

APPENDIX A - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Subject Matter		From and Date Received	Question Raised	Answer
Consultation Process	1	Parent A- 16.02	Are you confident that the process you have followed fulfils a full public consultation? And that the process you have followed reaches all within the local community? Can you explain your response and the actions you have taken to ensure a full, thorough, transparent and fair process has been adhered to.	<p>We are confident that the process followed the DfE guidance document <i>Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement (November 2019)</i> which sets out the principles by which the Trust has operated under.</p> <p>The guidance states that the consultation must run for a minimum of 4 weeks and provides a list of all stakeholders who must be considered. This consultation ran for just over 6 weeks between 20th January and 5th March and included the DfE list of stakeholders as a minimum number of stakeholder groups.</p> <p>A public meeting was held virtually on the 10th February with circa 50 attendees, a transcript of which is available in Appendix B. The holding of the public meeting virtually is in line with current Cabinet Office consultation principles.</p>
	2		Can you clarify how and when you consulted with Parish councils in all 3 villages concerned in this proposal?	The respective Clerks of the Parish Councils received the consultation documents on the 20th January.
	3		Could you please provide evidence of emails sent to the Parish Councils concerned in the proposed amalgamation of Wormegay and Runcton Holme schools?	<p>From: T***** S***** Sent: 20 January 2021 09:39 To: clerkwormegaypc@ Subject: Consultation on amalgamation of West Norfolk schools</p> <p>Dear *****</p> <p>I am attaching for your attention the formal public consultation document for the amalgamation of Wormegay CofE Primary School and Runcton Holme CofE Primary School.</p> <p>The consultation commences today and will continue until 17:00 on 5th March.</p> <p>We would be very grateful if you could please alert your councillors to this and also place the document on your website. I also understand that you have a Parish Council meeting on 28th January. The document details ways in which people can express their views about the proposal and also gives details of a virtual public meeting that will be held on 10th February.</p> <p>If you have any queries or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Consultation@demat.org.uk.</p> <p>With kind regards</p> <p>*****</p>
	4		Can you clarify how and when you consulted with Pupils regarding this proposal or if you plan to prior to the end of the consultation period?	Pupil consultation held on 2nd March via Zoom
	5		Can you demonstrate how you have considered the unique position and dynamics of West Norfolk in thorough assessment and decision making process to close this school? Including information on social impacts, local infrastructure and the local economy, environmental impacts and planned building.	As part of the development of the proposal DEMAT has liaised with Norfolk Local Authority to determine whether the removal of pupil places would impact the wider place planning dynamics. As detailed in the consultation response the Local Authority are supportive of the proposal.
	6		Why is it Downham Market 5 miles away schools are over-subscribed and being extended?	We are unable to comment on schools that are not part of DEMAT. This is a question that should be directed to the Headteachers or respective Academy Trusts.
	7		Have you informed and consulted with the Local Authority planning team and parish councils regarding taking this move ahead of serving consultation documents? Can you describe how failing to do so is acting reasonably and responsibly?	The Local Authority and District Councillors were informed of the proposal as a courtesy prior to the launch of the consultation documents. The Parish Councils received the documents as part of the consultation process. We have acted in line with the guidance set out in the DfE guidance document <i>Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement (November 2019)</i> and Cabinet Office guidance regarding changes required to public meetings due to COVID, which sets out the principles by which the Trust has operated under. We do not believe that we have acted unreasonably nor irresponsibly.
	8		Can you confirm that you have informed all aspects of the local community personally that a school closure will affect (e.g. residents, business) throughout the villages it will affect? (Wormegay, Tottenhill, Watlington, Runcton Holme)	The list of stakeholders we have consulted with is contained within the consultation paperwork.
	9		Can you be sure that this consultation process would stand up to equalities legislation and does not discriminate against some of those that live within this community? Can you explain your reasoning?	We have acted in line with the guidance set out in the DfE guidance document <i>Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement (November 2019)</i> which sets out the principles by which the Trust has operated under. We have also completed an EQIA which has been available to view on the DEMAT website.

10		(Re: Public Meeting): So what about those who could get a ticket, but have no way of accessing an online forum, especially during period of lockdown?	A public meeting was held virtually on the 10th February with circa 50 attendees. The holding of the public meeting virtually is in line with current Cabinet Office consultation principles. During a period of lockdown, an online forum with an online ticketing system is deemed to be the safest way to hold a public meeting. We also provided landline and mobile dial in details but we have received no specific concerns or requests from individuals in this situation. For those people unable to attend, a copy of the transcript of the questions and answers is part of the consultation response.
11		Or parents who cannot attend during lockdown as they are with their children 24/7, and do not wish to inform their children at the present time?	All stakeholders had a number of ways in which to raise questions or make statements as part of the consultation which were set out in the consultation documents. We have received no specific complaints from individuals in this situation.
