



Proposed Academy Conversion of St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery

Consultation Report for the Governing Body

June 2025

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1. Introduction

In September 2017, the Diocese of Westminster published its strategy for Catholic Academy Trusts (CATs) <<https://education.rcdow.org.uk/academies-homepage-new/>>.

The aim of the Diocese's CAT Strategy is to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education. 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 and Head of School of St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery have been considering the benefits of converting to an Academy for some time and have thoroughly researched the implications and benefits of converting for the School, including commencing collaborative working with the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust (ASCAT) in the Diocese of Westminster. The Governors of St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery the time is now right to convert to an Academy as part of the ASCAT.

A first step to taking this further was to complete the Diocese's Due Diligence process, including independent Finance and Standards reports. The Diocese Project Board subsequently confirmed that the school had met the requirements and issued the Diocese Letter of Consent to convert allowing the school to submit their application to convert and join the ASCAT in December 2024. According to the Academy Conversion Checklist published by the Department of Education, consultations with stakeholders are to be arranged after submission of the application.

In parallel to this, the Governors and Headteacher of the School passed a resolution to submit a conversion application to the Regional Directors (RD) Headteachers Board (HTB) to apply to become an Academy within the ASCAT in December 2024. The School subsequently received its Academy Order from the Regional Director in January 2025.

The school embarked on the conversion process including a consultation exercise with the school's stakeholders between 28 April and 23 May 2025.

This school therefore sets out results of the consultation exercise commissioned by the Governors to listen to the views of stakeholders.

The Governing Body considered the findings of this report at its meeting on 2 July 2025.

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 join the ASCAT.

The consultation period opened on 28 April 2025 and ended on 23 May 2025.

3. Methodology

The Governors of St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery, in consultation with the ASCAT, developed a consultation plan and FAQs leaflet, which identified all the school's stakeholders to be contacted at the start of the exercise and provided them with background information about the Diocese CAT Strategy and the ASCAT to inform the debate.

The Head of School wrote to all parents and staff on 28 April 2025 to start the consultation exercise, invite them to attend consultation meetings and direct them to accessing the consultation leaflet on the School's website.

Staff and parents were invited to attend consultation meetings to find out more about the proposed conversion to an Academy and the ASCAT.

Emails were also sent to both officer and elected representatives of Hertfordshire County Council and St Albans City and District Council, as well as the local MP, neighbouring Secondary, Primary and Nursery Schools and other partners.

The consultation materials also contained a response form which stakeholders were invited to complete and submit 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 submit questions, and to attend the appropriate consultation meetings scheduled below:

- Staff – 15 May at 4pm; and
- Parents – 15 May at 6pm.

The meetings were attended by the Chair of Governors, Executive Head, Head of School, Catholic Executive Officer of the ASCAT and the Diocese's Academy Support Officer.

The staff meeting was attended by 23 members of staff including the Senior Leadership Team and the staff governor, ; the Parents meetings were attended by 3 parents including a parent governor.

The Chair of Governors and Head of School gave a presentation covering issues such as the Diocese's vision for the CAT programme and the issues relating to joining the ASCAT, why this is being considered now, the conversion process and next steps.

The full presentation is enclosed as **Appendix B** to this report.

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

The questions asked and answers provided at the above meetings is included as **Appendix C** to this report.

5. Completed Questionnaires

24 completed questionnaires were returned:

- 7 stakeholders (29.2%) 'Strongly agreed' with the proposal
- 10 stakeholders (41.7%) 'Agreed' with the proposal
- 1 stakeholder (4.2%) 'Disagreed' with the proposal
- 3 stakeholders (12.5%) 'Strongly Disagreed' with the proposal
- 3 stakeholders (12.5%) were undecided about the proposal

6. Findings from the Consultation Questionnaires

Respondents were asked to consider the proposal that St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery should convert to an Academy and join the ASCAT.

Respondents who supported the proposal, offered the following comments:

- Belief that academisation may lead to better resourcing, structure, and support.
- Confidence in ASCAT's Catholic identity, shared values, and continuity in faith-based education.
- Possibility of increased autonomy and improved efficiency
- Flexibility of funding
- Protection of the school's Catholic status and closer links to other local Catholic schools
- Anticipation of improved staff development and greater collaboration across schools.

Respondents who had concerns regarding the proposal, offered the following comments:

- Risk of losing the school's unique identity, culture, and name.
- Lack of understanding/clarity around the impact on leadership, curriculum and finances.
- Uncertainty about staff conditions and job security.
- Questions around governance, transparency, and the evidence base for proposed benefits given the school's existing strengths.
- Possibility of more control over school's decision-making processes and less efficiency due to bureaucracy of academy systems
- Impact of weaker schools within the Trust and lack of support from the Local Authority, particularly in relation to SEND.
- Lack of choice as the decision to academise has already been decided without the voice of the school community.

7. Reflections on the Consultation

The staff, parents' and local authority response to the consultation was generally positive and no significant concerns were identified which had not been anticipated by Governors, the ASCAT and the Diocese.

The majority of respondents (70.9%) 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' with the proposal.

The lack of significant opposition to the proposal indicates that the St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery community has been well informed on the proposed changes and benefits of joining the ASCAT.

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 Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary & Nursery to an academy and to join the ASCAT.

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 ask questions.

Although the majority of respondents (17) were in favour of the proposal, with only 4 against, the number of returned response forms was less desirable than expected. The school and Trust should continue to communicate with staff and parents about this to ensure that the community remains updated and engaged.

However, the range of questions asked at the parents and staff meetings (and listed in **Appendix C**) was wide ranging, reassuring and positive. The questions and answers illustrate the willingness of attendees to engage with the Head of School, Governors and the ASCAT on this matter.

The school and Trust should continue to communicate with staff and parents about this to ensure that the community remains updated and engaged.

9. Acknowledgements

The Governors and Head of School of St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery 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. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Governors of St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Primary School & Nursery:

- (i) Approve 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) Publish this report on the school's website as a record of the consultation and feedback to the participants and wider stakeholders.
- (iv) Continue to share updates and engage with staff and parents on this matter; and
- (v) Proceed to the next stage of the conversion process not having identified any barriers to the schools' conversion and proposal to join the ASCAT.

***** End of Report *****