



## **Response to Public Consultation on Proposed Merger**

In May 2018 Croydon College and Coulsdon Sixth Form College announced their proposal to merge to create a stronger offer to the communities they serve in Croydon, Coulsdon and the wider area.

The merger is a positive and proactive step on the part of the Governing Bodies to secure a strong future for further education in Croydon and surrounding boroughs. Individually each College has a successful history of supporting their student body to achieve their best, to gain the skills, behaviours and qualifications they need to prosper. Each has worked hard to ensure that they meet the needs of the communities they serve.

As part of the consultation process the Colleges launched a consultation document "Creating Futures Together" which was shared on both websites and also sent to stakeholders including the families of all current Coulsdon students and applicants, Head Teachers of local schools, Principals of local colleges, the local MP and Councillors and the Local Education Authority.

This consultation was open from 14 May to 14 June 2018. Formal responses to the consultation could be made to either College in writing or via email. Coulsdon College received three responses. One response was the withdrawal of an application by a student who has opted to stay on at his school sixth form. The second was a general statement expressing concern that the merger may affect the "atmosphere at Coulsdon". The third response had more specific questions which are addressed below.

### **1) Why are we pulling out of the Reigate partnership when it appears to have worked so well? Is it to do with funding and the fact that the College will get more money from Croydon as opposed to Surrey?**

Coulsdon Sixth Form College had planned to join the Reigate Alliance Multi-Academy trust in September 2017. However the Trustees had some concerns about the financial arrangements relating to the College joining the Trust and the process was delayed. At this point the College received advice from the FE Commissioner who recommended that the College should undertake an appraisal of the best options for the future sustainability of the College and the protection of provision for students in the area. The College undertook an exercise which invited a number of institutions including multi academy trusts, sixth form colleges, FE colleges and universities to submit proposals for merging with the College. The response was positive and a number of colleges were shortlisted by the College Governors. Each shortlisted college made a formal application which they presented to a Governor Committee. The Governors agreed that the proposal to merge with Croydon College

offered the most sustainable and potentially beneficial future opportunities for Coulsdon students and local community.

Of the numerous benefits to Coulsdon College of joining Croydon College, the key factors are:

- ✓ Coulsdon Sixth Form College will continue to operate as a distinct part of Croydon College, maintaining its own identity and the successful Sixth Form offer which includes both vocational programmes as well as academic A Level subjects.
- ✓ Local management and leadership will remain, Coulsdon Sixth Form College will have its own College Quality and Curriculum Committee and Principal to ensure that the College continues to meet the needs of the communities it serves and optimise student outcomes.
- ✓ Working in partnership will improve our students' individual learning experience, encouraging and supporting them to achieve their full potential through the development of professional practice and innovations in delivery.
- ✓ There will be greater opportunity for work experience and extra-curricular activities, strengthening pathways into employment or future learning.
- ✓ Together we can improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing new opportunities to staff through joint professional development and support. We will be able to share expertise and best practice through enhanced teaching and learning communities.
- ✓ There will be greater opportunities to engage with a wider range of employers in the design and delivery of courses to encourage investment in their future workforce and more opportunities for staff to upskill.
- ✓ We can maximise the resources available to students by using scale to create more efficient delivery of operational functions.
- ✓ Together we will be more able to work with schools and stakeholders to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of the communities we serve.
- ✓ Our increased capacity will respond and develop provision in line with local and government priorities.

## **2) When would this merger be effective from?**

The target date is 1 November 2018. However, the merger process is complex and involves detailed due diligence from both parties which must be reviewed by a range of bodies and so may necessitate adjusting the final date of merger.

## **3) Will the Coulsdon staff remain the same for next year 2018/19?**

The staff of Coulsdon Sixth Form College will all transfer to the "new" College under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) regulations; their terms

and conditions will not change. Inevitably, as with any organisation, some change in staffing would be expected due to natural turnover.

**4) Croydon College has a less favoured reputation. I am concerned that Coulsdon will lose out on future candidates because of this. What are your comments to this as I fear for the College's future?**

Both Croydon College and Coulsdon Sixth Form College have been graded "Good" by Ofsted. Both Colleges have achieved excellent outcomes for students and the wider opportunities offered through the merger are expected to provide a range of benefits for future students as outlined in the consultation document. There is no indication of any negative impact on applications for the coming year as a result of the merger discussions at either College.

**5) Why is this the first we have heard about it officially as it seems to be a done deal. Would parents of had a choice?**

As outlined above, the College was directed to seek a partnership through the FE Commissioner's office; this was to ensure the future sustainability of the College and provision for the area. However, the decision to merge is by no means a "done deal", as the consultation and pre-merger due diligence processes have to be taken into account by Governors at both Colleges before they decide whether to progress with the merger.

These are all of the responses that the Colleges received in writing to the formal consultation. Governors at both Colleges will make a final decision on merger early in the new academic year.

Governors at both Colleges are committed to ensuring that the merger has little impact on the day-to-day provision of education by Coulsdon Sixth Form College. Both Colleges will retain their identities as individual Colleges on separate sites with local teaching staff, students and distinct curriculum offers.

Coulsdon College will continue to provide a high standard of learning and a supportive learning community for current and future students but will also benefit from a more sustainable partnership arrangement with Croydon College.

Approved for publication by the Board of Governors of both Croydon and Coulsdon Colleges - July 2018