



CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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15 October 2021

Dear Parents / Carers and Friends,

Formal Stakeholder Consultation

You may recall from a previous letter and the informal stakeholder survey issued before the summer break that governors have been exploring the proposal shown below. The questions raised by parents in the informal stakeholder survey have been answered in the two attached appendices. A separate Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to answer questions from staff and governors has been updated for internal circulation.

Proposal: to convert to academy status and join The Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust on the target opening date of 1 March 2022

The school's governing body invite you to participate in a formal consultation process by completing an online questionnaire. A hardcopy version of the questionnaire can be made available upon request at the school office. The data collected will be used to produce a formal consultation outcomes report for the governing body to consider before making a final decision. N.B. all reporting will be anonymous.

Please also email or pop into the school office via: office@corpuschristiweston.co.uk to register your interest if you would like to attend an online presentation event to hear more about the MAT proposal on **Monday 8th November at 5pm** BEFORE completing the online questionnaire.

Please click the link below to complete a short online questionnaire by **3PM FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2021** <https://forms.office.com/r/ASEq5tm1Tu>

Why and What would be the Main Benefits for Pupils in joining a Catholic MAT?

Delivering education improvements is at the centre of this proposal. Our proposed MAT would have as its driving imperative the provision of trust wide school improvement strategies backed by access to greater resources which would improve the statutory academic and Catholic education standards and lead to accelerated and sustained improvement. The key benefits include:

- Create the opportunities to enable all pupils to fulfil their potential and live life to the full through our commitment to our Catholic vision and ethos, improving the quality of education for all pupils
- Increased opportunities for pupils to learn from expert teachers and specialist staff who could innovate, share knowledge, and best practice across our family of Catholic schools. Existing MAT leaders have already told us how beneficial it was for staff to collaborate during the early days of the pandemic. Leaders worked together to understand and develop new ways of working to respond to rapidly changing Government guidance. Teachers worked together to design and implement new home learning materials in all the MAT's schools. Staff in standalone schools have had to cope with the increased demands on their own. Another example of how teaching might change would be through math leaders from different schools in the MAT working together to develop a shared Key Stage 1 math curriculum for implementation in all schools, but which allows its teaching and tasks to be adapted to suit a range of individual pupil needs to ensure all children make good progress.
- Pupils would benefit from the cost savings created through bulk buying power which could be used to improve resources and provide specialist support which may not be affordable for a single standalone school e.g., speech and language therapist, sensory play equipment, IT technician support.
- Pupils would benefit from being educated within a bigger, single legal entity as it would operate with common policies, systems and practice and be overseen by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) responsible for the educational and financial performance of the whole MAT. The CEO, as Senior Catholic Education Leader (SCEL), would hold headteachers to account for performance and delegate as they see fit to other staff. Headteachers would be expected to lead the day-to-day running of their school as they do now but with more freedom for senior leaders, including governors, to focus on improving the quality of education and related matters (e.g., wellbeing and attendance) that help to ensure all children are ready to learn, make progress and achieve. This would be possible because the MAT CEO would work with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and other support staff to oversee the

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delivery of all non-teaching matters in a joined-up way for all schools e.g., contracts, facilities, HR, statutory financial returns, cleaning, repairs and maintenance. One school governor who works in another MAT reported that schools joining their MAT resulted in headteachers having approximately one third of their time freed up.

- Similarly, pupils would benefit from being served by schools who can bid for additional funding grants only available to academies. For example, building MAT capacity releases headteachers to focus more of their time on driving school improvement. Sponsor grants enable leaders and teachers in high performing schools to support less well performing schools to improve the quality of education provision so that all children benefit from great teaching. This has been proven in other MATs to be a mutually beneficial learning exercise as high performing schools often find that under-performing schools have areas of strength they can share and implement in their own school. MATs with 5 or more schools serving more than 3000 pupils in total automatically receive additional funding called a School Condition Allocation to help maintain and improve the condition of school buildings.
- Pupils could benefit from shared enrichment and extra-curricular activities which become affordable when more children participate and promote inter-academy friendships e.g., trips and sports matches. This would be particularly beneficial for pupils as they grow older and transfer to the same secondary school.

