

Head Teachers' Bulletin - St Clare's CMAT Development – 2nd May

Upcoming Events

Head's Forum - Wed 11th May 1.30 – 3.00pm

Actions from this Bulletin

Heads and chairs of schools who haven't yet consulted, please let me know your thoughts and/or questions about next steps, e.g.

- If/when you might ideally like to begin consultation
- When you might ideally be seeking to join St Clare subject to consultation
- How you might want to work with St Clare from September (if we are approved by Advisory Board).

New Updates (since last bulletin)

Advisory Board and Consultation updates

Many thanks to all colleagues who supported in getting resolutions, applications and other updates to information ready for the Advisory Board. We got everything in by the deadline. We haven't had any feedback at this point. The advisory board is on 18th May, at which point we will find out if we have been considered and approved to open in September.

In the meantime, we will be in touch with plans about the things that we need to do to be ready for opening. That will include plans to work with heads, chairs of governors and clerks on how governance will work practically. It will also include plans for Adnan to work with Business Managers on budgeting and other training and actions needed before September. We are very mindful of how much there is to do in school so will work with you to keep a balance between ensuring that everyone feels confident and reassured about next year, without being overloaded.

Thanks too for attending briefings. I have noted below a summary of the questions that were asked in the second briefing along with the answers as these may be relevant and helpful to schools who have not yet consulted on joining St Clare but intend to do so.

Question; What order will consultation happen in?

The first step will be consultation between the governing body and parents, staff and other key members of the school communities that governors wish to hear from. The purpose of the consultation is to allow the governing body to outline why they are considering joining St Clare and then to hear the views and questions of their community.

These views and questions, along with the position of the Diocese, should inform a governors' discussion and decision on whether or not to resolve to join St Clare's CMAT. Such a resolution, if made, can be made to join at the earliest practical point.

Once we have resolutions from schools and support from the Diocese and the RSC, we can then submit an application to the RSC for consideration by an advisory board.

Should we be approved at the advisory board, then the schools would start a TUPE process to manage the transfer of employment of staff. This would happen alongside the necessary legal work to transfer contracts, land, etc. When all this has been completed, governors would be asked to sign the funding and transfer/conversion agreements to finalise the process.

Who will lead a consultation?

The initial consultation and TUPE consultation must be school led, though St Clare's CMAT and the Diocese are happy to support where asked with things such as template letters, online forms to gather responses and of course attendance at meetings to help answer questions and provide information.

How long does the process take from start to finish?

The DfE offers a guide of 5 months from the point of application to the advisory board to joining a MAT. This is to allow a comfortable amount of time for advisory board consideration, TUPE and other legal work, should the advisory board give approval. Given that the application requires a resolution which has been informed by wider consultation by the governing body, it is reasonable to allow 6 months from the start of consultation to a start date. This is why the Diocese indicated April 2023 as a suggested start date for a second group of schools as this is a sensible point for any VA school transferring and it is relatively comfortable even if consultation were to start in September.

It should also be noted that a good amount of the background legal work needed between advisory board approval and joining the CMAT has already been done as part of the original project, so this does allow for quicker timescales if needed and is what allows us to aim for a September start with those schools who have already resolved.

Could schools join the CMAT before April 2023?

As noted above, it is possible, though we would have to have the support of the Diocese and the RSC to seek submission to an advisory board even if schools had already consulted and resolved. The timeline is therefore not fully under our control.

I should also highlight that St Clare's CMAT also has to carry out due diligence work prior to an advisory board application in order to make sure that the CMAT has the appropriate capacity and that there are no issues which could have a negative impact on those schools already in the CMAT. Again, much work has already been done on this, but it would involve refreshing information from each school about financial position and school improvement capacity and priorities.

Can schools work with the CMAT even if not joining in September?

Yes. Part of our remit from the Diocese is to support collaborative working across families of schools. In addition, where schools are looking to join the CMAT, it makes sense to work closely together so that the transition is as smooth as possible. We recognise that this is particularly important for those schools disappointed not to be able to join in September.

We will of course need to be mindful that those schools who have joined first, to ensure that the cost of working collaboratively is fairly shared as well as benefits. This could be done through a traded service model, for example, where schools looking to join the CMAT may join some collective contracts or services early, paying a contribution towards them.

Notices:

Based on some conversations with a few head teachers, I intend to add a regular 'notices' section to the bulletin, where you can share any requests or information that you want with other St Clare schools. I will also be happy to share items with Heidi for inclusion in the St Francis bulletin so that they reach the whole Diocese. Please send anything that you would like to be included either to me or to Anita Bray.

TA Vacancies at St Alban's St Alban's are recruiting TAs. If you know of anyone who may be interested, please let Steve know or get in touch directly with Lindsey.

Charitable Funding

Thanks to St Francis for sharing with us some new grant funded opportunities available.

