



COOMBE ACADEMY TRUST

Executive Summary and Contents

Role: Chief Operations Officer and Chief Finance Officer

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Leading Strategic Growth and Operational Excellence



A merger of Auriga Academy Trust
with Coombe Academy Trust to
form Helix Learning Trust





A Message from the Board of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in the position of Chief Operations and Finance Officer. This appointment comes at a vital time as we integrate our schools into a unified, resilient Trust.

The merger of Coombe Academy Trust and Auriga Academy Trust has been approved by the DfE (Awaiting approval). As part of the merge, the Trust is being renamed with the proposed name of Helix Learning Trust.

While the Helix name will be new, it represents the combined talent, energy, and vision of two successful Trusts with a decade-long track record of delivering high-quality education. We are immensely proud of our schools' reputations and the vital contribution they make to our local communities across Kingston, and Richmond.

The Board is seeking a leader who can thrive during a period of significant integration and consolidation. This role offers the opportunity to join a Senior Leadership Team dedicated to developing a 'best-in-class' approach to inclusive education. As a Board, we are committed to providing the strategic support and investment necessary to ensure our central functions are as high-performing as our classrooms.

We look forward to meeting candidates who share our ambition for excellence and our commitment to financial and operational resilience. I wish you every success in your application.



A message from the CEO

The creation of Helix Learning Trust marks a transformative milestone as we merge the expertise of Auriga Academy Trust and Coombe Academy Trust across the boroughs of Kingston, and Richmond. We are building a unified organisation responsible for 3,800 pupils across eight schools, blending mainstream excellence with specialist SEND provision.

Our vision for Helix is to drive exceptional educational outcomes and provide sector-leading professional development, while pioneering greater SEND inclusion across all our schools. By integrating specialist expertise with mainstream excellence, we are directly answering the DfE's call for inclusive Trust growth. Helix is ideally positioned to lead the sector, turning the evolving social and financial challenges of modern education into opportunities for innovation.

To achieve this, we are seeking a Chief Operations and Finance Officer who will serve as a strategic partner to myself and the Board. Beyond oversight; we are looking for a leader to drive a comprehensive 24-month integration programme, embedding best practices across Finance, HR, Estates, and IT.

This is a pivotal appointment for Helix Learning Trust, requiring a leader who will serve as a high-level executive partner and 'co-pilot' throughout this transformative period. Beyond functional oversight, the successful candidate will be a senior architect of our future, leading the intricate sequencing and optimisation of our combined enabling functions. We are seeking a strategic operator with proven experience in organisational design and large-scale integration—someone capable of managing the complexities of a live merger to create the operational headroom necessary for our schools to thrive. This role demands a senior executive perspective to ensure that as we grow, our central systems are not just consolidated, but are fundamentally designed to be resilient, innovative, and best-in-class.

We hope this insight into Helix Learning Trust inspires you to join us. I look forward to discussing the role with you further and exploring the strategic contribution you can make to our team.

Esther





Our Vision and Mission

Our mission is to combine mainstream excellence with specialist SEND expertise to drive exceptional outcomes for all 3,800 pupils across our schools. We aim to lead the sector in inclusive education, turning the financial and professional challenges of modern schooling into opportunities for innovation.

The Helix* Portfolio

We will operate a diverse family of **8 schools** across Kingston, and Richmond supported by a **£34m** annual budget.

- **2 Mainstream Secondary Schools** and a combined **Sixth Form**.
- **3 Mainstream Nursery and Primary Schools**.
- **3 SEND Specialist Schools** (providing both Primary and Secondary provision) over 9 sites.
- **5 Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs)** integrated within our mainstream settings from Nursery to Key Stage 4.

Our Co-Location Model: While our SEND schools are co-located with mainstream hosts to foster inclusion, they maintain entirely separate leadership, management, and specialist facilities.



The Role: Purpose

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Trust Board, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) will:

- Uphold, promote and model the vision and values of the Helix Learning Trust at all times.
- Oversee the strategic development and operations of the Trust, taking operational responsibility for strategic initiatives.
- Facilitate the best possible educational provision and outcomes by successfully removing any non-academic barriers to achieving the Trust's goals.
- Be the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Trust, taking responsibility for ensuring financial compliance with statutory and legal requirements, as well as being responsible for financial management and reporting across the academies and the Trust.
- Provides outstanding and inspirational leadership to continuously improve the business capability, service effectiveness, and overall efficiency of the Trust by taking lead operational responsibility for Finance, HR, Estates, Governance, IT, GDPR and Administration (pupil and school).
- Continue to build upon and embed a culture focused on working collaboratively with senior colleagues and Trustees.

Job Description

1. Vision, strategy, and leadership:

- Embed the Trust's mission, ethos and values into all leadership decisions to prioritise student outcomes.
- Partner with the CEO to design business strategies, translate them into operational objectives, and lead due diligence and integration for joining schools.
- Lead and scale central services (Finance, HR, Estates, Governance, IT, Data, and Admin) to ensure high performance, efficiency, and clear accountability across the Trust.
- Direct a comprehensive 24-month integration programme following the merger, embedding cultural and operational best practices across Finance, HR, Estates, and IT.



