

By:	Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills
	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Committee, 12 September 2012
Subject	Primary Commissioning – Maidstone District
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report seeks to inform Members of arrangements in place to ensure sufficient school places are available in Maidstone, and seeks the views of the Education Committee on proposals to commission additional provision.
Recommendations:	The Education Committee is asked to endorse that the Local Authority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agree to the Local Authority increasing capacity at St Francis Catholic Primary School. b) Note that survey work is being undertaken in the Grove Green/Bearsted area of Maidstone, the outcome of which will inform any proposal for addressing the current concerns about the availability of school places in this community.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Maidstone section of Kent's draft "Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-2017" indicates a need to increase accommodation at St Francis RCPS; and to consider adding accommodation to one of the schools in the Maidstone North planning area (60 places).

1.2 An e'petition has been signed by 1171 people, requesting '*We the undersigned petition the council to increase the intake of reception class children at the three local schools, Thurnham CofE, Madginford Park Infants and St John's CEP to make sure all local children attend local schools. The aim of the e'petition 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.*' This will be debated at County Council on 19 July 2012. This issue will have a 'knock on' effect to the Maidstone North area mentioned above.

2. Background

2.1 A new free school, The Tiger School, opens in September 2012. Initially this will provide up to 60 year R places, and ultimately provide 420 places across all year groups.

2.2 There is pressure on places in Bearsted for September 2012 and public debate is currently underway regarding the need for provision. This situation has led to significant public interest and an e’petition. In response to conflicting information further analysis has been undertaken. This indicates that within Grove Green there are 404 pupils attending a primary school/academy in Kent. However, only 178 attend the local school in Grove Green, St John’s CEPS. A survey is currently being undertaken with these parents to inform the debate and any further proposals.

3. Commissioning Options for 2013 and beyond

3.1 St Francis RCPS has been admitting up to 60 pupils for the last two years. Its current PAN is 49. The proposal is to expand St Francis RCPS to a 2FE school, offering 60 places per year group. As this is not a significant enlargement, it does not require any formal consultation.

3.2 One response to the e’petition is to seek to expand St John’s CEP School. Discussion with the school is ongoing, and the outcome of the current survey will inform this discussion.

4. Proposal

4.1 It is proposed to:

- a. Expand St Francis RCPS to a 2fe school. This will add a total of 77 places.
- b. Consider outcome of public debate on the need for places in Bearsted and continue dialogue with the school and Canterbury Diocese to expand the school.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 St Francis RCPS

- a. Capital: Two additional classrooms will need to be provided for 2013/14, with an estimated cost of £201k. The classroom setup cost of £6k is within the capital programme.
- b. Revenue: The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget on a 'per pupil' basis.
- c. Human: The school will appoint two additional teachers as and when it becomes necessary.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed.

7. Member Opinion

7.1 The proposals are for schools sited in the following divisions

- a. St Francis RCPS – Maidstone Central division, Dan Daley/Malcom Robertson.

b. St John's CEPS – Maidstone Rural North division, Paul Carter

7.2 The members have been informed of the proposals and have indicated their support for these.

8. Area Education Officer Opinion

8.1 David Adams, the Area Education Officer for Mid Kent fully supports the proposals.

9. The Views of The Schools

9.1 The headteacher and governing body of St Francis Catholic Primary School have agreed to the proposals. Discussions are ongoing with St John's CEP School.

10. Conclusions

10.1 Forecasts for Maidstone Borough indicate demand for primary school places. These proposals will help address this.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Members are requested to endorse the recommendations as shown on page 1 of this report.

12. Background Documents

Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework
Commissioning Plan for Education – Kent

13. Lead Officer Contact details

David Adams,
Area Education Officer - Mid Kent
01233 898559.
david.adams@kent.gov.uk