

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

Executive

DECISION TAKEN BY:

**David Adams, Interim Deputy Director – Effectiveness,
Sufficiency and Skills**

DECISION NO:

OD-26-00032

For publication

Subject matter:

Opening a 30 place Specialist Resource Provision for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or speech, language and communication needs at Knole Academy, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3LE from September 2027.

Cabinet Member decision to which this action relates:

25/00085 [Decision - 25/00085 - Specialist Resource Provision Review and Commissioning Intentions](#)

Decision:

I:

- (a) AGREE, subject to the Secretary of State approving the provision, to enter into the relevant SRP contract with Aletheia Academies Trust to commission a 30-place specialist resource provision (SRP) for ASD and/or SLCN at Knole Academy, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3LE;
- (b) Approve £1,253,732 capital funding and £18,000 revenue funding for the establishment and start-up of the SRP at Knole Academy;
- (c) CONFIRM that the Director of Infrastructure will deliver all property and capital works required for the SRP and is authorised, in accordance with the Director's existing constitutional responsibilities under the Council's Property Management Protocol, to negotiate, enter into, manage and vary any property-specific or capital works contracts necessary to deliver the required accommodation; and
- (d) CONFIRM that the Director of Infrastructure may act as Authority Representative only for property and capital works contracts, and not for SRP commissioning or operational agreements.

Reason(s) for decision:

A review of KCC's current specialist resource provisions (SRPs) was undertaken in 2025. The priority was to increase capacity and improve local access, particularly by expanding secondary provision by September 2026.

The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (KCP) identified a series of proposals to increase SRP places, and to broaden the designation to improve local access and reduce travel for children.

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered a report on the topic on 18 November 2025 with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills approving the key decision

25/00085. Relevant to this decision, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, agreed to:

- CONFIRM the policy position, that Secondary SRP places are commissioned for Years 7-11 only, with exceptions being considered on a case-by-case basis;
- APPROVE the allocation of £20m of the High Needs Capital Grant to enable the delivery of an increase in commissioned SRP places, in line with the proposals set out in Tables 8c to 8f of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30;
- DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education to enter in to all and any necessary negotiations, consultations and contracts to commission the increase in SRP places set out in Tables 8c to 8f of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30, to change the designations of existing SRPs as set out in Table 8g of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30, and to decommission SRP provisions to implement the decisions set out at I. and II. above;
- DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to issue public notices, and approve proposals on behalf of the Local Authority;
- DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education to approve capital expenditure on individual SRP proposals contained in Tables 8c to 8f of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30 provided that the total capital expenditure remains within the agreed £20m, and in cases involving capital expenditure above £1m, such approval to be made in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and
- DELEGATE authority to the Director for Education and Special Educational Needs to enter into contracts and service level agreements (SLAs) with mainstream primary and secondary schools that provide either new or existing Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs), on behalf of Kent County Council under the current contract/SLA in place agreed under key decision 23/00128.

The establishment of an SRP at Knole Academy is contained in the list of proposals in the KCP and is therefore covered by the Cabinet Member's decision. This decision enacts that of the Cabinet Member and is in line with the authority delegated to me by the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education.

Consultation process and outcome

For an academy:

The Trust has consulted on their proposal for Knole Academy to open a 30 place SRP for students with ASD and/or SLCN from September 2027. The consultation undertaken between 3 and 24 June 2026 received 42 responses and demonstrated strong support for the proposal to establish a 30 place SRP at Knole Academy for students with ASD and/or SLCN. Approximately 80% of respondents supported the proposal, with feedback highlighting the need for additional local specialist provision and the benefits of increased inclusion and support for pupils with additional needs.

Respondents' comments focused primarily on implementation considerations, including staffing, safeguarding, facilities, and the potential impact on existing provision. These matters will be addressed through the detailed design and delivery of the SRP, with respondents emphasising the importance of clear communication and careful planning to ensure the new provision enhances support for all pupils.

The Trust Board has confirmed it wishes to proceed and has applied to the SoS for the change of

designation.

The provision will provide much needed place for students with ASD and/or SLCN in Sevenoaks and Borough Green areas.

Financial Implications:

Capital:

Capital funding of £20m has been approved for the SRP Expansion Programme. £1,253,732 of this funding will be required to provide the following:

- The school site does not currently contain any existing accommodation that could be repurposed to support the establishment of an SRP.
- However, there is an identified area in the north west corner of the Knole Academy campus, immediately to the west of the existing three storey school building where a new building will be constructed to accommodate the SRP.
- The site is close to existing access points to support integration with the main school and avoid isolating pupils; it is on level ground and is accessible via the rear service/access road, which minimises the need for significant earthworks and keeps construction traffic away from main pupil routes.
- Construction of a new single-storey SRP building of approximately 249m² GIA.
- The preferred construction methodology is lightweight timber-frame construction (modular has been discounted due to access constraints).
- The SRP will comprise of: two group rooms, medium-sized small group room/s, medical intervention room, staff office, specialist staff workroom, stores and equipment storage, coat and bag storage, food preparation area, pupil and staff toilet facilities, including accessible toilet/s and plant room.

Capital funding of up to £7,500 will be required for ICT infrastructure (£2,500 per class) and this has been included in the requested sum.

Revenue:

Commissioned and occupied places in an SRP are funded via the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, based on a rate per place.

For new SRPs, to reflect possible diseconomies when first opening a new SRP, start-up funding will be provided in line with the prevailing Growth Fund Policy approved by the Schools Funding Forum and funded from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Up to £18,000 (£6,000 for each SRP class) to provide for all furniture and SEN resources needed as a consequence of opening the SRP.

Any further growth or change in commissioned numbers will be managed by the school.

The Dedicated Schools Grant is a ring-fenced grant provided annually by the Department of Education. The revenue cost of this proposal is expected to be fully met by this grant and will not be a cost to the General Fund.

Legal implications:

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 KCC has a duty 'to support the child and his or her parent, or the young person, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help him or her achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes'. By ensuring we have appropriate provision as locally as possible, we are delivering on our obligation in accordance with this legislation.

KCC has duties, pursuant to the Education Act 1996, for ensuring sufficient school places are available including SEND provision.

Equality Implications:

An equalities impact assessment screening was completed to inform the Cabinet Member's decision (25/00085).

A separate equalities impact assessment has been completed for this proposal. This suggested a high positive impact for those who are secondary school aged and/or who may have a disability who access the provision, as the provision at Knole Academy will enable secondary school aged students requiring the support of an SRP, to attend a suitable provision nearer to their homes.

No negative impact on protected groups was noted.

Comments received from any Members or Officers consulted:

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills was consulted on the proposed decision and expressed support for it to be taken.

This decision enacts that of the Cabinet Member and is in line with the authority delegated to me by the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Alternative options were considered but rejected. Sevenoaks District currently has only one secondary SRP, at Orchards Academy, providing 12 places for students with ASD. Demand for specialist provision continues to grow, and secondary-aged pupils with ASD in Sevenoaks travel further on average (11 miles) to access appropriate provision than the Kent average (9.9 miles).

Maintaining current capacity was rejected as it would not meet projected demand or support more children and young people to attend school closer to home. Continuing to rely on provision outside the district, including special schools, was also rejected as it would not increase local capacity and would require pupils to continue travelling significant distances.

Establishing an SRP at Knole Academy is therefore the most appropriate option. It will increase local specialist capacity, reduce travel distances, and provide access to specialist support within a mainstream secondary school setting for students with ASD and/or SLCN.

Any conflict of interest declared by any executive member consulted by the decision maker and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Adams', is positioned above a dotted line.

signed

7th July 2026

date