What would be the Main Disadvantages of joining a Catholic MAT?

Greater freedoms would bring additional responsibilities and potential risks for a MAT Trust Board as a charitable company responsible for the performance and fulfilment of statutory duties for a group of schools. Other MAT leaders have been very willing to talk to us to explain how their MATs were set up and share their key learnings which has been helpful in informing our thinking and due diligence process. MAT induction and ongoing professional development training would be provided before and after opening, so we are confident that by working together and complying with the guidance issued by the Department for Education, these responsibilities and risks can be managed effectively and efficiently.

Would any Changes be made to the school because of joining a Catholic MAT?

- The main changes relate to the legal status of the school i.e., from a single local authority maintained school to being part of a family or group of academy schools known as a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).
- The MAT would receive its funding directly from the Department for Education and allocate it to its academy schools.
- All staff wherever they are based would be employed by the MAT, not an individual governing body.
- All staff wherever they are based would be employed by the MAT, not an individual governing body.
- The MAT as a single legal entity would be governed by a single Trust Board responsible for overseeing the performance of all schools and ensuring compliance with its statutory duties. However, committees would be established to work in accordance with the Trust Board's Scheme of Delegation. The remit for each Local Governing Committee would be to focus on holding their school's headteacher to account for the quality of education, pupil outcomes, wellbeing, spirituality and attendance, community engagement. Two parent governors would sit in each Local Governing Committee so do let us know if you are interested in finding out more about the role

In embarking on the exploration of this move please be assured that the governors do not intend to make any changes on conversion to the name of the school, its unique identity, pupils' uniform or its Catholic ethos and values. This means that day-to-day leadership of the school and staff engagement with parents and pupils would continue as it does now.

What Happens Next?

Following a process of due diligence and careful consideration of the formal consultation feedback, the governors will meet again to make an equalities impact assessment and final decision at the end of the autumn term.

Yours sincerely,



Chair of Governors



Executive Headteacher



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APPENDIX A

What is the Role of the Diocese?

Canon Law (Church Law) provides that each Diocesan bishop has strategic responsibility to commission sufficient school places to meet the needs of baptised Catholic Children in this area. A Catholic school is one which is recognised as such by the Diocesan bishop.

In respect of his schools, which includes academies the bishop has the legal right to appoint (and remove) an overall majority of directors and governors. In addition to all the other legal responsibilities, the law recognises that foundation directors and governors are appointed specifically to ensure:

- That the Catholic character of the school is preserved.
- That the school is conducted in accordance with its trust deed.
- That the religious education curriculum is in accordance with the bishop's policy for the Diocese.

The Diocesan bishop, acting through his Director of Schools and Colleges is responsible for:

- The provision and future development of excellent Catholic education throughout the Diocese.
- The oversight of high educational standards, progress, and outcomes in all Diocesan schools
- The appointment, development and training of foundation directors and governors and their removal.
- The inspection of religious life of schools and RE (Section 48 inspections)
- The development of Catholic teachers and leaders (and all appointments should be made with diocesan protocol)
- The oversight of school buildings/ estate and capital projects
- Planning of school place provision
- Engaging with the Local Authority (LA), Regional School Commissioner (RSC) and Ofsted
- Maintaining links with the Catholic Education Service and appropriate government departments

What is the Bishop's Vision for His Schools?

In 2016 and again in 2019, Bishop Declan shared his vision for all his schools to work together and undertake a due diligence exercise in readiness for the establishment of Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) across the diocese. His reason for doing this was to respond to the changes in the educational landscape and "ensure Catholic education is sustainable and remains true to its key principles for the generations of pupils now and yet to come".

What Options were Considered?

In 2016, the Diocesan trustees considered the following options to inform the development of the bishop's vision for Catholic Schools:

1. **Do nothing** – this was and is still not considered to be a viable option. The Government has repeatedly made it clear that overall, families of schools, or MATs, are the best option for improving school standards and pupil outcomes. National policy has led to the South West region becoming the most academised region in England and a reduction to funding to Local Authorities means their capacity to support schools has largely reduced or disappeared. The Diocesan Director of Schools and Colleges has written to every affected Local Authority to advise them of the bishop's vision, so they are aware of his preferred direction of travel and timescales. Currently, not all Catholic schools are currently judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' and there is a backlog of overdue inspections due to Covid. This means there is a risk the judgement of some schools could change and/or become 'requires improvement'. Where a Catholic school is judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate' the Department for Education can issue a Directive Academy Order which means the school MUST join a MAT. Currently Clifton Diocese does not have any MATs to support poorly performing schools to improve so there is a risk of them being moved to a non-Catholic MAT.

