

# St Francis of Assisi Academies Trust



## Report in Response to the Consultation on Age Range and Admission Criteria Changes

**BEDFORD CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**  
The Complete Education

January 2016

## **What did we consult on?**

The directors of the St Francis of Assisi Academies Trust consulted from between 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016 on age and admission criteria changes for:

St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School, DFE number 822/4605

St Gregory's Catholic Middle School, DFE number 822/4601

St Joseph's Catholic Lower School, DFE number 822/3342

St John Rigby Catholic Primary School, DFE number 822/3350

The consultation looked at how the Trust will fully align with the Local Authority's programme to create a two-tier education system throughout Bedford Borough.

The proposal was to deliver Primary education across the two sites in Queens Park and Biddenham, (St Joseph's and St Gregory's) whilst increasing the Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) in Year 7 at St Thomas More from 2017 onwards. Admission criteria were updated to reflect this.

It was proposed:

- St Joseph's become an Infant school, admitting children from age 4 (Year R) to age 7 (Year 2).
- St Gregory's become a Junior school, admitting children from age 7 (Year 3) to age 11 (Year 6).
- St Thomas More expand its intake in Year 7 from the current 75 to 200 and over time phase out its intake in Year 9 becoming a full secondary.

This report considers the outcome of the consultation and how the Trust plans to proceed

## **Consultation**

The original consultation document is available on each school's website.

## **Who did we inform?**

We informed and invited comments from a wide range of stakeholders and the wider community through a number of approaches. The major consultees were:

- All parishes and deanery groups within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton
- Bedford Borough Council
- Parents of every registered pupil at the schools
- Parents of potential pupils
- Staff who work at the schools
- Our local communities and our current site users
- All other schools within Bedford Borough
- Anyone else who had an interest in the proposal

Public meetings were held for parents, staff, stakeholders and any interested parties on:

7<sup>th</sup> December 2015

10<sup>th</sup> December 2015

An electronic version of the consultation was placed for all stakeholders and interested parties on the schools' websites.

### **Local Context**

The context of the implementation is part of the wider plan by Bedford Borough Council, the Local Authority that is currently consulting on facilitating a two-tier system of education in the Borough, commencing in September 2017. The Borough already has a number of primary and secondary schools currently operating.

## **The Report on the Trust's consultation on Age Range and Admission Criteria Changes from 2017 onwards.**

The consultation proposed, from September 2017:

- St Joseph's become an Infant school, admitting children from age 4 (Year R) to age 7 (Year 2) with a Published Admission Number of 75. Students who would have moved to Year 3 or 4 on the St Joseph's site will be on the St Gregory's Junior School site.
- St Gregory's become a Junior School admitting children from age 7 (Year 3) to age 11 (Year 6) with a Published Admission Number is 75. Year 3 to Year 6 will be on the St Gregory's site. Students who would have moved to Year 7 or 8 on the St Gregory's site would be admitted to St Thomas More.
- St Thomas More expand its intake in Year 7 from the current 75 to 200 and over time phase out its intake in Year 9 becoming a full secondary.
- St John Rigby's Published Admission Number remains unchanged at 60.
- Admission criteria for each school are updated to reflect the changes.

The Governing Body invited, through the consultation, responses to the proposal.

### **Summary of responses**

The Trust received a small number of written responses plus some verbal questions and responses that arose from people who attended the consultation events. The questions and comments raised, the form in which they were received, and the responses of the Governing Body are below.

