



ST ANTONY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY PARENT CONSULTATION MEETING

RE: CONVERTING TO ACADEMY STATUS

Date: Thursday, 27th February, 2020

Time: Commenced 4:30pm – ended: 5:55pm

Attendees: 45 parents from across the school (Nursery to Year 6) + children and older siblings

Consultation Meeting held with parents of St. Antony's Catholic Primary School in The St. Clare's Church Hall of the Parish Church.

Present:

Mrs A. Moore (Head teacher)

Pietro Chiesa (Chair of Governors)

Toyin Gbomede (Parent Governor & Vice Chair)

Fr. Christopher (Parish Priest)

Mr. Shandon Best (PFTA Chairperson)

Mrs Anna N'Jie (PFTA Vice Chairperson)

Mrs Moore who chaired the meeting asked Brother Christopher to open the meeting with prayer .

Introduction: Mrs Moore explained that the school has been in discussion about converting to academy status for over two year in line with the Bishop's Vision for the Schools in the Deanery of Brentwood. So, for us at St Antony's the academisation journey had begun long ago, with much dialogue among parents and staff . She gave context regarding how the school was initially established and the reason behind why faith schools like St Antony's wished to safeguard Catholic education by taking the route of academisation- ensuring a future in line with the original vision of the Ursuline Nuns who started the school in 1862. She stated that the school was formed so that all children of the Catholic Faith, other faiths and no faith could have an education that was not just about standards in the academics but also about promoting Christian standards, morals and values.

A power point presentation was shared which outlined details about the academisation process and the time line and steps that are involved.

After the presentation, Mrs Moore asked parents to share what they felt were the challenges faced by St. Antonys' and other faith schools today?

Parents responded by stating:

- The society is becoming ever more secular and children are bombarded by mixed messages in the media and social media which challenge the values that the school and the faith uphold
- There are very influential organisations and bodies that would like to see faith schools erased from the choice of schools available to parents-one only has to go on the inter-net and there are a number of sites that promote "no more faith schools"
- There are so many schools that are academies already in place across Newham so why is there such resistance to the Catholic schools becoming academies? What is the real reason behind all of the union action that is taking place at other Catholic School where siblings of our children are attending?



- Faith schools are accused of discriminating on the grounds of faith in terms of their admissions policy but if anyone checks they will never find any Catholic school that is 100% Catholic in terms of the pupils attending or the staff teaching in the school-so there is a lot of mis-information out there and this is a real challenge to counter these with the truth
- Faith schools do not get 100% of Capital funding from the government or Local Authority they only get 90% and that is not fair to our schools

Mrs Moore then asked : ‘Based on the information that you now have do you support the school moving towards academy status?’

Parents responded by stating:

- We are pleased with what the school is doing for our children and so we don’t mind the school becoming an academy especially if the majority of things will remain the same
- The reason we chose a faith school is because we are people of faith and we want our children to be educated in the faith
- The school is multi-cultural and very diverse and this will not change if we academies so I have no issues

Questions Some Parents Asked:

- When the government first introduced academisation it was targeting failing schools , but as far as I know we are not a failing school are we? Mrs Moore answered: “No we are not”
- So why are we converting? What are the benefits?

The Chair responded by stating that by converting:

- The school will then receive 100% capital funding going forward
- This will assist the school with doing capital works to continue to improve the school in terms of building and renovation work needed
- It would also aid the school if we join the Our Lady Of Grace MAT because certain costs which the school pays for on its own now would be shared by all the schools in the MAT and for example we would share the cost for HR and Payroll costs-saving the school money which can be spent on other things for the children

More questions asked:

- **Are the staff being kept on?** To which Mrs Moore explained that staff jobs are safe guarded and ring fenced; however, this does not mean that members of staff themselves may not choose to go- schools have a natural cycle.
- **Will the school will retain its current head teacher, SLT and the governing body** currently in place?-because when some schools academies the leadership structure changes.

Mrs Moore responded by explaining that the OLOG MAT model retains the individual schools’ structure and identity.

- **What are the business aspects? Will there will be a Chief Executive Officer? I formerly worked in an academy and when the CEO was appointed he changed everything which is why I left the school.**



Mrs Moore responded by going back to the structure displayed on the power point to show that the OLOG MAT model **did not include a CEO**, retained the local governing body and staffing structure.

More Questions Posed by Parents:

- **What agendas will the MAT be pushing on the school?**

Mrs Moore responded by stating that the OLOG MAT would not be pushing any agendas as the facts stated in the power point is what will happen. She invited all parents to visit the OLOG website and read the information for themselves. She also invited parents to visit the Websites of the Catholic Schools that have already converted and in the OLOG MAT namely:

St Joachim'sacademy status since 2015

St Helen'sacademy status since 2015

St Francis'.....academy status since 2018-19

St Edward's.... academy status since 2018-19

To see that the schools have maintained their individual identity, their school uniform remains the same, their staffing stayed in place, staff pay and conditions remained as it was before conversion

- **What is the role of the CAO?** The role is accounting in nature **Chief Accounting Officer** not to be confused with a CEO role which does not exist in the OLOG MAT Model.
- **How are the Trustees appointed?** They are appointed by the Bishop of Brentwood
- **Who are they? The Trustees are drawn from a wide range of skill sets which are needed in the Academy Trust with backgrounds in: Education, Finance, Law, HR etc.**
- **How good is the standards body?** The Head Teachers largely make up the standards body
- **Where do parents fit into this jigsaw?** The local Governing body has parent governors representing parents that are elected onto the body by your parental vote. We will also continue to have Parents Information Meeting like this one which we have always had once per term or when there is a serious matter to be discussed. This will not change
- **Can the board of trustees veto the governing body?** No, the only possible reason a veto can take place is if there is something anti the faith/ or in defiance of the values and ethos taking place.
- **Do you have the projected savings that will be made? Also what will be ploughed back into the school?** Mrs Moore informed the audience that the finer details have not yet been agreed as we are not yet an academy or a member of the OLOG MAT; however should that be the outcome then all will be discussed with all stakeholders in a later meeting.

Why have we waited so long to do this-we should have converted earlier?

Mrs Moore responded by stating that this was a good note to end on. She said that everything happens in God's Time. She further stated that the Governors and SLT want the best for the school so we are not taking any of this journey and decisions lightly.

The meeting ended with a prayer from Fr.Christopher at 5:55pm