

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Rainham Mark Education Trust (RMET) & Veritas Multi Academy Trust (VMAT) Proposed Merger Consultation

<p>Why is a merger being considered and why now?</p>	<p>Rainham Mark Education Trust and Veritas Multi Academy Trust have already been working successfully in close collaboration with one another, following Dr Kerry Jordan-Daus being appointed as the interim CEO of RMET; after the departure of the former CEO.</p> <p>As Dr Jordan-Daus has a proven track record of transformational leadership across all phases in education, preliminary discussions had already taken place through both Trust Boards as to whether this could become a permanent arrangement, through the merger of both Trusts.</p> <p>Following careful consideration, and in the best interests of the children and young people, staff and local communities that both Trusts serve, we are excited by the prospects and benefits that a potential merger will bring and feel that this is an opportune time for both Trusts to join and grow together.</p>
<p>Who makes the final decision on the proposal?</p>	<p>Each Trust Board will independently make a decision if the merger will proceed based on the outcomes of the due diligence process and consultation with all stakeholders. It is expected that this decision will be made by both Trust boards no later than the end of March 2025.</p> <p>An application will then be submitted to the DfE. The application is then considered by the Regional Advisory Board of the DfE, chaired by the Regional Director for the South East. Ultimate decision-making responsibility lies with the regional DfE board.</p>
<p>What does the due diligence process involve?</p>	<p>Both Trusts independently carry out due diligence on each other. As part of this thorough process, a number of areas are explored. These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal, compliance & contracts 2. Financial stability and compliance 3. HR & organisational 4. Premises, estates and property 5. Quality of education, standards & safeguarding 6. Reputation of the Trust and its schools
<p>Would other schools join us and who would make the decision?</p>	<p>Yes, other primary and/or secondary schools could join in the future.</p> <p>The creation of a larger Trust could bring additional benefits for children and young people, staff and local communities, however, our priority at this stage, if approved, is to focus on the successful and smooth merging of both Trusts.</p>

	<p>Opportunities for further growth after this point would be carefully considered by the Trust Board, with decisions always made in the best interest of our immediate school communities.</p>
<p>What are the advantages in this merger?</p>	<p>There are many reasons why both Trust Boards believe that a merger is in the interests of Rainham Mark Education Trust and Veritas Multi Academy Trust.</p> <p>First and foremost, we believe it would further enhance the educational opportunities and experiences our children and young people and staff receive. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School improvement is at the heart of both Trusts. Each Trust has specific expertise, and a merger would provide increased capacity for school improvement and widen the scope of work with an increased pool of staff to carry out school improvement work. • Both current Trusts would benefit from working with a wider range of colleagues, enhancing professional development opportunities and strengthening recruitment and retention of high-quality staff. • Governance at all levels would further diversify and provide the opportunity to build on existing governance skills and expertise. • Combining the expertise of our central teams will provide benefits for all. • There is alignment of vision and values of both Trusts allowing a smooth transition and collaboration, including with the interim CEO already having used this period to enact new collaborations across the two Trusts. This close working will be strengthened through a merger. • A merger will help to provide much needed stability to Rainham Mark Education Trust; through the leadership of Dr Kerry Jordan-Daus. • Financial planning and greater economies of scale will ensure long term benefits to Trust growth and school improvement by making scarce resources go further. This will mean more money going to our schools. • Larger Trusts benefit from other financial gains, e.g. an annual condition grant to support the development of our estates and school buildings <p>In addition, it will help support the ongoing sustainability of both Trusts and its schools from an operational perspective, with reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department for Education continues to actively promote the creation of larger Trusts, through mergers of smaller Trusts. This voluntary merger between both Rainham Mark Education Trust and Veritas Multi Academy Trust ensures that we have control over our future, rather than it being dictated to us. • Both Trusts have strategic priorities for growth, with a potential merger as one option to achieve this. • The creation of a larger Trust is more attractive to potential future schools joining and therefore provides immediate future

