

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE

From: Christine McInnes, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Beverley Fordham, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Proposed Expansion of Oakwood Park Grammar School

Decision no: 26/00042

Key Decision : expenditure of over £1m

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Children Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 14 July 2026

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Oliver Bradshaw and Stuart Jeffery - Maidstone Central

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This report seeks the allocation of the capital funds needed to expand Oakwood Park Grammar School.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills consider the following proposal 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.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 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. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:

[Commissioning Plan for Education Provision - Kent County Council](#)

- 1.2 For provision planning purposes KCC's produces forecasts according to planning groups. These planning groups are nationally recognised by central Government.
- 1.3 The KCP identifies the need for additional selective Secondary provision to serve the Maidstone and Malling planning group.
- 1.4 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.

2. Background and Analysis of Demand:

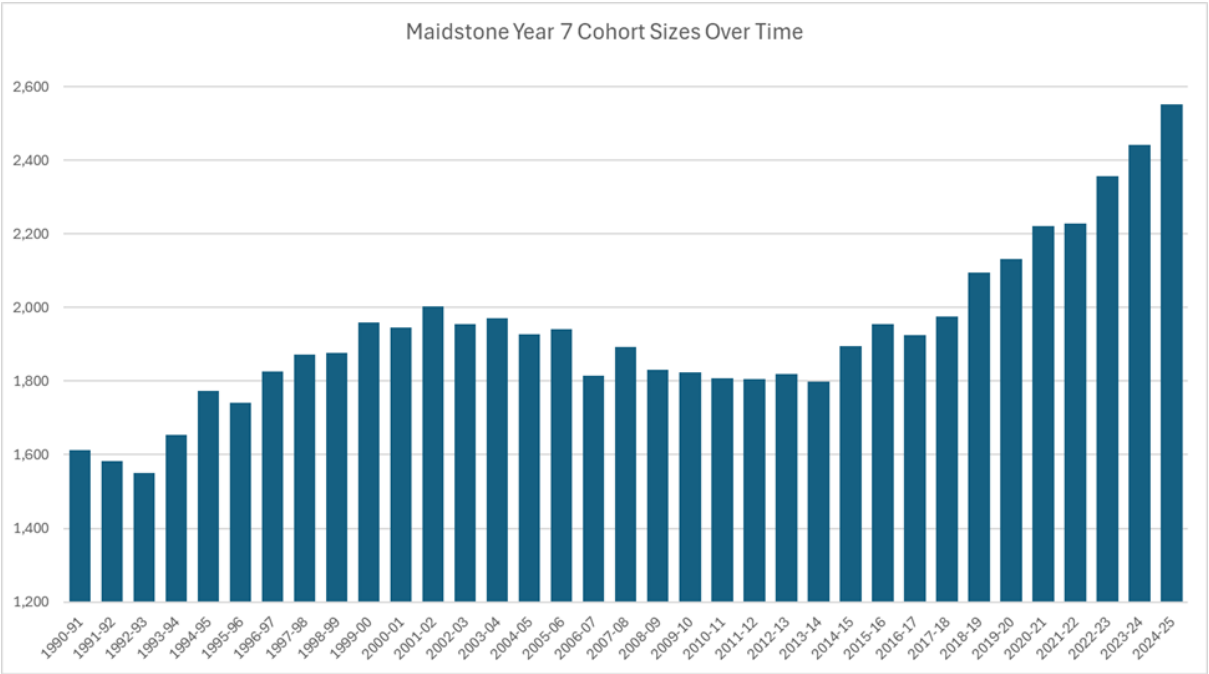
- 2.1 The schools in the Maidstone and Malling Selective Planning Group are all single-sex providers (for compulsory school-aged children). In September 2023 Maidstone Grammar School for Girls was expanded by 1 FE which provided additional provision for girls.
- 2.2 The current PANs of the four grammar schools in the Borough are shown below:

