

# **Proposed Academy Conversion of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School**

## **Consultation Report for the Governing Body**

November 2018

***Document Control Sheet***

<b>Project Title</b>	Holy Family Catholic Education Academy Trust
<b>Report Title</b>	St Anselm's Final Consultation Report 181101
<b>Revision</b>	V1.0 Final
<b>Status</b>	Approved by the Governing Body

## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2. SCOPE AND TIMING OF STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION.....	4
3. METHODOLOGY.....	4
4. CONSULTATION MEETING CHRONOLOGY.....	5
5. COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES.....	5
6. FINDINGS FROM THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRES .....	5
7. REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS.....	14
8. SUMMARY .....	14
9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	15
10. RECOMMENDATION .....	15

## Appendices

APPENDIX A – SACRED HEART CONSULTATION LEAFLET

APPENDIX B – SACRED HEART CONSULTATION PRESENTATION

APPENDIX C – QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE CONSULTATION MEETINGS

APPENDIX D – CONSULTATION ISSUE SUBMITTED BY YEAR 1 PARENTS

## **1. Introduction**

---

The Governors and Headteachers of the 6 Harrow Schools have been working closely together for a number of years and during this time have been considering the benefits of converting to an Academies and forming a Catholic Academy Trust (CAT) to further enhance partnership and collaboration.

In September 2017 the Diocese of Westminster published its strategy for Catholic Academy Trusts <http://rcdow.org.uk/education/academies-/>

The aim of the Diocese's CAT Strategy is to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education. The Strategy also sets out the Governance Structure, Scheme of Delegation, roles and responsibilities and a job description for the Catholic Executive Officer (CEO).

The Headteachers and Governors of all Harrow School discussed the strategy, its implications and opportunities for the 6 Schools and passed a resolution to submit a conversion application to the Regional Schools Commissions Headteachers Board to proceed with the next phase of the conversion process.

In submitting an application to the RSC Headteachers Board, all 6 Harrow Schools were required to complete the Diocese Due Diligence process which evaluated each Schools Standards and Finances. When the Diocese Project Board confirmed that the Schools had met the requirements they were issued with the Diocese Letter of Consent to convert.

All 6 Harrow Schools then received their Academy Orders in May 2018, representing the Regional Schools Commissions consent to convert.

The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. The Governors of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School firmly believe that they know what is best for the School and wish to invite comments from stakeholders on this proposal.

This report sets out results of the consultation exercise commissioned by the Governors of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School to listen to the views of stakeholders.

A subsequent meeting of the Governing Body will consider the findings of this report, together with other factors that Governors must include, and decide whether to proceed with conversion and establish a Catholic Academy Trust.

## **2. Scope and timing of Stakeholder Consultation**

---

The Governors devised and implemented a consultation exercise which sought the views of parents, staff and the wider community on whether the School should become an Academy and establish a Catholic Academy Trust with its partner Schools in Harrow.

The consultation period opened on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and closed on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

## **3. Methodology**

---

The Governors of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School developed a consultation plan and brochure, which identified all of the Schools stakeholders to be contacted at the start of the exercise and provided them with background information the Diocese CAT Strategy in order to inform the debate.

The Head Teacher wrote to all parents and staff on 10<sup>th</sup> September to start the consultation exercise, invite them to attend meetings in school and direct them to accessing the consultation leaflet on the School's website.

Staff and parents were invited to attend consultation meetings at the School to find out more about the proposed conversion to an Academy and form a CAT.

Emails were also sent to both officer and elected representatives of Harrow Council, as well as the local MP, neighbouring Secondary, Primary and Nursery Schools and other partners.

The consultation brochure also contained a questionnaire which stakeholders were invited to complete by the end of the consultation period.

The Consultation Leaflet produced by Governors is attached as **Appendix A** to this report.

