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To Directors of Diocesan Multi Academy Companies, Governors of Catholic VA Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, School Principals and Headteachers and Parish Priests

During these final weeks of the school year, I write to express my appreciation and thanks for all that you have done to support the education and the spiritual and pastoral care of our young people during the challenging time of the Pandemic. I know that so much has been achieved in difficult circumstances. All that you have done in the name of the Church has supported and enriched the lives of the children, families, people and parish communities throughout the Archdiocese.

This work is but a sign of the tremendous effort that is continually given to the education of the young in our Catholic schools. The gift of Catholic education is something that we must continue to protect in the years to come. Five years ago we launched our Diocesan Academy Strategy through the work of the Diocesan Education Service. It is a policy which requires all of our schools to move forward to join families of schools within local multi academy companies and this policy came with my endorsement and that of our Diocesan Trustees. By September of this year, 145 of our Diocesan schools will belong to a local multi academy company.

The Diocesan strategy for the academisation of our schools has unfolded and developed as we have faced the changing needs of schools and worked within the framework of the needs of the Archdiocese and the educational agenda of our country. I know that the work of academisation has been challenging, demanding on time and resources, but it is bringing many benefits to schools across the Archdiocese and ensuring that our schools provide the highest quality of education for our children.

I appreciate that our policy for academisation has not always been welcomed and there is some level of resistance to the plans for the development of the MACs. Whilst I appreciate the sentiments that have been expressed and the dialogue that has taken place, after five years the time has come to move to the next stage.

1/continued

In writing to you today, I am requesting every Catholic Voluntary Aided school under the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Birmingham to join a multi academy company of Catholic schools by September 2022, or to be in the process of doing so by this time. This must be in accordance with the plans provided by the DES for the local family of schools in your area. I ask for the full cooperation of chairs and foundation governors to support our schools in moving forward with this essential aspect of educational reform in the Archdiocese. This is one of the important ways in which you represent the Archdiocese as foundation governors.

In making this request I want to add my endorsement of the work of the Diocesan Education Service in directing and supporting our schools in so many aspects of education, and especially in advancing our policy for the academisation of our schools. The DES enjoys my support and appreciation for the excellent direction and advice it provides to our school communities.

I sincerely thank you for the work you undertake on behalf of our school communities. I know it is not always easy. I appreciate the vision, cooperation, enthusiasm and support of so many people who have enabled the development of our multi academy companies to take place and continue to offer them loyal support. I thank so many others who will now join in this essential work which forms a significant part of the work of our Diocesan Plan to strengthen our mission in the years to come.

Yours sincerely in Christ

+ Bernard Longley

✠Bernard Longley
Archbishop of Birmingham