

Talks over Government Academy Plan



Education Service in Talks over Government Academy Plan

THE CATHOLIC Education Service (CES) is working with the Government on new Memoranda of Understanding to ensure the protection of the character and ethos of church schools, following the Chancellor's announcement that all state schools in England are to become academies by 2020.

The Government set out its vision for schools in England in a White Paper launched on 17 March. The paper includes a blueprint for the new system of academisation and outlines Memoranda of Understanding to be agreed between the Department for Education, the CES and the Church of England.

The Memoranda, states the White Paper, will include the acknowledgement that "churches will expect their academies to remain part of a diocesan family of schools" and will set "clear protocols" for agreeing what is required of a church school as they convert to academy status. A meeting between the Government and the CES on the Memoranda took place on Monday. Paul Barber (pictured), director of the CES, welcomed the Government's "commitment to our continued relationship".

The Revd Nigel Genders, chief education officer for the Church of England, said: "The Church of England has built up a bank of expertise and a collaborative partnership between dioceses, the Department for Education and Regional Schools Commissioners.

"The aim of the academy programme is not to create homogenous institutions but to ensure talent and expertise are pooled." The White Paper also states that the Government is to ensure that all faith schools are "inclusive and welcoming to the communities around them, with a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain".

Last Thursday, on the morning following the Budget speech, the Chancellor visited a Catholic academy in Garforth near Leeds to reveal more details of government plans to double sports funding for every primary school. The school, St Benedict's, uses the current sports premium funding to ensure that every child has the opportunity to join in sporting activities with a series of professional partners.

Head teacher Kieron Flood said: "We believe that promoting a healthy lifestyle through active participation in sport and PE will ensure that children will develop a life-long love of sport through their physical literacy."

Rose Gamble - The Tablet