

# **THE AURIGA ACADEMY TRUST**

## **STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN (updated – May 2021)**

**Our Vision: *“The Auriga Academy Trust aims to provide outstanding special needs education for the local community close to where people live”***

### **Background**

The Auriga Academy Trust was formed in October 2016 from the two special needs schools in Richmond upon Thames. Clarendon School and Strathmore School. The driving force behind the formation of the Trust was to increase capacity to meet a steadily growing demand for specialist provision which was, in part, being met by the independent sector.

The foundation of the Trust was fully supported by the local authority and Achieving for Children (AfC), a not-for-profit social enterprise that provides the LA with educational services. The Trust and AfC continue to work closely together.

In 2019 the Trust successfully applied to open a new Free School, Capella House. The secondary site opened in September 2019, and the planned opening for the primary site is September 2021.

### **Our Schools**

Currently we have three schools; Clarendon, which is for young people aged 4-16 with moderate learning difficulties and additional complex needs including autism; Strathmore, which is for young people aged 4-19 with severe learning difficulties; and Capella House, which is for young people aged 4-19 with speech, language and communication difficulties. Clarendon also oversees The Gateway, which is purpose built secondary provision co-located with Twickenham School where students, with a diagnosis of autism, benefit from having specialist support targeting their individual needs whilst allowing them to access a mainstream education.

Clarendon and Strathmore were inspected by Ofsted in 2019 and retained their ‘Outstanding’ and ‘Good’ judgements. Capella House, as a new school, has yet to be inspected.

### **What we have achieved so far**

At our inception in 2016, we had 179 pupils across two schools. By 2020 we had expanded to 277 pupils, which is an increase of 52%. By 2024 we are projecting that we will have over 400 pupils, which would be a further increase of 44%.

We have opened a new Free School, Capella House, relocated the two original schools to new sites, and we have also opened four new sites across the borough. These sites are co-

located with mainstream schools which allows us many opportunities for working with our neighbours and enhances inclusion.

In 2015 18% of pupils in Richmond who had an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) were being educated in the independent sector. By 2020, that figure had fallen to less than 10%, and that was despite an overall growth in the number of pupils who had an EHCP. If the 18% figure had been maintained during that period it would have cost the local taxpayers £1,500,000. It is a statistic that is not widely known but one which we, at Auriga, are proud of.

Therapy is an integral part of the development and care of special needs pupils, and we are fully aware that our pupils need not only high-quality therapy but also consistency of provision. In order to meet that exacting standard of quality and consistency, we are now employing our own therapists, and this is an area we want to develop further.

We recognise that our staff are our biggest asset. Staff development, wellbeing and retention is key to ensuring that our pupils receive the best possible education. We have been dismayed that there is now less focus on special needs in Initial Teacher Training (ITT); therefore, we have introduced an apprentice scheme whereby staff can learn and progress while working in the Trust. We are delighted that many of our teachers have gained QTS status while working and being supported by us. We are also looking to build links with local teaching universities to provide information and promote special needs teaching.

## **Our organisation**

When the Trust was first conceived, we introduced a standard scheme of delegation which gave each Local Governing Board (LGB) a high degree of autonomy over all areas relating to their individual schools. Over the last four years we have learnt a lot about how to organise ourselves, within the Trust, to be more effective and productive and, above all, how to provide greater benefit for our pupils and their families.

We have conducted a comprehensive review of the way in which we work which, to a certain extent, is still continuing. The initial part of the review focused on admin functions and systems. This has resulted in the admin functions being concentrated in a central trust team. Not only has this brought about greater consistency, but it has also avoided duplication and waste that will, in the longer term, be reflected in financial savings.

For the same reasons, we have also introduced integrated systems (HR, reporting, finance etc.) across the Trust. While these systems have already produced benefits, it would be fair to say that we have yet to maximise their potential and we continue to implement further improvements.

Throughout the life of the Trust our finance and resources have been extremely well managed. We have consistently produced strong accounts, often in difficult times. Part of the philosophy of the Trust is to work very closely with the LA and the local community for

the benefit of our pupils and their families. A consequence of this philosophy has been that we have acted in a restrained manner when considering any increases in charges while our accounts remain strong. While we will continue with this approach, we also recognise that we must also operate at a level that will guarantee the quality of our offer.

Our leadership remains very strong. Not only are we committed to outstanding leadership at the top from our trustees, governors and Headteachers, but right through the organisation. It is our firm belief that while leadership must provide inspiration, guidance, and example; it is by involving, and engaging, the whole workforce in the direction and development of the Trust, that we will thrive as a strong organisation.

We believe that every decision we make should on the premise of 'will it be of benefit to our students', to that end, we want the prime focus of the LGBs to be student centric, we want them to concentrate on the education, safeguarding and welfare of the students in their school, and for the Trust to lead on areas (e.g. premises, resources, systems etc.) where it has greater expertise and can combine resources effectively.

We place a high level of importance on recruitment and, over the years, have attracted a number of extremely talented, experienced and knowledgeable people at all levels. We will continue to do so.

### **Our future**

Part of our future is part of our past. We take a considerable amount of time and effort to look back at what we have done; what we have done well, what we could do better, and what our future direction should be. This, we believe, makes us stronger and gives us a continual focus on sustained improvement in the quality of education, in the development and support of our staff, and in the efficiency of our operations that support them.

We will continue with our strategic review of the organisation of the Trust in order to identify and implement further improvements.

We want all of our schools to have an 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgement in three years' time (depending on the timing of their next inspection).

We will continue to interrogate our operating systems to ensure that we maximise their full potential.

We will continue to look at increasing our student capacity, where it is needed locally, wherever we can, by identifying new premises and by working with other schools either in partnership or by welcoming them into the Auriga family of schools.

We will produce a 'growth plan' that will articulate our strategy on increasing the number of schools in the Trust.

We will look to further enhance our therapy offer.

We already work in partnership with mainstream colleagues, using our expertise to provide advice and support for the benefit of students in the mainstream with special educational needs; and we intend to build our capacity so that we can provide a more comprehensive outreach service.

Will seek further inclusion opportunities with our co-located schools for the benefit of both sets of students while also positively influencing the attitudes of future generations to special needs and inclusion.

We will develop our buildings, and their use, to the point where they can be considered to be community hubs and become an integral part of that communities.

We will consider opportunities to generate income for investment in the Trust. This could involve the use of our facilities, the development of our services, as well as building relationships with local businesses.

We will continue to develop people within the Trust system to support the development of high-quality staff. This will be underscored by promoting a 'culture of excellence' in everything we do throughout the Trust, and which will culminate in the Trust being widely recognised as a 'Centre of Excellence'.

We expect to open Capella House primary centre in September 2021. Working with Achieving for Children we will seek to use part of this facility as an assessment centre for pre-school and early years children, with SEND, from across the borough, supporting them to access the most appropriate education provision available. We will seek to guarantee the funding of this resource through a commitment from AfC.

The board of trustees, and Local Governing Boards, will review their own effectiveness annually aware that they have overall responsibility for the development, safeguarding and welfare of all the children, and staff, within the trust.

A Trust Strategic Implementation Plan will be developed and monitored regularly to ensure that our strategic momentum is maintained. The Trust Strategic Business Plan will be formally reviewed annually.

We will remain fully focused on achieving our vision; ***“to provide outstanding SEND education for the local community close to where they live.”***

**Harry James**  
**Chair, Board of Trustees**

**Ivan Pryce**  
**Chief Executive Officer**