12		When parents cannot attend this evening because their children are with them and they are concerned about the emotional impact on their children?	All stakeholders had a number of ways in which to raise questions or make statements as part of the consultation. We have received no specific complaints from individuals in this situation.
13		Can you explain why you have chosen now as the timing to hold this consultation?	The timing was chosen to allow a sufficient period of time, post consultation, to deliver the proposals (if accepted). The viability and future of the school has been discussed a number of times at Board level, it was agreed that action was now required in order to preserve an education provision across the three parishes as soon as possible.
14		Why now when people cannot discuss without breaking the law?	It is presumed that this question refers to the holding of the consultation during a period of lockdown with large face to face meetings of people. We do not believe this prevents people from discussing using alternative forms of communication.
15		Can you describe how this consultation can be viewed as unfair during a period of lockdown, where it is illegal for people to come together to discuss, when your discussions took place in December prior to a national lockdown? How is this providing a level playing field?	We are unable to describe the consultation as unfair because it is our opinion that it is not. We have acted in line with the guidance set out in the DfE guidance document <i>Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement (November 2019)</i> and direction from the Cabinet Office which sets out the principles by which the Trust has operated under.
16		Can you explain how the Head Teacher giving her personal opinion to parents on 22.1.21 by saying "I do now believe that it is time for this to happen to ensure the continued education of all pupils that attend both schools" is an example of professional behaviour during a consultation period? Can you describe and explain how this is appropriate? Do you accept that this is exercising inappropriate influence and showing biased opinion at what should be an impartial process? Do you accept that this statement alone sounds as if a decision has already been made?	As part of the consultation all stakeholders are entitled to their opinion. The Trust supports the Headteacher in the actions she has taken, it is a difficult period for the federation and as the Headteacher she has the right to express her view to provide guidance at this time.
17		You have outlined the positives of making this move, can you also outline the negatives?	This question was answered at the public consultation on the 10th January and can be seen in Appendix C
18		Have you completed an environmental analysis of making such a move? If not, why not?	Whilst there is no legal requirement to undertake an Environmental Analysis, we have done so. This question was answered at the public consultation on the 10th February and can be seen in Appendix C. The EIA can be seen in Appendix D
19		Can you disclose outcomes from this environmental analysis, including original documentation prior to the close consultation?	The EIA can be seen in Appendix D
20		Will you ensure that the environmental, social and economic assessments were all published and taken into account as part of this consultation process?	The EIA can be seen in Appendix D
21	Parent A	Can you tell me how you have researched other village school modules in operation in the UK. Whether you have found out from them about how rather than closing this school you could make it sustainable longer term?	As part of the work carried out prior to the launch of the proposal consultation, different operating models were investigated. Even within DEMAT there are a number of models which work well where pupil numbers are stable or increasing; in this instance, due to the low confidence in pupil numbers which is supported by the Local Authority forecasts, the decision was made to proceed to consultation with the proposals as published.
22		Can clarification be given as to why the whole community has not been consulted with? Why in the consultation meeting of 10.02.21 you actually said you had no legal obligation to do so?	The list of stakeholders we have consulted with is contained within the consultation paperwork. We have acted in line with the guidance set out in the DfE guidance document <i>Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement (November 2019)</i> which sets out the principles by which the Trust has operated under. The consultation documents have been in the public domain for the full duration of the public consultation.
23	Parent A - 21.02	Why are we yet to see a full and thorough analysis of the short, medium and long term impacts on these communities of making such a move?	The consultation document detailed the impact of the proposal on the educational provision across the two schools and how this would affect key stakeholders.
24		Why was this thorough analysis not included as part of the proposal?	The consultation document detailed the impact of the proposal on the educational provision across the two schools and how this would affect key stakeholders.
25		Despite being promised on 10.02.21, where is the environmental analysis some 10 days now after the event?	The EIA can be seen in Appendix D
26	Parent A - 20.01	(Re: Ofsted grades and performance management): So how has DEMAT allowed this to be a standard that they have accepted and not managed?	The Trust and the school have made no attempt to disguise the fact that the Ofsted outcome of Requires Improvement is not good enough. Recent changes which include placing the monitoring of performance management and school performance under the direct supervision of the Trust have seen a greater level of rigour than previously.
27	Anon - 04.02.	With all the house building near our village, why are you not promoting our school? This has happened in the past, so why not now?	We believe that the school has been actively promoted, through social media platforms and representation at local events.
28	Parent/Carer - 09.02	If Wormegay school is not supposedly doing well, and needs shutting, why has my [child] been moved up from Year * to Year * as they are doing so well?	We are unable to comment on individual children as part of a consultation.
29		Can you explain how Wormegay school was a 'Good' school (Ofsted rating), until you took it over in 2014 and why you have been unable to maintain it as a good school?	As detailed in the consultation document, a year on year falling roll and a two class structure make the provision of a good education difficult. We are confident in the approaches being undertaken across the federation and as a result of this proposal to ensure that the quality of education improves.