Question origin	Question	Governor Response
Email (staff)	Will there be a separate document/consultation with regard to 're-alignment' of staffing as a result of the re-organisation? Has any thought been given to posts/positions/process? If so, when will this be communicated to staff and how will this work?	The governors value the support and feedback of staff on this process. Once consultation has closed and future plans and funding confirmed the governors will begin work on more detailed plans. These will fully involve staff on any re-organisation process.
Email (local authority)	If St Joseph's becomes an infant school and St Gregory's a junior school they are merely replacing one three tier system with another three tier system. We will have to have a transfer to junior school admissions round to manage the application process. Can you not just make them one school so there is not an admissions point from infant to junior?	<p>Governors have considered a range of options and at the forefront of these is always the drive to achieve the best education possible for the children in our system. Both St Gregory's and St Joseph's offer an excellent educational experience for the children in their care and any changes only seek to build on this.</p> <p>The governors have considered the views of the Local Authority, parents and Diocese and the revised plan will combine St Josephs and St Gregorys as a single primary school split over both sites. This simplifies the process for parents and fully aligns the Trust with the two tier system.</p>
Email (local authority)	Included in the St Joseph's admission criteria is a new criterion "Children attending St Joseph's Nursery who will be of Reception age." In this format this criterion is not allowed. This is a decision made in rulings by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA). As a consequence we advised all lower/primary in the Borough who had had such a criterion to remove it from their admission policies. This took place ready for the 2016 intake. If it said "Pupil Premium Children attending St Joseph's Nursery who will be of Reception age" then it would be allowed	<p>The DFE has confirmed that the criterion is permissible where the nursery is school run noting that whilst, the school's adjudicator has consistently found schools to be in breach of paragraph 14 of the school admissions code where the majority of places in reception are allocated to those who have attended the school's nursery. This is because those who live locally and choose not to send their children to nursery often have to travel a significant distance away from their local school to obtain a place. The DFE point to the 'Free School Admissions Guidance, Mainstream Admissions December 2014 (v3)' to provide further guidance.</p> <p><i>24.4. Children in a nursery which is part of the school or</i></p>

		<p><i>established and run by the school may be given priority for admission to reception. However, this is not without qualification.</i></p> <p><i>24.4.1 such priority must be fair in the local context. Schools should ensure those choosing not to send their children to the nursery do not find it harder to obtain a reception place than those attending the nursery. In this context, whether nursery priority is fair will depend on the location of the school, the availability of reception places in the area and the number of places offered without any reference to whether the child has attended the nursery (14 and 1.8 of the Code).</i></p> <p>As the school in question, St Josephs, does not have a catchment area and historic data indicates adding the nursery criteria would not disadvantage parents with children not attending the nursery the Trust believes the criteria is fair and applicable.</p>
Email (local authority)	All of the schools in the Trust have reworded their criterion relating to children of staff to replace “been employed at NAME OF SCHOOL” with “been employed by the SFAAT”.	The DFE advise the wording is specifically employed at the school, rather than contractual status with an employer. Wording to be adjusted accordingly.
Consultation evening at St Josephs	Can St Josephs be extended and used a single site primary and St Gregorys be closed?	<p>Governors have considered a range of options and at the forefront of these is always the drive to achieve the best education possible for the children in our system. Both St Gregory’s and St Joseph’s offer an excellent educational experience for the children in their care and any changes only seek to build on this.</p> <p>The governors have considered the views of the Local Authority, parents and Diocese and the revised plan will combine St Josephs and St Gregorys as a single primary school split over both sites. This simplifies the process for parents and fully aligns the Trust with the two tier system. The</p>

		governors feel retaining both sites and extensive facilities provides increased opportunities and flexibility for the children in the schools.
Consultation evening at St Josephs and by email	Parents may have multiple children to drop off at the split site school – concern over timings, access and children travelling across the field alone.	Once plans are agreed the schools will look at logistics and mechanics and consider coordinated options to ensure children are safe at all times. These will include timing of the school day, movement around the campuses and before and after school care.  The local authority has confirmed a permanent pathway will be built between sites.
Consultation evening at St Josephs	Concern that moving in year 3 may be unsettling particularly to a much larger site and that limited time on the St Josephs site may mean children miss out on that experience.	The two schools work closely now and children at St Josephs currently attend activities on a regular basis on the St Gregorys site. The governors recognise change can cause anxiety to some children and will ensure that plans are in place for a smooth transition.
Consultation evening at St Josephs	A parent who attended a split site primary in Kent commented there were no reservations about the proposal.	The governors are pleased to hear any feedback on the mechanics of the change, both concerns and what might work well.
Consultation evening at St Josephs	Has the Trust considered merging the schools under one new name?	The governors have considered parental, Local Authority and Diocese views and the revised plan will combine St Josephs and St Gregorys as a single primary school split over both sites. This simplifies the process for parents and fully aligns the Trust with the two tier system.
Consultation evening at St Josephs	What will happen to the school uniform? Will it be changed and unified?	The governors are acutely aware of the financial impact on parents of any changes to uniform. This point will be considered in detail after the consultation ends, and parents will be kept informed and consulted on any changes.
Consultation evening at	Is there any financial risk in the plans and could	The Local Authority has assured the Trust that funds will be

