



## **Rt Rev Ralph Heskett CSsR**

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### **STATEMENT BY BISHOP RALPH HESKETT TO HEADTEACHERS AND CHAIRS OF GOVERNORS**

#### **ACADEMISATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MULTI ACADEMY TRUSTS IN THE DIOCESE OF HALLAM**

January 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Our Catholic schools are a vital part of the Diocese of Hallam's mission. Our schools are crucial to the life of the Diocese in announcing the Gospel to the world and are able to do this in ways that parishes alone cannot. They are places where everyone is valued as a child of God, where every individual is enabled to mature towards their full growth in Christ and achieve their full potential. They teach a holistic understanding of the human person and society in which all are included so that humanity can flourish. Our schools enable each pupil to develop their God-given gifts in order to engage in building a better society which is characterised by justice, truth and love.

Our schools are central to fulfilling our mission, and to our parish communities. They actively promote social cohesion, engendering a sense of belonging for all. They are places where every child matters and where safety, well-being, enjoyment, tolerance, respect and dignity are reflected in all aspects of school life. Pupils are cherished for who they are, as much as for what they achieve, and all achievement is recognised and celebrated.

It is vitally important therefore that the Catholic education system in the Diocese of Hallam is secured, protected and developed further for the benefit of future generations of children and young people, that our schools continue to flourish and that every child who attends one of our schools receives the best possible Catholic education. However, the present situation within the Diocese with a number of stand-alone academies and one third of schools still to academise does not provide the best means of achieving our aims. We also need to ensure that we have the capacity and resources within our own structures to provide support to any of our schools that encounter significant challenges.

After a great deal of work, and examination by the Diocesan Trustees, I have come to believe that the long term future of our schools and Catholic education in the Diocese is best served by all diocesan schools becoming equal partners in a Catholic multi-academy trust (MAT). It is my intention, therefore, that as outlined last year we now move to establish two new multi-

academy trusts within the Diocese with all Diocesan schools and academies, including all remaining voluntary aided schools, becoming part of one of them.

A Catholic Multi-Academy Trust model throughout the Diocese will mean that no individual school will be left isolated or vulnerable in this rapidly changing educational environment. The new Trusts will enable our schools to work even more closely together in a spirit of mutual support, cooperation and respect. There will be greater opportunities for career progression and the development of future leaders for our Catholic schools. As financial austerity becomes more of a reality for many schools, these Trusts will be in a position to take advantage of economies of scale and to procure services on behalf of our schools enabling all to benefit from increased efficiencies.

The opportunities afforded by the new multi-academy trusts to benefit Catholic education in the Diocese are many but so are the challenges in establishing them and we will need your support to do so. I have listened to the views expressed by a number of you and have taken these on board. To this end, a MAT Development Group has been established which includes support from independent consultants with a track record of establishing large MATs within other Dioceses. This group is accountable to me and the Diocesan Trustees and is working together with the Diocesan Schools Department and in collaboration and with the support of the Department for Education which will be considering the timing and phasing for each MAT towards the end of March.

In the meantime you will have the opportunity to meet members of the MAT Development Group at school family cluster meetings which will take place over the next few weeks and members of that group will be making contact with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors before then to seek your support and to discuss the project in more detail.

This is good news for our children and young people and all those who serve in our Catholic schools and academies. This letter will be posted on the Schools page of our Diocesan website and I would ask that you bring this to the attention of your colleagues in school.

With my prayers and blessing to you all.

Yours in Christ the Redeemer,

+ *Ralph Heskett C.S.R.*

Bishop of Hallam