#### **4. Consultation Meeting Chronology**

---

The letters to parents and staff invited them to attend the appropriate consultation meetings scheduled below:

- Staff – 3.30pm Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 3.30pm; and
- Parents - 6pm Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 3.30pm

The Headteacher gave a presentation to attendees covering issues such as the Diocese's vision for the CAT programme, the advantages of working as a CAT, why this is being considered now, the conversion process and next steps

The full presentation given to Staff and Parents is enclosed as **Appendix B** to this report.

Attendees were then given an opportunity to ask any questions they might have.

#### **Attendance**

- The Staff meeting was attended by 27 members of staff; and
- The Public meeting was attended by 14 parents and supported by 4 Governors

The questions asked and answers, together with the issues raised, is included as **Appendix C** to this report.

#### **5. Completed Questionnaires**

---

162 completed questionnaire were returned by staff and parents.

#### **6. Findings from the Consultation Questionnaires**

---

This section sets out the additional comments offered by the respondent.

### **Q2) Respondents were asked to consider the proposal that St Anselm's Catholic Primary School should convert to an Academy and form the Harrow CAT**

---

Of the 162 responses:

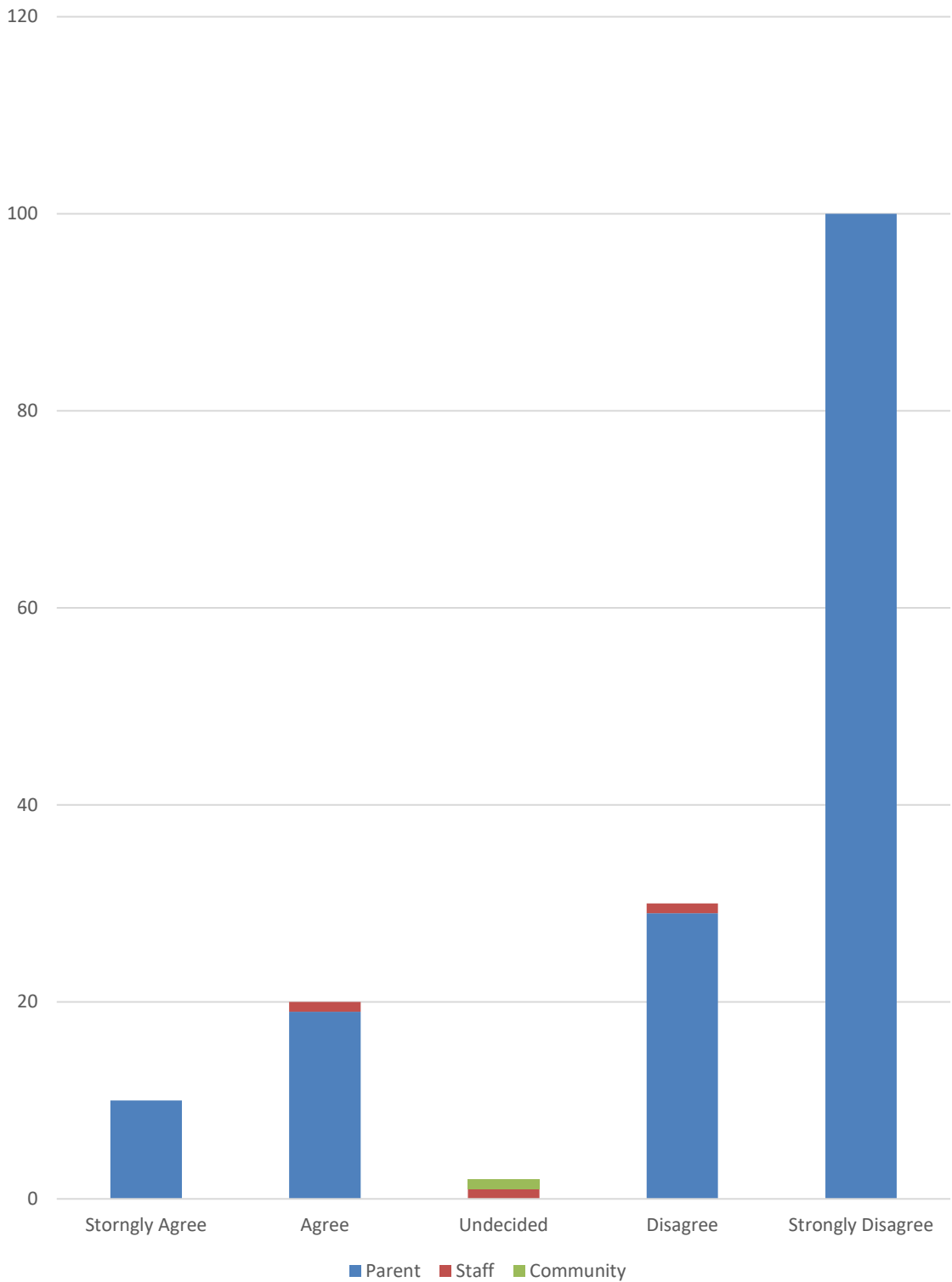
- 30 respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the proposal (18.52%);
- 2 respondent was undecided (1.23%); and
- 130 respondents either 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' with the proposal (80.25%).

