

# 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.

### **Are parents' views being considered during this process?**

We do take on board views from parents and they are welcome to share suggestions with us. Many parents have already done that. However, at this stage, and due to the size of the deficit, the only way that we can ensure that all of our schools have either a balanced budget or surplus from 2026-27, and are operating within DfE benchmarks, is to reduce staffing. We are also continuing to implement a range of other potential cost-saving measures.



### **Can you tell me the detail of the restructure being proposed at my child's school?**

We appreciate that parents would like more detailed information about the proposed restructures at schools. At this stage, however, we are limited in what we can share. Employment law requires the Trust to consult directly with staff who may be affected before any detailed information is released more widely. Some aspects of the proposal involve confidential staffing matters, and we are legally obliged to protect the privacy and dignity of individual employees. We will share any detail we are able to where we can.

### **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.



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## 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.

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.

### What is being done to support the wellbeing of staff and senior leaders during this period?

As part of the proposed restructures, senior leaders in each school are actively supporting their teams and maintaining regular communication with those affected. Senior leaders are being supported by their Director of Performance and Standards and HR. All staff are also able to contact our HR team directly should they need further guidance or individual support.



In addition, all colleagues have access to our Employee Assistance Programme, which provides confidential wellbeing support, counselling services, and practical advice. We are committed to fulfilling our responsibilities as an employer and to ensuring that staff are supported throughout this period.

#### **Why are senior staff still receiving pay rises?**

Pay progression is part of a national pay framework. Staff move up their pay scale based on experience and this progression is mandated through national policy rather than determined locally. In addition, all staff across the Diocese receive an annual percentage uplift to their pay, with the rate determined nationally. The percentage differs depending on whether the employee is support staff or teaching staff, but the increases themselves are nationally agreed and applied consistently across all schools and centrally.

### **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.

### **Section 7: Other**

#### **Why do you use an external venue in Fenny Bentley to hold meetings?**

This was a meeting held for all of our Headteachers as we have previously been made aware of concerns from them that some (particularly in the north) were having to travel very long distances to Derby. They would, of course, have been able to claim mileage expenses for any trips to Derby and we took the decision that finding a venue that was more central for all Trust schools was the fairest option to everyone. The initial cost for the conference room was around £50 and the meetings were held around 3x a year. The cost has risen recently as new owners have taken over and we are looking for an alternative venue that is free and can accommodate 30 plus people. We cancelled our last meeting which was due to be held there.

#### **Why do vacancies continue to be advertised, particularly in the Central Team, when you are making staff redundant?**

Vacancies across schools and centrally will continue to be advertised where there are posts that are required or are a replacement for a member of staff who has moved on and there is still a need for that role. All vacancies are scrutinised and assessed in terms of cost and need ahead of being advertised.



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### **The Diocese charges £15 per pupil in Trust schools, what is this money used for?**

Details of the services which the NRCDES (education service) provides are detailed in the document titled 'Provision of Services' [Click here to read the document](#)

In many cases, these services can only be provided by the education service rather than outside agencies. Their role is to act on behalf of the bishop in terms of Catholic School Inspection, Religious Education and prayer and liturgy. They provide a range of training and support for schools on the promotion and development of the Catholic ethos.

### **Why has there been an advert on the Trust website for a Director of People at a time when staff are being made redundant?**

The post of Director of People, (formerly Director of HR) is one which has been part of the overall diocesan CMAT structure since the CMATS were created in September 2018 and is therefore already budgeted for. The post became vacant on 28 February. There was a pause before re-advertising the role, but it has always been the intention of the Members that this post should exist and that it should be a shared service between the 3 CMATs just like the diocesan Payroll and Pensions Department.