

# St. Francis Catholic Multi Academy Trust Newsletter

1<sup>st</sup> October 2021



## ASSISI

Assisi is where our Catholic MATs are rooted. There is a mysticism which makes the visitor want to return; an atmosphere of peace amid the hustle and bustle of the tourists, a sense of tranquillity which exudes from the pink stones that glow in the sunshine. Francis and Clare remain here - Francis in the crypt of the great three storied basilica and monastery which is an extension of the hill to the West; and Clare in the crypt of Santa Chiara on the other side of the town. Their presence abides.

On the plain below Assisi is the large but uninspiring basilica dedicated to Santa Maria degli Angeli. It is an earthen vessel that contains a treasure – the tiny chapel, the Portiuncula, (=‘little potion’) a gift from the Benedictines to the new order. It was here in 1986 that Pope St John Paul II invited religious leaders of many traditions to meet to pray together for peace. A similar event took place with Pope Francis in 2016.

Assisi represents much that we seek to achieve in our schools, working together in our MATs. To be communities:

- of peace, where peace making and reconciliation are real; and where those of all faith traditions, who seek to share what we offer, are welcome;
- of renewal which look to the future with hope;
- where the love of God is experienced by those in the community and those who visit, communicating a sense that this is a holy place, a joyful place, a place which makes us want to take some of it with us when we leave, and to which we long to return.

The Board of St Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust met unofficially twice in August, to get to know one another face to face in St Bede’s Presbytery Rotherham before our first official meeting post-incorporation which took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> September by zoom. Incorporation happened on 27<sup>th</sup> August. Helen McLaughlin was confirmed as Chair of the Board and Bill Hayes as Vice-Chair. The other directors are Christiaan Hunt, Sean McCafferty, Margaret Helliwell and Fr John Ryan.

On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October, the Feast of our Patron, St Francis of Assisi, Bishop Ralph will preside at Mass at St Bernard’s with the Directors, the Chairs of Governors and the Headteachers of the MAT. This will be a social occasion, the first opportunity for such a meeting, and the first of many occasions for coming together and sharing our faith and our hopes as we build our relationships to work for the success of this project.

We are also planning to have a visioning morning on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November at Mount St. Mary’s Spinkill for heads and chairs when we can take time to get to know each other, learn about our schools and develop our collective vision for our MAT. More details will follow later.

As you are aware, it was not possible to appoint a CEO before the Summer. It is hoped that an interim appointment can be made soon. Already, a CFO for St. Francis has been appointed who will start work in January 2022. Chris

Manze who is the CEO of HSPAT has now started to work across both MATs to establish the core infrastructure and systems so that the interim CEO, when appointed, will move into a working operation. Chris has transformed HSPAT. His expertise will be essential to enable a smooth transition into the new order.

We know that this may be an unsettling time for staff and that the creation of St Francis raises many questions. We would like to emphasise the overarching desire that we have as a group of Directors that St Francis be a project that builds on the strengths across our family of schools; that respects and supports the individuality of our schools; builds a lean structure that empowers schools to work together to share excellent practice, ways of working and innovation; provides mutual solidarity; and helps all children across our Diocese access an excellent, Catholic, education. All staff and governors are important in making this a success. St Francis Catholic MAT does not reduce the need to have excellent leaders, teachers, managers, support staff and governors across each and every school – all of these roles are as important tomorrow as they are today. A key sign of success for St Francis will be if we retain more talent within our family of schools and that people have more time and resources to provide excellent education and life chances for all our children.

#### Dates of Board Meetings until March 2022

Weds 13th October 2021  
Tues 16th November 2021  
Tues 14th December 2021  
Tuesday 18th January 2022  
Tuesday 15th February 2022  
Tuesday 15th March 2022

#### Dates of other events

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October  
Mass for heads and chairs St. Bernard's Catholic High School Rotherham 5.15 pm

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November  
Visioning morning for heads and chairs Mount St. Mary's Spinkhill 9.00 am for 9.30 am start -12 pm

#### A PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

The Cantic of the Sun  
[aka The Cantic of the Creatures]

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,  
all praise is yours, all glory, honour and blessings.  
To you alone, Most High, do they belong;  
no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.

We praise you, Lord, for all your creatures,  
especially for Brother Sun,  
who is the day through whom you give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,  
of you Most High, he bears your likeness.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,  
in the heavens you have made them bright, precious  
and fair.

We praise you, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,  
fair and stormy, all weather's moods,  
by which you cherish all that you have made.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Water,  
so useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise you, Lord, for Brother Fire,  
through whom you light the night.  
He is beautiful, playful, robust, and strong.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Earth,  
who sustains us  
with her fruits, coloured flowers, and herbs.

We praise and bless you, Lord, and give you thanks,  
and serve you in all humility.