the main differences between academies and maintained schools?

The religious nature of the school remains the same, but the model of governance and funding change. A Catholic MAT is a group of Catholic schools coming together as a Trust, Only Catholic schools will be members of the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust. Academies have a funding agreement with the Education Funding Agency (ESFA) and receive funding directly from them instead of the Local Authority (LA). standards are monitored by the governance and leadership of the Trust instead of the LA. Standards are reported to the Regional Schools' Commissioner (RSC) on behalf of the Department for Education. Academies have more freedoms and do not have to follow the national curriculum but they do have to take part in national assessments such as (SATs and GCSEs) and Ofsted will still monitor them.

5) Will the uniform at the school change?

No. It is important that each school continues to have its own unique identity in the Trust.

6) Will the school day or holiday dates change?

No. These will still be determined by the governing body of the school and the Headteacher.

7) Will the name of the school change?

There is no requirement for the school to have the word academy in its title, although it can if it wishes.

8) Will staff change or have to move to other schools?

No. Staff's terms and conditions are protected by law. Nobody will be told to move to another school. Occasionally, there may be job opportunities in other schools and staff could apply for those, as they could if they weren't in a Trust.

9) What are the advantages for pupils of becoming part of BEBCMAT?

Schools joining the Trust will be given greater opportunities for collaboration and the sharing of good practice. The expectation is that this will have a positive impact on teaching and learning, although immediately there is no expectation that the move will have any significant impact on students and families. Each school will still be led and managed by the headteacher and governors. The Trust structure will provide greater opportunities for curricular and extra-curricular activities and possibly transition. Also, some jobs will be done by the central team of the Trust, leaving the Headteacher to focus on teaching, learning and pupils' spiritual development.

10) What are the advantages in general of becoming an academy in a MAT?

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.

11) What are the main benefits for schools within the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust ?

The benefits of joining a Catholic Multi Academy Trust are many and varied. As the Bishop of Lancaster states, Catholic MATs are a secure way to protect, preserve and improve Catholic education across the Diocese.

Being a member of BEBCMAT means all of the schools in the Trust working together to provide a first-class Catholic education, valuing staff and pupils, investing in their future, working in true collaboration and partnership with others.

Working in partnership, all of the schools in the Trust work closely together to create a sustainable model of high-quality education for all pupils. We believe that sharing ideas that work, learning from each other and allowing leaders and staff to focus on the core purpose of education enables us to move forward as a family of schools. As a Trust, with shared central services, schools can also benefit from economies of scale when purchasing and commissioning external contracts. The work of the central team at the Trust will free up leaders to focus on school improvement and enhancing the academic, spiritual and lives of pupils. The Trust can provide great opportunities for staff recruitment and retention and professional development

12) Why change if things are working well with everyone?

This is the Bishop's plan for the future of education in the Diocese of Lancaster. Partnership working is strong in the Diocese, but not every school collaborates well with others. We know that being in a Trust will enable schools to grow even stronger as we learn from the strengths of other schools. We will create improvement projects together and further strengthen our Catholic family.

13) Will schools lose their identity and will there be big changes?

No. 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. The local governing body's role is to ensure that the Catholic ethos is strong and the unique identity of the school is maintained. There are no significant changes which will affect pupils on a day-to-day basis. Uniforms, school day, free school meals, school name and holidays will not change.

14) What will the direct impact be on families if our school joins a Trust?

The move will not have a negative impact on families. The school will still be led and managed by the Headteacher and a local governing body.

15) Is Lancaster the only Diocese changing in this way?

Many other Dioceses are also developing structures to further preserve, protect and develop Catholic education, for example, in Nottingham, Leeds and Newcastle Dioceses, all of the Catholic schools are academies in MATs.

16) What are the legal responsibilities towards children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)?

Pope Benedict reminds us, 'Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary'. In a Catholic school and academy, our responsibilities to all children extend beyond curriculum standards so that children flourish. Academies must follow the SEND Code of Practice and work closely with the Local Authority, just like other schools.

