

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM ACADEMY TRUSTEES TO PARENTS AND GIRLS

The Background

As you may be aware, St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy currently has a number of links with the charity Sisters of Mercy Sunderland, which is based next door and which has supported the Academy for a number of years.

A number of Sisters sit on our board of governors and also appoint a number of other governors.

The Sisters have recently considered the matter of their responsibilities for St Anthony's. They have agreed that it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to keep abreast of developments in education law and policy, meaning that they are less able to give the strategic direction to the Academy that it needs. Being a governor on the Academy board is a significant commitment for some of the Sisters and they have agreed that they may not be able to sustain this commitment in the future in light of the fact that the community, as a whole, is getting older.

As a result, the Sisters have considered how best they may secure the future of the Academy, as a leader in providing Roman Catholic education for girls in Sunderland ensuring our pupils get the best education in the marketplace, under the best strategic leadership.

The Proposal

The Sisters decided to approach the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle about the transfer of their responsibility for the Academy to it. The Diocese has responsibility for other Roman Catholic academies in the North East, and is committed to maintaining the Academy's Catholic ethos and culture.

The Diocese already supports 24 academies and 134 schools within the North East and so has plenty of experience in this area. It is highly thought of by the Department for Education.

For the reasons given above, the aim of the transfer to the Diocese is to secure the Academy's future and to ensure adequate strategic direction can be given to it.

When?

The intention is for the transfer to take place on 1 January 2017, after construction of the new buildings at the Academy are completed. Although this seems a long way off, there are a number of steps that need to be taken to effect the transfer.

The legal process and finer points of detail are still to be worked through.

How?

There will be a transfer of certain land used by St Anthony's to the Diocese for it to continue to allow the Academy to use for its educational purposes.

The Secretary of State for Education will be fully consulted in advance of the transfer and her (or his) consent needs to be obtained to the transfer, to ensure that it is in the Academy's best interests.

The Bishop will "step into the shoes" of the Mother Superior in relation to the Academy's governance, meaning it will have the right to appoint a certain number of governors to our board. However, no changes to the make up of the governing body are currently envisaged.

What the transfer means for pupils and parents?

The Sisters, the Diocese and the Academy are working together to ensure that there will be as little change as possible for pupils and parents. You should not notice any change in the way that the School is managed on a day to day basis.

The transfer will not affect teachers and other staff at the Academy. The Academy will continue to be their employer and the terms of their employment will not change. We do not envisage any teachers will leave the Academy as a result of taking this step.

The curriculum will not change nor will your child's education be affected by this change. The school has worked very closely with both the Diocese and HNCP (Hexham and Newcastle Catholic Partnership) for many decades despite its different trusteeship so there should be no discernible difference to the day to day running of the school.

The Academy will continue to have the use of the land that it currently uses (including the new buildings that are due to be completed in 2016) for the provision of education.

We hope that you will support this process and we will keep you informed as matters progress.

If you have any questions about these proposals at this stage, please contact Mrs J Liddell (Company Secretary) in writing at the Academy.