2. **Promote school federations** – this is no longer considered to be a viable option in the long term. A Federation is where two Local Authority maintained schools are overseen by a single executive headteacher and
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governing body. Occasionally in recent years the bishop has given permission for schools to federate to address an issue in the short-term but legally and operationally, they remain two separate schools funded via the Local Authority so the factors set out in option 1 also apply to option 2. You can however continue to have an executive head overseeing more than one academy school within a MAT.

3. **Promote school trusts or MATs** – this was and remains the preferred option. A MAT is a charitable company whose Trust Board and Senior Catholic Education Leader (SCEL) also known as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) are accountable for the educational and financial performance of more than one school. MATs operate publicly funded or state-maintained schools so receive their funding directly from Central Government (rather than via the Local Authority). Each academy remains a Catholic School under the authority of the Bishop of Clifton and its religious designation does not change.

How would establishing Catholic MATs secure the long-term future of Catholic Education across the diocese for children being served by Catholic schools now and in the future?

Setting up Catholic MATs would help school leaders work together for the common good to overcome three of the biggest challenges currently facing Catholic schools:

1. **Catholic leadership** - headteacher posts in Catholic schools are reserved posts meaning the person appointed must be a practising Catholic. There is a national shortage of Catholic leaders able to protect and promote a high quality of Catholic education for all children attending Catholic Schools. In some schools, very skilled and capable but non-Catholic leaders make a significant contribution to our schools and forming a MAT could enable the Trust to create opportunities to retain and develop further those non-Catholic staff wishing to remain in Catholic leadership positions.

2. **Quality of Catholic education** – It would be the job of the Senior Catholic Education Leader (SCEL) also known as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to work with every headteacher to drive school improvement by sharing best practice, staff training and resources across all schools in the MAT. In particular, it would enable the sharing of knowledge and expertise in the areas of RE, prayer and worship. Using talented staff to support the professional development of others, especially other teachers, would help to ensure that EVERY child reaches their full potential. This is particularly important right now as many children need more support to overcome loss of learning due to Covid.

3. **Financial hardship** – Schools' funding is based on pupil numbers. Local authorities are already expecting a significant overcapacity of school places in the next few years and so deficits are likely. We have no option but to contemplate different ways of working within the finances allocated. A MAT would provide an additional level of financial control and support currently not available as well as opportunities for bulk buying which generate cost savings.

Page Break

APPENDIX B – PARENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

This document has been produced to answer the questions and comments given by parents to the informal survey issued in the summer term. A separate FAQ document to answer questions from staff and governors has been updated for internal circulation. Answers have been grouped under themed headings.

	Vision, Ethos and Education
The disguise of "the Bishops wants us to join a MAT" seems a little unfair. This is all about money, which will be very slow in reaching those schools which need it most.	It is not a disguise or all about money. A clear direction of travel was first communicated by the bishop to his schools in the Clifton Diocese 5 years ago. It was explained that his reason for doing this was to respond to the changes in the educational landscape and "ensure Catholic education is sustainable and remains true to its key principles for the generations of pupils now and yet to come".
Seems like a 'done deal' already, yet I wonder if the 1 March 2022 date could be extended by one month to coincide with tax year change (if it made it easier all round?) and because of COVID this govt deadline might be extendable - worth asking?	The vision and aspirations for The Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust created collaboratively by the Vision & Ethos Working Group is very child and education centred: As a community of Catholic schools we aspire to give children an all-round education rooted in Christian values in a nurturing environment where they flourish, become lifelong learners and fulfil their potential. Whilst the bishop's vision and directives to establish Catholic MATs are clear, it is not a done deal. Five years notice has provided plenty of time and



