

Elizabeth Woodville School De-amalgamation Consultation

30th September - 21st October 2025

Executive Summary

Tove Learning Trust is proposing to formally divide Elizabeth Woodville School into two separate secondary schools in time for the 2026-27 academic year. This process is known as de-amalgamation. Both schools would continue to collaborate as members of the Trust in the same way that the other schools in the Trust collaborate through targeted and universal support networks and staff can be utilised in the best interest of the school they are working within.

De-amalgamation will lead to educational and organisational benefits, and an opportunity to accelerate school improvement and raise outcomes for students. Value for money will be ensured because economies of scale in areas such as IT support, catering and facilities management will be retained as a central service of Tove Learning Trust.

The two, de-amalgamated schools will better serve their communities by enabling more focused leadership, tailored curriculums, improved student outcomes, and more efficient use of resources. The transition is projected to deliver long-term benefits in educational performance, financial sustainability, and community engagement.

Background and Context

Elizabeth Woodville School operates across two sites in the villages of Deanshanger and Roade.

Originally Elizabeth Woodville School was two separate schools with Kingsbrook Business and Enterprise College operating in Deanshanger and Roade School Sports College operating in Roade. Roade and Deanshanger are villages 9 miles apart and serve a large rural catchment area in south Northamptonshire. The villages of Roade and Deanshanger are entirely separate, and each is a close-knit community. Due to historical underperformance of the two predecessor schools and changing demographic patterns the decision was taken by Northamptonshire County Council in 2011 to merge the two schools and operate as one school (Elizabeth Woodville School) working across both locations. Unfortunately, the merger was not wholly successful, and performance and viability concerns remained. It was also apparent that the merger of the two predecessor schools prevented the two distinct and unique communities of Roade and Deanshanger developing a strong sense of identity with their school. It was determined that the school transferred to Tove Learning Trust. The school joined Tove Learning Trust in 2016 and has continued to grow in success but has not yet been able to yield the successes that school autonomy would provide.

Currently, Tove Learning Trust continues to operate Elizabeth Woodville School as a single school over the Deanshanger and Roade sites. The school has received intensive support and considerable investment from Tove Learning Trust to improve the quality of education and this culminated in the school receiving a very positive Ofsted outcome in March 2025.

During 2025 it was necessary to undertake a significant review of staffing structures, finances and education provision to ensure that the school could operate sustainably. During this process there was a strong view that the current position of the school operating over two sites was hindering progress and not allowing the needs of the two distinct communities to be met.

- Elizabeth Woodville School serves two different communities but retains one administrative structure. This structure requires regular co-operation across the two sites and compromises between them to implement effective change, adding another layer of complexity at times. These systems are constrained for administrative and technological reasons, such as the requirement to maintain a single management information system for the school.
- The schools have very differing contexts and therefore, the needs of the staff and students differ vastly. In having a single management structure, the schools are not autonomous in being able to quickly adapt to the operation needs of their own context.
- There has been a gradual move to the two sites operating informally as two separate organisations and leaders and staff have been positive about these changed working relationships. Some practical examples of this include:
 - *“This academic year when the sites have operated on a more site-by-site basis has allowed me to lead my department more effectively.”*
 - *“Cross-campus communication can also be poor, which can lead to confusion and create a divide.”*
 - *“Had I been able to run this trip as [site] only...it would have significantly reduced my workload.”*
 - *“The drive between two sites for meetings just feels like time I am wasting that I should be spending on my professional development. PPA time isn't used for travel so I feel I am not gaining anything by driving for 20 minutes to teach a lesson somewhere else - there isn't the time then for collaboration which could be done virtually.”*
- Parental engagement demonstrates that two sites create frustration and confusion, there is often confusion about events and parity between the offer and experience of the sites. Open Evenings for example have to be offered at different times but catchments fall into two largely different areas. However, parents often confuse where those catchments are due to the school having one outward identity.