17) What about safeguarding?

The same expectations for schools about safeguarding would be in place in the Trust.

18) How does the school convert to an Academy?

Firstly, all of the schools will be recognised equally in the Trust, The cost of the process to become an academy is met by a grant of £25,000 per school. Subject to approval by governors, the timeline for the school to convert is 1st September 2022. The current governing body will become the Local Governing Body (LGB) under the Trustees and Members of the Trust.

19) What is the role of parents?

All schools that convert to academies must ensure that parents are consulted. Parents are important in the work of a Catholic school and schools looking to become part of a MAT must seek to work in partnership with the families who entrust their children to their care. BEBCMAT will become the Admissions Authority although each school will have their admission policy which they will follow. There will be no change in policy or pupil admission numbers. Our catchment area and our partner schools will remain unchanged too. Admissions will still be administered by the Local Authority. The MAT board is responsible for arranging for an admissions appeal if there are families who wish to appeal for a place in a Trust school.

20) What is the leadership structure in the Trust?

There will be a Chief Executive Officer and a Chief Financial Officer. Each school will have its Headteacher as it does now. These roles will not be diminished. The Trust and the Local Governing Body will be involved in the appointment of Headteachers if and when vacancies arise. Each school is an equal partner in the Trust so that there is no school more important than another. Each school will retain and manage its own budget but will contribute for key roles and projects within the Trust. This is not an additional financial strain on the school but it will come from the money formerly top-sliced by the Local Authority.

21) How will governance work?

There will be three layers of governance. The Members will be the Bishop of Lancaster, the Episcopal Vicar for Education and Formation and the Diocesan Board of Trustees. Then there is a Trust board made up of at least five Trustees/Directors, who are not paid and the majority of them are practising Catholics. Each school will have its own Headteacher and Local Governing Body. The powers and responsibilities of each of these groups will be outlined in the scheme of delegation. The LGB will carry out many of the functions they presently do. For instance, the LGB will ensure that the standards in the school are as good as they can be and that the school is delivering the improvements needed. This will be supported and monitored by the CEO and the Board of Trustees.

22) What services will the Trust provide?

The Trust will establish a core central team. The core team will offer support for schools around standards, finance, school improvement and the operational running of schools. They will continue to work with the Catholic Education Service to offer strong support in developing each school's Catholic life. The Trust will be required to purchase services that are of the best value and the best quality. Local Authorities retain their statutory responsibilities for areas such as safeguarding and SEND. The Trust can make savings by economies of scale. This money can then be used for the education of children.

23) Who owns the buildings and how are they maintained?

The ownership of sites used as Catholic schools is held by the Diocese. 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 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.

24) What happens with finances and resources?

The Trust Board will be responsible for presenting the consolidated accounts for the Trust as a whole. The Trust will provide opportunities for centralising contracts and service delivery that we hope will yield considerable savings for school budgets. The Local Governing Body will be responsible for managing the delegated school budget, with oversight from the central team. The Trust is responsible for the central service fund and for strategic planning across the whole Trust. The LGB is responsible for staffing structures. As now,

they will need to ensure that the structure is sustainable within the delegated budget. The central Trust team will support in this area if needed.

25) What will happen to the existing school reserves or deficits? Any transfer of assets?

All assets and existing reserves or deficits will be retained by the school on conversion, having been contractually transferred by the governing body to the Trust pursuant to the terms of a Commercial Transfer Agreement. The Local Authority is obliged by statutory regulation to transfer any school surpluses to the academy within 4 months of conversion, though typically it happens more quickly than that.

26) What happens with teachers and support staff employment?

Teachers and support staff employed by the Local Governing Body at the point of the transfer will transfer to BEBCMAT on their existing Terms and Conditions, There is no expectation that staff would work in different schools. However, future posts might be designed to do this.

27) How do we find out further information if we need it?

