



End of Second Year Review From The Trust Board Sept 2019 – Aug 2020

When I wrote our first Trust Board annual report for you this time last year, there was no indication of the unusual times which lay ahead for us as a Trust and indeed worldwide with the Coronavirus pandemic.

At the start of the year we envisioned our second year as one Trust family of twenty-five schools being an opportunity for “consolidating progress so far, ensuring that it is sustainable and taking our next steps forward in all five key strategic areas”. Despite the challenges of the last six months, **I am delighted to share with you that we have indeed made progress with all five of our strategic aims.** Some recent highlights are on page four.

I also said that “our Trust is a dynamic entity, which will change over time” and that has certainly been the case this year! The changes we experienced, particularly from mid March onwards, were new for everyone. All of a sudden, instead of all children having to be in school, most children had to be out of school **with schools kept open over school holidays** for some children.

Many adults had no choice but to start doing their own work from home while at the same time using **learning resources provided by teachers to help their children continue with schoolwork.** Governance and operational meetings moved on-line to enable essential work to continue. The broad range of different home circumstances, access to the internet, availability of suitable devices and so on added many layers of complexity to an already challenging situation. Throughout this time of change what has remained constant though are the

Catholic principles upon which our academies are founded. We continue to take the words of our patron St Ralph Sherwin to heart being

often things were simply done in a different way. For example, as you may recall from last year, we started what we intend

A Catholic family of schools providing service and witness to children, their families and the communities they serve. Stronger together, united in faith and working as one to enrich the learning experience of all our young people so that they fulfil their God-given potential

‘**Inspired by the life, message and example of Jesus Christ**’ to do Lord’s will **“today rather than tomorrow”** doing our best for those who learn and work in our Trust as well as the governors, other volunteers, parishioners and many others who support the work of Catholic education in our area of the Diocese of Nottingham.

Although all our plans for the Pentecost term were thrown up in the air, there were many successes before Covid-19 took over and, despite the challenges last term, not everything was cancelled completely,

to become an annual Trust event when we joined the St Ralph Sherwin Society members for their annual Mass at Rodsley, the birthplace of our patron.

Before the Mass we completed a pilgrimage walk from All Saints Catholic church in Ashbourne with Bishop Patrick taking the lead along with 40 members of our Trust community.

This year a virtual pilgrimage was arranged along a route of 1270 miles from Rodsley to Rome where St Ralph Sherwin studied and

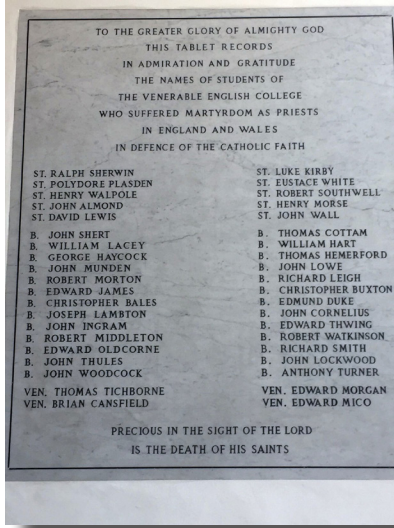
began his work as a priest.

This time people across the Trust, as well as friends and family, walked, ran, cycled and swam, logging their miles online and at the same through sponsorship (including Gift Aid) **raised over £1,500 for our two Trust charities Bluebell Wood and Rainbows children’s hospices.**



Plaque at St Ralph Sherwin’s birthplace, Rodsley

Plaque - Venerable English College, Rome



Together and as we move into year three it will be **Serving Our Community, Growing In Faith Together**. The pandemic experience has reinforced the important role that our schools play in the heart of their local communities. Our Catholic ethos, seeing Christ in all whom we meet, and reaching out to the most vulnerable has been even more evident in recent months. During the coming year our Local Governing Bodies, working with each school leadership team, will be developing community engagement plans relevant for their local context and building on the work done so far.

Serving Our Community, Growing in Faith Together

and other information we have read throughout the year to ensure that we considered what is most important for the Trust at this time.

Rather than meeting for a whole day one weekend, instead we met via MS Teams over several evenings. The purpose of the Strategy Discussions remained as planned and as usual one key output was an updated Strategic Plan for the coming three years. The Senior Executive Team, who joined in person last year, was also included via MS Teams this time.

The Strategic Plan 2020-23 retains the same five Strategic Aims as before with the details below each one being updated based on progress so far and our aspirations for the coming three years. This Plan will be shared with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors to use with their teams throughout the coming year and will be uploaded on the Trust website. The complexities of bringing twenty-five schools together have been an ongoing challenge though it is becoming smoother over time. Using Integrated Curriculum planning as

Another annual event is our **Trust Board Strategy Day** and our third one was due to take place on Saturday 6th

June. As usual we wanted to ensure that our discussions were informed by inputs from schools, the Trust team and governors, so, as we were unable to meet in person, elicited contributions

via surveys followed up by on-line group discussions with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors, members of the Executive Team and the Trust Board.

