

Why are Religious Orders forming the Laetare Catholic Multi Academy Trust (CMAT)?

Our hope is that the creation of the Laetare CMAT will enable Religious Orders to create a new family of schools which will offer a distinctive and transforming experience of Catholic education. The schools in the Laetare CMAT will be united by a shared vision of education based on that of the Gaudete Trust and each school will be fully supported in continuing to develop its own mission for education in line with the charism of its founder. This commitment will be a key distinguishing feature of the Laetare CMAT together with our intention that the Religious Order Trustees will continue to play a major part in the life of their schools.

The unique feature of the Laetare CMAT is the commitment to protect, nurture and strengthen the charism of the founding Religious Order in each school. The unique spirit which animates a Religious Order school will be celebrated, and the diversity of charisms will be honoured as complementary voices, all teaching the truth of the Gospel to future generations.

The true collaborative nature of the Laetare CMAT will be evident through the decision-making authority delegated to the Leadership Group which includes the CEO, Headteachers / Principals and Chairs of Governors. This is a structure, which ensures input from all school leaders within the CMAT to the strategy and operation of the trust. The Leadership Group will be the key decision-making body on educational matters and will ensure that each school is included in determining the strategic direction of the CMAT. This group is a vital part of the governance structure and reflects our commitment to working together in a collegial rather than hierarchical way.

Each of the Religious Orders involved in the development of the Laetare CMAT has a strong network of schools, but does not have the number of schools to embark on a project such as this alone. Collaborating in such a way will enable Religious Order schools to have a stronger voice in determining national policy and will ensure that schools do not become isolated in the future as the educational landscape develops.

The education policy of successive Governments has led to over 80% of secondary schools now being academies and the Laetare CMAT will reflect the maturing vision of what a high-quality trust is capable of achieving. The majority of Dioceses across the country have developed their own strategy for Catholic schools and we seek to work in partnership with them to create a complementary pathway for Religious Order schools to bring forward God's Kingdom in the modern world.

The formation of the Laetare CMAT is a unique opportunity for Religious Order schools to collaborate as equal partners *'to see the future of Catholic education strengthened and enhanced by the distinctive charisms of Religious Orders'*. The Laetare CMAT will contribute to the diversity of Catholic Education and provide an alternative option, in addition to Diocesan CMATs, for schools under the trusteeship of Religious Orders. It will ensure Religious Order schools continue to provide a high-quality education and maximise the life chances of all young people through the opportunities that can be provided by the CMAT.

The Christian Brothers have worked with other Religious Orders as equal partners in the development of the Laetare CMAT proposal. Membership of the Laetare CMAT is open to all schools under the Trusteeship of Religious Orders who wish to adopt the Laetare CMAT vision of education alongside their own distinctive charism and values. Although there will be close links with the Gaudete Trust, there is no expectation that schools must be part of this group to join the CMAT. The Laetare CMAT will be inclusive and be open to any school or college in need of support. It is anticipated that schools or colleges will join the Laetare CMAT in phases, depending on need and readiness to join. The first schools are expected to join in the 2024/25 academic year.

Key Features of the Laetare CMAT

The Laetare CMAT is being created as a uniquely collaborative CMAT for Religious Order Schools. The key features of the Laetare CMAT will include:

- A commitment to protecting the uniqueness of each school. We will honour, protect, nurture and support the distinctive charism of each school. Schools will have access to all the resources of Religious Orders in Education, the Gaudete Trust and their founding Religious Order in charism development.
- A collegial approach which empowers leaders through the Leadership Group, and utilises the wisdom and experience of Headteachers / Principals and Chairs of Governing Boards which guarantees the maximum level of autonomy that is compatible with the shared vision, values, and strategic direction of the CMAT.
- The strengthening of current collaboration between Religious Order schools so that the collective experience and strength of all schools can be maximised to ensure that all schools can provide a transformative educational experience.
- A commitment to strong Local Governing Bodies and local community engagement.
- A governance structure which enables Religious Order Trustees and the Trustees of the Gaudete Trust to continue to have an active involvement in the development of their schools. This will include their participation in the appointment to Senior Catholic Posts (often referred to as 'reserved posts') and nominating Foundation Governors.

Benefits of Joining the Laetare CMAT

Alongside providing the benefits of any CMAT, Religious Orders are endeavouring to design a CMAT with key features that, taken together, we believe are of particular benefit to those schools in the trusteeship of a Religious Order. School leaders, Governors and Religious Order Trustees have all had an opportunity to shape the development of the CMAT from a very early stage.

The Laetare CMAT will provide a means to safeguard the future of our Religious Order schools and collectively secure and develop Catholic education and develop our future Catholic leaders. Ultimately the Laetare CMAT will enable its schools to support a greater number of

children locally, regionally and nationally, in line with the Religious Orders' historic purposes and the Church's mission for education.