Please refer to the 'Join Us' page <https://bebcmat.co.uk/join-us/> on the BEBCMAT website for more information on the Trust and the conversion process.

Questions Received from Consultation week ending 26/11/21

Could you explain how and when you intend novate leasing existing agreements? We currently a private nursery leasing space from school. The lease agreement is with school. It would cause anxiety to the owner of the nursery if she felt the terms of the lease could be altered due to the change of name of the organisation the lease is from.

At the point of conversion the local governing body will cease to exist as a legal entity therefore all contracts must novate to the new legal entity which is the Trust.

Letters of Novation will be drawn up to advise all parties and service providers of this change in advance of the conversion point, normally 1-2 months in advance. The terms of the contract in force at the time will not change. Moving forward the terms could be reviewed at the point of renewal as they can be now.

Also, could you clarify: once the lease is novated why receipts from the rental remains with the school and not BEBCMAT?

The school would retain its Letting income as self-generated school income

Regarding Parent pay what will the school account details change to and why?

Currently, each academy in the Trust has its own bank account and there is not one central bank account.

A new bank account will be setup for the academy within the trust with signatories falling in line with the trust signatory list. At least one signatory will be the Headteacher of the school joining.

Parentpay will be set up with the new bank details and amounts paid onto the Parentpay platform will automatically be paid into the new bank account. These amounts will be posted to the schools accounts through the bank reconciliation process in the relevant income section that the receipts relate to.

What will be the procedure for "Petty Cash" if it is allowed. Who decides how it is allowed and what are the criteria for allowing it?

The trust does not operate a petty cash system due to the amount of time required to reconcile and maintain the imprest system - bank cash collections and monthly reconciliation of what can be large amounts of receipts and paperwork. Instead the trust operates a system whereby staff can complete a "Claim for Reimbursement" form, signed off by the budget holder/headteacher, and attach a receipt. This is then processed through the BACS system by the finance team and paid directly into the claimants bank account. Any signed claims received by Wednesday will be processed and in the claimants bank account by the following Monday. This change should have limited impact as any current claims made through "Petty

Cash" should by their very nature and name be small in cash value. Many items currently purchased through the "Petty Cash" system will also be able to be ordered from suppliers e.g. stamps.

Regarding staff pay -will teacher national pay spines be adopted? Will Lancashire Authority pay spines be used for TA's and support staff?

BEBCMAT adopts Teachers STPCD and NJC Green Book pay and conditions for support staff. Staff would TUPE transfer on their current scale points into the trust. At some point in the future, the Trust may wish to get consistency across the Trust on the support staff pay scales in the future for appointments such as TA2 and TA3. Should differences exist in these areas it would be something the Trust would need to discuss with HR and legal regarding future harmonising of contracts across the trust.

I have read that the Local Authority still have statutory responsibility for SEND, will schools still apply to the Local Authority for statutory assessments including Education, Health Care Plans?

Schools will still need to apply to the LA for statutory assessments including EHCPs. The responsible LA is the LA where the child is resident.

Will a transfer to a Special School for a pupil work the same as our policies and procedures do now?

Yes – this is a responsibility of the LA so schools will continue with these channels as they do now.

Will schools use BEBCMAT central services for Educational Psychologist/ specialist teacher involvement or the Local Authority as we do now?

Currently – there is no provision in central services for Educational Psychology or specialist teacher involvement. This is an area the Trust wish to develop as the Trust grows. The school is free to source an external SLA but this could be one the Trust secure across the Trust for good value.

Will I (SENCo) still have the freedom and responsibility to commission specialised assessments with a funded cost centre as I do now? Can schools still use Lancashire County Council services if a Service Level Agreement was agreed?

If that is part of the delegated budget, then yes. Schools can use any specialist services and SLAs as appropriate. Some SLAs will not be renewed, some will be negotiated across the Trust and others will continue – this will be looked at in detail in the due diligence aspect of the conversion process.

