

Frequently Asked Questions

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Section 1: Financial Context

Why are restructures being proposed?

We have been carefully making savings where we can, in order to address funding challenges in the education sector. These are due to a number of factors, including partially funded pay rises, a drop in pupil numbers and rises in overall costs, for example in catering, cleaning and other suppliers. As a consequence, the Trust has been left with more staff than we can afford under current circumstances and we have had to take the necessary action to bring expenditure on staffing levels in line with the income we receive. As a result, restructures have been proposed at a number of schools and our Central Team.

How did the Trust's deficit arise?

The deficit has arisen from a widening gap between income and expenditure. Falling pupil numbers have reduced funding, while pay awards and inflationary pressures have increased costs at a faster rate than school budgets have grown. Staffing levels remained higher than the Trust could sustainably afford, which meant that expenditure continued to exceed income. These pressures are similar to those faced by many schools nationally, but the cumulative effect has resulted in a significant deficit that now requires a structured recovery plan.

What accountability has there been for the financial situation?

We have strengthened financial oversight by appointing a new Chief Financial Officer with experience in the education sector. Scrutiny at Board level has increased, and external financial support has been brought in to ensure that recovery plans are robust. A full independent audit has taken place, and the Trust's accounts are publicly available. The areas of concern identified by the Education and Skills Funding Agency are set out in the Notice to Improve, which is monitored regularly by the Board.

What other cost-saving measures are being considered?

- Seeking alternative Trust office accommodation to reduce costs.
- Renegotiating Trust-wide catering contracts to secure better value.
- Renegotiating Trust-wide cleaning contracts with the same aim.
- Exploring Diocese-wide procurement to increase buying power and savings.
- Reviewing all existing contracts to identify where Trust-wide agreements can improve efficiency.
- Assessing income streams and expanding lettings to generate additional revenue.
- Registering with grant-search platforms to access external funding opportunities.
- Investing small daily surpluses in short-term high-interest accounts.
- Exploring land-sale opportunities where the Diocese agrees.
- Protecting 52-week contract alignment for support staff.
- Working with each school individually to understand local issues and find solutions that remain within budget.



Section 2: Restructures

How was it decided which schools would restructure?

The Department for Education expects each school to work towards an individual surplus budget and to spend between 75 and 78% of its revenue income on staffing. Some schools are already within these benchmarks or can reach them naturally through the ending of temporary contracts. Others cannot reach these levels without making structural changes. For those schools, a restructure is proposed to ensure they can operate sustainably.

How were the restructure proposals developed?

Headteachers worked closely with Directors of Performance and Standards to analyse the needs of each school. This included reviewing current and projected pupil numbers, understanding each school's SEND profile, and assessing the level of support required for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans. Leaders also reviewed teaching approaches, supervision arrangements and operational processes to ensure that any proposed changes would not compromise educational quality or pupil wellbeing. We are also closely monitoring children who are currently undergoing assessment. If any of those pupils are granted EHCPs with funded hours, we will adjust our plans accordingly and increase staffing to reflect this. Ensuring that children's needs are met remains central to every decision we make.

What steps has the Trust taken centrally before proposing school-level changes?

Reductions have been made within the Central Team. In 2022-23 the Central Team consisted of more than 67 full-time equivalent staff, but this has since reduced to just under 48, representing a reduction of more than 22 posts and a saving of around £580k. Further reductions are planned, with the Central Team expected to reduce again by 2026-27. The Trust is also in the process of renegotiating contracts, exploring alternative office accommodation, aiming to increase lettings income, reviewing procurement processes and registering for grant-funding platforms.

What support is being offered to staff affected by the restructure?

Senior leaders in each school are working closely with their teams to provide guidance and reassurance. Directors of Performance and Standards and the HR team are supporting Headteachers throughout the process, and all staff have access to the Employee Assistance Programme, which offers confidential wellbeing support, counselling and practical advice.



Section 3: Pupils – SEND, Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Inclusion

How will support for children with SEND be protected?