Formally integrating schools or Academies into a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust can be extremely beneficial for all schools wishing to join. There will be an opportunity for schools to develop formalised relationships and structures that create significant practical benefits such as:

- Enhancing the quality of education across schools within the CMAT. We are fortunate that Religious Order schools have an outstanding reputation for the high quality of education they provide and schools within the network will support and hold one another to account, as well as provide support to local schools who are facing challenging circumstances.
- It will be possible to recruit and retain teachers who are inspired to work in Religious Order schools. Through Teaching School Hubs, School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) providers and partnerships with leading Catholic universities, we will be able to develop the next generation of teachers and leaders.
- The recruitment and retention of leaders, staff and governors is currently an issue for many schools. Having a group of schools in a CMAT will increase progression and professional development opportunities helping to recruit and retain as well as contributing to succession planning at all levels.
- Teachers in Religious Order schools will work and learn together to improve the way they teach and schools can share practices that make a difference to the experience of the young people they serve. This will particularly strengthen the opportunities for faith formation, student leadership and provision for Religious Education.
- These partnerships will also help each school to make sure that its staff, both teachers and support, are given opportunities to continuously improve their work and to take part in training and share experiences with other skilled professionals across the CMAT.
- Creating a CMAT structure and increasing capacity will enable the Laetare CMAT and its schools to maintain and further develop strong governance at local school level, and at central CMAT level, which will provide greater opportunities for schools to work together across a range of activities.
- As well as strengthening governance and ensuring that the Catholic ethos is maintained, the CMAT will have a better profile to engage with their local parish and Diocesan communities to oversee standards and Catholic life.
- Jointly procuring contracts and developing centralised services will provide tailored, high quality support and will also achieve significant economies of scale which will enhance the level of resources available for delivery of outstanding education in the medium to long term.
- Also, the larger the CMAT, the potentially larger the influence locally, regionally and nationally where it has a greater chance of influencing areas such as student funding,

standards, school to school support, school improvement and educational policies. Through its strategic direction, the CMAT can help schools to secure greater influence to promote and support the delivery of outstanding education and their Catholic ethos within that context.

- Schools within a larger CMAT will also have a greater scope to develop positive links with other Catholic and non-Catholic schools in their local areas, particularly where they are keen to offer support, or to learn from other schools. The expectation is that the schools would work collaboratively with neighbouring schools, children's centres, and other community focused organisations.
- Ultimately, working within a formal structure will enable schools to pool resources and skills to ensure the best possible delivery of education to students.
- Stronger collaboration between schools in the CMAT will be beneficial and schools will also be encouraged to retain and support strong local partnerships which work for the benefit of the communities they serve.
- The CMAT will bring schools together in a formal partnership to ensure that every child under their care is given the best possible opportunity to succeed. It will also reduce policy burden, supporting compliance and reducing duplication of effort.

Above all, this CMAT *'will be dedicated to providing an outstanding and distinctive experience of Catholic education, rooted in the charism of the religious Order, for the young people in its schools.'* This education will develop young people of faith, hope, forgiveness, and love; people who will work for justice and show compassion for the vulnerable and the marginalised; people who will be co-creators of a better world. It will ensure Religious Order schools continue to provide a high-quality education and maximise the life chances of all young people through the opportunities that can be provided.

Why the name Laetare?

The name Laetare was chosen from Laetare Sunday being the fourth Sunday in the season of Lent, and is traditionally a day of celebration. Gaudete Sunday is the third Sunday in Advent. Both the Gaudete Trust and Laetare CMAT are linked by a name that means "Rejoice!" and are complementary celebrations at different times in the liturgical calendar.

How will we ensure schools keep their unique identity?

Each school will be an Academy in its own right as well as being part of the Trust. Each school will be expected to have its own Vision and Values. The school's distinctiveness and Religious Order character will be preserved on conversion and its formal designation as a Catholic school will be carried over, including its designation as a Religious Order school.

The Scheme of Delegation protects the uniqueness of each school and the Local Governing Body's responsibilities include ensuring that the Catholic ethos is strong and the voice of the community and parish is maintained. The Laetare CMAT recognises the distinct nature of the community that is served by each school and is committed to retaining these unique identities. It is this unique charism of each school that is so important.

Do the Religious Orders still want to focus on education in the way they once did?

The Religious Orders are committed to an ongoing active involvement in their schools. The formation of the Laetare CMAT will ensure that there are systems and structures in place to enable this to continue in the long term so that the legacy of Religious Order education can be maintained and strengthened.

How will the schools in the CMAT be linked?

Working in a more formal relationship within a CMAT will ensure that all schools are supported and develop resilience by working together, opening up more creative possibilities for sharing good practice. This will be reflected both at school level and at Trust level as strategic partnerships evolve between other local Catholic and non-Catholic multi Academy trusts. This further strengthens the Catholic family. The Directors will seek to establish working groups within the Trust for specific themes and improvement strategies. Excellence through collaboration is a key way in which multi Academy trusts support schools to work together for the Common Good.

Who will be the employer of staff?