Similarly, how will the statutory duty of the Local Authority look for safeguarding children? Will we follow the same policy and procedure on a day to day basis as we do now? Will we still refer to Lancashire Children's Social Care and follow Lancashire's Safeguarding Continuum of Need?

Similarly, Lancashire LA have a statutory responsibility for safeguarding the children in their area. You would follow the same processes as you do now, liaising with local social care arrangements.

Regarding the leadership of the school, you report that the Headteacher and Governing Body roles are safe in leading and managing the school. Can this reassurance be given to other members of the senior leadership team, including the Deputy Headteacher or are these roles subject to change?

There is no Trust wide plan or policy to alter the staffing across the Trust. If schools cannot balance budgets, staffing would be scrutinised as it would now to ensure the costs and structures are appropriate. Benchmarks against other similar schools will help in determining this. These roles are only subject to change if needed by individual schools.

Thank you for the information regarding the TUPE process. Can I clarify that staff members' Terms & Conditions will not change and is there an end date for our Terms & Conditions?

Staff members' terms and conditions are protected under TUPE legal processes. There is no planned end-date.

Regarding Maternity Leave Terms & Conditions, will the responsibilities of the person still be the same upon return of a Maternity Leave, and similarly a Paternity Leave if this was an extended period of time?

The Trust operates in line with legal advice and will not make changes to responsibilities solely due to maternity or paternity leave.

With currently working for the trust in two of the Blackpool schools and seeing the importance they place on pastoral and family support will this be something other schools joining would like to replicate?

Some schools already have a pastoral team and these would remain in place; however, if funding allows it is an area that may be developed further.

Will staff in the schools be linking with staff currently in the trust to form teams across the trust such as curriculum coordinators and key stage leaders?

Yes, networks developed across the trust will be invaluable for all involved and the schools see the support for the subject leaders as being essential to school improvement.

The Academy financial year runs from September to August, will my weeks worked need to change if I am not currently not contracted to work during the summer holidays?

The Trust do not envisage the need for working weeks to change at this point. However, following the stakeholder consultation should approval to proceed be received, the Trust will be reviewing all staffing information and therefore this will be reviewed as part of that process. Should any changes be needed (referred to as measures under TUPE legislation) then this will be communicated to staff and consulted upon as part of the formal TUPE consultation process.

Questions Received from Consultation week ending 19/11/21

Will the Trust's Finance system and procedures be different to Lancashire's system?

The Trust currently use SAGE finance system although they are looking to tender for a new system in Spring 2022. The Trust intend to include representatives of the schools in Wave 1 to be part of the selection process for the new system.

Will staff be able to claim overtime under the payroll system?

The Trust are looking to tender for a new payroll/HR system in Spring 2022. A self-help portal for staff to easily claim overtime, book annual leave and change personal details will be included in the desirable specification. The Trust intend to include representatives of the schools in Wave 1 to be part of the selection process for the new system.

What will happen with existing lettings arrangements?

They will continue but the contracts will continue but will novate to the Trust. Receipts from lettings fees will remain as school income.

Is the PTA allowed to continue and how will funds be managed?

Yes, however any funds raised must be paid into the main school account OR an account that is managed by the PTA and there are no school signatories and not managed by any employees of the school.

Breakfast and After School Club are run by a Voluntary Management committee within the Governing Body; parents pay into a separate account directly, mostly through BACS, will this continue?

The clubs will continue under the management of the Governing Body committee, however unless the clubs are set up as separate training subsidiaries then all income and expenditure will be managed through the main school account through separate budget lines.

What happens to the school fund / petty cash?

The regulations for the management of academy finances are extremely robust. Multiple accounts are not encouraged as the Trust has to reconcile and consolidate all income and expenditure on a monthly basis. All transactions have to be authorised through a proper process and reconciled on the system. Auditors don't encourage the use of petty cash but the Trust may have a procedure for this if they allow it. Existing funds will transfer to the school's main account.

