

We trust this Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document provides you with answers that are supportive of your queries.

It is important to us that all Stakeholders have their voices heard and their questions answered.

The online feedback form includes some questions for you.

Online feedback

We welcome online feedback using this **Form**

A consultation is a discussion and an opportunity for us to consider your thoughts. To do that effectively, we do need your contributions. Your insights will help us refine our implementation plans and ensure a smooth and successful transition.

Your questions will be added to the FAQ document, which we will update periodically in response to additional themes raised throughout the consultation.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

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Benefits of a merger

Why merge with Coombe Academy Trust?

AAT has considered a range of potential merger partners before commencing informal and formal due diligence with Coombe Academy Trust.

Working in partnership, the two trusts have identified their alignment in terms of their mission and vision statements, providing the synergy for the XYZ Multi Academy Trust to flourish.

How will we know if the merge is successful?

Visible and measurable improvements across various areas, including academic outcomes, will be closely scrutinised to ensure progress and impact.

Pupil emotional wellbeing, personal agency, social connection, and safety, alongside academic and vocational measures, and their ability to actively contribute to their communities, will be enhanced.

The financial strength of the trust will be an important indicator, with a focus on maintaining stability, achieving efficiencies, and reinvesting savings into schools to support students and staff. The realised economies of scale will be clearly reported to demonstrate the redirection of savings back towards benefitting pupils and staff. In addition, student attendance will be a vital measure, including the reduction in the number of persistently and severely absent students, reflecting the trust's ability to create engaging and supportive learning environments. Staff attendance will also be monitored to assess morale, well-being, and the effectiveness of staff support systems. Feedback gathered through surveys, including staff, parent, and student voices, will provide evidence of success as well as valuable insights into the experiences of the school community and help shape further improvements as well as the impact of the introduction of previous improvement initiatives. This engagement will ensure that the trust remains responsive to the needs of its stakeholders. The overarching goal is to establish a robust framework that allows all schools to become outstanding environments where students can learn, grow, achieve, and flourish.

Joint Mission Statement

Together, the Coombe and Auriga Academy Trusts are united in a shared moral purpose: to provide an inclusive, aspirational, and transformative education for every child and young person.

We are committed to enabling each learner to thrive/flourish - academically, socially, therapeutically, and personally - by cultivating curiosity, ambition, equity, and compassion in a culture rooted in trust and collaboration.

Our ambition is for our learners to be active contributors to their communities, making a positive difference and following clear pathways to independence, further education, employment, or meaningful adult lives.

Whether mainstream or specialist, every school in our partnership retains its unique identity while contributing to a collective commitment to excellence, innovation, and opportunity for all.

Joint Vision Statement

We envision a partnership of schools where every pupil has access to a world of opportunity - one that nurtures trust, aspiration, celebrates difference, promotes civic responsibility, and supports success.

Together, we:

- **Collaborate across contexts and communities** to share ideas, knowledge, expertise and best practice
- **Empower our staff** through world-class, lifelong professional development and purposeful career pathways
- **Champion equity and inclusion** so that every learner, regardless of need or background, is known, supported, and inspired to be the best you can possibly be
- **Develop resilient and thriving schools** through strong, transparent leadership and robust governance, and aligned operational systems
- **Innovate with purpose**, pioneering evidence-informed educational practice that evolves sensitively with our learners' and society's needs
- **Promote all learner voice**, independence, and meaningful pathways into adulthood,
- **Partner with families**, recognising their vital role in shaping successful futures

In all we do, we lead with integrity, hope, and optimism. Our Trusts/Schools stand together - distinctive and united, preparing our communities for a future full of possibilities.

Protecting the characteristics of our schools and their provision and specialisms.

We have composed a Charter that sets out the principles and commitments that will safeguard the identity, ethos, and excellence of both specialist and mainstream provision within the merged trust.

It will ensure that the unique strengths of all *XYZ Multi Academy Trust* schools are preserved, celebrated, and enhanced within a collaborative, inclusive educational partnership. You can read more about our united inclusion charter here [Proposed Unified Provision Charter.docx](#)

Is this a rescue or takeover?

This is not a rescue or takeover. It is a strategic partnership from a position of strength, designed to future-proof AAT's and CAT schools and amplify their impact.

Finance and Resources

Would there be financial advantages or disadvantages?

Although baseline per-pupil funding stays the same, economies of scale mean more resources can be redirected into learning and services. Over time, consolidated purchasing, staffing, and services would lower costs, which would bring benefits to all students.

Due diligence has confirmed that both trusts are financially healthy. However, in keeping with the increased pressure on funding within all schools, a larger MAT would enable the unique identity of each school to be maintained, whilst furthering economic sustainability and providing further economies of scale.