The Laetare CMAT will become the employer of staff. All staff will transfer to the Trust on their existing terms and conditions of employment in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (commonly known as 'TUPE'). Schools will be expected to use CES contracts of employment and the CMAT will adopt the CES employment policies and procedures which are designed to ensure that the Bishops' objective, that Catholic schools and academies fulfil their responsibilities to preserve and develop the Catholic character of the school, is met throughout the employment relationship. These policies are agreed nationally, including consultation with Trade Unions. Pensions for both teaching and support staff remain unchanged. Staff will continue to be members of their existing pension schemes.

What are the responsibilities of the Local Governing Body?

A distinctive feature of the Laetare CMAT governance structure is the retention of governance at school level. This is the cornerstone for the implementation of the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. Individuals who sit on Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) are referred to as 'Local Governors'. Local Governing Bodies are a committee of the Board of Directors. Directors delegate certain governance functions to Local Governors and this is detailed in the Scheme of Delegation and then outlined in LGB terms of reference. This will make it clear what responsibilities are retained by the Board of Directors of the trust (the Trust Board) and the responsibilities given to each Local Governing Body.

The Local Governing Body will be responsible for the Catholic Life of the Academy, day to day oversight of the management of the Academy and compliance with Trust and Academy policies and practices, standards, and ensuring the Academy fulfils its responsibilities to pupils

and their families, being at the heart of the relationship between the school and its local parish community.

Will a school lose autonomy in the Laetare CMAT?

Headteachers will continue to lead their schools and are expected to act with autonomy to ensure they are serving the children and young people in their communities. In line with the principles of subsidiarity, decisions will always be taken at the most appropriate local level. Schools will continue to determine the curriculum that is most appropriate for their young people and will work with subject Leaders to select the most appropriate courses and exam syllabi that should be offered.

Will admissions policies change?

The Board of Directors are the legal admissions authority and are bound by exactly the same law, government guidance and Diocesan protocols as all schools are at present. There will be no changes to admissions policies as part of this process. If any school within a CMAT wished to change its admission policy it would have to follow exactly the same process of consultation as at present.

Will schools be expected to change their name or uniform?

Preserving the unique identity of schools is a key feature of the Laetare CMAT and there is no expectation of schools to change their name or uniform. Schools will be expected to be clear in their communications that it is part of the Laetare CMAT and is working as part of a wider family of Religious Order schools.

How are Academies funded?

Funding for Voluntary Aided schools is currently calculated on a per pupil basis according to the national funding formula and subsequently agreed by the local Schools Forum. This is then paid to Local Authorities who decide how much of this funding goes directly to schools and what is held back to pay for services they provide centrally. This is in addition to services that individual schools purchase through service level agreements.

Single Academy Trusts currently receive their General Annual Grant (GAG) direct from central government via the Education Funding and Skills Agency (ESFA).

In a CMAT, funding is determined by central government on a per pupil basis for all the schools in the CMAT using the same national funding formula and paid centrally to the CMAT via the ESFA. The CMAT will then allocate school level budgets in a similar manner to how they are currently allocated. Grant funding e.g. pupil premium is provided direct to the schools. Funding for SEND is allocated at local level.

Schools will continue to receive their full funding entitlements and schools are able to spend their budgets as they would normally do so in line with CMAT policy. The Local Governing Body and Headteacher are responsible for managing their delegated budget and for the staffing of the school in accordance with the agreed staffing structure and the curriculum that

is being offered. Where amendments are made to school staffing structures this needs to be done alongside the Trust Board that operates as the employer.

What is the likelihood of securing large scale capital funding for potential work required?

Multi Academy Trusts with at least 5 schools and more than 3000 students in total will receive funding for capital projects through the School Condition Allocation (SCA). This is provided annually to the Trust who will then prioritise the use of funding based on its estate management plan. This will provide a fixed sum each year to the Trust and is guaranteed funding to enable a planned programme of improvement across multiple years.

Single Academy Trusts currently access capital funding through bids to the DfE Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). Funding is prioritised by the DfE and there is no guarantee an individual Academy will be successful.

Voluntary Aided schools will usually access capital funding through bidding to the Diocese who receive the School Condition Allocation.

All schools will continue to receive their Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) allocation which can be used to fund smaller scale capital projects.

Is revenue generated internally by the school fully protected?

School generated income through lettings, donations etc will be fully retained by individual schools. If Religious Orders donate funds to support individual schools these will also be fully retained.

What will happen to the existing school assets and reserves?

Assets transfer to the Trust, as the legal entity. All physical assets would remain in the school. Schools will need to have an updated asset register in place so that the correct accounting valuation and treatment can be put through the accounts.

Schools are expected to retain an appropriate level of reserves to manage any unexpected expenses and this will continue to be the case for schools in the CMAT. These reserves should be in place to ensure each school has what they need to deliver their planned curriculum. Schools will be expected to retain their reserves at an appropriate threshold which balances the future risk with the expectation that funding is used for the benefit of pupils currently at the school. The threshold for reserves will be agreed by Directors and will be laid out in the Reserves Policy.

If schools propose to convert with significant reserves, broad conversations would take place during the period of due diligence to ascertain where these reserves are planned to be used. For example, some schools have accrued reserves mindful of life cycle replacement of assets such as 3G pitches or building programmes.