Parents use ParentPay, paying for dinners, uniform and trips online, will the funds be to be paid into the school account?

Yes, although the school account details will change.

What happens to SLAs in place? Will schools need to pay for a full year or will they be reduced to 5/12, to end on 31st Aug? e.g. payroll, HT, safeguarding etc.

The LAs are aware of the intention to convert on 01/09/22, whereas this does not constitute notice for terminating the SLAs they will be aware that the schools may not renew some SLAs. It would be normal for LAs to allow, at the renewal point, a 5/12 fee e.g. for finance support and other SLAs that schools will keep April – August 2022.

Will schools be charged for 7/12 payroll only, and then for a full year from April?

We would expect that LAs would charge only for the months that schools remain in the service.

Will schools continue to use BTLS support for Finance 6 and Sims.net- would we be using an alternative within the Trust or continuing with this?

To ensure compliance with the Academies Trust Handbook all schools in the Trust will use the same finance system and support.

How will the school ensure that the curriculum remains broad and balanced?

Through the Trust's Scheme of Delegation the Governing Bodies of the schools will retain responsibility to review and set the curriculum. The CEO will have oversight of this.

Will the entry requirements to the school still allow non-Catholic and local non-faith families to attend or will parents have the choice of local schools reduced as academies can restrict pupils on roll?

Although the Trust is the Admission Authority, through the Trust's Scheme of Delegation the Governing Bodies of the schools will retain responsibility for the Admission Policy of each school. Any future changes would be subject to formal statutory consultation.

Who will ensure that teachers current salaries are protected? Whilst academies allow staff to receive bonus pay but who will ensure that no staff receives a pay cut?

All staff who TUPE to the Trust will have their current Terms and Conditions which would protect them from unilateral pay cuts.

Will direct funding implement the funds school puts aside for non-curricular and pastoral care?

Through the Trust's Scheme of Delegation the Governing Bodies of the schools will be responsible for setting the school budget in accordance with its priorities, however the final budget will need to be approved by the Trust Board.

Will future teaching staff still be fully qualified and trained in their subject?

Through the Trust's Scheme of Delegation the Governing Bodies of the schools will retain responsibility for appointing teaching staff with appropriate experience and qualifications.

Trusts have a Board of Directors which each school would report to – what happens to the Governing Body?

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with the Diocese, Model CES Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation the Governing Bodies will remain in place and will retain a large number of decision making functions and play a pivotal role in the leadership and management of the schools.

What is the top slice you will be required to pay? And what will you get for your money?

The Trust Board will approve an appropriate Trust Membership Levy which will pay for the central functions and services provided by the Trust. In accordance with the Academies Trust Handbook the Trust will have in place a transparent policy and appeals procedure for the use of the levy.

What level of autonomy will you retain? Will your headteacher retain any powers?

The Headteacher will remain accountable for leading and managing the school. In accordance with their Headteacher Job Description and Scheme of Delegation they will therefore retain a large number of decision making functions.

Where is your support? There is only internal support, you lose the protection of your Local Authority. HR, payroll, advisory services are all either brought in house or outsourced to expensive business based providers with no care or knowledge for schools.

Services that are to be provided centrally will be brokered by the Trust who will seek high quality services for schools that represent, following an exhaustive procurement process, best value.

There is no saving money in an Academy Trust – you still pay for the central team. You then source or are forced to change your SLA's, losing the LA's bulk discounts. Companies are savvy now to trust discounts and they are not widely cost effective anymore.

The Trust will retain funds currently 'top sliced' by the LA, this will contribute to the level of the Trust Membership Levy required to pay for central services. Academy trusts benefit from the National Deals for Schools scheme and national procurement frameworks for the purchase of many types of goods and services including energy, ICT equipment, recruitment, insurance, payroll and HR. The Trust and schools will still be free to procure LA goods and services should they represent best value.

