

To: County Council – 19 July 2012

Position Statement on Primary provision in the Grove Green/Bearsted area of Maidstone

1. Background

- 1) The County Council received an e’petition on 25 May 2012, with 1171 signatures (this was made up of an e-petition of 798 signatures and a paper-based petition of 373 signatures).
- 2) The wording of the petition is:

"We the undersigned petition the council to increase the intake of reception class children at the three local schools, Thurnham C of E, Madginford Park Infants and St John's CEP to make sure all local children attend local schools.

The aim of the ePetition is to create awareness of this situation and increase the infant class intake to eliminate the stress that many families in the Bearsted, Madginford, Weaving and Grove Green areas are currently experiencing."

2. Analysis of Primary Places in the Area

- 1) The five local schools serving Grove Green and Bearsted are St John's CE Primary School, Thurnham CE Infant School, Roseacre Junior School, and Madginford Park Infant and Junior Schools.
- 2) For admission in to Year R in September 2012, the three infant/primary schools received the following numbers of applications:

St John's CEPS	Total prefs: 160 (1 st = 42; 2 nd = 40; 3 rd = 78)
Thurnham CEIS	Total prefs: 248 (1 st = 116; 2 nd = 95; 3 rd = 37)
Madginford Park IS	Total prefs: 309 (1 st = 136; 2 nd = 114; 3 rd = 59)

- 3) At offer day on 30 March 2012, 12 children living in Grove Green, five children in East Bearsted, and three children in Madginford were not offered one of their families' preferred schools. Instead they were offered places at an alternative infant school in Maidstone, which is rated a good school by Ofsted, however is not located within their local community, is over the two mile limit and is not on a bus route.
- 4) For some families difficulties are created by accepting a Reception place at Thurnham CE Infant School, a voluntary controlled school, who would then need to access a place at age 7 at the neighbouring junior school, Roseacre, which is a foundation school. There is no admissions link for siblings between the two schools. This has led to a number of the families being offered Year 3 places at Roseacre for September 2013, or having older children in the school, while not being offered Year R places at Thurnham CE Infant School for their younger child.

- 5) St John's CE Primary School currently has one form of entry. The local Member and officers are discussing with the Governors the possibility of expansion.
- 6) Thurnham CE Infant School does not have accommodation to take more pupils, or sufficient space for temporary additional accommodation.
- 7) Madginford Park Infant School does not have accommodation to take more pupils or sufficient space for temporary accommodation.
- 8) Current numbers of the three schools are as follows:

School	PAN	PAN Cap	NOR 2011	1 st prefs Sep 2011	YR 2011	1 st prefs Sep 2012
St John's CEPS	30	210	220	42	30	42
Thurnham CEIS	90	270	266	83	87	116
Madginford Park IS	90	270	269	92	90	136
Totals	210	750	755	217	207	294

- 9) The current pre-school population in the area is 226, with a forecast decline to 178 by 2015. The pre-school population in the area in 2009 was 230, slightly higher than the current figure.

3. Capacity in the Wider Area

It was appreciated that Year Reception capacity in Maidstone in 2012 would be tight. In September 2011, 1622 pupils joined Year Reception classes in Maidstone. This will increase to 1726 in September 2012, and then decline in September 2013 to 1681. The Tiger (free) School will open in September 2012. This year they offered 78 places and 60 parents have accepted places. With this capacity, it is expected that 4% of Year R places will be vacant across the Borough in 2012/13, increasing to 7% in 2013/14. However, capacity will be reviewed at a more granular level and then published in the new Commissioning Plan for Education Provision.

4. Kent County Council Action

- 1) The Local Member and the Area Education Officer met with parents at a meeting convened by Bearsted Parish Council.
- 2) The Area Education Officer has written to parents of primary aged children in the Grove Green area asking them for information regarding their future preferences for school places. It is hoped that this information will provide a better understanding of the community's wishes, to inform future provision. The results of this survey will be reported to County Council on 19 July 2012. The outcome of this survey will inform any proposals brought forward.
- 3) The Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills and local Member will update the Council Meeting on the outcomes of the aforementioned activities.

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