

Thank you for your feedback to date on the proposed merger.

We want to give a huge thank you to all the parents, staff, and community partners who have taken the time to respond to our consultation. We have read every single comment, and your feedback is incredibly valuable.

You have told us that you understand the reasons for the merger.

You told us your biggest worries are about the specialisms within our schools being taken away and if money and resources intended for our pupils would be used in mainstream schools.

The aim of this document is to answer those specific questions as clearly as we can.

Our Reassurance to All Stakeholders

We've heard your concerns, and we want to be very clear about the following:

- For parents of children at our special schools: This is not about "diluting" the specialist provision your child needs. Your child's school will continue to be a centre of excellence, and its funding and resources, including therapy, will be protected.
- For parents at Coombe mainstream schools: This merger is not about turning those school into an "SEND-only-focused" school. It's about strengthening the high-quality mainstream education the pupils already receive, while also getting better at supporting *all* children.

The goal is for both types of schools to learn from each other, share best practices, and support our whole community. We believe this collaboration will achieve significant benefits for children and young people in Kingston and Richmond.

What Will Stay the Same?

- ✓ Your child's school's name, uniform, and individual identity.
- ✓ Your child's school's admissions, school day times, and term dates.
- ✓ Your child's Headteacher; they will continue to lead the school and be your main point of contact.
- ✓ Your child's school's Local Governing Body, which includes parent representatives.

What Will Change?

- ➔ A single Trust Board will be created to oversee all the schools, with members from both current Trusts. New trustees will be appointed based on the skills we need.
- ➔ A combined leadership team will be led by Esther Brooks (current CEO of Coombe Academy Trust), with Ivan Pryce (current CEO of AAT) as Deputy CEO, ensuring

experience and knowledge of successfully running special schools remains within the executive leadership team.

→ Our central support teams (like finance, HR, and IT) will work together to provide stronger, more efficient support to all schools.

→ Over time, all schools will benefit from shared training and resources.

Your Questions Answered

We've grouped your main questions into themes.

1. Your Child's School

Will my child's school name, uniform, or logo change?

No. We are committed to this. Our formal agreement (called the Unified Provision Charter) states that all schools will "retain their distinctive character, name, branding, and community identity".

Will my child notice any changes to their school day?

No. There are no plans to change the school day, timetables, or term dates.

2. Money & Funding

How will you protect our special school's budget from being spent on mainstream (or vice-versa)?

This is a really important question.

- Money for children with Special Educational Needs (SEND), such as from an EHCP, will *only* be spent on the support for that child or for the specialist provision it's intended for. This includes for Therapy.
- In short, the funding for special schools and mainstream schools will remain unchanged by the merger. It is the development of greater efficiencies through centralised services and purchasing that will reduce costs in the longer term.

We want to make clear that neither Auriga or Coombe need to merge for financial reasons. Both Trusts are financially secure and have accounts audited independently. Our balanced, 3-year budgets are sent each year to the DfE for checking.

How will you pay for the costs of the merger (like legal fees)?

These one-off costs will be paid from the central office budget. This money is set aside for this kind of work every year.

3. Leadership & Your School's Voice

Will our school still have a say in its own running?

Yes. Each school will keep its own "Local Governing Body" (LGB) to provide local focus and oversight. This group will still include parent representatives.

Will our school have to follow a standard, one-size-fits-all curriculum?

No. The Charter guarantees that all schools will "retain autonomy over curriculum design and delivery." Our special schools need to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils who attend that school and, as now, continually adjusts that curriculum as children's needs change. The benefit is that schools can choose to collaborate and share great ideas, but they won't be forced to.

Will parents have a voice on the new, overarching Trust board? Your voice is mainly represented at the local level.

- Parents will continue to be elected, by parents, to every Local Governing Body.
- The Chairs and Vice Chairs of these local bodies then meet regularly with the main Trust Board Chairs to share insights and feedback from their schools.
- The Trustee Board will be formed from both existing boards based on a skills audit. Some of the make up, based on the skills analysis may include a Trustee appointed for their skill and this person may also be a parent.

4. Teaching, Quality, and Support

How will this merger *actually* help my child's learning?

Whilst Auriga Schools provide specialist training for our staff, our pupils can benefit from mainstream approaches that we can adapt. Learning about those approaches from mainstream staff who have a level of training and expertise that we cannot provide, supports us to ensure we are always using the most up to date and appropriate techniques and approaches. Our goal is to provide "wider curriculum knowledge" and "enhanced learning experiences by sharing the best ideas, specialist skills, and resources from all our schools, we can create opportunities that a single school couldn't offer alone. We also work with local universities, other school trusts, and specialist advisors to keep improving our teaching.

How will teachers be supported?

We plan to create even better professional development opportunities. This will allow teachers and support staff to collaborate, share what works, and develop new skills (especially in supporting children with SEND). Better supported and trained teachers mean better teaching for your children.

Staff in Auriga Schools receive specialist training in order that they can help our pupils learn best. We need our staff in our schools and will not move them to mainstream schools, unless there is an opportunity that individual members of staff wish to follow. Joining with Coombe will enable those staff to continue to develop without us losing their knowledge and experience completely. Similarly, we will be able to support mainstream staff who wish to learn more about working within a special school.

Auriga Schools have a proud reputation of being active in Richmond school communities and networks, not only with those mainstream schools we are co-located with. Any merger will not change our engagement with Richmond's schools and SEND communities.

What Happens Next?

- The consultation period officially runs until 1st December 2025.
- After that, all the feedback from parents, staff, and the community will be formally reviewed by both Trust Boards.
- This feedback will be a key part of the final decision.
- If the merger is approved, the earliest it would take place is September 2026.
- We will keep you updated through the schools' and the Trust's websites.

Have More Questions? Get in Touch!

Your feedback is still very welcome using the [consultation form](#) and [information on our website](#)

Ivan Pryce (CEO) is available to meet parents during his visits to each school, on the following dates.

Please email the info@aurigaacademytrust.org.uk to let us know if you would like to attend.

Strathmore @ Russell & Grey Court (Russell Campus)	28 /11/25	2:00pm
Capella & Clarendon Secondary	17/11/25	2:15pm
Strathmore Richard Reynolds	24/11/25	2:45pm
Clarendon Primary	27/11/25	8:45am
Capella Primary	28/11/25	8:45am

We trust this update has been helpful and has answered your most important questions.

Thank you for your feedback on the proposed merger, it is much appreciated