St Josephs	this cause it not to go ahead?	made available and there is every will for the change to take place. A number of schools have already consulted and moved to two tier.
Consultation evening at St Josephs	Will parents have to apply for a place again at St Gregorys?	Under the revised plan St Josephs and St Gregorys become a single primary school and parents will not have to apply again.
Consultation evening at St Thomas More	Would the current year 5 move to St Thomas More in 2017 as year 7?	The Local Authority have confirmed funding for building work at St Thomas more will enable this site to be ready for September 2018. The current year 5 at St Gregorys will move to St Thomas More in 2018 in Year 8.
Consultation evening at St Thomas More	Will St Gregorys have the same headteacher?	The Trust is fortunate in that it has a highly experienced, professional and dedicated staff and wherever possible will seek to retain them. Once consultation has closed and future plans and funding confirmed the governors will begin work on more detailed staffing plans and structures.
Consultation evening at St Thomas More	Will more transport be provided?	This is something the Trust will have to look at, and whilst we are not in a position to guarantee or provide transport we can make the local authority and public transport providers aware of the demand and increased numbers.
Consultation evening at St Thomas More	Could the St Josephs & St Gregorys primary be on a combined site and the freed up facilities be used as an alternate resource, for example a sixth form?	The governors have a strategic overview for the future of the Trust and review a range of options. Retaining all sites allows us to watch and respond flexibly.

## **Revised Age Range and Admission Criteria**

The governing body has considered the feedback of staff, parents and stakeholders and plans to proceed as follows.

- St Josephs and St Gregorys will combine as a single primary school from September 2017 admitting children from Reception to Year 6 and based on both existing sites. The Published Admission number into Reception will be 75. There will be no entry point into Year 5 (save for in year admissions as managed now by the local authority). For 2017 Year 7 and year 8 (current year 5 and year 6) will remain on this site before moving to St Thomas More in September 2018 as normal or one off transition.
- St Thomas More will have new buildings in place in September 2018 which will allow it to increase its Published Admission Number for year 7 to 200. For 2018 it will have a Published Admission Number for year 9 of 125 (to take account of the year 8 cohort moving into year 9). Children on the St Gregorys site who will be moving into Year 8 in September 2018 (current Year 5) will move to St Thomas More.
- To allow St Thomas More to transition to a single Year 7 admission point, for 2019 its Year 7 Published Admission Number is 200 and Year 9 is 50 (to take account of the year 8 cohort moving into year 9).
- Admission criteria for each school are adjusted as below to reflect these changes.
- Changes are subject to Secretary of State approval and secured funding from the Local Authority.

### What happens to the current year group?

Year group as of Sept 2015	Sept 2016	Sept 2017	Sept 2018	Sept 2019	Sept 2020	Sept 2021	Sept 2022
Year R	Year 1 at Lower	Year 2 at Lower – converts to Primary	Year 3 at Primary	Year 4 at Primary	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary
Year 1	Year 2 at Lower	Year 3 at Lower – converts to Primary	Year 4 at Primary	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary
Year 2	Year 3 at Lower	Year 4 at Lower – converts to Primary	Year 5 at Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary	Year 9 at Secondary
Year 3	Year 4 at Lower	Year 5 at Lower – converts to Primary	Year 6 at Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary
Year 4	Year 5 at Middle	Year 6 at Middle – converts to Primary	Year 7 at Secondary	Year 8 at Secondary	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary
Year 5	Year 6 at Middle	Year 7 at Middle – converts to Primary	Year 8 at Secondary	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary	
Year 6	Year 7 at Middle	Year 8 at Middle – converts to Primary	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary		
Year 7	Year 8 at Middle	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary			
Year 8	Year 9 at Secondary	Year 10 at Secondary	Year 11 at Secondary				

## **ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI ACADEMIES TRUST**

### **ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR 2017**

#### **Basic information**

St Joseph's and St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, St John Rigby Catholic Primary School and St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School are part of the St Francis of Assisi Academies Trust (SFAAT) which is promoted by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton

The Directors of the SFAAT are responsible for determining and administering the policy relating to the admission of pupils to the schools within the Trust. It is guided in that responsibility by the requirements of the law, the advice of the Duns Scotus Trust and the Diocesan trustee, and its duty to the schools and the Catholic community.