As currently takes place within AAT and CAT, if a school projects an in-year deficit, the Trust Board may approve justified exceptions supported by a recovery plan and reserves.

Community & Identity

Will this change schools' admissions procedures?

There will be no changes to the published admission arrangements for any of the schools in either Trust. Admissions Policies will continue to be reviewed in line with the Admissions Code and not as a result of the merger.

Special Schools will continue to collaborate with AfC regarding consultations in the same way as now.

Would the Trust or School names change?

Each school's identity will continue within the MAT. No school name would change unless a local governing body felt a school name needed to change over time. A new name of *XYZ Multi Academy Trust* enables the newly merged Trust to be united by our vision, values, and aims whilst promoting the ethos that all schools are equal within the MAT.

Will community and school relationships change?

The relationship within the community would remain unchanged, with each school leadership and staff working in close partnership with their local community.

Will uniform change?

Current school uniforms will remain unchanged.

Will school times & term dates change?

Day timings and holiday schedules will remain; any future changes would involve thorough consultation.

Staff and Employment

Are there risks of redundancy?

The merger itself will not automatically trigger redundancies. Both Trusts recognise the importance of retaining their teams in their current form during the initial phase of the merger due to the different nature and operational models of the schools involved. Because of these differences, no immediate changes will be made to staffing structures. Separate budgetary pressures, which are being experienced nationwide, could affect staffing models at individual schools or in central teams in the future. Some central trust staff may experience changes in their role, e.g., focus on new areas, expansion of responsibilities due to growth. Existing staff won't be moved without agreement. We anticipate that the merger will create opportunities for staff to take on new roles. New roles may require multi-site coverage, which would be negotiated within individuals. The trust remains committed to staff well-being and development through its People Strategy.

Will existing employment terms and conditions be retained?

Employees will keep their current terms under TUPE arrangements. Employee Pensions are protected and will not be changed or affected as part of the merger.

What would happen to the Leadership Team?

The trust would be led by the current CAT Chief Executive Officer, Esther Brooks. Ivan Pryce, CEO at AAT, would become Deputy CEO - with responsibility for SEND and School Improvement Systems. Once systems are positively aligned, the Executive team will identify the future leadership structure the new Trust needs in order to build on the skills within the current school improvement teams and continue to lead successful and thriving schools.

The CEO would lead a multidisciplinary team, including a Chief Operations Officer, a Finance director, and a central team. The merged MAT would have expertise in finance, HR, premises, and IT. Support from the central team would complement the skills and experience of the staff based in each school to ensure these vital services support the effective running of each school. There will be a revised Trust-wide school improvement structure, building on the skills within the current school improvement teams. Our Headteachers will continue to be the key leaders in each of the schools and remain central to school leadership. A combined support team will bolster local school staff in managing finance, HR, and premises efficiently.

Process & Governance

What would happen to the legal entity of the Trust?

Legally, one trust has to be transferred, and one has to be the receiving trust, culminating in AAT transferring its schools to CAT, which would be re-named. The new name is [To Be Confirmed](#).

What would happen to the governance structure?

A single Trust Board, with representatives from both predecessor boards, will oversee strategy, finances, and the educational mission. The single trust board would have representation from both of the current boards, valuing the expertise of special and mainstream education across a range of skills.

The Single Trust Board would have the necessary skills mix including mainstream and special backgrounds, as well as in other specific areas. A Trust Skills Matrix will be produced to ensure necessary skills coverage. The Local School Governance Bodies (LGBs) would remain unchanged at each school and would retain focused oversight with input from parents and staff.

Will XYZ Multi Academy Trust continue to expand?

XYZ Multi Academy Trust is open to partnering with additional local schools, working to benefit all children and young people, but only where it benefits students in our existing as well as additional schools. Any application would be considered carefully, including the potential impact on our current schools, and a similar consultation exercise would be undertaken before

What would happen if any of the schools experienced academic decline?

The trust's oversight supports early identification of performance dips. Intervention can include support from within the trust or external experts, leveraging the trust's collective strength. The aligned school improvement systems and teams will quickly pick up on any concerns.

When might this merger occur? What are the next steps?

Trustees will review consultation feedback after 28/11/25 before deciding next steps. Whilst there is no formal voting process, both boards of trustees highly value stakeholders and will carefully consider the majority views. The feedback received during the engagement period will remain invaluable and will continue to play an important role in shaping the next steps of the merger process. A comprehensive communication plan will be implemented to ensure stakeholders remain informed and engaged as the process moves forward.

If it is agreed to proceed to the next stage of due diligence, an application would be made to the DfE Regional Board for approval. The earliest the merger would take place is September 2026.