

## St Clare Directors' Update – October 2021

We are delighted to report that much has happened since last month's update. As a board we were very keen to engage directly with the St Clare family of schools, to build knowledge and to gain feedback – we have begun to put this into practice.

We held our first Chairs Forum on the 7th October via Zoom with the Chairs of Governors of the St Clare Schools and Academies. More than half the schools in the Dearne Valley and the Sheffield families were represented. We were very grateful to everyone who attended for sharing their views, providing feedback on how best to engage going forwards, highlighting areas to focus on with regards staff wellbeing, and being candid regarding challenges and opportunities. Chairs were keen to meet in person next time to help establish relationships and to have an early opportunity to meet the successful St Clare CEO and CFO. There was also a strong desire to receive regular updates and to have key information shared in a timely way. We have taken the feedback and suggestions onboard, going forwards we plan:

- To have monthly meetings with Chairs as we move towards establishing the St Clare Catholic MAT – these will be primarily online meetings to enable as many people as possible to participate.
- To share a regular Directors' Update (i.e., this bulletin).
- To ensure that board minutes are shared via the Diocesan website.
- To arrange an introductory event for Chairs and Head Teachers with the new CFO and interim CEO once they are in post.

We have also arranged for **the next Chairs Forum to be held in person at All Saints Catholic High School in Sheffield at 6-8pm on 10<sup>th</sup> November**. If you have not received an invitation please contact Kev Smith. Thank you to All Saints for agreeing to host the meeting, we hope to move around the St Clare family of schools for future in-person meetings. We are very keen to engage as widely as possible, if you would like Directors to attend Governors meetings to discuss the development of the St Clare Catholic MAT and to respond directly to questions, please do let us know.

We held the second St Clare Head Teachers forum on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October at St Pius X Catholic High School. Thank you to St Pius for accommodating us all for this event. The forum provided an opportunity for the Head Teachers of the different families of schools to get to know one another better and to continue to develop the relationships that will be so important to the future of the St Clare Catholic MAT. We will organise the next Head Teachers forum for a date in November (details to follow) to help continue the conversations.

Since the last bulletin we are delighted to announce that our top choice for CFO has accepted the job offer and should take up the permanent CFO post in the new calendar year. This is a significant appointment for St Clare and will provide important strategic support to the interim CEO and board in the coming months. The final formal HR checks are

still in progress, but we should be able to share a biography for the successful candidate shortly.

In our last bulletin we reported on the public events that we ran to encourage applications for the interim-CEO post. Following these, we are pleased to say that we received a number of very credible applications from within and beyond the Diocese and had a good field of candidates to take forwards to interview. The selection process completed on the 20<sup>th</sup> October and we hope to share information about the outcome of this soon.

As a Board we committed to developing our knowledge and skills relating to Multi-Academy Trust governance and learning from the experience of other Dioceses. In October Directors attended training organised by Nottingham Catholic MATs to review changes to the Academy Trust Handbook. We are grateful to Nottingham Catholic MATs for also inviting us to join training on Academy Finance in November. We will be reviewing the Board's skills audit and organising targeted training in light of this. To develop further understanding of practices across the St Clare family of schools we have had informal briefings over the past month from Bob Sawyer (talking through 11-18 provision) and Alan Dewhurst (reporting on Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship).

We held our second St Clare Board meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> October – we are grateful to Dave Higgins from Learn Sheffield who is now acting as clerk for the Board. We spent time reflecting on themes emerging from the Head Teachers Forum and Chairs Forum, discussing the progress towards recruitment for CFO and interim CEO posts, received an update from Philip Patterson on behalf of the Schools Department, and considered the skills development and composition of the Board. As discussed in the Chairs Forum, the draft scheme of delegation is still being finalised by Trustees, but we hope to have this as a paper to discuss at our next board meeting.

We are grateful to everyone who has given up their time to attend meetings or to send feedback and suggestions to help inform the development of St Clare. Please do continue to question, put forward ideas, challenge and encourage. Most importantly, please share your aspirations – what could we do collectively that would add value to your school? To help you to do things that aren't possible or viable individually? To work together in new ways across our schools and Parishes? Let's tackle challenges head on, but let's also be ambitious and look for ways for St Clare to deliver positives for all from the outset. Let us all pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance, wisdom and courage as we build the St Clare family together.

**St Clare Board of Directors**  
**21st October 2021**