



**St Ralph
Sherwin**
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

23.10.26

Dear parents, carers and families,

As we approach a much-needed half-term break for schools, I wanted to write to you to update you on progress that we have made as a family of schools since September.

Department for Education (DfE)

I continue to meet regularly with the DfE and I can confirm that the trust continues to make very good progress against the conditions of the Notice to Improve. Our finances are stabilising and whilst the climate remains tough, we are beginning to plan for investment in our schools. We have used the School Condition Allocation this year to work on improving our Estate and to invest in some very outdated IT equipment. Whilst some of this work might not be apparent at first, this marks the start of a planned and considered investment into our infrastructure so that our school buildings and digital offer are the best of all possible options for your children in our schools.

Four of our schools are earmarked to be rebuilt under the government's School Rebuilding Programme. The first two of these are St Edward's in Swadlincote and Saint Benedict in Derby and the second two are St Philip Howard in Glossop and Saint John Houghton school in Ilkeston. I met with the DfE to discuss these projects specifically last week and I am delighted that all four have been confirmed. In addition to this, we have other schools that are currently being assessed for Wave 4 of the programme and I will keep you updated with respect to progress here.

The renewed Board of Directors

I have written to you previously to provide you with reassurance that the Diocese was appointing new Foundation Directors to strengthen governance at Board level. I am delighted that a new board has now been appointed and brings together a range of critical experiences from education, public service and industry which will ensure robust governance moving forwards. A full list of Directors, along with a pen portrait of each, will shortly be published on the trust's website.

Inspection

Congratulations to St Alban's primary school, in Derby, which had a Catholic Schools Inspection this half-term. I was delighted for the school, which was graded Good overall, with Catholic Life and Mission and Collective Worship graded Outstanding. St Alban's is a truly lovely school, driven by a commitment to inclusion and excellence for every child, surrounded by God's love and this recent CSI inspection certainly serves as testament to this.

Headteachers' Conference 1

I have introduced a series of Headteacher Conferences into our trust calendar. We held the first one of this academic year at St Philip Howard school in Glossop. St Philip Howard is a highly successful secondary school and we were delighted to have held our first conference of this academic year within this



community. During the conference, we were grateful to Peter Giorgio, Director of Education for the Diocese of Nottingham, who led us on Diocesan updates. We then focused on our own trust strategic plan. We have identified three priorities for each of the central department functions:

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Catholic Life and Mission	Strengthening chaplaincy	Opportunities for pupils to lead in Faith	Developing partnerships with the parish, family and community
Servant Leadership (HR)	Equality and Diversity	Engaging with people connected to the trust (stakeholders)	Engendering a sense of belonging for our staff
Outstanding Catholic Education	Improving academic excellence	Improving attendance and inclusion	External validation (CSI and OfSTED)
Digital	Cybersecurity	Updating our hardware	The safe use of AI in schools
Governance and Compliance	Review and audit Appointment of new directors	Sharpen reporting to the Board	Auditing compliance
Finance	Recovery from deficit	Growing and investing	Developing financial confidence
Estates	Develop an overview of each school building	Health and Safety compliance	Sustainability
Marketing and Communications	Growing our wonderful Catholic schools	Spreading the Good News of what we do in our schools	Becoming an employer of choice

Working with the Trade Unions

We continue to engage productively with Trade Union colleagues. We have introduced several opportunities for union representatives to feed back to us and we continue to listen and to respond to



**St Ralph
Sherwin**
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

concerns or areas of worry for staff in our schools. I continue to be grateful to Trade Union colleagues for how they are working with us.

News from the family

Congratulations to Mr John Nish, Headteacher at St Mary's primary school in Marple Bridge and to Mr David Redfern, Headteacher at St Thomas More secondary school in Buxton who have been successfully promoted to other posts and who leave us at Christmas. Both Headteachers have served their communities with such passion and drive during their tenure as Headteachers and thoroughly deserve their promotions. The trust is now working with the Diocese and local governing bodies at both schools to recruit the next incredible and inspiring Catholic school leaders for these wonderful schools.

Finally...

Please join us in continuing to offer prayers for our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV as he recovers from surgery. He really shows us what it is to serve God and it was incredible to see him back at work in St Peter's Square last Sunday. At the end of his encyclical letter 'Magnifica Humanitas' Pope Leo urges us to become 'weavers of hope.' He writes,

§245 'With the same faith as Mary, let us become 'weavers of hope' in our world, sharing who we are and what we have, so that the presence of Jesus may grow among us and his Kingdom take shape'

I cannot think of any more fitting way to end this half-term; let us be 'weavers of hope' together with God, as we work together and grow our trust family and inspire those around us as we follow the Gospels.

I wish you a restful half-term break from all of us at St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust.

With my very best wishes,

Lisa Walton
Chief Executive Officer