Support for children with SEND will continue to be prioritised. Each school will retain a SENDCO, and teaching assistants will remain in place to provide targeted support where it is required. Staff will continue to receive training to ensure they understand how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. SEND provision is a responsibility shared by all staff, not only specialist teams. Children entitled to additional TA support will continue to receive it, and funding specifically allocated for pupils with identified needs will remain in place. Where new EHCPs are granted, staffing will be increased to ensure that children receive the support to which they are entitled.

How will safeguarding be maintained with fewer staff?

Safeguarding remains a central priority for every school. Each school will continue to have a Designated Safeguarding Lead and a deputy, and the Trust has strengthened capacity by appointing a Trust Safeguarding Lead and increasing the number of DSL-trained staff across schools. Staff receive regular safeguarding updates, weekly briefings where appropriate, and comprehensive annual training. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all staff and this shared culture of vigilance will continue to underpin daily practice.

How will pupil wellbeing and inclusion be protected during these changes?

Pupil wellbeing remains a core priority. Schools will continue to have experienced pastoral staff, and all staff are trained to support children's emotional and social needs. Leaders will monitor the impact of any changes closely to ensure that schools remain safe, caring and inclusive environments. We will continue to ensure that children feel safe, supported and able to thrive and this is a responsibility shared by all staff. This commitment will continue throughout the restructuring process.



Section 4: Catholic Life and Chaplaincy

How will spiritual and Catholic life be maintained with reduced chaplaincy provision?

We are incredibly grateful to our chaplains for the support they provide to our Headteachers in ensuring that our Catholic faith is at the very heart of all of our schools. However, we do not receive any extra funding for chaplains and this was an area highlighted to us by the Department for Education. We understand that this must be a difficult proposal to comprehend, as we are a Catholic organisation, however there are other Catholic Trusts which do not have any chaplaincy provision. In Trusts that are able to continue employing higher levels of chaplains, it may be that they are in a better financial position than our Trust and have higher levels of reserves. This proposal has been discussed fully with the Bishop of Nottingham and the Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service.

The Headteacher is the main faith leader in every school. While adjustments will need to be made given reductions in the overall amount of chaplaincy support in school, we will be working with staff to ensure all aspects of Catholic Life and Mission continue to be vibrant and at the heart of school life. The chaplaincy support we do continue to offer will be fairly distributed across schools and used for the greatest impact possible. We will work closely with our Headteachers to ensure that our commitment to Catholic life remains as strong as it is now.

Section 5: Staffing and Central Team

How many staff does the Trust employ and what is the overall budget?

There are currently 1,180 employees across the Trust (centrally and in 25 schools). The total 2025/26 staff budget excluding indirect employee expenses and bought in supply cover is £50.2m.

Why does the number of higher paid staff appear to be increasing?

The table on our website detailing higher rate pay includes Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers, it is not a Central Team breakdown.

The rise from 32 employees in 2023 to 50 employees in 2024 within the statutory £60,000+ disclosure bands does not reflect an increase in senior posts or a growth in higher-paid staffing. The movement is almost entirely the result of pay progression affecting staff who were already employed by the Trust.

Two salary progression factors account for this change:

- Annual incremental progression for staff on national pay scales, which moves eligible employees up one point each year until they reach the top of their band.
- National inflationary pay awards, which increased salaries across the Trust in 2023/24.

These routine and nationally applied uplifts resulted in a number of existing employees moving over the £60,000 and £70,000 thresholds for the first time, which is why they now appear in a higher remuneration band.



**St Ralph
Sherwin**
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

The national pay award for 2023/24 was higher than in previous years, which increased the number of staff whose salaries crossed the statutory reporting thresholds. As the disclosure bands are fixed in £10,000 increments, even modest pay movements can shift an employee into the next category.

Are cuts being made in the Central Team?

The Central Team is planned to reduce in 2026/27 to 44.18 full time equivalent staff. In 2022/23 the Central Team stood at 67.01 FTE with total costs of £3.262m. This represents an overall reduction of 22.83 FTE and £580k in staffing costs, this is despite year on year pay awards and employer national insurance increases.

Section 6: Industrial Action

How is the Trust responding to industrial action?

We are meeting regularly with trade unions and working urgently to avoid further industrial action. Please see the parent letters on our website for updates on this.