

9th March 2026

Dear Staff,

As you may already be aware, the governing body of Sacred Heart has applied to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010 and is proposing to join Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust. The governing body is now consulting stakeholders on this proposal before a final decision is taken on entering into the funding agreement and completing the conversion. Further information about what becoming an academy means and how to comment on the proposals is set out below.

Will Sacred Heart definitely become an academy?

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion in September 2026. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the multi academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of pupils at the school, staff at the school, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

All staff are invited to attend a meeting on Wednesday 15th April at 3.35pm, where you can ask questions about joining the Trust and what this means for you as a member of staff.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the governing body before it takes the final decision to convert to academy status. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The governing body will not vote to proceed with academy conversion unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school, taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

What is an academy?

An academy is a state-funded school that is independent of local authority control. Academies receive their funding directly from central government rather than through the local authority. We are proposing to become an academy as part of Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust. This means that we will be part of an academy group comprising Ursuline High School, St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Regina Coeli Catholic Primary School, St Elphege's Federation of Catholic Primary Schools, St Cecilia's Catholic Primary School, and St Aidan's Catholic Primary School.

What are the benefits of being an academy?

- The governing body believes that becoming an academy and joining Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust could bring a number of benefits for the school: Academies are

independent of local authority control — this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves.

- Academies receive their funding direct from central government — this means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services.
- Academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught — this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider appropriate for their pupils.
- Academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff — academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and so can provide staff with better pay and conditions than previously.
- Academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects — academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries.

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?

Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs and, in any event, Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust already deals with these matters for several schools it currently supports.

Once the school has converted, there is currently no route to revert to being a maintained school under local authority control — academy conversion is a permanent change.

If the school were underperforming in the future, the Secretary of State may have the power to force the school (as an academy) to transfer to a different academy trust. However, in those circumstances, it is likely that the Secretary of State would have the power to intervene, even if the school remained a local authority-maintained school.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As a voluntary aided school, Sacred Heart already deals with its own admission arrangements. As an academy, Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust will deal with admission arrangements and will also still be bound by the national School Admissions Code and School Admission Appeals Code.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. If the academy wanted to change its admission arrangements, consultation would be required.

What will this mean for staff?

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the school will automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay and conditions. Although the academy will have more freedom to amend those pay and conditions in the future, the governing body does not intend to take such a step in the foreseeable future and, in any event, any change to pay and conditions would need to be consulted upon with staff representatives.

Will Sacred Heart change?

We do not intend to change Sacred Heart, except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For pupils, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day-to-day school lives.

Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the school day. However, it is not intended to take any such steps at this stage, and we would engage with parents/carers, staff and pupils if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

How can I find out more?

A meeting for staff will be held on Wednesday 15th April at 3.35pm. We would encourage you to attend if you have any questions or simply want to learn more.

There is also more information about academies on the DfE website:

<https://www.gov.uk/education/setting-up-or-changing-the-status-of-a-school>

If you can't find the answer to your question here or on the DfE website and cannot attend the meeting on 15th April, please email Mrs Norville on head@sacredheart.merton.sch.uk who will try to assist.

In addition, you can find the governance arrangements for Sancta Familia at this link: [Trust Documents | Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust](#)

How can I submit my comments or representations on the proposed conversion?

To respond to this consultation on whether the conversion of the school to academy status should take place:

Representations can be made in writing to:

Sarah Norville
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
Burlington Road
New Malden
KT3 4ND
or by email to: head@sacredheart.merton.sch.uk

The closing date for representations to be made is Friday 17th April. All feedback received will be considered by the governing body before a final decision is made.