Engagement in this process was excellent with everyone contributing in a constructive way and it is interesting to note that the tone of this year's contributions was overwhelmingly positive and forward looking, recognising the **benefits of being part of a large Catholic Multi Academy Trust**.

The Trust Board also reflected on the range of previous reports



Our St Ralph Sherwin wheel visited all schools before lockdown continuing to collect many more contributions which represent the many talents across the Trust

Another fundraising highlight took place in October when our CEO Sean McClafferty and I did Tandem jumps, each attached to experienced skydivers, from a plane at 13,500ft raising over £3,000 between us for Bluebell Wood and Rainbows.



Each year we agree on an overarching theme for our Trust starting in our first year with **Building Community**, as we all came together into one organisation for the first time. Our theme this year was **Building Community; Growing in faith**

well as sound financial processes means that **the Trust overall remains solvent and compliant in line with requirements of the ESFA and other agencies.**

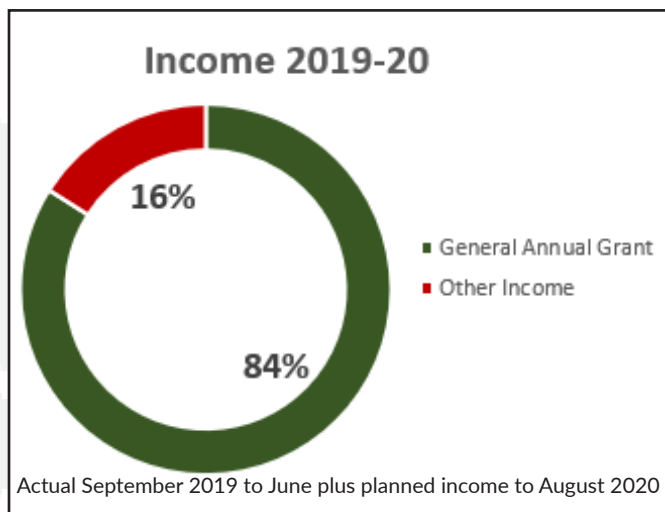
Owing to Covid-19 various reporting deadlines changed this year and we remain on track to submit all reports by their due dates. As yet, the financial impact of Covid-19 is not completely clear but is expected to become so in the coming months as additional funding for cleaning etc is confirmed. During the year, we have improved on our reserves position overall and plan to grow reserves further to ensure long-term security for all our schools.

The size of the Trust remains fairly constant at c8000 pupils and c1200 staff. Our income is c£42M with the majority coming from the General Annual Grant (GAG) and the rest from other sources, including Universal Free School Meals and Pupil Premium funding.

Approximately three quarters of our total income is spent on teaching and support staff in our academies with an additional 20% on school premises, energy etc while the Trust's Central Team total costs remain at 5%. From this, **the Central Team provides a wide range of services for schools including HR, Finance, Chaplaincy, Estates, School Improvement and Governance.**

As we enter year three, a Marketing

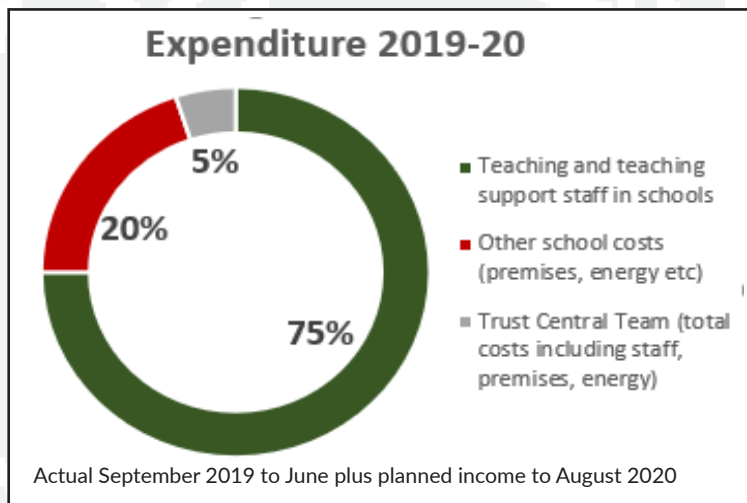
Manager has been appointed and part of that role is to support Headteachers in **making the most of opportunities to raise the profile of their schools so that parents are aware of what is available** for their children and apply for places at our schools. Another new appointment



for the coming year is a Bid Writer whose role is to help **access other funding opportunities for schools** in order to support the effective delivery of individual school development plans as well as the Trust Strategic Plan overall.

An important consideration for central roles is that they enable each school to have a quality service in a more cost-effective way than if they sought and employed these services individually.

The Trust is blessed to be supported by many volunteers who come into



schools, for example, to help children with reading, plus over 150 local governors. **We remain thankful to all volunteers for the time and energy they devote to supporting Catholic**

education in the Trust.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Trust Board Directors for their tireless dedication to their work for the Trust. As volunteers ourselves we do appreciate the challenges involved

for many balancing governance commitments with family and work. It is a privilege for me to work alongside so many talented people in the Trust.