Wormegay CofE Primary School	30	Parent A - 16.02	Can you explain the promotional measures that you have put into place at Wormegay to promote this school since you took control of it in October 2014? Provide specific dates and actions taken and how they have effectively promoted this school?	We believe that the school has been actively promoted, through social media platforms and representation at local events.
	31		Can you evidence a basic plan, review process to demonstrate that you have done all that you possibly could to save this school?	Following a lengthy planning process we believe the options contained within the proposal are those that provide the most sustainable method by which to continue an education provision across the three parishes
	32		Do you accept that you have failed to promote this school adequately, and therefore are responsible for failing this school and the community?	No, we do not accept this statement
	33		What would need to happen for you to allow Wormegay school to remain open, and a 2 year action plan to be put in place, aimed at improving school performance and numbers?	This question has been looked into as the proposal was being built. Unfortunately place planning data from the local authority supports the assumptions made within the proposal meaning it is not possible to increase the number of pupils to a sustainable level.
	34		What would need to prevail for you to allow this school to stay open?	Please see response to Q33
	35		Can you tell me how you have researched other village school modules in operation in the UK, what you have found out from them about how rather than closing this school, you could make this school sustainable longer term. (For example model used in Nottingham – the most successful LA outside of the capital, and closer to home Castle Acre School, who has provided a turnaround in its fortunes?)	Please see the response to Q21
	36		(Re: Site Deeds): Will you suspend this consultation process until such a point that these DEED's can be fully viewed and assessed, to see if any local covenants are in place on this building?	The Deeds to the Wormegay site do not form part of this consultation or proposal. The Academy Trust does not own the site or building therefore, should the proposal proceed, any covenants or reversing orders contained within the Deeds will be determined by the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance.
Wormegay Site	37	Wormegay / Tottenhill Parish Councils - 25.02.21	(Re: Site Deeds): If all the documentation cannot be obtained at this time, this raises questions on how legitimate and transparent this process is. Therefore, we would want to be in receipt of this documentation by the end of February. We would also like to have DEMAT's proposals for the future of the site after the closure of the school, if that happens.	The Deeds to the Wormegay site do not form part of this consultation or proposal. The Academy Trust does not own the site or building therefore, should the proposal proceed, any covenants or reversing orders contained within the Deeds will be determined by the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance. DEMAT cannot provide proposals for what happens to the site in the future as it does not own the site.
	38	Parent A - 16.02	Can you explain what actions you are going to take to improve the health and safety problems outside the school if this transition takes place?	The presumption has been made that this question is referring to Runcton Holme site. The assumption made in the question that Health & Safety problems exist outside the school is not one that can be supported, nor is there evidence to prove otherwise. As with all DEMAT schools, regular H&S audits and reviews are completed and should any remedial works be needed it is undertaken.
Runcton Holme CofE Primary School	39	Parent A - 16.02	What is the plan to ensure safety including when, where, how and why?	Please see the response to Q38
	40		Can you provide assurances that Runcton Holme School will not close going forward, especially as your consultation documents say that to be sustainable you require 50 pupils? With your current failure to produce 'Good' schools (not managed to do since taking these schools over in 2014), can you explain how you plan to encourage students to attend?	We believe that the proposals set out the best solution to the provision of a sustainable model of education across the three parishes. In addition to these proposals the Trust is to consider whether there is potential for a pre-school on the Runcton Holme site as a means to attract more pupils. We do not accept the comment stating 'your failure to produce good schools'. As detailed in our Annual Report and Accounts the number of schools rated as Good or Better now stands at 67%, a 21% increase from where schools join the Trust.
	41	Local Resident - 07.02	Who is to guarantee this school will not be closed too?	This guarantee cannot be made by anybody for any school. We do believe that the proposals set out the best solution to the provision of a sustainable model of education across the three parishes.
	42	Parent A - 16.02	Have you completed a full assessment of the impact on the local community (including social and economic assessments for the community)?	Please see the response to Q23
Impact on Community	43	Parent A - 16.02	Can you fully describe the potential short, medium and longer term impacts of the community of shutting Wormegay School? If yes, what did these results show? Can you discuss these and explain why these have not been published for public viewing? If not, why not?	Please see the response to Q23
	44		Re: Amalgamating the schools: Considering it impacts the fabric of the community, do you feel that it is reasonable to do so?	The presumption has been made that this question refers to the breadth of stakeholder engagement. We have acted in line with the guidance set out in the DfE guidance document <i>Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement (November 2019)</i> which sets out the principles by which the Trust has operated under. All stakeholders identified within the document have been consulted.
	45		Could you provide explanation as to why 3 teachers are required in a school with 2 classes? Where is this salary being paid for? What are the implications of having this role in place?	We have made operational staffing decisions to meet the needs of the pupils and to provide a high quality education.