			Current PANs	Total Places Sex	Y7 by	% of Total Places
Girls	4058	Invicta Grammar School	240	450		55%
	4523	Maidstone Grammar School for Girls	210			
Boys	4522	Maidstone Grammar School	205	365		45%
	5422	Oakwood Park Grammar School	160			
				815		

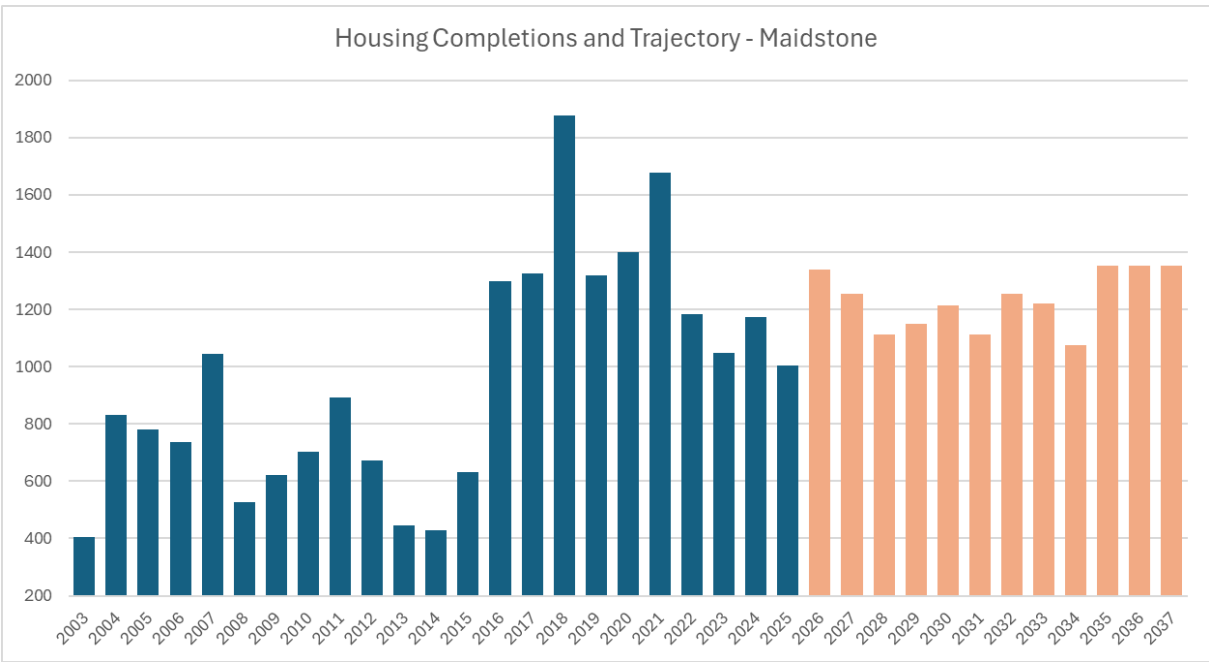
- 2.3 Since 2021 the percentage of the Year 6 cohort resident in the planning area assessed as eligible for Grammar through the Kent Test has remained stable at around 25%, however the total cohort has grown in size and is anticipated to continue to do so. In 2021, 749 pupils were grammar eligible but in 2025 780 were, with the same proportion of pupils taking the test and a similar proportion achieving grammar eligibility.
- 2.4 As the proportion of pupils taking the test and passing has remained stable, the change is due to the underlying increase in the total size of the pupil population;

this increase is expected to continue over the next decade due to the significant housebuilding that has taken place in Maidstone Borough.

