

St. Cuthbert's RC VA First School

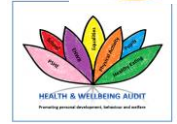
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Monday 27th September 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Consultation to join the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.

Please note this is not the same consultation, or connected to, the future of Education Provision in Berwick that went out recently.

In December 2019 the Diocesan Academy Policy was revised with the aim that all Diocesan schools will become academies within one of four Diocesan education trusts by July 2022.

Underpinning the Diocesan Trust Policy is the desire and need to ensure the promotion, preservation, protection and future development of Catholic education within the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The Catholic Trust model will ensure that the uniqueness of each individual school is celebrated and the unique contribution of each is recognised and appreciated. It will also mean that no individual school will be left isolated or vulnerable in a rapidly changing and complex environment. The aim is also to facilitate greater sharing, adding strength and capacity to the system and ensuring that all schools are supported.

Our Governing Body's priority remains to enable the school to continue to provide an excellent Catholic education for our children, whilst continuing to be at the heart of our community. Therefore, in line with Diocesan policy, our Governing Body has decided to consult with parents, carers, staff and other stakeholders, on whether our school should join the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.

We are therefore commencing formal consultation today, Monday 27th September 2021, for a period of three school term weeks. Consultation will therefore end at 3pm on Friday 15th October 2021.

What is a Catholic Education Trust (CET)?

A CET is formed when schools come together in partnership. Each school keeps its own name and it is possible for other schools 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.

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference, they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff.

How can we find out more about Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust?

www.bishopbewickcet.org

Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust (formerly known as Sacred Heart Partnership of Schools) was established in 2017.

The Trust was founded on clear principles, to educate the whole child, to ensure every child in its care has an excellent Catholic education and to work together to improve opportunities for all its children to succeed and be happy. Our Catholic schools are some of the best in our region, all have strengths, all have areas to develop. By coming together as a partnership of schools, we can harness the best practice within schools, and then disseminate it across the system. The Trust believes this is the single most important benefit of being part of a Trust.

Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust wants all its schools to maintain their individuality, uniqueness and a great deal of autonomy. The Trust values what makes schools different, however schools are bound together by their desire to ensure every school is supported to become the best it can in order to improve the life chances for all children in our region.

Part of the process of joining the Trust means that a maintained school converts to an academy. These 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. A freedom Bishop Bewick has already used to the advantage of its schools. However Catholic Academies continue to be accountable to the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle as well as the local community. All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules as other schools on special educational needs, exclusions and admissions. There are now over 9,000 academies in the country, including many schools in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and in the local authority.

An academy is part of a charitable trust run by a board of Directors. 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>

What are the main benefits for schools within the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust?

- Access to top quality staff, including an “outstanding” Trust leadership team who are sharply focussed on securing excellence.
- Moderation of standards across the partnership of schools to ensure the highest quality provision
- Greater control over finances and the money due to schools.
- Educational benefits for students as a result of additional freedoms available to academies in terms of the curriculum we offer, and how we prioritise resources.
- The opportunity to work in close and formalised partnership with other schools and share expertise and services that will benefit all of our students and staff.

What additional responsibilities will Trust status bring?

- Additional financial and legal responsibilities – however as Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust is a well-established Trust, arrangements are already fully in place to deal with these responsibilities.
- Currently the Governing Body employs our staff – going forward the Trust would be the employer rather than the Governing Body.
- The Trust would be responsible for admissions rather than the Governing Body (although the Local Authority would still co-ordinate and ensure the Trust adopts clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code).
- The Trust would enter into a 125 year lease for the land, usually owned by the Local Authority. We already have responsibility for the cost of maintaining the land and buildings.

How do I learn more, and how do I respond to the consultation?

Our Governing Body would very much like to hear your opinion and we encourage you to contact Clare McGregor with any questions you might have.

If you wish to respond to the consultation, please email clare.mcgregor@st-cuthbertsrc.northumberland.sch.uk with your feedback, and include your name and contact details by the closing date of Friday 15th October 2021.

Attached is a list of frequently asked questions which may answer any queries you have in the first instance. You may wish to read the last two newsletters sent out by BBCET, these and all other information regarding BBCET can be found on our school website at http://www.st-cuthbertsrc.northumberland.sch.uk/website/bishop_bewick_catholic_education_trust_bbcet/552419

Yours sincerely,

Clare McGregor

Headteacher

Barbara Simpson

Chair of Governors