

End of Term Letter, No.5

July 2023

Dear St. Francis of Assisi Trust Family,

No doubt at this time of year we are all contemplating a bit of rest and recuperation. Hopefully you will have some kind of break in the routine if not a proper holiday planned. Wherever and whatever you are doing this summer, I pray that you and your loved ones will be recharged, rejuvenated and relaxed well before the September return.

I'm grateful that, in amongst your packing for holiday and/or the busyness of the end of term, you have found the energy and time to read this letter. You may recall that at the end of each term I try to give you a brief one or two-page update on how our schools are benefitting from working together in our Catholic family Trust. It's always a great pleasure and privilege for me to be able to do this and to give you examples of how we are securing ever-better Catholic education for the children and everyone in our communities. In the paragraphs that follow, you will find three examples of recent developments from the last term or so.



However, before I get to that, I wanted to mention two schools especially: **Sacred Heart Ware** and **St Thomas of Canterbury**, who have celebrated their 50th and 150th anniversaries respectively this term. Each school organised a beautiful mass – it was lovely to see so many of you associated



with those schools there to celebrate – said by Cardinal Vincent Nichols. You can see a couple of images from those beautiful celebrations to the left and right hand side of this paragraph. Thank to you everyone involved in organising and attending such important events which demonstrate just how important it is that we keep preserving and developing the beautiful Catholic education that our schools have provide across the generations.

Developing the best possible Catholic education

During the course of the Spring Term, each Headteacher was interviewed as part of a 'review' into how the creation of our Trust has supported school improvement and educational outcomes in each school. You can find the full summary of the Headteacher interviews on our website [here](#). You will find over 50 different School Improvement projects in total, but the following are just some examples of how our working together has benefitted the children and staff in each school:



St Joseph's
Catholic Primary



Sacred Heart
Catholic Primary School



St Augustine's
Catholic Primary School



St Joseph's
Catholic Primary School



St Thomas of Canterbury



St Joseph's
Catholic Primary School



St Mary's
Catholic School



St Cross
Catholic Primary School

- Development of our Early Years Curriculum across all Primary Schools through cross-school moderation and sharing of best-practice, planning and resources.
- Creating Subject Leader Networks so that teachers who would otherwise be working 'solo' in their own schools can now team up and co-plan and share with other teachers in the same position in other schools.
- Retaining our best Catholic leaders of the future by offering several high-impact leadership posts across our network of schools.
- A Trust-wide Chaplaincy project enabling children to share and develop their faith with children from other Catholic schools.
- Children from Early Years through to Year 13 have been engaging in a Trust-wide Franciscan Values Award which encourages and recognises children for their work in living out the charism of St. Francis through acts of peace, caring for the environment, and looking after the vulnerable.
- Keeping everyone safe: we have held regular Health & Safety and Safeguarding meetings across all our schools to share training and upskill each other in best practice.
- Centralised Trust-INSET for all our teachers, 94% of whom say that their teaching practice will be positively impacted by the training provided.
- Creation of a SENDCO network to plan CPD and share knowledge relating to the best provision for students with special needs.

Delivering greater resources to all our schools

Whilst the primary aim of our Trust is to help schools improve their provision of Catholic education, a very important secondary aim is to help our schools become more financially robust and more efficient. Therefore it is a great pleasure to be able to say that because of conversion, our schools have now gained just over £1,720,000 in our first five terms. I try to be an optimist, but this figure is well beyond even my own expectations, though I am now targeting to push that figure over £2,000,000 next year.

One element of this financial strengthening of our schools is the Capital Project Schemes that are only open to Academy Schools. This year we have been remarkably successful in securing successful bids for seven of our eight schools, bringing our total Capital Projects to nine in our first two years. That equates to £1.4m in successful bids, along with six-figure sums realised through Academies being funded directly from government, six-figure sums from savings through our conversion grants, and five-figure sums being realised through joint-procurement / purchasing power. There are other six-figure sums in the pipeline, but the ink is not quite dry on those 'contracted-savings' so I look forward to telling you all about them in our next newsletter. Here are the totals for each school in capital projects won to date:

- St. Thomas of Canterbury £152,000;
- Sacred Heart £81,000;
- St. Joseph's Bishop's Stortford £56,000;
- St. Joseph's Waltham Cross £73,000 & £57,000;
- St. Joseph's Hertford £170,000 & £406,000;
- St. Augustine's £152,000;
- St. Cross £277,000.



St Joseph's
Catholic Primary



Sacred Heart
Catholic Primary School



St Augustine's
Catholic Primary School



St Joseph's
Catholic Primary School



St Thomas of Canterbury



St Joseph's
Catholic Primary School



St Mary's
Catholic School



St Cross
Catholic Primary School

Development plans for 23/24

In working with Headteachers this term, we have agreed to settle on four key priorities for next academic year: We are going to be concentrating on developing Writing skills across all our schools for children aged 3-18. Writing is a key development priority for us all already, so we have agreed to co-ordinate and combine our 'forces' on this. We will also be running: a Headteacher Leadership Development Programme for next year, ensuring the best of development opportunities are given to our school leaders; a Cross-School Curriculum Development Programme looking to ensure seamless education from 3yrs through 18yrs, along with the very latest curriculum documentation and planning; and a Trust-wide Special Educational Needs provision programme which aims to deliver the very latest support and provision for all children who need this support.

This time next year I look forward to being able to report on the impact those projects will no doubt be delivering for children and staff across our schools.

Until I write again, I leave you with a blessing here (right-hand side) that I have always been encouraged by. I hope it encourages you too, specifically as you contemplate some time away from the school routine and, God-willing, some rest and recuperation with your families.

God bless you all.



Andrew Celano, CEO



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