The table below sets out the actual number of responses in each category;

<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Parents</b>	10	19		29	100
<b>Staff</b>		1	1	1	
<b>Community</b>			1		

The bar chart on the following pages illustrates this graphically.

**2) Do you agree that St Anselm's Catholic Primary School should convert to an Academy and form the Harrow Catholic Academy Trust by entering into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State**



A sample of the range of additional comments offered by consultee are set out below for Governors. (These are direct quotations from the response forms.)

**The reasons given by those in favour of the proposal include:**

- “The Diocese seems to have given thought to the reasons for the move. Those in decision making positions must have weighed up the options before starting schools in this direction”;
- “I believe it will lead to better resources for the School and opportunities for staff and pupils through a stronger collective bargaining body”;
- “This might help the school to get more funds which in turn might help the children and teachers to get more facilities”;
- “My concerns are whether are jobs are safe and how will this affect our pensions”;
- “I understand that with the current limits on funding the decision for a Catholic school to remain a faith school and continue to work with adequate resources it needs to collaborate to allow it to survive and help other Catholic Schools”;
- “I think that placing all Catholic Schools together is moving with modern times and allowing parents more choice and involvement”;
- “I agree because converting to an academy and forming a Harrow Catholic Academy Trust can benefit our school and community in a number of ways”;
- “I agree because it might make the school better, and more people might want to come to it, it might also be known more”;
- “If all the schools work together this will surely help to raise standards and reduce expenditure”;
- “I believe this is inevitable, so best to join at outset and help form the Academy”;
- “I have faith in the Governing Body. If they think this is best for the School I trust their judgement”; and
- “Hopefully it will lead to a better allocation of resources without St Anselm’s losing out”.

**The reasons given by those opposed to the proposal include:**

- “Full control by the Diocese. National curriculum may change as no requirement. Lack of control of running costs. Absence of TUPE protection for Teachers will discourage the best teachers”;
- “It is unclear whether the Academy will improve standards or results. We have concerns that Governors will no longer have control over decision making. Will the new decision makers have the same and/or equal interests as St Anselm’s”;
- “I do not see the need for such an outstanding school to become an Academy. St Anselm’s will lose its autonomy and the danger is it will lose its outstanding status”;