The schools primarily serve the parishes of: Holy Cross; St Joseph's; St Phillip and St James; Christ the King; Our Lady's, Kempston; St Francesca Cabrini; Sacred Heart and St Cuthbert and the whole of the Catholic community of Bedfordshire.

The Directors of the SFAAT have set its planned admissions numbers as:

- 60 pupils for St John Rigby Catholic Primary School
- 75 pupils for St Joseph's and St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
- 75 pupils in Year 7 for St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School
- 125 pupils in Year 9 for St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School (a total of 200 including those moving from Year 8 to Year 9)

Parents living in Bedford Borough who wish to apply for a place in the school for their child beginning in September 2017 must complete the paper version of the Local Authority application form or can apply on line at: [www.bedford.gov.uk/onlineadmissions](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/onlineadmissions) by no later than the dates to be confirmed by the Local Authority and in accordance with the co-ordinated arrangements. Parents who do not live in Bedford Borough should apply to the Local Authority in which they live. All applications will be considered at the same time.

Children with a Statement of Educational Needs naming the school will be admitted in accordance with Bedford Borough policy and regulations.

The Admissions Committee of the SFAAT Directors will consider all applications made in accordance with the criteria set out below without reference to the aptitude or ability of the child. All applications will be considered on an equal preference basis.

## **ADMISSIONS CRITERIA for ST JOSEPH'S & ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

In case of over subscription the Directors will give priority to children in the following order:

1. Children 'Looked After' and children previously 'Looked After' (see definitions)
2. Children attending St Joseph's & St Gregory's Nursery who will be of Reception age
3. Catholic siblings of children attending the school whose application is supported by their Parish Priest or a priest known to them
4. Catholic children from practising families from the parishes of Bedfordshire whose application is supported by their Parish Priest or a priest known to them
5. Catholic children from practising families from other parishes whose application is supported by a priest
6. Other Catholic children with proof of catholicity e.g. a baptismal certificate or evidence of enrolment on a catechumenate programme
7. Children of staff who have either
  - a. been employed at the school for two or more years at the time the application for admission to that school is made
  - b. or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage
8. Siblings other than Catholic attending the school
9. Children from other Christian denominations whose parents wish them to receive a Christian education whose application is supported by a Christian minister
10. Children from other faith backgrounds whose application is supported by their Faith Minister or leader
11. Any other children

## **ADMISSIONS CRITERIA for ST JOHN RIGBY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

In case of over subscription the Directors will give priority to children in the following order:

1. Children 'Looked After' and children previously 'Looked After' (see definitions)
2. Catholic siblings of children attending the school whose application is supported by their Parish Priest or a priest known to them
3. Catholic children from practising families from the parishes of Bedfordshire whose application is supported by their Parish Priest or a priest known to them
4. Catholic children from practising families from other parishes whose application is supported by a priest
5. Other Catholic children, with proof of catholicity e.g. a baptismal certificate or evidence of enrolment on a catechumenate programme
6. Children of staff who have either
  - a. been employed at the school for two or more years at the time the application for admission to that school is made
  - b. or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage
7. Siblings other than Catholic attending the school
8. Children from other Christian denominations whose parents wish them to receive a Christian education whose application is supported by a Christian minister
9. Children from other faith backgrounds whose application is supported by their Faith Minister or leader
10. Any other children

## **ADMISSIONS CRITERIA for ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC TEACHING SCHOOL**

In case of over subscription the Directors will give priority to children in the following order:

1. Children 'Looked After' and children previously 'Looked After' (see definitions)
2. Children attending St John Rigby Primary School entering Year 7 or St Josephs and St Gregory's Primary School entering Year 9
3. Catholic siblings of children attending the school whose application is supported by their Parish Priest or a priest known to them
4. Catholic children from practising families from the parishes of Bedfordshire, whose application is supported by their Parish Priest or a priest known to them
5. Catholic children from practising families from other parishes whose application is supported by a priest
6. Other Catholic children with proof of catholicity e.g. a baptismal certificate or evidence of enrolment on a catechumenate programme
7. Children of staff who have either
  - a. been employed at the school for two or more years at the time the application for admission to that school is made
  - b. or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage
8. Siblings other than Catholic attending the school
9. Children from other Christian denominations whose parents wish them to receive a Christian education whose application is supported by a Christian minister
10. Children from other faith backgrounds whose application is supported by their faith minister or leader
11. Children attending Beauchamp Middle School
12. Children attending St James' VA Primary School or Alban Church of England Academy
13. Any other children

