

By: Peter Sass – Head of Democratic Services

To: Scrutiny Committee – 19 April 2016

Subject: Ensuring the provision of sufficient denominational school places in Kent – Discussion Item

Status: Open

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Summary: The Scrutiny Committee is receiving an update on the steps being taken by KCC to ensure sufficient provision of denominational school places, with particular reference to growing demand for Catholic school places.

This covering report provides summary information which may assist Members in discussion of the item.

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 There are 2163 Catholic schools in England and 89 Catholic schools in Wales, making up 10% of the national total of state funded schools. Over 800,000 pupils attend Catholic Schools. 30% of pupils at Catholic schools are of other faiths or none.
- 1.2 The school buildings and land of Catholic Schools are owned by the Catholic Church, which provides the premises at no charge and contributes 10% of any capital costs for maintenance. The day to day running costs of Catholic schools are funded by the state in the same way that all schools are funded (either through local authority or DfE funding agreements).
- 1.3 Presently, the Catholic Church in England and Wales is not opening any new Free Schools due to the Bishops' Conference response to the Government announcement made in September 2015 that religious schools must limit their faith admission element to 50% within their oversubscription criteria.

*Paul Barber, Director of the Catholic Education Service, said:*

*"Catholic schools are some of the best performing educational institutions in the country and there is a significant demand from parents.*

*"We are not opposed at all to the principle of free schools, however yesterday's announcement will be disappointing news to the thousands of parents who are unable to get their child a place at a Catholic school.*

*"If it is a question of diversity and promoting community cohesion, it would be worth the Government remembering that 36% of pupils at Catholic schools come from ethnic minority backgrounds, six per cent higher than the national average.*

*“We share the Government’s desire to provide hundreds of thousands of quality school places and its plan to give parents more choice in education.*

*“Providing high quality schooling is something the Catholic Church already does and the CES would ask the Government to remove the barriers which hinder us continuing to do this.”*

*Key statistics – Sept 2015*

- *83% of Catholic schools have been rated good or outstanding by Ofsted*
- *At GCSE Catholic schools outperform the national average by eight percentage points*
- *At age 11, Catholic schools outperform the national average English and Maths scores by five percentage points*

## **2. Scrutiny Committee action**

- 2.1 At the March Agenda Setting, it was agreed by the Chairman and Spokespeople that the Committee should receive an update from the Education and Young People’s Service Directorate, on steps being taken by KCC to ensure sufficient provision of denominational school places, with particular reference to concerns raised around catholic schools.
- 2.2 KCC’s Education Directorate has provided the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2016 – 2020 to support discussion (Appendix 1).

## **3. Attendance**

- 3.1 The following Members and Officers will be attending to provide the update and answer questions:
  - Mr Gough – Cabinet Member for Education Health Reform
  - Patrick Leeson – Corporate Director for Education and Young People’s Services

## **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Committee may note the update, express comments and make recommendations to the relevant Officer, Cabinet Member, Leader or Full Council.

## **5. Background Papers**

Appendix 1 – Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2016 - 2020

## **6. Contact details**

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