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How might COVID rising/dropping affect academy plans and futures, budgets included??	opportunity for discussion and progression despite the recognised challenges presented by Covid. The diocese has sought to minimise workload for busy leaders and volunteers and impact on the academy plans being considered by six Dunstan partnership schools by securing pilot grant funding to add extra capacity and specialist support e.g., legal, project management. The financial year for MATs and academies follows the academic year i.e. 1 September to 31 August annually so a one month delay would not be beneficial. Covid has impacted the budgets of all types of schools and the government has provided additional funding to cover some of the costs.
Is the reason simply twofold? 1) we cannot get Catholic heads, so a MAT is a way of circumventing the problem by minimising the number of practicing Catholics in leadership positions (after all, the number of PCs in teaching positions is becoming fewer and fewer), and 2) is it just an accounting exercise for bulk buying of things or services. It may make the 'organisation' work better, but is that necessarily better for the education of the children?	No, but it is fair to say they are factors taken into consideration. The main reason for proposing a MAT was to secure the long-term future of high quality of education for all children being served by Catholic schools now and in the future given the reduced funding, therefore capacity for local authorities to support schools. To explain the reasons, the diocese delivered strategy presentations to headteachers and chairs of governors in 2016, 2019 and 2021. Questions about practising Catholics in leadership positions and bulk buying are answered in the finance and staffing section. Benefits for children are listed in the next box.
How exactly it will benefit the children.	Delivering education improvements is at the centre of this proposal. Our proposed MAT would have as its driving imperative the provision of trust wide school improvement strategies backed by access to greater resources which would improve the statutory academic and Catholic education standards and lead to accelerated and sustained improvement. The key benefits include: • Create the opportunities to enable all pupils to fulfil their potential and live life to the full through our commitment to our Catholic vision and ethos, improving the quality of education for all pupils • Increased opportunities for pupils to learn from expert teachers and specialist staff who could innovate, share knowledge, and best practice across our family of Catholic schools. Existing MAT leaders have already told us how beneficial it was for staff to collaborate during the early days of the pandemic. Leaders worked together to understand and develop new ways of working to respond to rapidly changing Government guidance. Teachers worked together to design and implement new home learning materials in all the MAT's schools. Staff in standalone schools have had to cope with the increased demands on their own. Another example of how teaching might change would be through math leaders from different schools in the MAT working together to develop a shared Key Stage 1 math curriculum for implementation in all schools, but which allows its teaching and tasks to be adapted to suit a range of individual pupil needs to ensure all children make good progress. • Pupils would benefit from the cost savings created through bulk buying power which could be used to improve resources and provide specialist

