

End of Term Letter, No.4

December 2022

Dear St. Francis of Assisi Trust Family,

At the end of each term I write out to all in our community to offer a brief update on work in our Trust schools. In this our fourth termly newsletter I have picked four developments which showcase some of the benefits to staff, parents and pupils from being a part of our Trust: How we are developing ever better teaching and teachers; winning new funding streams only available to Trust schools; helping each school to be a constantly improving school, and how we are learning about each other in order to develop and support each school community.



Developing the best teachers

As a Trust one of the most important things we can do is facilitate and help all our teachers to constantly develop their skills. Headteachers are working well together to develop projects on Curriculum, Subject Leadership, Chaplaincy, Catholic Life and more. Two of these projects (Curriculum / Subject Leadership) are the focus for our first Trust-wide In Service Training (INSET) day on 3rd January 2023. All teaching staff across the Trust will assemble for a liturgy, and then hear from a great keynote speaker (Gerard Durkin) with teacher-led workshops throughout the afternoon. The day promises to be a real milestone for our schools in working together to ensure that we use our collective ability to help improve each school; stronger together.

Delivering benefits of being a Trust: a £482,000 win!

You might have seen last term I sent you a link ([here](#)) to a short summary of some of the key benefits for schools belonging to our Trust. Whilst we were very pleased with those achievements, this year has got off to a great start in terms of financial 'achievements'. One of the advantages of being in a Trust is that the government offers a bigger 'pot' from which to bid for Capital Projects, and indeed bids won are also not subject to VAT if you are in a Trust. It's therefore a great pleasure to be able to confirm that at the first time of asking, two Trust schools have bid and won a total of £482,000 in capital projects to enhance and develop their school environments. It's the view of our Building Consultants that these bids would not have succeeded on the non-Academy bidding cycle, and so this is a great dividend from conversion. St. Cross and St. Augustine's have won this time, and I'm looking forward to other schools winning significant sums of money in the future, all for the benefit of pupils and staff.

Constant school improvement

This term has seen the release of our Mission, Strategy and Vision document (what we are calling our Core Purpose document; our 'reason for being', so to speak). You can read the whole document on our website [here](#). Of utmost importance is our Trust Mission – what our Trust is all about:

Inspired by the teachings of Christ and the example of St Francis, we strive for excellence, cherishing every child in our care as a unique thumbprint of God, enabling all to realise their full potential.



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

The mission is our ambition for all the children in our care, and we have worked closely with all schools to form this statement so that it underpins rather than replaces each individual school mission statement. Our Strategy is to deliver this through striving for constant school improvement; ensuring all schools work together to challenge and support each other to become ever better at what we do. Our vision is that because of this strategy we will deliver the best possible Catholic education now, and for generations to come; protecting and preserving our schools for the future. I have a great personal empathy with that vision – across six decades three generations of my family have either worked at or been taught in our schools. Whatever your experience and association, my hope is that it will be at least as long and happy as my own.

Engagement with School Staff and Local Governing Bodies

This term one of the main priorities for Trust work has been to engage with each school community. To this end I've visited each of the eight schools up to four times this term: meeting with Heads, touring the school to meet staff and pupils, holding staff meetings, meeting with individual governors, and, with Directors, meeting with the full governing body. This has been a great privilege for me – helping me to learn about each community and what is important to each school. In 2023 I look forward to opportunities to meet with parents, as well as build on those new relationships with schools. These engagements are designed to ensure that the Trust we build reflects your wishes and takes account of each school charism.

Finally, to end this letter with just two further thoughts:

Firstly, I would like to thank the Directors who helped us set up the Trust and who have now handed on the baton as we enter a new phase of growing our Trust. Dr Greg Hacksley, Chris Long and Cate Company all served the Trust either before and/or after formation into our first year, generously giving of their free time, skills and abilities to help us form and then develop in our early terms. Fr Peter Harris (Chair, and Health and Safety Director) and Lavinia Willis (Foundation Director) are now joined by two new Foundation Directors: Mary James (Vice Chair, Safeguarding Director) and Jonathan Smith. Their profiles will appear on our website shortly, and I know they have already thrown themselves into visiting our schools and getting to grips with Trust governance. We are always looking for new Foundation Directors, so if you are interested in becoming a Director please do contact Fr Peter at p.harris@stfrancistrust.net.

Secondly, and most importantly, I would like to wish all of you a happy and holy Christmas, and a peaceful New Year. Christmas is just the most wonderful celebration of how a light came to shine in our darkness. Whatever you, your family and your loved ones are doing this Christmas, my prayer for us all is that somehow we can see, sense and savour the joy of our salvation arriving in the form of the baby Jesus. May his shining light dispel all darkness in our lives, and may we find all our hope in Him. Amen.



God bless you all.



Andrew Celano, CEO



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