2.5 The chart below shows the total Year 7 cohort sizes of Maidstone resident pupils from 1990 to 2024. This strong upward trend in the last decade is mainly due to housebuilding:



2.6 The total number of dwellings completed within the Borough increased significantly in 2016 and this increase has been sustained over successive years. The forecast housing trajectory, based on the Borough Council's adopted Local Plan, is set to continue at current levels or greater well into the 2030s – see table below:



- 2.7 The KCP forecast show that the increase in secondary aged children resident in Maidstone Borough has not yet peaked and Year 7 cohorts are forecast to grow each year for the rest of the decade and then settle at larger sizes than they currently are. If PANs remain as they are, the forecast future deficit of around 1 to 2 FE places for the remainder of the Plan period:

Planning Group name	2027/28 (F)	2028/29 (F)	2029/30 (F)	2030/31 (F)	2031/32 (F)	2032/33 (F)	2033/34 (F)	2034/35 (F)
Maidstone and Malling Selective	-8	-32	-56	-27	-32	-20	-52	-21

- 2.8 The split between girls and boys achieving Grammar eligibility in the Kent Test has remained stable in Maidstone, with 52% passing the test being boys each year, in 2025 that represented 401 boys achieving eligibility. Boys' places currently represent 45% of the total Year 7 places available in the grammar schools. On average each year group of the current primary school aged population of pupils resident in the planning area is 51% boys.
- 2.9 With boys making up 51% of the pupil population and also representing a similar proportion of pupils achieving eligibility through the Kent Test, but with 45% of existing places being available to boys, it is considered necessary to increase the number of boys' places as the total cohort grows.
- 2.10 As of 30/1/2026 Oakwood Park had no spare places in their current Year 7 and Maidstone Grammar School were 6 pupils over its PAN. The 2027 Year 7 cohort is forecast to be larger than both the current 2025 cohort and the 2026 cohort.
- 2.11 Around 90% of Grammar Eligible boys resident in the planning area attend one of the two schools (335 in 2025), with the majority of those attending schools elsewhere typically attending grammars in Tonbridge (30 in 2025). Oakwood and MGS also typically have around the same number on their roll who reside outside of Maidstone; this is due to geography and admission criteria; that pattern is not expected to change in future.
- 2.12 Therefore, to meet the forecast need identified in the KCP, and to ensure equality of girls and boys provision, KCC has asked Oakwood Park Grammar School to provide 30 additional boys selective places from September 2027.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The proposed expansion scheme is intended to provide equality of selective provision for boys and girls within the Maidstone and Malling area.
- 3.2 In order for the scheme to progress, a successful planning permission application is required to provide the new accommodation needed for the expansion.

- 3.3 The academy is required to follow the Statutory Guidance 'Making significant changes to an academy', to gain approval from the Department for Education (DfE) for the expansion.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 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.

5. Financial Implications

Capital

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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

- 5.5 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.

- 5.6 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.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Planning permission will be required for expansion and the application process is ongoing.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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).

7. Equalities implications

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

8. Data Protection Implications

- 8.1 There are no data protection implications.

9. Other corporate implications

- 9.1 Support from the Capital and Strategic Programmes team will be required to deliver the project. KCC Highways and Planning colleagues will be consulted, as appropriate, throughout the planning process.

10. Governance

10.1 This decision delegates 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. This includes the granting of leases for utility installations for over 20 years, if necessary, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, as required, to implement the decision

10.2 Implementation of the expansion is subject to securing approval from the DfE under the 'making significant changes to an academy' process, and will only be progressed should that approval be granted

11. Consultation

11.1 In accordance with the DfE's Statutory Guidance 'Making significant changes to an academy', the academy is required to carry out a public consultation with stakeholders as part of their funding application process.

11.2 The KCC Members for Maidstone Central, Oliver Bradshaw and Stuart Jeffery, have been consulted on this proposal.

12. Conclusions

12.1 This report sets out the need for additional boys selective provision in the Maidstone and Malling planning group. It proposes the expansion of Oakwood Park Grammar School by 1 FE from September 2027 to meet this demand for places. The proposed expansion would ensure that there is an equitable split of boys and girls selective places within the Maidstone and Malling area.

Recommendation(s):

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13. Background Documents

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30

14. Appendices

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15. Contact details

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