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	support which may not be affordable for a single standalone school e.g., speech and language therapist, sensory play equipment, IT technician support. • Pupils would benefit from being educated within a bigger, single legal entity as it would operate with common policies, systems and practice and be overseen by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) responsible for the educational and financial performance of the whole MAT. The CEO, as Senior Catholic Education Leader (SCEL), would hold headteachers to account for performance and delegate as they see fit to other staff. Headteachers would be expected to lead the day-to-day running of their school as they do now but with more freedom for senior leaders, including governors, to focus on improving the quality of education and related matters (e.g., wellbeing and attendance) that help to ensure all children are ready to learn, make progress and achieve. This would be possible because the MAT CEO would work with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and other support staff to oversee the delivery of all non-teaching matters in a joined-up way for all schools e.g., contracts, facilities, HR, statutory financial returns, cleaning, repairs and maintenance. One school governor who works in another MAT reported that schools joining their MAT resulted in headteachers having approximately one third of their time freed up. • Similarly, pupils would benefit from being served by schools who can bid for additional funding grants only available to academies. For example, building MAT capacity releases headteachers to focus more of their time on driving school improvement. Sponsor grants enable leaders and teachers in high performing schools to support less well performing schools to improve the quality of education provision so that all children benefit from great teaching. This has been proven in other MATs to be a mutually beneficial learning exercise as high performing schools often find that under-performing schools have areas of strength they can share and implement in their own school. MATs with 5 or more schools serving more than 3000 pupils in total automatically receive additional funding called a School Condition Allocation to help maintain and improve the condition of school buildings. • Pupils could benefit from shared enrichment and extra-curricular activities which become affordable when more children participate and promote inter-academy friendships e.g., trips and sports matches. This would be particularly beneficial for pupils as they grow older and transfer to the same secondary school.
Is the MAT too geographically big? Any face to face will take time and effort.	No. There are regional and national MATs operating successfully across England.
Why was the Bishop so set on 'academy ready status' for such a spread-out rural area?	We would be part of a group of six one-form entry primary schools situated in the Diocese of Clifton and in the Somerset and North Somerset Local Authorities with the furthest distance between the schools being 32 miles and the travelling time of approximately 1 hour. The distance between the nearest schools is much less and they can be reached in less than 30 mins. During Covid we have overcome the distance barrier and used technology to support collaboration, this has improved the attendance and participation in all activities. Geography has been covered by other MAT speakers who have spoken to our governors and leaders. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a South West based MAT with 22 primary academies spread across two counties has spoken to our governors and leaders about the practicalities. He mentioned how beneficial they have found introducing small local clusters of schools within their MAT which makes in person visits possible within a short travelling distance e.g., to continue shared practice in moderation as well as ongoing networking and collaboration with other local schools not in the MAT. He also mentioned how use of technology has become the new 'normal', especially throughout the pandemic. This has been our experience too. All our governing body meetings have been held remotely over the last 18 months, so this is a way of working that people are now used to.
What would change (if anything) re Catholic teaching? I would not want the teaching to become	There is no intention to make changes to Catholic teaching or make it stricter. RE is a core part of the curriculum as is the teaching of British values and citizenship which aims to develop the knowledge, skills and



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stricter at the expense of other faiths and raising children in today's society and equipping them with the skills and knowledge to thrive in the wider society.	understanding required for pupils to learn about themselves as developing individuals and members of their communities, building on the early learning goals for personal, social, and emotional development.
How would MAT help schools to address Ofsted findings for improvement?	The MAT CEO would work closely with every headteacher after an inspection to provide support and challenge in their production and implementation of a post-Ofsted action plan to address the findings made by the inspectors.
How will this benefit the education of my child in English, maths, science and in social matters etc?	The MAT CEO has the responsibility for driving school improvement across all schools and will work with all headteachers to identify where there are particular areas of strength and expertise which can be shared to improve practice in other schools where appropriate. Part of this resource will be other talented staff who can buddy up with their peers to provide support in a specific area for improvement. Ongoing professional development, talent management and succession planning organised within the MAT would provide more peer-to-peer support and career development opportunities for all staff to lead on trust wide areas of responsibility if they wish to do so. For example, SENDco, subject leadership of math, science or English, HR, facilities. In addition, the MAT would continue to work with external partners including the local maths and English hubs alongside the Five Counties Teaching School Hub Alliance. As part of an outward looking group of schools we have already sought support from several MATs during our due diligence process including ACE MAT, Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust, Preston Primary Academy Trust, Primary Quest Academy Trust, Plymouth CAST and LINK.
Finance and Staffing	
Will staff have to re-apply for their current jobs when the MAT conversion is completed or will contracts transfer?	No, all staff with permanent contracts transfer across to the MAT, as would any on fixed term contracts with an expiry date after the date of opening. TUPE means that existing staff would transfer into the MAT on the same pay and terms and conditions (including pensions).
Are teaching staff terms and conditions the same?	
Will this mean that Head of School posts can be held by non Catholics in a permanent capacity thus providing stability to schools?	Headteacher posts in Catholic schools are reserved posts meaning the person appointed must be a practising Catholic. There is a national shortage of Catholic leaders able to protect and promote a high quality of Catholic education for all children attending Catholic Schools. In some schools, very skilled and capable but non-Catholic leaders make a significant contribution to our schools and forming a MAT could enable the Trust to create opportunities to retain and develop further those non-Catholic staff wishing to remain in Catholic leadership positions.
What safeguards are in place to guard the Catholicism of the schools?	Reserved posts would remain primarily to promote and safeguard catholicity in Catholic schools.
Does the CEO need to have an educational background? I feel it is needed.	Yes. The Senior Catholic Education Leader or Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the vision and school improvement strategy. They will work with headteachers to ensure the provision of high-

