



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING OF FULL GOVERNING BODY OF
ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL HELD IN SCHOOL
ON TUESDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 6.00PM**

PRESENT: Canon J Batthula (Chair, Foundation); Mr C Hartley (Vice Chair, Foundation), Miss P Pickering (Head); Mr M Doherty (L.A.); Mrs K O'Flynn (Foundation); Mrs J Hurst (Foundation); Mr A McArdle (Foundation); Mrs E Morgan (Foundation); Mrs N Henderson-Andrade (Elected Parent); Mr P Haley (Elected Parent); Miss L Grant (Staff); Mr S Taylor (Foundation)

APOLOGIES: None

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L Hall (Clerk)

1. Chair opened meeting with a prayer.
2. Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Meeting was declared quorate.
3. **Register of Interests**
There were no conflicts of interest declared.
4. **Minutes of the Extra-Ordinary full GB meeting** of 29th June 2021 were declared to be a true record and were signed by Chair.

5. **Matters Arising**

PP wanted it minuted that since the last meeting staff have said they were disappointed that their questions were not referred to. LG said that staff have not received feedback or acknowledgement. ST explained that the report produced five themes as a result of staff feedback. He thought that the first step following the report would be to feedback to the Governing Body. He apologised if staff felt unacknowledged.

LG thanked the Committee for the work put into the report but explained that we need to know what the children would receive in return for £35,000 a year. She stated that there were too many unanswered questions to vote.

ST answered that the money pays for the provision of a resource to share with all the schools across the MAC. LG said that she doesn't think that happens. A lot of schools are struggling and we would be too stretched to share, the working day would be harder and we need to think before joining something that isn't working. She said she understood how good an academy could be, but that this academy is not good enough.

ST said that he felt strongly that decisions need to be made for the longer term challenge of falling pupil rolls, and that a MAC can offer different ways to communicate with the community. He said that [REDACTED] is passionate about the cost of transport.

CH added that [REDACTED] was aware of the issue of buses to BGN and that he had said they would do everything to address buses from Bicester ten years ago. Nothing has happened other than the cost going up. JH said that she has knowledge of the buses and that their cost may be a huge factor but also where families place Catholic education in their life scenario.

PP asked what academisation is going to do to improve the number of Catholic children coming to the school. JH asked what had been done to date and said that the most important thing was a vision for the future, to safeguard Catholic education today so that it will survive.

PP said that the Bishop's Conference will be looking at the future of Catholic education nationwide in 2022. In 2019 the decision to academise was given to each Diocese, and that a lot has been learnt in that time about academies.

JH said that she didn't think the Archbishop's advisors would propose something damaging to Catholic education.

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Signed: Date:

PP said that the policy to academise is to be reviewed at a national level by the bishops.
LG said that we are stretched here and that, on talking with colleagues in the academy, they are going without. She said that this is the children's money and we need to be sure on what it is spent.
ST replied that it is spent, in part, on Shared Services which should be seen as an insurance policy. If something goes wrong in the future, the MAC is duty bound to help.
AMc questioned the use of the 'top slice' for services as there was no evidence of how this is value for money. LG responded that at least three or four schools within the MAC are without head teachers. ST said that if that happens to us we will have more help, to which LG replied that it is more likely if we spend all this money. In addition, the people that we have used for years, for example ██████████, will have to be let go. She said that the only way to get £35,000 is to cut staffing, and that she can't see what's being given only what is being given away.

PP interjected that she and LG were very emotional this evening. That asking questions was an outpouring of their frustrations. She said that she had put an article on the Governors Drive which summarises what she had been trying to say. What is being talked about is hearsay, what may happen. There is a possibility that this academy will be fantastic but there is national evidence that academisation is not the answer, it is how those academies are led that determines their success or otherwise.
She said that we do not have confidence in what we are being asked to join, this is a big decision which could change the lives of so many people around St Mary's.
She pointed out that there has been a lack of communication from BGN, who have not questioned the falling intake from St Mary's.
PP said that she, LG and their staff want the best for every single child in this school and that she wouldn't be saying that she will walk away if it wasn't something that is not proven to be the best decision for St Mary's. She shared that we are on the brink of not having enough staff on a daily basis, that she asks them to do things above and beyond, which is something that no one working on a higher level will be able to understand or make decisions about.

ST said that he understood and that the Committee put time in to understand the pro's and con's, which were never obvious.
LG said that they had been hoping to be convinced but they weren't.
KOF said that the working party had not received any questions from staff.
LG added that the Committee hadn't missed anything out of their report, but the answers to their questions don't exist. She said that people working in the MAC don't know what they are getting for the money and that it doesn't have a proven track record.

PP summed up that she understands and appreciates that the Governor's support the school. She never had any reason to believe that the Governing Body didn't want the best for St Mary's, that she appreciated all that they do but that this was emotional and the staff also care.

EM said she understood staff frustration. The Committee worked hard to find an answer where there was nothing definitive and to take a neutral point of view.

NAH added that academisation can work, this is a new MAC so there are no answers but that you have to be part of a MAC to make it succeed.

LG said she can't be working more hours than she is doing already to pay those at the top. She could make a difference in a better way at another school. She hoped that it succeeds but didn't feel that we have the capacity to keep it afloat.

Chair said that this had been a good open chat, that the vote was not a foregone conclusion. He said that this was an emotional, difficult time and completely understood the feelings. This had been spoken about for ten years, but the meeting of 29th June was the only time it was discussed in detail. The Committee tried their best to research but they would not find answers to everything. He told Governors to trust their judgement and hope they make the best decision.

6. Ballot of all Governors on Proposed Academisation

A blind ballot counted and announced by Clerk as 7 against academisation and 5 in favour.

7. Planned Next Steps

Chair stated that he will write and inform the school's commission of the Governing Body's decision. He said that he will resign tonight as a Foundation Governor as it is the obligation of Foundation Governors to agree with the Diocese.
JH announced that she also resigned as it was in principle to follow Diocese.

The meeting closed with a prayer at 20:00.

LH 22/09/21