

MAC Expansion

Update November 2020

Background

As part of The Diocesan Academy Strategy, the Trustees of the Archdiocese have requested that all schools under the Diocesan Trust Deed work towards becoming an Academy. This means the Archdiocese sees the long-term future of its schools as forming and being part of a Multi-Academy Company with other Catholic schools. The Pope Francis Multi Academy Company (PFMAC) has been designated as the MAC for all Oxfordshire schools.

Initial PFMAC expansion

The first step in the enlargement of the PFMAC has been to take in St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Carterton and St John's Catholic Primary School in Banbury; this process was completed for September 2020 and acted as a template for the process of bringing in further schools.

De-amalgamation of St Gregory the Great Primary and Secondary

The successful de-amalgamation of St Gregory the Great occurred on 1 November and the migration of the resulting primary school into the Anglican ODST is now complete. The primary school has been named St Frideswide CE Primary.

St Gregory the Great's site has had some development work in order to physically separate the two schools and to create a new entrance and lobby for the SGTG Secondary. No decision has yet been taken as to whether the Secondary will be renamed.

DBMAC merger

The next step is to merge the Dominic Barberi Multi Academy Company (DBMAC) in Oxford which is planned to occur on 1 January 2021. The combined MAC will comprise 11 schools (2 secondaries, 9 primaries), a total staffing of nearly 400, around 4,000 pupils and a combined expenditure of about £14 million.

A Working Group consisting of Directors and Executive Team Members has been set-up to monitor the progress of the planned merger and to communicate with all stakeholders including DfE, BDES, MAC Boards, Principals and LACs.

TUPE meetings with the Unions and the DBMAC staff have now been completed in a series of Zoom meetings. There are no formal measures associated with the transfer of DBMAC employees to PFMAC, because both MACs use the same terms and conditions, policies, pay dates, etc. No significant issues are anticipated and, to-date, none have been raised.

All schools are being visited by Liza Campbell and Paul Quinn as part of the due diligence process. The merger will involve the consolidation of all bank accounts and accounting systems across both MACs and this work is currently underway.

MAC structure

As part of the MAC merger process, new Executive, Governance, Operations, Finance and Administration structures are to be put in place. In practice, many of these roles already exist within the existing MACs and schools so they are not 'new' but are being brought into a central team and funded by a top-slice of General Annual Grant (GAG) income.

There is a requirement from BDES for all MACs in the Diocese to include a Chief Executive position, titled the Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL). Following a robust recruitment process, Mr Fraser Long has been appointed from a pool of strong candidates. Fraser will be leaving his position as Principal of Blessed George Napier Catholic School in Banbury to take up his new role on 1 December 2020.

Top-slice

This central team and other common central expenditure will be funded by a 'top-slice' of the income from schools in the MAC. In fairness to schools that are in areas of high deprivation, rather than including all funding in the top-slice, it has been agreed by the Directors the calculation for everyone will be based purely on the Age Weighted Pupil Funding (AWPU) and the Lump Sum element, at a rate of 6% of this total figure.

Operational considerations

There are a number of operational matters that are still under consideration and for which the Working Party would welcome comments and suggestions, including email addresses, signage and logo. There is much to be decided and everyone is keen to get the balance between 'school level local' and 'top-down MAC-wide' decision making correct.