- “I think the School is doing well. This is an irreversible thing to do. We should wait and see how it affects other schools before choosing this route ourselves”;
- “Once the Secretary of State funds our school they may dictate policies that our against our Christian values (even promoting others that demean and degrade our values”;
- “Too much control by the Diocese. Too much financial autonomy. St Anselm’s will be a guinea pig in this experiment. Impact on Admissions policy. There is no way out if this goes wrong. Questions over the leadership and management (Diocese and Senior Leaders.) What does St Anselm’s gain from this MAT”;
- “I fail to see the extra benefits to St Anselm’s of becoming an Academy and I am worried by the risks”;
- “I feel St Anselm’s stands to more than it gains given that it’s a high quality than most of the others in the proposed union”;
- “It is risky to change the Governance arrangements which are working very well.”
- “The School is successful on its own. Why bring it into partnership with other Schools who are not doing so well. The Academy structure, may I feel, impact on what is being taught in class, affecting my child’s education.”
- “I worry about the financial support if the School becomes independent of the Council”;
- “St Anselm’s has excellent Key Stage 2 results, and well above average progress in reading, writing and maths. I don’t think the MAT will improve academic standards. St Anselm’s will lose the financial safety net of the local authority by joining a MAT. There is no way out of a MAT”;
- I was a signatory to the year 1 parent’s paper which we submitted. I do not believe that the queries raised in our document have been answered. I am very worried that the teachers settled in their class role and consequently are settled children will be redeployed elsewhere. I am very concerned about such a slimmed down board level in place of good governor’s decision making for such huge sums of money and I am concerned about losing the local authority”;
- “I disagree as not enough information has been shared with support staff about how it affects them individually in terms of pay and pensions.”
- “There is no evidence MATs raise academic standards and improve results. Reduction in accountability to parents”;
- “As a new parent at the School I was disappointed that this was not discussed earlier before the selection process. One of the reasons I did not chose St Bernadette’s is because it has become an Academy. Academies tend to be business first, and as a group collective Academy, St Anselm’s would not be a priority.”
- “Independence from the Council might reduce quality of education in the school.”

- “It is impossible based on the information provided to make a properly informed decision on whether there are any benefits to converting. We would expect a greater level of transparency than has been evidence, for example no information has been provided about the financial business case for converting. This is fundamental to the issue. Given the lack of information we cannot support the conversion.”
- “Conflict of interest with the CEO/Headteacher of Sacred Heart”;
- “I am happy with the School as it is”;
- “I don’t understand why it’s better for the School or community to take it away from the Local Authority control. I think delegated not centralised control is better for the local community”;
- “The School cannot change its mind and return to local authority control. St Anselm’s Headteacher will lose ultimate control of the School to the CEO”;
- “Other Boroughs have had schools reject the idea so this gives me reason for concern too. Being led by the Head of a Secondary School seems unthinkable. No boys Secondary School offering is also unsettling”;
- “I don’t think that joining that Trust will bring any benefits to St Anselm’s only layers of administration and cost. St Anselm’s has worked well with the other Catholic Schools for some time – a Trust is not needed to continue the already existing relationships between the Schools”;
- “Will there be a risk of staff redundancies and the School will lose the safety net of the local authority by joining a MAT”;
- “Recent reports by the BBC suggest that school results worsen after joining a MAT. Most Academies are in financial deficit. Pay of the top management at the Academy was not revealed e.g. CEO. CEO was never a Headteacher of a Primary School therefore how can they be best suited to head this Academy”;
- The Academy Trust proposes concentration of decision makers to a few Trustees with insufficient knowledge of St Anselm’s which is an Ofsted rating Outstanding School. St Anselm’s has more to lose than other Schools joining the CAT. To deal with financial pressures, the theory of cost-cutting theories is attractive, but in practice, is poorly done due to the disconnect between staff in the school and the decision makers. Adding a layer of bureaucracy also runs counter to the idea of cost cutting”;
- “I disagree on the basis that I do not fully understand the changes that this would bring”;
- “There is no information about the annual running costs of the MAT”;
- “St Anselm’s should look to become the best. St Anselm’s should create more partnership with parents as they want the best for their kids and if with the Ofsted results we can see that St Anselm’s is doing great we will be willing to contribute more”;