The Condition Improvement Fund bids that could be put in annually for capital works to secure new buildings, roofs, toilets and heating are beneficial but the competition is fierce and the process is expensive if you don't secure the bid.

By September 2022 BEBCMAT will qualify for School Condition Allocation. This grant is paid directly to the Trust to maintain their estate, they will not have to compete with other academies for the funding. This will be allocated through an estates management strategy.

BEBCMAT has been a lonely Trust for a long time now – why? Why has no other school joined yet – what is their offer to you?

The expansion of BEBCMAT as the Diocese and DfE's preferred strategy in the Blackpool and Fylde Coast area is a reflection of the faith in the leadership and management of BEBCMAT. This faith is shared by the schools joining the Trust who believe in the benefits outlined in this document and in the letter previously shared with you.

Questions Received from Consultation week ending 03/12/21

Does the Bishop legally have the right to tell Catholic schools to become academies or is this something that could be said no to?

Technically, the Bishop can issue a directive which has the same force in Canon Law as statute. In addition, the Governing Body is made up of a majority of foundation governors who are appointed by the Bishop to sit in 'Locis Episcopi', that is in place of the Bishop. It would not be supportive of the Bishop's wishes for foundation governors to act in a way that would directly contradict his wishes unless there were exceptional

circumstances to do so until those circumstances were resolved. Please see the Bishop's leaflet for his rationale and more background.

Will support staff continue to be paid in line with the local government pay scales? Will annual incremental progression still apply?

Yes, BEBCMAT adopts NJC Green Book pay and conditions for support staff. Staff would TUPE transfer on their current scale points into the trust. At some point in the future, the Trust may wish to get consistency across the Trust on the support staff pay scales in the future. Should differences exist in these areas it would be something the Trust would need to discuss with HR and legal regarding future harmonising of contracts across the trust.

Some staff work on variable hours contracts, who decides whether to increase my hours or to decrease them? Is it the decision of the Governing Body or BEBCMAT? If it is BEBCMAT who decides whether to increase or decrease hours, they may not be fully aware of the range of tasks that are required to complete and use this unawareness to reduce hours permanently to the minimum stipulated in the contract - would this, could this happen?

This will be a decision for the schools as it is now. There is no Trust wide plan or policy to alter the staffing across the Trust. If schools cannot balance budgets, staffing would be scrutinised as it would now to ensure the costs and structures are appropriate. Benchmarks against other similar schools will help in determining this. These roles are only subject to change if needed by individual schools.

BEBCMAT use BROMCOM as their preferred information management system. A lot of the schools currently use SIMS. If the MAT would like schools to move to BROMCOM will training be offered or will schools simply learn as they go? Also if schools move away from SIMS will schools also move away from FMIS as they are both supplied by ESS. Some school currently buy into Finance support from LCC and the finance officer does termly reviews etc... who will provide this finance support?

The Trust currently use SAGE finance system although they are looking to tender for a new system in Spring 2022. The Trust intend to include representatives of the schools in Wave 1 to be part of the selection process for the new system. To ensure compliance with the Academies Trust Handbook all schools in the Trust will use the same finance system and support. Schools will therefore move away from FSMS and the finance support. This will be provided by the Trust central finance team.

Regarding the MIS, the Trust has just moved across to Bromcom. It is not expected that all schools will need to move to this system, although it would be something to consider in the future. We are setting up a 'showcase' with Bromcom for interested staff to have a look at in the near future.

As it is expected that we will join the MAT on 1st September will training (if necessary) be offered before the school closes in July as most staff are am term time only and September and July are especially busy in the academic calendar. If decisions are not swiftly taken September will be impossible to manage.

BEBCMAT will look to provide any training before term finishes although this would depend on the start date of the system. The proposed working party for school business managers/bursars would be key drivers in setting this timeline with the Trust.

Will BEBCMAT prefer a central payroll system? Some schools currently buy into LCC oracle and others use People Pay. Which system is the MAT are currently using and will schools be expected to join them in their preferred platform?

