

Consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy with Hilgay Riverside Academy, to change the catchment area of Hilgay Riverside Academy, and to change the name of the amalgamated school.

We are looking for your views on the proposal as outlined in this document.

Context

As a county, Norfolk is characterised by the number of small schools it has, with **Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy and Hilgay Riverside Academy** being amongst the smallest. There are many benefits to teaching and learning in small schools. The children are known by all staff as individuals and can be provided with the support and challenge that is right for each young person. Small schools are committed to developing the whole child in an environment with high expectations and with a very clear ethos, built upon the knowledge of the individual. The Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust (DEMAT) is committed to supporting and nurturing these values within their schools and to provide the strategic leadership to allow schools to flourish and thrive in a sustainable manner. To achieve this, it is vital to recognise how small schools can be sustainable moving forwards, to provide the best possible educational outcomes for all the children.

Both schools were partnered through the Riverside Federation, and this continued following academisation in 2016. They share a Headteacher and governing body and share several other staff between the sites. A previous consultation was undertaken in 2017 to close Ten Mile Bank, the outcome of which allowed the school to remain open with a review to take place in August 2019. During that period pupil numbers at Ten Mile Bank stabilised but post pandemic have begun to decline with Local Authority forecasts predicting no foreseeable increase.

1.1 What is the proposal?

DEMAT is seeking views on the following proposal, namely that:

- Ten Mile Bank and Hilgay academies are formally amalgamated.
- From 1 September 2024, or a later date, education is provided on one site, in Hilgay, with the closure of the Ten Mile Bank site.
- That the catchment area for Hilgay Riverside Academy is redrawn to include the catchment area for Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy.
- That Hilgay Riverside Academy retains its Unique Reference Number (URN) but is renamed as Riverside Academy.

1.2 Decision to undertake the consultation

On the 13 October 2023 the Trust Board of DEMAT agreed to undertake a formal consultation on the proposal within this document.

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Grace Building, 8 High Street, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4JU

1.3 Consultation on the proposal

The public consultation will open on 13 November 2023 and close at 17.00 on 5 January 2024. Written representations must be received by this date to be taken into consideration.

1.4 Public meetings

A public meeting will be held on: 29 November 2023 from 19:00 – 21:00 in the Ten Mile Bank school hall.

The meeting will provide those in attendance with the opportunity to hear about the proposal, ask questions about the proposal, and express views about the proposal. A note will be taken of questions and views expressed during the meetings.

1.5 Responding to the consultation

In addition to the notes made in the public meetings, written consultations using the form at the end of this document will be able to be made during the process, these should be submitted to:

- By email to: Consultation@demat.org.uk
- Or through the online survey: <https://forms.gle/kqrRfZ2C9KPjeA469>
- Hard copies of the form can be dropped off at the school office of either school.

by no later than 17.00 on 5 January 2024

1.6 Consultation report

At the end of the consultation period DEMAT will produce a consultation report and this will be considered by the DEMAT Trust Board. If the Trust Board decide to proceed with the proposal following consultation, it will prepare a business case to be considered by the DfE Regional Director.

1.7 Implementation date

The proposal to amalgamate the schools, if accepted, would be implemented from September 2024, or later by agreement with the DfE Regional Director.

2 Why is DEMAT proposing the changes?

2.1 The proposed changes are driven by:

- 2.1.1 A rapidly falling roll with currently 28 children at Ten Mile Bank.
- 2.1.2 Only two pupils started in Reception in September 2023 at Ten Mile Bank.
- 2.1.3 Forecasts indicating that there will be no increase in pupil numbers over the next five years with total roll fluctuating between 23 and 28 pupils.
- 2.1.4 A forecast cumulative deficit of £-267,902 by the end of 2026 at Ten Mile Bank
- 2.1.5 Requests by the Headteacher and Chair of Governor to review the viability of the school and proceed with closure of Ten Mile Bank due to concerns of financial viability and ability to sustain education quality with diminishing resources.
- 2.1.6 Children at Ten Mile Bank are educated in a two-class structure, which the Trust do not believe to be the most suitable structure in which to educate children.

- 2.1.7** An amalgamated school provides a sustainable opportunity to maintain an education provision for all pupils without the risk of standards declining due to the low numbers on roll.