Job Description

1. Vision, strategy, and leadership (continued):

- Provide clear leadership and effective management across all areas of responsibility including the appraisal and performance review of Directors / Managers as required.
- Provide information, insight, and advice to senior leaders across the Trust on the efficiency of operations, enabling them to optimise their own areas of responsibility.
- Take an active role in developing and maintaining external links and relationships and promoting the Helix Learning Trust.
- Monitor all operational policies ensuring they are relevant, reflect up to date legislation and best practice and that all statutory obligations are complied with.
- Keep informed of national policy and practice affecting operations including relevant legislation, and use this to inform strategy, policy and delivery across the Trust accordingly.

2. Human Resources:

- Provide strategic oversight regarding effective retention and recruitment strategies.
- Ensure robust process and systems are in place to ensure the accuracy of information for all HR processing and reporting including the SCR and payroll.
- Ensure the Trust HR team is addressing the needs of all schools by providing recruitment and onboarding support and relevant HR guidance.
- Monitor staff absence across the Trust and work with schools to ensure effective strategic management.
- Ensure all DfE and statutory reporting requirements are met.



Job Description

3. Finance:

- Act as the CFO, in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook all DfE/Statutory reporting requirements.
- Manage complex organisational risk and capacity during a period of live merger, providing the Board with sophisticated insight and advice on financial resilience and operational efficiency.
- To advise and support the CEO in the financial aspects of their responsibilities as the Trust Accounting Officer.
- Ensure financial viability of the Trust and provide expert advice to all stakeholders, working with Headteachers to manage risks against agreed KPIs.
- Ensure robust financial oversight of financial performance and cash management by reviewing monthly financials, forecasts, and 3-year budgets; highlight risks to the CEO and Board.
- Liaise with the relevant funding agencies to ensure that the Trust maximises all income opportunities.
- Support in the identifying and applications for grant funding and Bids for Growth, contributing to the successful implementation of future growth plans.
- Develop contacts with business and external partners to develop and generate sources of income which support the development objectives of the schools
- Provide effective leadership and guidance in the development of financially sustainable staffing models.
- Lead contract negotiations, tenders, and service agreements to ensure "best value" across the Trust.
- Maintain a rigorous internal control environment as evidenced by successful internal and external audits.

4. Data Protection:

- Act as the Data Protection Lead for the Trust acting as key point of contact for the Data Protection Officer.
- Across the Trust monitor and ensure that all breaches, SARs and FOIRs are addressed within the appropriate time frame.
- Establish a culture of data security across the Trust.
- Ensure all Information Commissioner's' Office reporting requirements are met.



Job Description

5. Estates:

- Provide effective leadership and guidance in the development of sustainable estates strategies, whilst also be executive sponsor of capital projects including bids, partnership engagement and project implementation.
- Ensure the Trust's estate reflects the demands of its pupils, students, staff and external stakeholders and that education and services are delivered in as state-of-the-art environment as is possible.
- Provide commercial input for the evaluation of tenders, for building contracts and planned maintenance, and ensure there is value for money in contract procurement and oversight.
- Oversee all lease negotiations and ensure compliance with funding body requirements where this is required.
- Ensure a robust culture of health and safety through monitored practices to ensure a secure environment for all staff and students.
- Ensure the Trust Estates Team is addressing the needs of each school by providing accurate information, managing access for necessary works, managing the annual H&S and Fire Risk Assessment process, including liaising routinely with Headteachers.

6. Administration (including pupil):

- Ensure each school has an effective administration framework.
- Partner with the School Improvement Team to oversee and evolve Trust-wide assessment and data management systems.
- Ensure the Pupil Administration function is addressing the needs of each school by providing accurate pupil information, managing admissions and consultations, managing the annual review process and exams.
- Ensure all DfE reporting requirements are met are met with total accuracy.

7. Governance:

- Monitor the capacity of the governance professional function ensuring that adequate resource is planned and available to manage governance support efficiently and that all reporting requirements are met.
- Assist in the development of governance structures/policies for review and approval.



