



**St Ralph
Sherwin**
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

18.6.26

Dear parents, carers and families,

As you are aware, I took up my role as the acting Chief Executive Officer of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust on 8 June 2026 as a secondment from my substantive role. I wanted to write to you today to introduce myself properly and to update you on progress and future plans.

I am a practising Catholic and my professional background is rooted firmly in education, having taught and led in Derbyshire and Derby city schools for over 30 years. Since 2022, I have been the Deputy Chief Executive of the East Midlands Education Trust and more recently, I served there as the Chief Executive Officer for 14 months. I am also a Director on the Board for Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi Academy Trust in our Diocese. My passion is, and always will be, centred around the gift of education. I know that we all want the very best for our children and young adults and for their outstanding Catholic education to be the touchpaper for incredible futures ahead of them. I give my commitment to you to ensure that this is realised in every school in the trust.

Of course, I am sure that you are well versed in the financial difficulties that beset the trust and of the very difficult decisions that have been made to restructure staffing in some of our schools. It would be wrong of me not to acknowledge the level of pain felt by some colleagues and the disruption that has resulted in some of our schools by ensuing trade union action. I am deeply concerned, as you will no doubt be, about the impact that this may have had upon your child's education if they attend one of our impacted schools. I have already started working with the trust's executive team and school leaders to ensure that the curricula that we provide for these children will address any gaps in learning.

Our Catholic schools are much more than places to learn. Education, in its broadest sense, is about the development of the whole person, socially, emotionally and of course, spiritually with God. I am acutely aware that we will need to be deliberate in our plans to address any missed opportunities in these spheres too.

My absolute priority, above anything else, is getting all children back to school without the uncertainty of continued strike action. On the second day in post, I met with trade union colleagues to signify my intention to fully engage in negotiations. Following this, I met with trade union colleagues from the three unions who are in dispute with the trust, namely UNISON, the NEU and the NASUWT. I felt that our early discussions were positive and I will continue to make every effort to engage actively and constructively. As it stands, all three unions had an offer on a range of concessions by the end of last week to take to their members in schools. Whilst these concessions are still with members for consultation, I have regrettably received notice today that the NEU have balloted for more continuous strike action during June and July. If your child attends an affected school, I give you my utmost assurances that we will do all that we safely can to provide an onsite education to as many children as possible. I will also continue to articulate my deepest intention to continue to engage meaningfully in further talks and negotiations – for as long as it takes – to provide union colleagues with the assurances they seek to pause strike action whilst we reach a resolution, in order to ensure that our children have the education that they so richly deserve.

Clearly, not all trade union requests are in my gift, nor are they in the gift of the Board of Directors. The trust now operates under a set of conditions laid out by the Department for Education (known as a Financial Notice to Improve)



**St Ralph
Sherwin**
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

and my role is to ensure that these conditions are met. It is only by meeting these conditions can we ensure that the trust starts to rebuild its financial health in order to invest properly in our schools.

Over the coming weeks, I will visit every school in the trust. Just today, I visited Saint Benedict and St John Houghton secondary schools where I met with school leaders, staff and pupils. I truly enjoyed my visits and shall especially remember the students with whom I spoke: they displayed such positive attitudes towards their education and talked passionately about their schools. They are a real credit to you. Last week, I also met with Headteachers; what a tremendous group of colleagues! I was struck by their passion and commitment to do the very best for every single child and family in their care. Moving forwards, in the Autumn term, I am exploring opportunities to meet with parents and carers so that I can, along with the executive team, listen to your feedback.

I hope that you are getting a sense now of my leadership style: I am committed to being open and honest with you and I will always have your children with Christ at the centre of every decision that I make.

I have felt so very privileged in my first ten days in post. I have been particularly grateful for the warm welcome that I have received and for the many messages offering support for the trust's future success. I already feel part of the family and I look forward to the coming weeks and months ahead.

Yours sincerely,

LWalton

Lisa Walton
Chief Executive Officer

cc. SRS employees