

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

22/00061

Unrestricted

Key decision: No

Subject:

Proposal to establish a new 15 place Special Resource Provision at Copperfield Academy, Dover Road East, Gravesend DA11 0RB, for September 2022

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to the establishment of a 15 place SRP at Copperfield Academy, for the September 2022 intake.

Reason(s) for decision:

The proposal establishes a 15 place Special Resource Provision for children for whom speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is the primary barrier to achieving their full potential. This is a new provision offering additional places from September 2022.

KCC, as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. This duty applies to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, as well as mainstream settings. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2022-26 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out KCC's future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent highlights the SEN place pressure that Kent has experienced, with the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) increasing significantly in recent years. A key area of demand is providing support for students who have speech, language and communication needs as their primary barrier to achieving their potential.

The demand for Speech and Language places across the North Kent Area has increased with strong parental preference towards places at Special Schools and significant house building in the area. Even though much is being done in Kent to reduce children's need for ever increasing numbers of EHCPs and place a greater proportion of young people in mainstream provision, the demand for dedicated SEN places is not forecast to reduce in the near or medium future.

Copperfield Academy is a primary school with a strong local focus, offering places to children in the Northfleet and West Gravesend area. The school is operated by the Reach2 Academy Trust. It was assessed by Ofsted to be a 'Good' school in May 2021.

Financial Implications***Capital***

There is no capital outlay, with the accommodation already identified and equipped.

Revenue:

Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per newly provided learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment.

The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to special schools through KCC's Schools funding Formula.

Human:

The school will appoint additional staff as required; utilising revenue funding allocated through the Schools Funding Formula for these additional pupils.

Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. No adverse implications were identified.

Legal Implications

The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. The proposed decision will authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council. It will also authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

The expansion will be subject to a legally binding and enforceable contract being in place between KCC and the Trust.

These proposals will help to secure our ambition "to ensure that every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can fair access to school places" as set out in the Kent Commissioning Plan.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

In accordance with the statutory guidance, the Academy Trust has undertaken its own public consultation. Following the consultation, the Academy Trust determined to progress the proposal and advised this formally to the Area Education Officer.

The Trust will also advert the responses and decision to the Education & Skills Funding Agency when they apply for their funding agreements to be amended.

The Local Members (Northfleet & Gravesend West) affected by the change, Conrad Broadley and Dr Lauren Sullivan were informed of the proposal.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Due to the availability of accommodation, and the willingness of the school to establish a provision, no alternative has been considered.

There have been studies undertaken into alternatives to create new Special School provision. A review is currently underway to assess the future pathways for SEN provision, but this proposal can be assessed independently due to the immediate availability of accommodation.

If the proposal does not proceed, Kent County Council will find it difficult to provide sufficient local special school places in the North Kent Area.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date