Staff	46	Parent A - 16.02	Can you explain the performance measures that you have put into place at Wormegay to return it to being a good school since the 2017 Ofsted report? Providing specific timescales and detail of each SMART objectives applied, whilst ensuring individuals are kept safe and anonymous? How were each of these objectives assessed and rated? If this process was completed effectively, why was the school still RI in 2019? Do you accept that you have failed this school and community for not ensuring the quality of education was assessed as good?	We are unable to disclose individual performance management reports within a public consultation but are confident the local governing body discharged their responsibilities in overseeing these and the school targets. The effectiveness of the discharging of responsibilities is something that both LGB and Trust are responsible for. As stated in the response to Q26 we are confident that recent changes will support the school to improve further.
Performance Measures	47	Parent A - 01.02	Why were these schools 'Good' with the same structure only 7 years ago when they were effectively managed?	Please see the response to Q29
Education	48	Parent A - 01.02	Why are there schools in other parts of the country that are good or outstanding with very similar set ups?	We are unable to answer this question as we do not run those school but are able to show that DEMAT also has Good & Outstanding schools in similar situations.
	49	Parent A - 16.02	Can you provide an acceptable explanation of how children's opportunities can be effectively improved when adult/child ratios will be decreased?	This question has already been answered in the public consultation and can be seen in Appendix C. In addition - as demonstrated in the Kreston Academies Benchmark review 2021, the average number of pupils per teacher is 25.1, assuming all pupils currently on roll in yR-5 remain to do so and including the forecast new intake, the average number of pupils to teachers at the amalgamated school will be approximately 15. We remain confident that the small increase in class size will have no negative impact on the quality of education and will in fact improve it as pupils will now be taught in more age appropriate class groups.
	50		When you have failed to obtain results on the current structure, how can parents be confident that these will improve with less adult resource per child?	As stated in the consultation documents and in the response to Q49, by bringing pupils together in more age appropriate groupings the teachers will be able to provide a more sequenced curriculum and more focused, age appropriate direction therefore improving the quality of education.
	51		The mixed classes at Wormegay has always provided children with an advantage going into High School, both with their social skills and allowing capable children to thrive, why is this now seen as a disadvantage? It has also been highlighted by the work of the Duchess of Cambridge, how early years and secure environments are the foundation to better longer term outcomes for children, so why does this proposed move appear to go against this research, especially during a time when children are already feeling insecure (COVID), evidenced by recent TV reports?	We disagree that the proposed move goes against the belief that high quality EFYS provision and secure environments are important to secure better outcomes. The proposal strengthens the quality of education being provided and removes the risk of a single child being educated alone in an EYFS classroom which could happen should the proposal not take place. We are unaware of anything within the consultation that states mixed age classes are a detriment to pupils going to high school. Pupils at the amalgamated school will still be in mixed age classes but in more suitable groupings than across 4 different academic years.
	52	Parent A - 22.01	Will DEMAT be providing extra support for children who are not only aware of a national lockdown but also now have the uncertainty of this change taking place during this pandemic?	Of course, the schools and Trust are fully committed to providing the support all young people need at this time. Both schools have mental health first aiders and benefit from a shared staff group who understand individual needs.
	53	Parent A - 16.02	Can you describe your understanding of the potential emotional impacts on children and their families of holding this consultation at this time?	This question was raised at the public meeting on the 10th February. Response can be seen in Appendix C.
Mental Health	54	Parent A - 16.02	Have you seen the news reports on BBC national news and BBC Look East last week which outlined how children's mental wellbeing is suffering due to COVID restrictions? Have you considered how the additional stress of a school closure and change may impact these children?	We are unable to recall viewing particular TV programmes but are aware of the impact of COVID restrictions on young people. This was discussed and we are confident in the pastoral support offered across the federation, which has been praised by many as part of this consultation, in supporting all of our pupils at this time.
	55		What will you be offering to families and children in terms of support/compensation for the level of additional emotional distress you have put them through at this time?	Please see the response to Q53
	56		Can you explain how you reached the number of 6 children in Wormegay School in 2023?	Local Authority forecasts and preference data suggest a continued downturn in pupil numbers which could result in such a figure being on roll.
Pupil Numbers	57	Parent A - 16.02	Can you publicly disclose the information which gave you that figure? (Re: 2019/2020 finances): Can you explain and provide evidence for such a large loss during this year, when the previous highest loss was (£7000 in 2017/18 and only £711 in 2018/19) is significantly lower? Financial information on your website shows that Wormegay has been financially viable up until the 2019/20 financial year where it showed for the first time in history a £3.5k loss.	Please see the response to Q56 The fixed costs of Wormegay remain the same, as they have reached the bare minimum of staffing and property costs, but due to the fall in pupil numbers, the income reduces each year. As such, we would expect the deficit to increase each year, if pupil numbers fell further. There is always some lag in the impact of the reduction in funding due to pupil numbers as the October census information is used for the following September funding.
	59		Can you explain and justify how this is not financial mismanagement?	We do not accept the figures above evidence financial mismanagement and therefore no further justification is required.