During the course of the year there have been changes to the composition of the Trust Board as well as the Members.

As a temporary arrangement, in order to support the Bishop while the trusts were being established in 2018, the four CMAT Chairs from across the Diocese were also asked to be Members. This arrangement ended in March 2020. **In the Advent Term David Lawes and Fr Simon Gillespie were appointed as Members with Ann Neale and Laura O'Brien joining them at Easter.**

Further details about our Members are on our Trust website and their role is explained in the Scheme of Delegation which can also be found on the website.

In September Fr Mark Brentnall stepped down from his role as a Foundation Director and in February we welcomed Deacon Richard Walsh to our St Ralph Sherwin Trust Board. In July Melanie Barker stepped down as a Foundation Director. I would like to thank Fr Mark for his continued support in one of our Local Governing Bodies and to thank Melanie for the work she has done for the St Ralph Sherwin CMAT over the past two years, as well as the many years she supported the St Robert Lawrence MAT and her work in local governance at St Joseph's in Matlock before that.



Strategic Aims - A few highlights

1: Mission and Ethos - Through our Catholic faith, promote the academic, spiritual, emotional and social growth of the individual child and young person

- More than half our schools now have chaplaincy support through collaboration with local parishes
- Pupil awards for contribution to the Catholic life of their school; also awards for support their community during the crisis
- At St Joseph's, Derby 92 pupils and staff took part in a Coronavirus study for Public Health England (PHE)

Strategic Aim 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment - To ensure that all our academies provide the very best teaching in order to promote and provide high quality learning for all our children and young people and ensuring that there is support in place for teachers to achieve this

- English Martyrs' was graded Outstanding at its Diocesan Canonical Inspection.
- Trust-wide, on-line CPD sessions, 400-600 attending each one; Trust Inductions from September, moving on-line last term
- First Trust-wide Teaching and Learning INSET Day for over 950 staff hosted at St Mary's & St Benedict, Derby

Strategic Aim 3: Academy Improvement - To establish a self-sustaining, system-led, collaborative approach to improvement that enables rapid improvement where required

- Real Schools Guide 2020 for Derbyshire secondaries included St Thomas More (7th) & St Benedict's (8th) in top 10
- Ofsted rated St Joseph's, Matlock & St Edward's Good (were previously rated Inadequate); The Priory retained Good
- More than 50 parents of Year 6 pupils joined an online transition meeting with St Philip Howard

Strategic Aim 4: Leadership and Governance - To ensure high quality leadership and governance at Trust Board, Local Governing Body and individual academy level

- Regular CEO video messages to staff and parents; updates to Headteachers distilling Government advice into actions
- Operational and Governance meetings continued throughout the year, moving on-line since March
- Senior Executive Team established at Easter to focus on longer-term opportunities & risks for the Trust

Strategic Aim 5: Business Support Services - To ensure that the Trust has business support arrangements which are efficient and deliver value for money across all its operations

- Recruitment processes continued throughout, moving on-line and working well
- Ongoing professional support with financial planning is helping reduce inherited deficits to secure longer-term sustainability
- Thorough Covid-19 risk assessment process with a concern for pupil & staff wellbeing in place quickly with weekly monitoring

More achievements are shared in school newsletters, the Trust website & regular Trust-wide newsletters throughout the year

Looking ahead to year three, our intention to partner with an experienced **digital learning** provider has been accelerated.

An increased awareness of issues around **equality, diversity and inclusion** highlighting aspects of hidden disadvantage has inspired us to convene a working party during the coming year which will be chaired by our CEO and will report on its work to the Trust Board.

Ever outward looking, to see what we can share with and learn from others, the Trust has become a member of the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce which will help **develop stronger links with other sectors**.

Our third feast day celebration will take place towards the end of the

Advent term and a second **Trust-wide INSET day** is coming up in February 2021 with our first **Trust Leadership Residential** in March. All these events are being organised by working parties of staff from across the Trust.

We remain hopeful that our postponed **Staff Awards Evening** will take place before Christmas.

There are a number of research projects underway where we have appointed colleagues to carry out **Action Research projects on raising the profile of mental health and raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils** to help inform future Trust policy and practice. We are excited to see where this work will take us.

A lot has been learnt by everyone in

the second half of this year and we are looking forward to seeing what of the new and different ways of working can be retained longer-term for the benefit of everyone. Headteachers are working with the Executive Team under the leadership of our CEO to share ideas, explore these and determine the best way forward.

We have an exciting year ahead of us. No doubt there will be challenges along the way but with God's grace we approach it with confidence in our staff, support from one another and a desire to do what is best for all the children in our care.

Jacqueline Rodden
Chair, St Ralph Sherwin Catholic
Multi Academy Trust Board