If applying these criteria results in there being more children with an equal right to admission to the school than the number of available places, the tie break will be the distance the pupil lives from the school, measured in a straight line, using the Local Authority's computerised mapping system, with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority. The Local Authority will measure the distance from the address point of the pupil's home to the following points on the school sites:

St Thomas More – Front door (opposite Reception)

St John Rigby – Front door

St Joseph's & St Gregory's – Front door of the St Joseph's site

Priority will not be given within each criterion to children who meet other criteria.

Pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs are required to be admitted to the school which is named on the statement, even if the school is full.

Priority will also be given to the admission of pupils in accordance with the 'Fair Access Protocol'.

In any situation where the application of the above criteria results in more children with an equal right to admission to the school than the number of available places, the tie-break will be made by a lottery. The names of all those with an equal right to admission will be allocated to numbered counters. These will then be drawn and the order in which they are drawn will give the order of priority for the allocation of the places available. The places will be allocated, in order, up to the number of places available. This process will be carried out under the supervision of an independent observer from Bedford Borough Council.

### **Transport on 'Denominational Grounds'**

Generally as a parent or carer you are responsible for your child's journey to and from school. However, Bedford Borough Council provides free transport in certain circumstances. Please check the policy as it provides further information on the local authority's statutory duties and eligibility criteria.

The Council would expect that the majority of parents/carers would be able to facilitate their child's attendance at school, either by providing the transport themselves or by making alternative arrangements

The Home to School Transport Policy can be accessed by viewing the Admissions Booklets at [www.bedford.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/admissions) or [www.bedford.gov.uk/schooltransport](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/schooltransport) or by reference to the Admissions Information booklet. Further information is available via the School Transport Help Line 01234 718004.

## **Definitions**

### **Catholic child**

A Catholic child is a child baptised according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church or a child enrolled in a catechumenate programme.

**Practising** means attending Mass weekly for Roman Catholic families.

### **Children ‘Looked After’**

A child ‘looked after’ is a child who is (a) in the care of the local authority or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

### **Children previously ‘looked after’**

A previously ‘looked after’ child is one who immediately after being ‘looked after’ became subject to an adoption, residence or special guardianship order. An ‘adoption order’ is an order under section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. A ‘residence order’ is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under section 8 of the Children Act 1989. Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a ‘special guardianship order’ as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child’s special guardian (or special guardians).

### **Sibling**

A sibling refers to a brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister or the child of the parent / carer’s partner, and in every case, the child should be living at the same address. The sibling must be in the school at the time of application and be likely to remain in the school at the proposed date of admission.

### **Home Address**

A pupil’s home address will be regarded as the address of the parents or carers with parental responsibility with whom the child normally lives. This will not usually include grandparents, aunts or uncles. Where a child spends time with parents at more than one address, the address used to allocate a school place will be the one at which the pupil is ordinarily resident and where the child spends the majority of the school week (Mondays to Fridays) including nights. If there is any query on the home address this will be checked against original official documentation e.g. council tax bill, a recent utility bill (gas, electricity or water), a rental agreement, child benefit annual statement or family tax credit information.

### **Christian**

A “*Christian*” is a member of a Christian Church which is recognised as a full member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, or the Evangelical Alliance or, otherwise, which believes the Nicene Creed, at the time Governors make their decision on admissions. Proof of membership must be provided by the appropriate church leader.

## **Additional Information**

### **Appeals**

Parents/carers who may wish to appeal against non-admission will have the right of appeal to an **Independent Appeals Panel**. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be binding. Details of admissions and appeals arrangements will be published each year.

### **In Year Admissions**

There is no longer a requirement on Local Authorities to co-ordinate in-year admissions although it is our understanding that Bedford Borough will continue to undertake this on behalf of all schools within the Borough. Any requests for admission into other year groups than the normal year of transfer should still be made directly to the Local Authority in the first instance.