	60		Will you be paying for each of these children to have a full new uniform to start school in September, to ensure that parents do not have any additional costs?	This is to be discussed by Trustees, it is anticipated that all new uniform (which differs from existing uniforms) will be provided free of charge
	61		Will you be providing a compensatory payment to the local parish councils for the impacts on the local community, the risk to the village hall, and longer term health implications? Could you supply a figure of what you would propose? If you do not feel this is within your remit, can you explain your reasoning?	No, it is not within the remit of our funding agreement to make such payments.

Financial	62		Have you taken into account the possible lost revenue from no longer having the support of a 'friends of' group supporting the school, which contributes thousands to this school each year? Could you explain your understanding of this?	Any additional income has been considered in putting this proposal forward. The value of donations from the 'friends of' group is not sufficient to provide long term sustainability to the school, when compared with the impact of the falling pupil roll. The impact of a drop in one pupil (based on 20/21 funding statement) is £4,163. Further, as the villages of Wormegay & Tottenhill would be included in the proposed catchment area, there is nothing to preclude a 'friends of' group in the villages supporting the proposed merged school with fundraising activities.
	63		Will you be paying compensatory payments to home owners for the potential impact on house prices of removing a school from this village? Could you offer a figure of what you propose? If you do not feel this is within your remit, can you explain your reasoning?	No, it is not within the remit of our funding agreement to make such payments.
	64	Parent A - 16.02	Looking at DEMAT's current financial reports, this would appear to be more about a move to cover up your financial mismanagement and your year to year losses (with charitable donations and contributions providing significant yearly losses, and a struggling pension pot), rather than being about what is the best thing for children and their communities, can you provide evidence and a justification as to why this is not the case.	The proposal regarding the merger of Wormegay/Runcton Holme is unrelated to the Trust financial position. The income, combined, of Runcton Holme & Wormegay comprises 1.5% of the total income received in 19/20, being .8% and .7% respectively. In reference to the yearly losses, as noted on page 11 of the 19/20 financial statements, available on our website, the operating result for 19/20 was a surplus of £489,652. The equivalent figure for 18/19 was a £253k surplus. We therefore do not accept the assertion that our financial information indicates financial mismanagement nor that we have significant yearly losses, when non-recurring, capital and pension movements are adjusted for. In further reference to the 'struggling pension pot', the value of this cannot be ascribed to the financial management of the Trust as it represents a valuation of the LGPS liability that is allocated to the Trust, based on current employees. The management of the LGPS scheme sits wholly outside the Trust control and the deficit cannot be used to support claims of financial mismanagement or operating results of the Trust. There is more detail about the LGPS in our financial statements in note 23.
	65		(Re: Financial information going back to 2015): Could you provide with a matter of priority the detailed financial breakdowns of these specific academies, and how these figures have been obtained for these schools?	Please see Table 1 at the bottom of this document for the income/expenditure for Runcton Holme & Wormegay for each year since 2015/2016. These figures have been obtained from the year end accounts for each year. These are consolidated into the whole Trust accounts, which are published on the demat.org.uk website.
	66		Will you be providing compensation to parents at Wormegay for additional travel expenses of closing this school? For the duration of their child's time at school, including those about to start in reception in 21/22 school year? If a parent chooses to take their child to another school, as it is your choice to remove their school, will you provide them with full compensatory payments for their child's remaining years at primary school?	No, it is not within the remit of our funding agreement to make such payments.
	67		(Re: Womegay accounts 2018/19): Can you please explain your figures for this same year show a closing balance of £7391 for this same year? Why such a discrepancy in figures? How can the school be making an annual profit, but declaring a loss? Where is the money going?	Please see Table 1 at the bottom of this document for the income/expenditure for Runcton Holme & Wormegay for each year since 2015/2016. These figures have been obtained from the year end accounts for each year. These are consolidated into the whole Trust accounts, which are published on the demat.org.uk website. The in year result for Wormegay in 2017/2018 is a loss of £26,950 (Table 1), bringing their total deficit reserve at the year end to £7,391. This deficit was carried forward into 18/19, when there was an in year surplus of £6,680. The reserve deficit of £711 was carried forward into 19/20. The school is/nor ever has declared surplus/deficit which is not reflective of the financial records we hold. The accounts referenced above evidence this. These have been audited & submitted to the ESFA in line with our funding statement. Differences between the financial statements and the gov.uk benchmarking tool are as a result of the way the DfE presents the underlying data. The underlying data is provided by us in our Annual Accounts Return, submitted each January to the ESFA and audited by our auditor. The numbers are taken completely & directly from those used to prepare the financial statements, which are in turn from our accounting system.