- “As a member of staff I would have like written confirmation of employment terms and conditions and pension status prior to the consultation process. More information would have enabled me to assess how changing to an Academy will affect me”;
- “I feel I applied to this school in its current form only 1 year ago and fear the school I applied to is already trying to shift the goal posts”;
- “It gives power to whose commitment and attitude in dealing with the direction of St Anselm’s is unknown rather than to a trusted authority which has decades of experience (LEA)”;
- “Concerns around changes to the national curriculum being solely for the Church agenda”;
- “As a non-Catholic parent (married to a Catholic parent) who fully supports the ethos of the School, I was happy in the knowledge that St Anselm’s is a state school, answerable to the LEA which I trust to enable faith schools to operate responsibly within the boundaries of educational best practice and a national curriculum. Changing to a MAT would give St Anselm’s the power to pick and choose from the curriculum. How do I know that my daughter will still be taught certain Catholic taboo subjects which I hold to be academically sacred i.e Darwinian evolution. If St Anselm’s had been in a MAT when my daughter had chosen schools we would not have applied. As such I feel slightly duped. The School should have given a 6 year run up to becoming a MAT to give parents choice”;
- “Understanding is that when an ‘Outstanding’ school becomes an Academy is no longer goes through routine inspections with Ofsted. This wholly unacceptable”;
- “The Diocese should not be running this School. Neither should they aspire to this Academy plan”;
- “We will lose our voice, our Governors of the School. Who will fight for change when changes occur that do not benefit St Anselm’s”;
- It gives too much control to the Headteacher of another school”; and
- “Academies have not proven to be the most successful for all schools, why risk losing the unique character, fantastic results, exceptional care and affection by converting to an Academy and giving away power to govern in this way.”

### **Q3) Respondents were given the opportunity to make any other comments about the proposed conversion**

---

#### **Additional comments offered by those in favour of the proposal include:**

- “Ensure we as parents/School authority has equal rights to agree/disagree any rules or regulations based on the impact to students”.

### **Comments offered by those who opposed the proposal include:**

- “St Anselm’s is already a great School. There is no benefit to join but a lot to lose in stepping into the unknown”;
- “There were no earlier meetings and there is a feeling that this is being rushed and pushed through”;
- “Consultation period is too short. Failed to engage enough parents. Not allowed a parent ballot”;
- “If the Trust were to be formed without St Anselm’s and it were possible to demonstrate benefits then we could reconsider in due course. This cannot be done if we were to join and then wish to leave”;
- “Feel it is a foregone conclusion and that Academisation will happen regardless”;
- “The desire of the Diocese and the Cardinal’s wishes should not be allowed to jeopardise the excellent educational standards already present at St Anselm’s”;
- “Wait. I think having 1 month to make this huge decision is grossly unfair If needed”;
- “I do not like this proposal and hope that St Anselm’s does not become an Academy. It really worries me to think that it will”;
- “Extend the consultation period so that parents are more informed”;
- “St Anselm’s could decide to wait and join the MAT at a future date if its working”;
- “We as parents put together questions to be answered but these were not answered. A proper consultation with Diocese and CAT representatives should have taken place”;
- “Too much control by the Diocese run by five men with no female representation”;
- “If St Anselm’s is willing to become an academy for financial reasons I believe it should turn to parents and request support”;
- “See list of key concerns raised by parents”;
- “Yes one comment – don’t do it please”; and
- “St Anselm’s could reject the proposal and join later”.

The list of question referred to in the above extracts are attached as **Appendix D** to this report.

### **7. Reflections on the Findings**

The above direct quotations from the consultation responses contain a number of inaccuracies and misunderstandings about Voluntary Aided School and the Harrow Catholic Academy Trust.

These inaccuracies and misunderstandings include;

<b>Inaccuracies in the consultation responses</b>		<b>Correction position</b>
1	Creating a CAT will affect staff pension	Staff benefits in the Teaching Pension Scheme (TPS) and Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) remain unchanged. All rights and entitlements transfer with staff to the CAT under TUPE.
2	The Diocese should not have full control of the School	The Diocese currently appoints all Foundation Governors on the Governing Body and has the power to remove them.  As an Academy the Diocese would appoint the Foundation Directors with the correct skills to provide strategic oversight and challenge to the CAT to serve on the Trust Board.
3	TUPE does not apply	TUPE does apply. All staff with a contract in place at the point of conversion will TUPE transfer to the Trust on their existing pay, terms and conditions of employment.
4	Governors will no longer have control over decision making	Governors will continue to make decisions in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.  The Scheme of Delegation sets out which decisions are made at each level in the CAT. The Diocese Scheme of Delegation retains responsibility for CAT Finances and Standards at Board level and cascades all other decisions; including responsibility for implementing budget and improving standards in each school to the Headteacher and Local Governing Body.  Each School has a Governor on the Shadow CAT Board.
5	Admissions will change	The current Admissions process through Harrow Council and the Admissions policy will continue to apply.
6	St Anselm's is financially supported by the Council	The School receives its funding through Harrow Council. As a Voluntary Aided the School the Governing Body employ the staff and not the Council.  Harrow Council would not financially support the School if it got into difficulties.
7	The Foundation Directors receive a salary	The Foundation Directors are volunteers drawn from the Foundation Governors across the 6 Schools. They do not receive a salary.

