

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Beverley Fordham, Cabinet Member for Education
and Skills

DECISION NUMBER:

26/00042

Executive Decision – key

26/00042– Proposed Expansion of Oakwood Park Grammar School

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- 1) APPROVE the allocation of £7.3m from the Children, Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to permanently expand Oakwood Park Grammar School by 1 FE, increasing its PAN from 160 to 190 places in September 2027.
- 2) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take relevant actions including but not limited to negotiating, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts, contract variations or other legal agreements as required to implement the decision, including the granting of leases for utility installations for over 20 years, if necessary, in consultation with the Deputy Leader.
- 3) AGREE for the Director of Infrastructure, to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills without requiring a further Key Decision.

Reasons for decision:

Kent County Council (KCC), as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30 (KCP) is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

For provision planning purposes KCC's produces forecasts according to planning groups. These planning groups are nationally recognised by central Government.

The KCP identifies the need for additional selective Secondary provision to serve the Maidstone and Malling planning group.

To meet the identified demand for additional selective Secondary provision within the Maidstone and Malling planning group, we propose to permanently expand Oakwood Park Grammar School by 1 FE, increasing its PAN from 160 to 190 places in September 2027.

Financial implications:

Capital

Comprehensive feasibility and design work have been completed as part of the on-going planning application process. From these works, the total scheme cost is estimated to be £7.3m that will be funded from the Basic Need Capital Programme.

The scheme incorporates 3 additional general teaching classrooms, a 3-court sports hall and a science classroom extension. This will be achieved via the provision of a new building, internal remodelling of existing accommodation and improvements to facilities.

Capital Costs for mainstream provision are funded through the Basic Need Capital Programme, which is made up from a range of sources including the Basic Need Grant, Developer Contributions, Prudential Borrowing (originally agreed to fund shortfalls in historic schemes) and other specific grants (such as schools rebuild programme). The Basic Need Grant is the largest contributor to the programme and is provided by the DfE to support local authorities fulfil their statutory duty to ensure there are enough school places for children aged 5 to 16 in their area. The Education capital programme is continuously reviewed, with projects entering and leaving the programme regularly in response to demand and project completions. The 2026-27 Basic Need Budget, agreed at County Council in February, of £148 million included an allowance for the estimated cost of this scheme and the updated costing is expected to be accommodated following changes to other projects. This project is partly expected to be funded from developer contributors of £411,502.

In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment.

Revenue

Should the scheme not proceed through to completion, any costs incurred at the time of cessation would become abortive costs and are likely to be recharged to Revenue. This would be reported through the regular financial monitoring reports to Cabinet. This will be a cost to the General Fund.

Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would also be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment (in addition to allowance for ICT specific expenditure). 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 funding formula. All school related revenue costs highlighted will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant, a ring-fenced grant from the Department of Education.

Legal implications:

Planning permission will be required for expansion and the application process is ongoing.

The proposed decision requires the award of a contract for works. The Council proposes to utilise its existing Property Construction Partnership Framework Agreement. The framework was procured in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("PCR 2015") and remains valid and compliant. The Council is able to award contracts under that framework without the need to conduct a separate procurement process, provided that the call off is undertaken in accordance with the terms of the framework agreement and the provisions of the PCR 2015. The proposed award will be made in compliance with those requirements, including the applicable call off procedure set out in the framework.

Local authorities must plan for and secure sufficient school places for their area in line with their duties under section 14 of the Education Act 1996.

All individual proposals to either establish new, expand current or cease current provision will be required to go through the DfE process of making significant changes to an academy (non-statutory guidance on collaborative school place planning and making organisational changes to academies, August 2025).

Equalities implications:

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed for the proposed expansion. The screening found no evidence that the KCP will impact negatively on pupils from Protected Groups or lead to them being treated less favourably.

Data Protection implications:

There are no data protection implications.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 14 July 2026

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

There are only 2 boys' grammar schools within the planning group, Oakwood Park and Maidstone Grammar School and therefore the options for expanding boys' grammar provision are limited to these schools. Maidstone Grammar School was expanded previously and would be more challenging to expand further than Oakwood Park.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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Signed

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Date