	68	Parent A - 21.02	(Re: Runcton Holme accounts 2018/19): Equally, the same questions for Runcton Holme, the 2018/19 figures show a loss (-9775) with your figurs also showing a loss of (-29,638).	Please see Table 1 at the bottom of this document for the income/expenditure for Runcton Holme & Wormegay for each year since 2015/2016. These figures have been obtained from the year end accounts for each year. These are consolidated into the whole Trust accounts, which are published on the demat.org.uk website. The in year result for Runcton Holme in 2017/2018 is a small surplus of £6,179 (Table 1), bringing their total deficit reserve at the year end to £29,676. This deficit was carried forward into 18/19, when there was an in year deficit of £5,633. The reserve deficit of £35,309 was carried forward into 19/20. The school is/nor ever has declared surplus/deficit which is not reflective of the financial records we hold. The accounts referenced above evidence this. These have been audited & submitted to the ESFA in line with our funding statement. Differences between the financial statements and the gov.uk benchmarking tool are as a result of the way the DfE presents the underlying data. The underlying data is provided by us in our Annual Accounts Return, submitted each January to the ESFA and audited by our auditor. The numbers are taken completely & directly from those used to prepare the financial statements, which are in turn from our accounting system.
	69		Can you explain the discrepancies in Government figures and the figures declared in your own accounts? Why would you not want to make this information available?	The figures published on the gov.uk website come from the returns we submit to the DfE, and are based on the audited figures within our financial statements. The DfE does report the figures differently, including/excluding certain types of income/cost and therefore there is not a meaningful direct comparison. The DfE has embarked upon a 'Better Reporting Programme' to provide more alignment in the sector. We would reiterate that the financial statements, which reflect our internal financial information, are audited and we have never received a qualified audit report, nor material control weaknesses.
	70		Can you explain how you have utilised the Benchmarking tool since your custodianship of these schools in 2014, to ensure that they remain sustainable?	The DfE financial bechmarking tool was not introduced until 2017. Since then it is used in conjunction with a number of other benchmarking reports to look at the financial performance of all schools across the Trust.
	71		For those who cannot drive living in these villages, what do they do?	We would encourage any such families to make contact with the school to discuss potential options.
	Transport to Wormegay	72	Parent A - 16.02	What specific plans to you have to ensure that residents in the villages of Tottenhill and Wormegay who do not drive have the ability to be able to get their children to school?
73		Parent A - 04.03	Why would you encourage children to travel further for these villages? The natural catchment if Wormegay is removed would be Watlington (2 miles).	As detailed in the consultation paperwork the schools are in a long standing federation therefore to provide a consistent provision of education with the same leadership team and staff group is seen as beneficial.

	74	Parent A - 16.02	Could you explain and give examples of how your current actions and behaviours support your values of love, respect, trust, community and ambition?	Whilst a difficult decision and recognising that it will impact on some of our community we remain confident that the actions contained within the proposal are in the best interest of the school and community. These proposals set out how we will be able to offer a long term sustainable education provision across the three parishes instead of risking losing both schools. We also remain confident that the proposals will allow us to continue the improvement journey of the school to ensure that all pupils for many years enjoy a high quality education underpinned by our Christian distinctiveness. We have conducted the consultation as set out by Government guidance and listened to the comments that have been received. We want the best for all of our pupils and this proposal allows us to realise that ambition in a sustainable manner.
DEMAT	75	Parent A - 16.02	Can you explain why your failure to produce a 'Good' school, and manage your own finances successfully, risks making victims out of the local communities, their children and the prosperity both financial and socially in the future?	We are unable to answer this question as we do not recognise a number of allegations made within it. We can say that our role is to provide all pupils with a high quality education and the proposals set out the best way we can do this in a sustainable manner.
	76	Parent A - 21.02	Why has DEMAT failed to see, realise and highlight the positives and potential in these schools?	We do not believe this to be the case. We believe in the potential behind the proposals by bringing the two schools together for the benefit of pupils across the three parishes now and for many years to come.
	77	Pupil - 23.02	Why do you need to do this to schools? Why mine? Why now?	This rationale for the proposals is set out within the consultation document.
	78	Parent A - 04.03	Considering DEMAT has Trust as one of its core values, how would it currently score on the Trust Equation?	The Trust Equation (Green, C. 2010) is a self reflection tool which is not part of our methods used to self assess therefore we can not give an accurate response to this question.
	79	Parent A - 16.02	Could you explain how your current actions and behaviours support the values, ethics and morals of the Church of England?	This question was answered as part of the public meeting on the 10th February and the response can be seen in Appendix C
	80	Parent A - 21.02	(Re: Hereford Diocese article in Independent in 2011, regarding small schools): How can Diocese in Herefordshire make this successful, but not in Ely?	The article was contextual at the time of writing, however both locally and nationally education funding has changed since then. Whilst raising some interesting points the article is not a tool by which to extrapolate findings into different settings. As stated in the response to Q21, a range of other schools and models were researched as the proposal was developed.