Yes, one payroll provider would be used across the Trust. BEBCMAT currently use Blackpool LA system. However the Trust are looking to tender for a new payroll/HR system in Spring 2022. The Trust intend to include representatives of the schools in Wave 1 to be part of the selection process for the new system.

The school financial year currently runs from April to March and the MAT's runs September to August. This will throw up a number of complications that need to be worked around. The majority of our bought in services are up for renewal from 1st April - at this point will schools have signed up to the MAT? Will

schools have enough time from signing the MAT agreement to source new contracts – to bring schools line with the MAT without losing vital services?

The LAs are aware of the intention to convert on 01/09/22, whereas this does not constitute notice for terminating the SLAs they will be aware that the schools may not renew some SLAs. It would be normal for LAs to allow, at the renewal point, a 5/12 fee e.g. for finance support and other SLAs that schools will keep April – August 2022. The Trust will meet with each school team individually during the due diligence process to consider SLA renewals and work with staff in determining their way forward.

Would it be possible to meet with other Bursars and School Business Managers to discuss and understand how processes may/or may not work. To brainstorm and resolve issues before they arrive and to build relationships to ensure that smooth transition into the MAT.

Yes, this has already been discussed with the CEO of BEBCMAT and the Headteachers and a working party is being set up to do exactly this.

Will there be an opportunity (if it is deemed beneficial) to see first-hand the way that the current MAT works – how they support each other – how they communicate etc?

Yes definitely. Once each school has made the second resolution, more visits to and from the Trust will take place for staff to get to know each other and ways of working.

Will schools be supported by BEBCMAT to enable them to further grow and be the best that they can be?

Yes, that is the main driver behind the Bishop's plans for MATS – to enable strength through close collaboration and building on improvements for pupils and staff.

How does the MAT plan to grow over the next 4 years or so. Will the growth of the MAT enable in house services etc?

The MAT's growth strategy based on the Bishop's plan for academisation is to grow to 22 schools within the next 5 years. This will be a growth of approximately 4 schools a year. This will enable a growth in some in-house services and development of new ones in areas of need identified by the schools within the Trust.

One aim of the trust model is to enable greater sharing, adding greater strength and capacity to the system and ensuring that all schools are supported

- **How will this benefit schools?**
- **What will actually be shared?**
- **What does 'adding strength and capacity to the system' actually mean? Is this simply adding strength and capacity to the Academy Trust?**

The main ways of academy Trust's adding greater strength are through sharing of expertise, streamlined central support and services such as HR, finance and legal services. Schools will also be able to achieve finance through economies of scale. There will also be direct support for school improvement, ability to collaborate with like-minded schools and development of clusters and networks across one family of schools. This is adding strength and capacity across the system (schools and the Trust) by working together for the Common Good principles.

If the Governing Body's priority remains to be to provide an excellent catholic education for our children, how will being part of BEBCMAT further improve children's education?

The benefits to children's education come through improved educational experiences from staff CPD, networks, curriculum good practice etc. through to improved services such as speech and language, SEND, family support and education psychology as the Trust grows.

The letter dated 15th November 2021 states 'The Catholic Trust Academy Trust model will apparently ensure that the uniqueness of each individual school is celebrated and the unique contribution of each is recognised and appreciated'

- **How will that uniqueness be recognised and appreciated?**

- **Will any of that uniqueness be retained, and how?**

Schools will maintain their own governing body, own autonomy of management, own uniform and name. They will retain their own vision, mission statement and development plan. In essence the MAT will operate in a similar vein to the local authority in that it will be a facilitator of services to the schools within it which is the provision that the local authority offers currently.

As Catholic schools in one family, we will all have a shared vision, but each governing body will express it differently depending on the needs of the unique community and parish they serve.

BEBCMAT is made up of just 3 schools. Two are built on the same site and one is just a few miles away.

