

What is an academy?

Academies are still state schools. They are funded directly by the Department of Education rather than the Local Authority (LA).

What is a Catholic Multi Academy Trust?

We are proposing to join St Francis Catholic Multi Academy Trust (CMAT). This means that we'll be part of a Catholic community of schools that are governed by a single Board of Trustees, overseen by members within the Diocese of Hallam.

Each school in the Trust will also have its own Local Academy Committee with some delegated governance responsibilities for that particular school. The Trust also employs a team of central staff to support their schools and drive school improvement. As part of a Trust with multiple schools, McAuley Catholic High School will have the opportunity to collaborate and share resources with the other schools across the Trust. We will be supported by these other schools and will also give expertise to other schools where necessary and appropriate.

As a Catholic Trust, just as a Catholic School, the Catholic Life of our students is a key priority, keeping the Gospel Teachings at the core of Trust practice.

Why are we joining St Francis CMAT?

The Bishop of Hallam, along with the Diocesan Education Board, have designated McAuley Catholic High School to St Francis CMAT. This allows McAuley Catholic High School to work very closely together with St Bernard's Catholic High School, St Pius X Catholic High School and the community of Primary Schools to share expertise, learn and develop. It will also allow the Trust to support the development of Catholic Education across South Yorkshire for the future.

What is the benefit of converting to St Francis CMAT for McAuley Catholic High School?

The benefits will include:

- Improved teaching and learning for our students through the sharing of teaching expertise and resources across the Trust.
- An increased offer of training and development opportunities for staff
- Greater financial efficiencies and economies of scale so that we protect the financial future of the school often by procuring goods and services at a larger scale across the trust
- The opportunity to collaborate and bring our students together from across the Trust to work in larger communities,
- Additional school improvement support from a central team of educational specialists.
- Specific development of key areas of challenge for schools nationally such as Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Will the Trust take any money away from our school?

McAuley Catholic High School receives funding directly from the Department of Education known as the general annual grant (GAG). It will pay St Francis CMAT a proportion of this funding to pay for the central services (known as top-slicing). You can see the services that are offered by the Trust in the Trust Prospectus on the Trust website stfcmat.com.

When McAuley Catholic High School is an academy in the Trust, will it still be inspected by Ofsted?

Academies are inspected by Ofsted, and are held to the same standards as other state-run schools. However, the Trust will support the school both in aspects of development and in the inspections themselves.

Will it follow the National Curriculum?

All St Francis CMAT schools follow the national curriculum and have their own curriculums which are bespoke to their school, their students and the communities they serve. Part of the joy of the Trust is the ability to share these curriculums to ensure that they get better and better and to learn from other schools which can improve our own practice.

St Francis CMAT focuses much of their improvement work on curriculum development with specialist curriculum advisors so we will therefore benefit from this work which will impact our students' outcomes.

Will we change our uniform?

There are no changes currently planned for school uniform at McAuley Catholic High School.

How will entering St Francis CMAT affect the students?

Students won't notice a big difference in the day-to-day operation of the school but the work that the school undertakes as part of the Trust will benefit in the long term from the opportunities that they experience as part of a larger community to the impact of provision on higher outcomes in their examinations.

What will the provision be for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)?

Schools in Multi Academy Trusts have the same accountability in relation to SEND as other state schools, as set out in the SEND Code of Practice.

The provision for SEND in schools is a national challenge and schools are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the most complex needs of students.

St Francis CMAT holds SEND provision as one of its highest priorities and the ambition of the Trust is always to add value to this area for individual schools.

All schools in St Francis have SENCOs who work closely with the students in their care, as they do prior to joining the Trust. However, on converting to St Francis, the SENCOs join the SEND network and immediately begin working as a wider group of SENCOs who collaborate rather than working in isolation. They share practice, discuss and solve challenges as well as take advice and guidance from lead professionals who work with the Trust.

St Francis CMAT schools also engage in full school SEND reviews which highlight strong practice in the school and areas for development which all form part of a Trust report which identifies common themes of success and development for improvement planning.

The ambition of St Francis CMAT as it grows is to build further capacity in SEND provision, enabling students to thrive in mainstream as well as accessing specialist provision where necessary.

What will change for our school staff?

The conversion to the Trust means that staff move from being employed by the governing body to being employed by the Trust Board.

Staff will convert to the Trust through a TUPE process which concludes prior to conversion. This is supported by the unions who work with both the school and the Trust to ensure a smooth transition. The Trust operates nationally recognised terms and conditions.

Staff development is a key function of St Francis CMAT and a core aim is to ensure the succession planning for outstanding Catholic provision in our schools. Staff will therefore have a wider range of training and development opportunities as part of the Trust in the form of professional networks, specialist coaching, collaborative working and professional challenge. This then has an impact on students as they benefit from strong leaders, exceptional teachers and support staff and a culture of learning and development.