The Jerusalem Trust provide small grants connected to the teaching of RE. They are Secondary focused, but do work with Primary schools too: <https://www.regrants.org.uk/>

The Albert Gubay Trust is working with the Diocese via Caritas. They are in negotiation for a possible grant of £60k to alleviate food poverty. In essence small grants can be made to families in distress (circa £100.00 last year), for food or in some cases food vouchers or parcels were preferred.

Hallam SVP is having a drive, at some point this year, on school uniform poverty. [About Us | St Vincent de Paul Society \(svp.org.uk\)](#) They may have funds available to help parents. We will keep you posted if we hear anything additional.

Items copied from previous weeks' bulletins for reference

Advisory board and timeline updates

You will have received an update from the Diocese regarding the CMAT project.

The following is a summary of the key points that I shared in the briefing last week that will be repeated this week. It just goes into a little more detail about the implications of the developments over Easter for St Clare schools.

- The RSC have agreed to consider St Clare's and St Francis separately i.e. they will now consider approving one without the other. They have made it clear, however, that they still wish to see a two MAT solution in the Diocese.
- I understand this position in the context of the White Paper. The RSC are clearly keen to see capacity established in the Diocese which can ultimately accommodate all schools by 2030 and they believe a single MAT of 47 schools developed in that timescale is too large to be safe. MATs of around 7500 students are highlighted in the White Paper, which would be the size of St Clare and St Francis if all the schools joined.
- St Clare's CMAT has been given support of the RSC and the Diocese to try to get onto the May Advisory board. As resolutions are needed from the schools in order to be considered at an advisory board, this means we can only progress with those schools who have already engaged in consultation and indeed passed resolutions. The DfE do need to see updated resolutions from these schools, as a sign that their wish to join St Clare has not changed.
- Those schools who have not yet consulted or resolved to join St Clare will have the opportunity for consultation, starting with consideration of a sensible timeline for you within the parameters offered by the DfE and the Diocese. We recognise that some schools will be disappointed not to be able to move on with a view to a September start, while for others this will suit you better. We will want to hear all perspectives to share in our ongoing dialogue with the Diocese and the RSC.

Should St Clare get onto the May advisory board and be approved, it will allow us to concentrate with certainty on planning to open as a CMAT in September. Adnan and I will be liaising with those schools regarding a plan for preparation and work with you. That plan will involve a re-opening of TUPE to ensure that all staff have had as full an opportunity as possible to have their questions answered and to ensure that all perspectives are properly considered in our planning.

Alongside this work, the directors along with Adnan and I will continue to work with all schools who are keen to continue to engage with us.

Update on other CMAT work

- A great deal of time has been taken up with work on papers for the advisory board and indeed the related discussions with the DfE, the Diocese and with you. Thank you for your patience

and your understanding in responding to requests for updated information that has been needed as part of this process.

- Adnan has also been working on a paper outlining financial planning assumptions to inform budget setting which he will share soon. We will share this paper with all schools for you to use if it is useful. If we are successful at a May advisory board, this paper will be particularly important for the schools who would be joining in September as it will help to ensure that all our planning is based on a common set of assumptions about what the future will bring.
- Adnan, the directors and I have been really pleased to continue to be asked to visit and work with schools in various ways. We will only come if invited, but really appreciate those invitations, the opportunities to answer questions and gain an ever greater understanding of the priorities and strengths that each school offers to inform our collaborative work.
- Chairs forums continue to be well attended. Directors are planning a focus on the White Paper at a future meeting, with a view to have time to consider together what it means for our schools and our potential priorities as a CMAT.
- Our directors are also planning a focus on SEND at a future meeting, responding to the common issues you have highlighted and the Green Paper. Directors will reflect on messages heard from schools, in the context of the Green paper, to consider what new opportunities may be open to us through collaboration in a CMAT to support schools with some of the common challenges that we clearly all face. We will of course share these developing thoughts with you for your feedback.

Update on school improvement discussion paper feedback

Thank you to everyone who has managed to find time to respond to the School Improvement Discussion Paper. I have included below a link so that you can see the results to date and a further link so that you can add a response if you haven't done so already.

We had originally set 31st March as a deadline, but given the delay in dates for starting the CMAT it seems sensible to allow more time if others of you wish to add your feedback. I have attached for your convenience another copy of the discussion paper that the feedback form refers to.

Link to summary responses so far;

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/AnalysisPage.aspx?id=l4x9viv7-EyF9V4qku-M7WFKEAxkXAhCmh53zjxxvnBUMDU4Qk5WVzdHMFhMTkdQMkICQ1pZOEJSQi4u&AnalyzerToken=XjwM39rxFABxDpGwRAouQjdd5FMDZ6s0>

Link to add a response;

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=l4x9viv7-EyF9V4qku-M7WFKEAxkXAhCmh53zjxxvnBUMDU4Qk5WVzdHMFhMTkdQMkICQ1pZOEJSQi4u>