- **What have the benefits been to each of these 3 schools be being an academy?**
- **What have been the main challenges?**
- **How will the experience of the small academy benefit the Primary Schools?**
- **How will you ensure that schools, that are remote from the existing 3 schools, will receive full focus and support from the Academy?**

Benefits of being in a Trust have been cooperative working on the curriculum, local issues, wellbeing across the Trust, ICT etc. all of which have been particularly important through the pandemic. We meet monthly as a leadership group to discuss Trust-wide issues so that we work as a group of schools, not three individual 'islands'.

The main challenge, as in any organisation, is ensuring that communication is quick and effective. The experiences of any academy regardless of size all benefit the Trust – size of school does not matter – it is one school, one voice around the table.

Schools remote from the existing schools will receive the full focus and support of the Trust team. The central team is relocating in the Spring term out of it's current offices in one of the schools to offices in a business park. This will help to reassure schools that all schools will be treated fairly. It is envisaged that part of the CEO's working week will be spent in the different schools, as happens now.

During the initial consultation meeting, it was stated that one of the advantages for becoming an academy was that subject leaders would be able to further develop their expertise and leadership of their subject by linking with others in the academy trust. Please could you confirm that any meetings and cluster groups formed will be part of our directed time and not additional / in staffs' own time eg after 4pm?

Meetings and clusters would be part of directed time unless the Trust can facilitate these during the day if they are essential.

As part of an existing, successful science coordinator cluster group will joining the academy trust and potentially a new cluster group, mean that staff need to leave the current cluster? Within the current cluster group schools have signed up to a project in autumn term 2021 that has a commitment of 2 years.

Current clusters will be able to continue if beneficial to the schools. Existing and new networks developed across the trust will be invaluable for all involved and the schools see the support for the subject leaders as being essential to school improvement.

BEBCMAT currently follow STPCD (school teachers pay and conditions document) and this will be protected under TUPE. Could the academy trust decide to hold a consultation to move away from following the STPCD in the future at any point?

It would be technically possible following a full negotiation process to move away from STPCD however BEBCMAT currently follows STPCD and there are no plans to move away from them.

How will staff on maternity leave during the transition period be supported and kept up to date on the changes?

Staff will be supported on return to work after maternity and can use KIT days to ensure that they are up to date with any changes.

Despite many positive comments from other teachers who work within a MAT, especially with regards to CPD, a Preston faith school has recently decided to take strike action over plans to transform it into an academy. The article states that ‘The National Education Union has said that the process undermined local democracy and threatens staff terms and conditions.’

Is this definitely not the case with the MAT that schools are hoping to join?

The Governing Bodies of the schools that have chosen to consult on the proposals to convert to become an academy and join BEBCMAT on 1 September 2022 have followed the statutory consultation process required of them.

Should the proposals be approved staff terms and conditions will transfer in accordance with, and be protected by, TUPE regulations. BEBCMAT has positive working relationships with all local professional associations and meets with them all termly as part of their Trade Union Recognition Agreement (TURA).

Under some of the frequently asked questions on the BEBCMAT website, it states:

What happens with teachers and support staff employment?

Teachers and support staff employed by the Local Governing Body at the point of the transfer will transfer to BEBCMAT on their existing Terms and Conditions, There is no expectation that staff would work in different schools. However, future posts might be designed to do this.

When schools undertake a redundancy process (teaching) staff needed to fill in a matrix. What would the process be like if it was needed in the future? How likely would a post be designed (as mentioned above) to help ensure that a further redundancy would not be needed?

Future posts may be designed to enable the MAT to move the members of staff, within reason, between schools. These posts would be based on a need for the role across the Trust and would be specifically advertised as such.

The redundancy process described is typical of a fair and transparent process that any reasonable employer would have to undertake in determining, if the need arose, which post(s) to select for redundancy. BEBCMAT would follow a similar process if it were required. Regrettably there is no way to design a post to protect it completely from redundancy as there are many factors which may lead to this requirement.