

St Clare Catholic MAT News Bulletin – September 2021

It has been an exciting month for the Board of St Clare's... St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Trust was officially incorporated on the 27th August, a big mile stone for everyone involved in the Catholic MAT project. We have gone from a Board in waiting to a team that can move forwards and start to develop the St Clare vision and work with Heads, Governors and the Diocese to co-create the initial structures and ways of working. We appreciate that there are many questions remaining about how we go forwards together and we will be able to start to tackle these directly now.

We held our first St Clare Board meeting on the 15th September – we are now legally up and running. Kevin Smith was confirmed as Chair, Matthew Davis as Vice Chair. We agreed the various legal and accounting protocols to allow us to start operating as a Multi Academy Trust. The Directors agreed arrangements for undertaking further training covering all areas of responsibility and to learn from existing Catholic MATs. You will soon be able to access minutes and papers from Board meetings through the Diocese website (and later on the St Clare website).

When we met as Directors we discussed the shared desire to get to know each school that will be joining the St Clare family and to engage as much as possible over the autumn with Heads, Governors and staff across all schools. It is important that St Clare reflects all our wonderful schools and that the vision reflects all. We would very much like to visit schools to meet people in person (where this is possible) and to start to hold St Clare meetings in different locations to help build the conversations and shared understanding. If you would be happy to host a St Clare Board meeting, please do get in touch.

Kev Smith met with Heads for the first time last week and agreed an approach to involving all our Head's in the work of strategy development. ***The next Head Teacher's forum will be on Wednesday 20th October 4.30-6.30pm at St Pius X Catholic High School.***

We hope to meet ***Chairs of Governors at an online event on the 7th October*** to talk about how best to engage to develop the St Clare Local Academy Committees and other structures (if you have not received the email invitation, please let us know). We want to build relationships between schools and families of schools as well as between the Board and schools. Developing trust and understanding will be fundamental to the success of St Clare and a first step will be for us all to get to know each other's strengths, where we have specific needs and understand how we can work together on a personal level. We will be organising more events with Heads and Chairs of Governors in the coming weeks to help talk through key issues, challenges and opportunities as we embark on this change together.

At the Board meeting we also reflected on the recruitment of the CEO and CFO. It is disappointing that we were unable to appoint a permanent CEO before the summer, but we agreed that this provides an opportunity to do things differently and to build on the talent and knowledge that we

have within the Diocese to help establish St Clare. You will have seen the advert for an interim CEO and we would very much encourage school leaders to consider whether they have the talents and enthusiasm to help create the vision and structure to deliver positive impact across the St Clare family. We are committed to ensuring that the interim CEO is supported and that this is a position that helps the individual (and by extension, their own School) to develop their leadership capabilities, as well as benefiting all of St Clare in the short and long-term.

While we are recruiting for the interim CEO post, we have been moving at pace to bring in other leadership and capability to move St Clare's forwards. We have now completed the CFO recruitment process. We are delighted at the strong field of candidates that the post attracted and we have been able to secure a highly experienced and capable CFO to help develop St Clare – we will share more details soon. Chris Manze has also agreed to provide his expertise to help establish the core infrastructure and systems across the Diocese to enable St Clare to start operating quickly (e.g., email systems, financial and statutory reporting) – Chris has demonstrated how this can be done to great effect at HSPAT and we are grateful for his support. This will help our interim CEO to focus on developing the St Clare vision, Catholic ethos and to engage with schools. Chris has started working with schools to gather the information required by the Diocese to start to bring our families of schools together successfully within our Catholic MATs. Chris will be trying to do this in ways that minimise the time demands on individual schools.

We know that this may be an unsettling time for staff and that the creation of St Clare raises many questions. We would like to emphasise the overarching desire that we have as a group of Directors that St Clare 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 Clare 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 Clare will be if we retain more talent within our family of schools and that people have more time and resource to provide excellent education and life chances for all our children.

St Clare Board of Directors

1st October 2021