3 Educational benefits

- 3.1** Ten Mile Bank was last inspected under the previous Ofsted framework in 2018 where it achieved a Good grade. Changes to the Ofsted framework in September 2019 have raised the threshold to achieving a Good grade, which is particularly demanding for small schools. A report by TES (Feb 2023) found that post pandemic only 56% of schools with under 120 pupils achieved a Good s5 grade by Ofsted. Hilgay was one of these schools, the three-class structure enabled the delivery of a structured curriculum from Reception through to y6, by amalgamating both schools more pupils would have access to this provision.
- 3.2** There are currently two classes in Ten Mile Bank with three/four-year groups in each class; this is extremely challenging for each teacher and causes difficulty in appropriate curriculum sequencing and providing appropriate levels of challenge for all children. All pupils at Ten Mile Bank could join the existing classes at Hilgay alleviating these concerns.
- 3.3** The two schools share SENDCo provision across both sites. By bringing the schools together onto one site the SENDCo will be able to provide a greater level of support to all pupils and their families as they will have more visible and regular access to them.
- 3.4** Amalgamating the two schools should enable all pupils to benefit from more effective teaching and learning, greater opportunities for pupils to learn with peers of their own age and more targeted, age-related teaching. The social and educational benefits gained by facilitating pupils to learn and socialise with a larger number of peers, whilst maintaining the advantages of being in a small school, should not be underestimated.
- 3.5** Riverside Academy provides an opportunity to celebrate the coming together of the two halves of the Riverside Federation.

4 Staff

- 4.1** A single amalgamated school will allow for all pupils to be taught by a permanent member of staff.
- 4.2** Historically, the recruitment of teachers for positions where they are expected to teach across three/four year groups within a single class has proved difficult in comparison to single and two year group classes.
- 4.3** Staff will no longer be required to travel between two sites creating a more effective working environment, thus allowing more time to be focussed on the quality of education the children receive.
- 4.4** If, following consultation, the proposal is approved then the Trust will engage with members of staff to explore the options and opportunities for them moving forwards. This process may result in a redundancy situation, but we are confident that any at risk staff could be redeployed within the local area to fill existing vacancies with 15 Trust schools situated within a 15-mile radius of Ten Mile Bank.

5 Pupils

- 5.1** If, after consultation, the proposal goes ahead then a Pupil Placement exercise will be undertaken by the Local Authority for parents of Ten Mile Bank pupils to express a preference for a school place.
- 5.2** All current Ten Mile Bank pupils will be guaranteed a place at the amalgamated school.

5.3 Should the proposal go ahead, any parents who have stated a preference for Ten Mile Bank for Reception 2024 will be contacted by the Local Authority.

6 Viability

- 6.1 The annual funding received by Ten Mile Bank is insufficient to cover minimum budgeted costs. The academy does not have any reserves, and the actual annual expenditure typically exceeds the income received.
- 6.2 As the expenditure is so minimal, additional investment opportunities are limited, including capital and infrastructure work required to create a modern teaching environment.
- 6.3 Opportunities to share resource with Hilgay already exist, but are no longer sufficient with a falling pupil roll, as funding is based on the number of pupils within a school.
- 6.4 Ten Mile Bank receives GAG funding of £279,971 annually, £7,193 of pupil premium, £17,932 of SEN funding and £16,300 sport & PE grant.
- 6.5 The year end positions in 2021, 2022, and 2023 were £-10,880, £-45,500, £-8,876 respectively.
- 6.6 In 2023-24, with their current expenditure and including the sharing of headteacher resource with Hilgay they are forecasting a £69,384 deficit
- 6.7 Due to the low roll and increasing costs across the sector the 3yr budget forecast for Ten Mile Bank between 2023 and 2026 is a cumulative deficit position of £-267,902
- 6.8 In a small school it is harder to absorb in year overspends, as they represent a greater proportion of total income. An amalgamation would provide opportunities for reducing duplicated expenditure incurred maintaining two sites.
- 6.9 Academies can be financially viable with 50+ pupils and the Trust has several of these financially viable, small academies. Therefore, the proposed amalgamation of Ten Mile Bank and Hilgay provides the opportunity to create a financially viable, small academy within the existing communities, with the associated benefits of being in a small school environment.

