04th September

Dear Parents, Carers, and Parish community,

Academisation Development Consultation about the Vision

On 11th July 2024, Archbishop Bernard Longley outlined a new plan for our Catholic schools. The goal is to move from collaboration to shared responsibility by bringing all Catholic schools into a smaller number of stronger, flourishing Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATs).

After consulting widely, the Trustees approved the formation of St Raphael the Archangel CMAT, formed on 1st Sept 2026, with the merger of Our Lady of the Magnificat, Holy Spirit and five voluntary aided schools, St Joseph's Whitnash, St Mary Immaculate, Warwick, St Anthony's Leamington Spa, Our Lady's Princethorpe and St Peter's, Leamington Spa.

What is being proposed?

The next phase of this development is for Pope Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Company, Holy Cross Catholic Multi-Academy Company and Romero Catholic Academy, along with eleven Voluntary Aided schools to join St Raphael the Archangel on September 1st, 2027. The three MACs and eleven VA schools joining are as follows:

	Number of Schools	**Secondary**	**Primary**	**Pupil Numbers**
Holy Cross MAC	7	2	5	4128
Romero MAC	8	1	7	3714
Pope Francis MAC	12	2	10	3768
VA Schools				
St. Anne's, Caversham	11	0	11	2691
St. Martin's, Caversham				
Sacred Heart, Henley-on-Thames				
St. Joseph's, Headington				
St. Aloysius', Oxford				
St Osburg's, Coventry				
Our Lady of the Assumption, Coventry				
All Souls, Coventry				
Holy Family, Coventry				
St Mary & St Benedict's, Coventry				
St Anne's, Coventry				

Total	38	5	33	14301

St Raphael the Archangel CMAT will serve its children and communities through the creation of structures that will reduce the workload for staff and schools, ensure the delivery of the highest quality Catholic education and provide the economies of scale needed in these challenging times.

Why merge schools into a larger Trust?

By combining schools into a bigger Trust, staff workload can be reduced, resources can be shared, and schools can focus on delivering high-quality Catholic education. This setup can also create cost savings, which will benefit all schools involved.

How will a larger Trust benefit the schools?

Large, well-managed trusts have several advantages for the students, staff, parishes and communities:

Catholic mission and values: The Trust will maintain and develop a strong focus on our Catholic mission and values including outstanding chaplaincy across all schools.

More resources: Larger Trusts can access more funding and manage it more effectively. This can mean new buildings, better teaching resources, and more support for students and staff.

Support for school communities: Strong Trusts can quickly provide extra staff or resources to schools that need them.

Career development for staff: Teachers and staff will have more opportunities for growth without leaving the classroom.

Who will lead the new CMAT?

The CEO of the St Raphael the Archangel CMAT is Sinead Smith. Sinead will be supported by a highly skilled Board of Directors. A list of whom can be found on the trust website.

How have the schools been allocated to the new CMAT?

DES officers, working with Archdiocesan Trustees and the Department for Education, have considered a range of factors including Local Authority, parishes, number and phase of schools and pupils, finances and current academy and voluntary aided status. Primary feeder schools will continue to be allocated to the same Trusts as their Catholic secondary school.

How will we be able to influence decisions in such a large Trust? Will we lose our identity?

No. Schools will remain deeply connected to their communities, and the Trust will ensure that each school's individuality is respected and celebrated. Local governing bodies will continue to play a key role in making sure the school's needs and voices are heard.

Will our school feel lost in the larger organisation?

To the contrary, successful Trusts are rooted in the communities that they serve. CMAT leaders will be required to engage with school communities.

What will be the role of the local governing body?

As stated above, successful Trusts and schools are rooted in their communities. In the larger CMAT, the role of the local governing body becomes even more important as a means to ensuring the local community are represented and listened to. Local governing bodies are the eyes and ears of the Board in ensuring the school and CMAT are meeting the requirements of a strong CMAT.

Will there be more money for my school?

Money for school buildings is paid directly to larger Trusts and that opens many doors for the CMAT to work with their schools to grasp the opportunities of managing their estates.

In addition, the significant economies of scale will result in a more effective use of funds across the Academy Trust leading to additional resources for schools and pupils where required. This support can be provided in different ways: SEND, pupil premium, education performance, estates management, administration support, parish and community engagement, and will vary depending on need.

What is the timescale for the new vision?
Trustees, Trust leaders and the DfE will work together to complete this next stage by September 2027.

Next steps

As part of the process, we are now consulting the parents, parishes, and community of our schools for the period 4th September 2026 to 16th October 2026. If you would like to make a comment about the proposal, we invite you to submit these through this link to the Comments Form, by 12pm on 16th October 2026.

As we look forward, we pray for the success of St Raphael the Archangel CMAT so that we can all work together in order for diocesan schools, their pupils and communities to flourish.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

CEO Chair of Directors