Church of England Values	81	Parent A - 21.02	(Re: Hereford Diocese article in Independent in 2011, regarding small schools): Why the discrepancy in attitudes between the Dioceses, when you both sit under the same Church of England umbrella and should operate the same values?	The article was contextual at the time of writing, however both locally and nationally education funding has changed since then. Whilst raising some interesting points the article is not a tool by which to extrapolate findings into different settings. As stated in the response to Q21, a range of other schools and models were researched as the proposal was developed.
	82		As a CofE MAT, should you not be doing what is best for these communities and children and looking at the evidence of the advantages of these small environments, and focusing on how you ensure they are sustainable?	We believe the proposals contained within the consultation do exactly this. The amalgamated school will remain a 'small school' and harbour the same benefits that make small schools special.
	83	Parent/Carer - 31.01	Surrounding schools are already at capacity or close to, what would happen if Runcton Holme was to be at full capacity?	A review of local school occupancy data suggests that a large number of schools in the locality have spare places. In the event that all of these places are full, as is the school at Runcton Holme, then additional places would be commissioned by the Local Authority.
	84	Local Resident - 20.02	If other schools are closer, why would you make them travel further than they have to?	Please see the response to Q73
How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to change the catchment area of Runcton Holme CofE Primary School to include the parishes of Wormegay and Tottenhill from 31st August 2021?	85	Parent/Carer - 24.01	It's in Runcton Holme, why does the school name need to change just because Wormegay are coming to our school?	The existing federation that both schools have been part of since 2012 is named 'Holy Cross Federation'. It is seen as a common bond between the two schools.
	86	Parent/Carer - 31.01	Are you going to change the village name too, then?	No, the changing of the name of the village is outside of our control
How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to change the name of Runcton Holme CofE Primary School to the The Holy Cross Primary Academy?	87	Local Resident - 04.02	Why change the name just to placate the change in student groups?	Please see the response to Q85
	88	Parent/Carer - 09.02	Well, are they going to change the name of the village if they are going to change the school name?	Please see the response to Q86
	89	Member of Staff - 23.02	Why the need to change the name?	Please see the response to Q85
	90	Grandparent - 05.03	The Holy Cross Primary Academy relates to who?	Please see the response to Q85
	91	Parent/Carer - 21.01	Will the running cost savings from the running of Wormegay be all attributed to The Holy Cross Primary Academy? - i.e. DofE goes into one school and not lost in 'DEMAT administration' costs?	If the proposal were to go ahead, as there will be a reduction in funding of £115k to the new school due to the way funding is calculated, there will be no overall savings. However the larger school would be more sustainable and provide more economies of scale, so the loss incurred by both schools in recent years would be eliminated.
	92	Parent/Carer - 25.01	As this/these schools are both linked to the church, can the church not help keep both schools open?	Schools are funded by the central Government and not the Church. We receive support from the Diocese and Church in other forms rather than financially.
	93	Potential Future Parent - 27.01	Would it be better to close both schools and let the additional 26 from each school go to places like Shouldham, Watlington and West Winch?	This option is not feasible at this time due to a number of reasons, most notably we have a duty to maintain an education provision across the three parishes.
	94	Parent/Carer - 31.01	Why has it been decided that there will only be 6 children in the school in 2023?	Please see response to Q56
	95	Parent/Carer - 01.02	Will we have to buy new uniforms?	Please see response to Q60
	96	Local Resident - 07.02	Has the damaging effect this will have on mental health been appropriately cost?	We are confident, as are many parents, in the pastoral support offered by the school. We have Mental Health First Aiders at both sites and are prepared to support children if they need it.
	97		What sort of upheaval will this cause families and children?	We believe the changes to be relatively small, the most notable difference for some parents will be additional travel distance to the school. The teachers will remain the same as will the ethos and care within the school.
	98		Who will be fired?	We are unable to comment on staffing restructures in a public consultation, however due to the size of the Trust, we do not believe we would need to make redundancies if the proposal were successful.
	99		Is there any asbestos in the school as is common in old buildings?	There is a low level of asbestos in Runcton Holme, though it is lower quantities than is usual. This scenario is consistent with other schools nationally.

Is there anything else that you would like to ask or raise as part of the consultation?	100		How will you decide on class size and year groups?	It is anticipated that KS2 will be split into two groups with KS1 in a single group. This will be confirmed once we know how many pupils will be on roll following the NCC place preference exercise
	101		Will the 1:1 care the children have now be able to be continued with more children?	All pupils that are entitled to 1:1 support through their Education Health & Care Plans will continue to do so
	102		What measures are you proposing to take to ensure Runcton Holme does not close in the future?	Please see the response to Q41
	103		What funding will the school get?	The school will continue to receive the funding allocated to it by the central Government which is largely based on the number of pupils it has on roll.
	104		How are you going to make the school better?	This is contained within the consultation document and also in the transcript of the public meeting (Appendix C)
	105	Parent/Carer - 31.01	Why close Wormegay when it is not a failing school, to move the children to a failing school?	As clarified when a similar statement was made at the public meeting, Runcton Holme is not a failing school. Both schools are currently rated RI but as Runcton Holme has the physical capacity to host an additional class along with plentiful outdoor play space it is more logical to site the amalgamated school there.
