

St Clare Directors' Update – December 2021

This update is a joy to write, sharing good news and positive outcomes as we come to the end of the autumn term and head towards the feast of Christmas.

The highlight is the news that both the St Francis and St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Trusts have been approved by the Advisory Board. We are now finally in a position to make St Clare's Trust a living, breathing, family of schools and put abstract aspirations into tangible action to help us all work together for the benefit of the young people of Hallam. Thank you for your support during this process, we recognise that there have been bumps and difficulties along the way. We will now build and shape St Clare's Trust together.

The approval of St Clare's Trust means that we have now been able to submit our bid to the Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF) to the Regional Schools Commissioner. We have requested funds to cover initial set-up costs, system and infrastructure investments to benefit the St Clare Trust as a whole. This reduces costs to schools in St Clare's Trust and helps us get effective systems in place from the outset. We will also be applying for grants from additional funding sources in the coming months.

We had an excellent turn-out for our December Chairs' Forum. Thank you to everyone who attended. We had 22 schools represented, almost all of the St Clare's family. It was fantastic to have everyone come together and for so many people to share their views. We agreed that we would share provisional dates for Chairs' Forums for the remainder of the academic year. The intention is to run the majority of these online to help as many people as possible to attend. We would like to come together in person though at least once more during the year - please get in touch if you would like your school to host the forum.

The provisional Chairs' Forum dates for 2022 are: **Wednesday 19th January, Wednesday 9th February, Wednesday 16th March, Wednesday 11th May, Wednesday 15th June and Wednesday 13th July**. We have tried to arrange these dates around the key holidays across St Clare schools, but please do let us know if you spot any obvious clashes that would impact attendance. We would like future Forums to be more interactive and collectively owned. Please do flag any issues for discussion ahead of the meeting and we can build these in. We will also make use of break-outs to have more focussed small group discussions and help people to get to know one another better.

While we weren't able to send the scheme of delegation ahead of the Chairs' Forum, as Directors we have been really pleased to read the early version of this. It sets out in black and white the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and respect for the individual characters of each school. We are reassured by the document and pleased that it reflects the vision that we share for a lean and localised structure. As promised, we will share the scheme of delegation as soon as the amended copy comes back to us – we will email this out to Heads and Chairs. As requested, we will prepare a video or narrated PowerPoint to walk you

through the key points and highlight areas that will need our collective attention to develop the practical detail for. It will be the New Year before we put the video/PowerPoint together, so this will most likely follow after the scheme of delegation document. We will also collate any questions that you have via email and then spend the first half of our next Chairs' Forum tackling these together.

We asked Chairs to think about opportunities and quick wins as we come together as a family of schools – we would ask Heads to also reflect on this. In particular:

- What opportunities and ways are there to collaborate early on – what could we do together that we couldn't individually?
- Are there quick wins and cost savings that we can make together (e.g., subscriptions, resources, software)?
- Are there things that cause you or your schools workload/headaches that we can try to tackle together?

As we move beyond the application and form filling stage, let's think about the practical, positive things that St Clare can help us to realise together. Please do send any ideas and thoughts on to us. We are collating these and will review action to address them at each board meeting.

Please could we ask you to share these Updates widely as the Diocesan MAT newsletters ended in September and all St Clare communication now come directly from the St Clare's Trust Board and CEO.

On the 1st January Steve Davies and Adnan Bashir formally take up their full-time roles as interim-CEO and permanent CFO respectively. This will be the next big milestone. While Steve and Adnan have generously committed much time to St Clare's already, January will see the pace step-up and the detail of how we will start to work together really start to take shape. These will be a busy few months, but we should see many of the frustrations that we have all experienced regarding the ins and outs of how the Catholic MAT will work disappear – we will now be able to develop the answers together and establish our ways of working.

This is an exciting time and an opportunity for us all to shape and strengthen Catholic education across the Hallam Diocese together. We are grateful to each of you for the support, time and patience that you, your colleagues and your Governors have committed to help the Bishop's vision of establishing the St Clare family of schools become a reality. Let's continue to work in partnership and with a spirit of openness and collegiality to make St Clare's a family that we are all proud to be a part of.

Wishing you all peace, joy and rest this Christmas.

St Clare Board of Directors
17th December 2021