Job Description

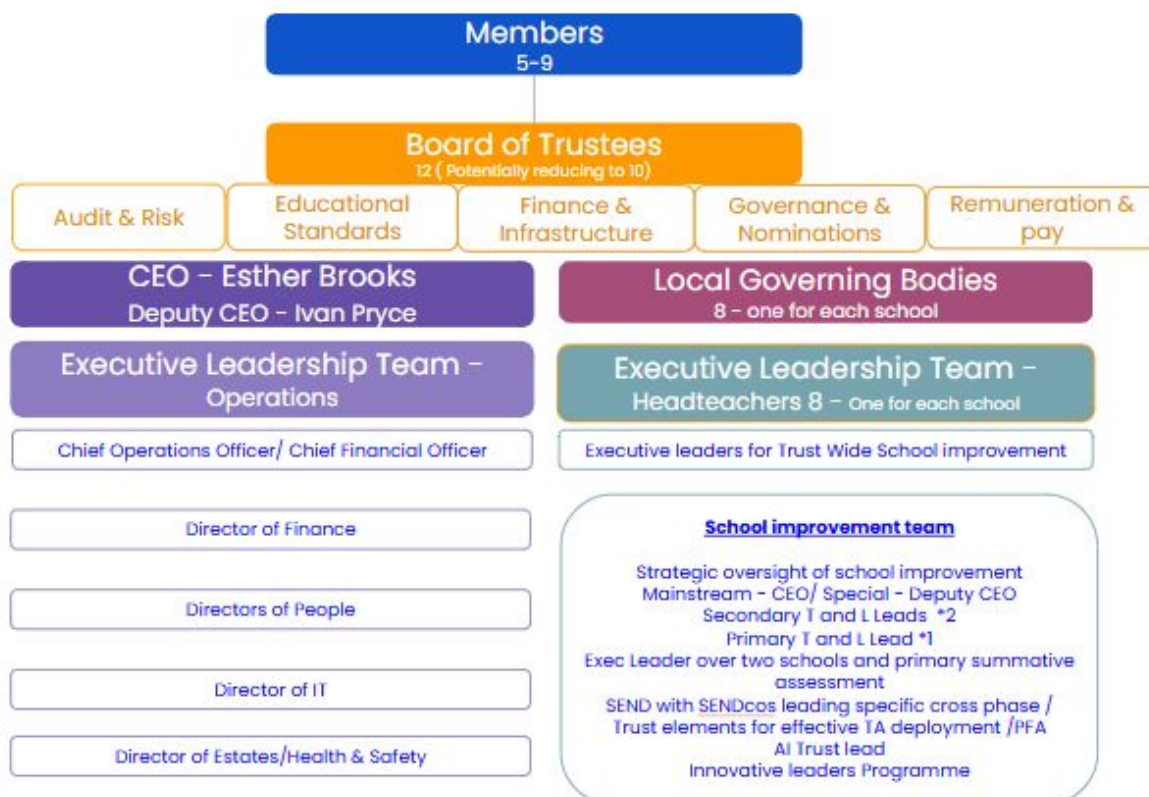
8. IT Services, Systems and Digital Innovation:

- Ensure that the Trust, and its constituent schools, has a strategy for using technology that is aligned to the overall vision and strategic plans of the Trust and takes into account the latest digital innovation.
- Ensure key IT operational issues are project managed effectively.
- Ensure the Trust has the necessary protections in place to protect us from cyber threats.
- Act as a key liaison with the IT Director, ensuring high levels of service.
- Provide commercial input for planning and evaluation of procurement which results in a high level of return on investment, and value for money for schools.

9. Marketing and Communications:

- Actively protect and enhance the brand and reputation of Helix Learning Trust.
- Provide oversight to the marketing lead in formulating and delivering high-impact communication strategies.
- Ensure all marketing and communications persuasively reflect the Trust's vision, mission, and core values.

Organisational Structure - Under Helix Learning Trust (proposed)





Person Specification

Key Leadership Skills/Knowledge and Experience Required:

- Educated to degree level with an associated relevant finance qualification such as the [ICAEW](#), [ACCA](#), [CIMA](#) or [CIPFA](#) (including CIPFA qualifications developed in partnership with [ISBL](#)).
- A track record of operating as a senior executive partner, with the ability to influence at Board level and translate high-level strategy into robust operational objectives.
- Expertise in managing complex change and capacity, with a demonstrated ability to identify and mitigate risks while scaling central services across a diverse portfolio of schools.
- Strategic commercial acumen, with the ability to not only consolidate existing systems but to pioneer new, innovative approaches to business capability and service effectiveness.
- An understanding of the principles of effective change management and experience of leading change, achieving improvement and demonstrable positive impact on organisation performance.
- To be able to think strategically and to articulate a clear vision.
- A track record of creating a healthy and sustainable business model.
- Experience of effective business management in times of austerity, as would experience in the education or not-for-profit sector.
- Experience working at Board level with an understanding of how effective governance can support the organisation and lead to positive change.
- An appetite to seek out and develop innovative practices, including implementation of new technologies and achieving system and process improvements.
- Excellent communication skills with experience of presenting and communicating information and ideas using all forms of communication.
- Effective networking skills and experience of working with multi-agencies to develop new approaches and accelerate improvement.
- Able to support and work within the ethos and values of the Helix Learning Trust.
- Understanding of and commitment to promoting Equality of Opportunity and safeguarding responsibilities within the Trust.

Appointment Process and How to Apply

Candidates should email the application form and covering letter addressed to the Trustees and CEO, Esther Brooks, to COOVacancy@coombe.org.uk addressing the criteria in the role description and person specification, as detailed in this pack. We welcome applicants to speak with the CEO prior to submitting your application. To arrange a telephone call please email:

Chloe Barlow / Sarah Lomer - Co-Directors of People at COOVacancy@coombe.org.uk

Closing date: Friday 10th April 2026 **Start date:** ASAP **Salary:** Competitive

If sufficient applications are received, Interviews may be held before the closing date.



The Coombe Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee (company number 7905433, registered in England and Wales) that has its registered office at:

Coombe Boys' School
Blakes Lane, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 6NU.

Trust related enquiries:
trustenquiries@coombe.org.uk