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	quality teaching for every child served by the MAT and be held accountable for performance by the Trust Board.
I have concerns that XX Catholic Primary School will be seen as a school doing well so not as much money will be given to us.	~~To ensure equity, each school will continue to be funded based on pupil numbers as they are now.~~
It would be helpful to understand how the savings this would make by being a bigger trust are translated to local school.	A group of schools can obtain better value when negotiating contracts for services essential for running schools. Cost savings generated for each school can be used to support the provision of teaching and learning and extra-curricular activities for pupils. For example, external specialist teachers and become more affordable and accessible when paid for by a group of schools e.g., speech and language therapy, sensory play equipment, music to name a few.
Would an academy be able to employ specialist teachers who could work across sites to really allow children to excel in non academic areas, not just PE but for example music, art, drama etc etc also.	With MAT growth over time secondary specialist teachers would be part of the trust and able to provide more internal specialist support and guidance to primary school teaching colleagues. It will be for headteachers to decide on the priorities and allocation of resources to maximise the benefit for children.
Can a school exit a MAT once it has joined?	Schools can be directed by the Department for Education to move MATs if their performance is not being well managed within their existing MAT. Schools cannot exit a MAT to return to being a Local Authority maintained school as on joining a MAT each school contracts with the Department for Education to receive its funding directly.
If a MAT fails financially. What happens? Does it return to Local Authority control? For how long is a MAT allowed to be in deficit?	A trust board cannot set a deficit budget for the MAT but may need to manage in-year deficits and/or individual school deficits. This can sometimes be a feature for joining schools but managed through integrated financial and curriculum planning, a school resource management adviser review and/or financial recovery planning. Usually, financial recovery would be expected within 3 years.
Communication and Change Management	
When will parents be able to be involved in the consultation process?	Yes. Please see the link to the online questionnaire in the formal consultation letter inviting all parent/carers to participate in the consultation process.
Governance	
Does this break the link the between the school on the ground and a larger governance structure which does not know the detailed need of each place?	No because Local Governing Committees report into the trust standards and performance committee which in turn reports to the trust board. The governance structure and ways of working are designed to promote two-way communication, effective and efficient teamwork between the board and its committees. By working together directors and governors improve the quality and impact of governance upon standards and outcomes for children. The trust board will focus on holding the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer to account for performance of the trust as a whole and Local Governing Committees will focus on holding individual school headteachers to account for the educational performance in a designated school to avoid duplication. The role of local governors (including parent governors) remains hugely important precisely because they do have local knowledge about the school, its pupils, staff, and community. In a MAT governance structure, the trust board relies upon local expertise to help directors maintain oversight of education performance for all schools in the trust.
What is delegated to LGBs and what is expected of them?	The remit for each Local Governing Committee would be to focus on holding their school's headteacher to account for the quality of education, pupil outcomes, wellbeing, spirituality and attendance, community engagement. Two parent governors would sit in each Local Governing Committee so do let us know if you are interested in finding out more about the role.
What is delegated to HTs/Exec HTs?	The MAT Trust Board would be responsible for setting the governance structure model and Scheme of Delegation (SoD) and keeping it under annual review. The SoD clarifies what delegated authorities are given to committees but also to executive and school leaders. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the most senior employee with delegated responsibility for the operational leadership of the whole MAT. The CEO can delegate as they
It would be helpful to understand what decision making power do the local schools have in relation to the	



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children they support vs decisions made centrally?

I would want it confirmed that the headteacher would not change and that they would still have levels of autonomy in their school.

see fit to other staff but headteachers would be expected to lead the day-to-day running of their schools as they do now but with more freedom to focus on improving the quality of education and related matters that help to ensure all children are ready to learn e.g., wellbeing and attendance. This would be possible because the MAT CEO would work with support staff to oversee the delivery of all non-teaching matters in a joined-up way for all schools e.g., contracts, facilities, HR, statutory financial returns, cleaning, repairs and maintenance.

We are not expecting changes in headteachers at the point of transfer or to the day-to-day running of their schools. As a headteacher can choose to resign with notice at any time it is not possible to provide guarantees.

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