	106		If Runcton school is failing with the low numbers they have, what makes you think that moving more children there will be helpful?	As clarified when this question was asked at the public meeting, Runcton Holme is not a failing school. We are confident in the plans contained within the consultation documents and the actions currently being delivered in school to improve the quality of education and make the amalgamated school a popular choice in the area.
	107		How many classroom assistants will there be?	We are unable to answer this question at this time until we know how many pupils will be on roll in September.
	108		How do you suggest gaining and retaining staff at a failing school?	As clarified at the public meeting, Runcton Holme is not a failing school and as a Trust we are investing in our teams through high quality CPD and staff development.
	109		How do you suggest gaining governors?	The Trust Governance team is currently in the process of recruiting governors with the appropriate skills and knowledge to support the amalgamated school effectively.
	110		Why do you think parents and potential students will choose Runcton school (Holy Cross) when it is a failing school?	Please see the response to Q106
	111		What is to stop you closing both schools?	Please see the response to Q41
	112		How can you possibly know there will only be 6 students on the roll in 2023?	Please see the response to Q56
	113	Local Resident - 03.03	How will transport be managed?	We are committed to working with the Local Authority and our families to support the resolution of any transport concerns
	114	Parent/Carer - 04.03	It is apparent from reading DEMAT's accounts that it has reported two members of staff earning between 80-90k and one earning 130-140k for the financial year that were not previously paid. How can DEMAT justify paying these salaries (as well as the 21 other jobs roles paying between 60-80k) when it has underperforming schools or schools that it says it cannot afford to run and must close them?	All Executive pay decisions are proposed by the Remuneration Committee of the Trust Board before agreement by the Full Board. Benchmarking activity is undertaken to support the proposals and decisions. The increase in posts is representative of the growing size of the Trust, with nearly 40 schools and a budget of over £40m and the challenges that go with such an organisation. There are 24 posts within the Trust remunerated above £60k, of which 17 are school-based leadership roles and the remuneration is set in line with the STPCD, and relevant group sizes of the schools. We do disagree with the last statement that is made which reads 'that it says it cannot afford to run and must close them', this statement has never been made by DEMAT or its representatives. The decision to close Wormegay is that due to the rapidly falling roll and low confidence in pupil numbers recovering, then the quality of education would be improved by amalgamating the two schools within the Holy Cross federation. The falling roll does make the school increasingly financially unviable and as we are custodians of public finances we must ensure that funds are spent in the most appropriate way to gain the maximum benefit.
	115	Grandparent - 05.03	Why is such a big decision being put forward/taken when children have not been present but at home being home schooled due to the Covid-19 pandemic?	Whilst the COVID pandemic is a short term concern by making the decision at this time it enables us to put in place a sustainable model of education provision across the three parishes for the long term.
	116	Grandparent - 05.03	How can DEMAT say what will emerge from the Covid pandemic? We have been inundated with suggestions from all walks of the media that all that matters is this life is family, togetherness, helping each other - all very strong traits at Wormegay School - so why push to close a school that provides all of this and much more?	DEMAT cannot determine what will emerge from the COVID pandemic, nor have we sought to. We agree that those traits are important. It is pleasing to see that these are recognised in the provision at Wormegay, they are also recognised at Runcton Holme established by the same leaders across both schools.
	117	Grandparent - 05.03	Who is DEMAT really thinking of?	As stated in the consultation document the proposal has been developed with the educational interests of the children foremost. We believe that this proposal sets out the best way in which we can provide a sustainable model of education across the three parishes which will benefit not only the current cohorts but future pupils as well.
118	Grandparent - 05.03	Is this an attempt to improve Runcton Holmes Ofsted standing at the expense of the children who attend Wormegay?	We disagree with this assumption, we do agree that we are implementing strategies by which to improve the Ofsted judgement at Runcton Holme but this is not directly related to the consultation proposal. The strategies currently being implemented will continue except that more pupils will benefit from the impact of them.	

TABLE 1

Runcton Holme	Income	Expenditure	In year balance
2015/2016	393,641	(407,819)	(14,178)
2016/2017	400,035	(439,164)	(39,129)
2017/2018	348,245	(342,066)	6,179
2018/2019	334,969	(340,602)	(5,633)
2019/2020	316,375	(339,185)	(22,811)

17,452 *Brought forward reserve*

(58,119) *Reserve as per 19/20 accounts*

Wormegay	Income	Expenditure	In year balance
2015/2016	249,327	(259,742)	(10,415)
2016/2017	253,162	(255,850)	(2,689)
2017/2018	240,818	(267,768)	(26,950)
2018/2019	277,379	(270,698)	6,680
2019/2020	269,149	(304,131)	(34,982)

32,663 *Brought forward reserve*

(35,692) *Reserve as per 19/20 accounts*