Proposal

From September 2026, Elizabeth Woodville School will be de-amalgamated into two separate schools - the names are yet to be determined and will be part of a wider consultation process. However, for the purpose of this process will be referred to in the following way:

- **Deanshanger School (Years 7-13)**
- **Roade School (Years 7-13)**

The rationale behind this proposal is to allow each academy to better focus on the specific needs of their students and families. It will also improve how we operate day-to-day and

allow each academy to maximise funding available and to invest further in our students and their education. There will be no change of employer for staff and they will continue to work at one of the two sites. All terms and conditions will remain the same otherwise.

Each school will have its own:

- Leadership team (Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher, etc.)
- Budget and resource allocation
- Tailored curriculum and extracurricular programs
- Strategic improvement plan

Both schools will operate within Tove Learning Trust, and will benefit from the school improvement services of the Trust, including:

- A range of teaching and learning development programmes and initiatives
- Full back-office support including finance, human resources, estate management, procurement, business support and data and IT systems.
- Membership of the Tove staff network and Swan Professional Learning Alliance.

Benefits

There are clear educational and organisational benefits to de-amalgamation including:

- The Educational benefits would be more direct **accountability** e.g. Ofsted, Performance Tables and Schools Financial Benchmarking would all relate to one site rather than an amalgamation of the two sites. This would ensure that all stakeholders have better information on which to make decisions, such as parents choosing a school, and therefore drive-up standards.
- Increased **autonomy** to serve the needs of the local communities e.g. on timings of school day, uniform, admissions criteria or other school-level policy, so that relevant decisions can be made and changes implemented without undue delay.
- Increased **security**, such as around data protection and safeguarding, because leaders will only have access to information relating to members of their own school community would allow for more organisational benefit.
- Increased **clarity** regarding the nature of inclusion and SEND provision at each school with a clearly identifiable SENCO who will only be responsible for the young people in their school which has been an on-going benefit of more recent autonomy.
- Increased **effectiveness** of support and provision for students through the concentration and co-ordination of services on each site rather than across sites (e.g. pastoral systems, mental health support, safeguarding). This will ensure that relevant decisions can be made efficiently and autonomously to service the best interests of the students in line with the Trust's charitable objectives.
- Increased **efficiencies** through installations of local systems e.g. separate management information systems and communication systems. The current system requires regular compromise, communication and co-ordination between sites which adds workload and slows down decision-making.
- Increased **resources** for students, because the lump-sum funding received for the second (separate) school will be approximately £50k more than the funding Elizabeth Woodville School currently receives for operating across two sites.
- Increased **academic outcomes** through continued collaboration and constructive competition alongside locally determined curriculum and pedagogical approaches.
- Increased accountability through strong local governance with separate Local Governing Bodies enabling community stakeholder involvement.

Value for money

The Trust has already separated the school's budget into two sites. Almost all staff are based solely on one site. Each site has a substantive Head of School who are responsible for ensuring value for money and a balanced budget through discussion with the Trust's Chief Financial Officer. There are limited additional costs anticipated as a result of de-amalgamation, mostly relating to license costs. The additional lump-sum funding more than compensates for the loss of split-site funding and these additional costs. This funding model will also more accurately and reasonably reflect the operational conditions of the school. The process would therefore continue to provide value for money.

Nature of provision and admissions

Both schools will continue to deliver the same provision as currently. There would be no significant deviation. Currently the planned admission number (PAN) for new year 7 students is 240 each year, with 120 students allocated to each site. Each new school's PAN would be 120. Each new school would continue to operate sixth form provisions according to local demand.

In the current admissions process parents have to select the school and then site. This often leads to confusion. If the schools are de-amalgamated the admissions process will be more straightforward as parents would be expressing a preference for either Roade Secondary School or Deanshanger Secondary School.

Conclusion

The educational and organisational benefits are likely to be significant for communities of both schools. Project costs are modest, and ongoing costs will have a negligible impact on the overall financial position of the Trust. Rather, efficiencies will be achieved through more direct and responsive decision-making at the local level. Through the de-amalgamation process the schools will achieve greater academic success and better value for money.