	<p>growth potential; with additional secondary schools joining our family of schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A merger further increases capacity for school improvement. • Small Trusts do not yield some of the benefits of larger Trusts. For example, financial efficiency. • A larger Trust provides more options for the future, e.g. bidding for a free school (new school).
What is the proposed timescale?	<p>A formal decision to merge will be made by the end of March 2025 by both Trust Boards.</p> <p>This decision will be informed by the completion of a due diligence process which is currently underway and a review of the feedback received from this consultation. Should a decision to merge be agreed, it is anticipated that the new Trust will be established for September 2025; following approval by the DfE Regional Director. However, these processes can take some time and be subject to delays so we will keep stakeholders informed of any changes to these proposed timescales.</p>
What will this mean for staff?	<p>We believe that the merging of both Trusts will bring benefits for our children and young people and communities, as well as our staff. Through increased collaboration, staff will have access to enhanced best practice sharing, resources and training.</p> <p>This merger is not about redundancies and both Trust Boards have made this commitment. If both Trust Boards did not believe that this merger would bring about benefits for our schools, our families, our communities and our people we would not be entertaining this proposal.</p> <p>This merger presents no changes to existing staffing. However, at the point of the merger (proposed for 1 September 2025), Veritas Multi Academy Trust staff will transfer to be formally employed by Rainham Mark Education Trust. As with any merger, there is always a 'transferring' Trust and a 'receiving' Trust; in accordance with legal frameworks. Veritas Multi Academy Trust is the 'transferring' Trust.</p> <p>Veritas Multi Academy Trust staff will be protected to transfer on the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. This is legally covered by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations; commonly known as TUPE.</p> <p>Prior to a merger there would be a full staff consultation regarding TUPE for Veritas staff, which is set out in the regulations. Further information on this will be shared at the appropriate time. We are committed to ensuring that this contractual change happens smoothly with no disruption.</p>
Will staff have to reapply for their jobs?	<p>There are no plans for this. Should any reorganisation decisions need to be made later down the line, those members of staff affected would be consulted with directly, in line with employment procedures.</p>

Will staff be moved across locations?	There is no plan to change the location of staff members' places of work. However, for those who want it, there may be opportunities to work across more settings and be part of a wider collaboration.
How will this support staff's professional development?	Following the merger, we hope there will be increased opportunities for collaboration and professional development for all staff with the Trust, including through best practice and resource sharing.
What does this mean for our children and young people?	<p>The merger will not interfere with the educational provision in any of our schools. It will enhance what we currently do. There will be no changes to senior leadership and parent and/or carer relationships with their child's school will continue as normal. The staff, including senior staff will continue to teach as they currently do.</p> <p>There will be improvements to the way we support teaching, for example in the capacity to provide additional staffing resource, information technology and funding. There will also be enhanced opportunities for developing the condition of our buildings to provide first-class facilities for everyone.</p>
Will the school names change?	No. All existing schools from both Trusts will retain their current names.
Will there be any changes to the admissions criteria?	No. All existing schools from both Trusts will continue to work directly with the merged Trust to ensure their own admissions policies and admissions criteria reflects the requirements of their own schools.
Will the curriculum change?	We currently already teach to the National Curriculum.
Would the term and holiday dates change?	<p>There will be no changes to published term and holiday dates. The Trust will continue to work with all schools to ensure dates best serve children and young people and staff within their community.</p> <p>Synchronised calendars are already in effect throughout both Trusts to allow for shared training and development opportunities on INSET days across the academic year.</p>
Would there be a change in school uniform?	No, all existing schools from both Trusts will retain their current school uniforms.
The schools across both Trusts are quite different, how will this work?	Each school will continue to retain their own unique identity, however, merging as a broader collective of schools will only help to enhance and diversify the experiences, opportunities and insights that our staff and teachers can benefit from.
How would governance arrangements work?	Currently each Trust has its own Board of Trustees. This would change and there would be one Trust board for the newly merged Trust. The newly formed Trust Board would be made up of skilled and experienced individuals and would comprise of existing Trustees from both Trusts. As with now, each school will continue to retain its own local academy committee (LAC), with responsibilities delegated from the Trust Board. There is no planned change to LAC arrangements.
Are there any financial risks to either Trust?	Both Veritas and Rainham Mark Education Trust are currently financially secure and have their own reserves, and the financial stability of both Trusts is a key component carefully considered within the due diligence stage, and throughout the considerations of all Boards. Following a merger, the reserves of both Trusts are 'pooled'. Budget setting and monitoring for schools will continue as normal.

What are the potential risks?

As ambitious Trusts and schools, we believe that the greatest risk is to stand still and remain at our current respective sizes.

Merging two existing Trusts and forming something new and enhanced will greatly increase our capacity and expertise to deliver the best possible education to our children and young people, which only provides security rather than risk. However, we are currently undergoing a robust process with due diligence and consultations to ensure that any risk is limited or pre-empted.