8	Other Boroughs have rejected the CAT proposal	<p>The Diocese CAT Strategy is voluntary programme. It is not the case they opted out, but rather they did not opt in.</p> <p>However, there are schools in both boroughs who have now expressed an interest to go forward. It is up to Governing Bodies to determine if and when it is right for their school to convert.</p> <p>Both the CAT Strategy and the Diocese approach to Education is one of inclusivity and a place for all Schools in the Diocese.</p>
9	Academies are not subject to Ofsted Inspection	Academies are inspected by Ofsted in the same way as Schools
10	Consultation period is too short	The 4 week consultation process is a standard time frame for Schools converting to Academies
11	Parents are denied a ballot	<p>This is a decision for the Governing Body not parents or staff.</p> <p>Governors are inviting parents and staff to contribute their views on the proposal.</p> <p>The consultation findings are one of a number of factors that Governors will take into account when making a final decision.</p>

As these misunderstandings are given as the reasons some parents and staff disagree with the proposal, it is possible that a number of consultees may change their minds if these misunderstandings can be corrected.

In addition to this Governors could expand on issues raised during the consultation such as how the Harrow CAT would improve standards in schools.

Many of these issues are anticipated and addressed in the Diocese Catholic Academy Trust Strategy.

## **8. Summary**

This report summarises the findings of the genuine, open and honest consultation exercise undertaken by Governors to ascertain the views of parents, staff and other stakeholders on the conversion of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School to an academy and establish the Harrow CAT.

This report evidences the comprehensive approach taken to raise awareness of the consultation exercise in the community, to provide background information on the issues and to host staff and parents meetings to allow stakeholders to find out about the Diocese's Strategy and to ask questions.

The number of returned response forms was significant, although attendance at the parents meeting was slightly disappointing for the size of the School. However, the range of questions asked at the meetings (and listed in Appendix C) together with the comments on the completed response forms, evidence the wide range of issues discussed and illustrated the willingness of attendees to engage with Governors on this matter. The response forms identify a significant number of concerns and beliefs held by staff and parent, and summarised earlier in this report

Many of these concerns have been anticipated by the Diocese Strategy and considered by Governors in their earlier discussions.

Governors will take the findings from the consultation exercise and report into account with the other factors that Governors must consider when making a final decision on whether to form a Catholic Academy Trust in collaboration with the School's partners is in the best interests of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School.

## **9. Acknowledgements**

---

The Governors and Headteacher of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School would like to express their gratitude and appreciation for the staff and parents who took part in the consultation by listening to the presentations, asking clarification questions and who took the time to contribute their views.

## **10. Recommendation**

---

It is recommended that the Governors of the St Anselm's Catholic Primary School;

- (i) Note the contents of this report;
- (ii) Recognise that they have fulfilled their duty to undertake a Statutory Section 10 stakeholder consultation exercise on the proposed conversion;
- (iii) Acknowledge that whilst stakeholders have raised significant objections to the proposal, many of these have been anticipated by the Diocese CAT Strategy and discussed previously by Governors;
- (iv) Publish this report on the Schools website as a record of the consultation and feedback to the participants and wider stakeholders;
- (v) Continue to share updates and engage with staff and parents on this matter by addressing the points identified in Section 7 of this report;
- (vi) Meet to consider the findings of this report, together with the other issues Governors must take into account and decide whether to proceed with their plans to convert and form a Catholic Academy Trust.