7 What alternatives options have been considered?

7.1 The Trust has considered other options available in this situation. Alternatives that have been considered or undertaken are listed below:

7.2	Federation with another school	Already in place
7.3	Academisation into a Trust	Already in place
7.4	Amalgamation with another school	Preferred option
7.5	Closure of Ten Mile Bank, no amalgamation	Dismissed
7.6	No change	This is not a viable option due to the low roll

7.7 The rural schools' presumption applies to Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy, the Trust has carefully considered the options available to it and believes that the amalgamation of the two schools is in the best interests of educational provision in the area.

7.8 The rural schools' presumption lists six areas that must be considered in deciding to close a rural school:

- 7.8.1 Alternatives to closure including federation with another local school; conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust;** These have already been undertaken with regards to Ten Mile Bank.

- 7.8.2 Does the school provide local community services and facilities e.g., childcare facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access etc;** Ten Mile Bank does not currently offer these services and limited physical capacity on the site would prevent this from being offered in the future.
- 7.8.3 What are the transport implications i.e., the availability, and likely cost of transport to other schools and sustainability issues;** Based upon a post code analysis and in school data of pupils currently on roll at Ten Mile Bank, many pupils currently arrive by car due to the remote location of the school. There are some pupils who will be affected by a longer travel to school, but these are in the minority and the Trust will seek to work with these families on an individual basis.
- 7.8.4 The size of the school and whether it puts the children at an educational disadvantage e.g., in terms of breadth of curriculum or resources available** The low roll will make providing a good education harder to achieve and place pupils at an educational disadvantage compared to their peers at other schools.
- 7.8.5 The overall and long-term impact on the local community of the closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility** As a Diocesan Trust, the Trust is aware of the importance of local communities and acknowledges that the loss of the local school for Ten Mile Bank may cause an impact. However, this impact is reduced as the number of pre-school and school aged pupils in the village who choose Ten Mile Bank as their preferred choice is very low.
- 7.8.6 Wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils;** By amalgamating all pupils will be allocated a school place, therefore, negating any effect on wider school reorganisation.

8 Who will be consulted?

8.1 The list below states the stakeholders that must be consulted with, as stated in DfE guidance. These will all receive the formal consultation paperwork.

- 8.1.1** Parents
- 8.1.2** Governors
- 8.1.3** Staff
- 8.1.4** MP
- 8.1.5** County councilors
- 8.1.6** Parish council
- 8.1.7** Diocese
- 8.1.8** LA
- 8.1.9** DfE Regional Director
- 8.1.10** Trade Unions
- 8.1.11** Pupils
- 8.1.12** Local primary schools

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Response form

Consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy with Hilgay Riverside Academy, to change the catchment area of Hilgay Riverside Academy, and to change the name of the amalgamated school.

Let us know what you think of our proposal.

How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to amalgamate Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy and Hilgay Riverside Academy, resulting in the closure of the Ten Mile Bank site from 31st August 2024?

Please tick one box.

Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please give the main reasons for your answer:

How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to change the catchment area of Hilgay Riverside Academy to include the catchment of Ten Mile Bank Riverside Academy from 31st August 2024?

Please tick one box.

Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither agree or disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please give the main reasons for your answer:

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How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to change the name of Hilgay Riverside Academy to Riverside Academy?

Please tick one box.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please give the main reasons for your answer:

Is there anything else that you would like to raise as part of this consultation?

We would like to hear from many different people, as your views help us to decide whether we make these changes. We will process your personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, which means that we will not give your personal data to any third parties. Your comments will be anonymous - your name or anything that could identify you will not be included in any report. However, we cannot guarantee that this information will be withheld if it is requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Please tell us who you are:

Parent / Carer

Member of staff

School governor

Local resident

Other (please specify): _____

What is your postcode? _____

You can tell us your views by returning your completed form by any of the following means:

- By email at: Consultation@demat.org.uk
- Or through the online survey: <https://forms.gle/kqrRfZ2C9KPjeA469>

Hard copies of the form can be dropped off at the school's office for either school
This consultation ends on 5 January 2024

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