

**From:** Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

**To:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

**Subject:** Proposed changes to Meadowfield (Foundation Special) School, Sittingbourne for 1 September 2019

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** 30 March 2017

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member decision

**Electoral Division:** Sittingbourne South – John Wright

**Summary:** This report sets out the results of the education consultation on the proposed changes to Meadowfield (Foundation Special) School

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

Issue a public notice to

- permanently increase the designated number of the school from 209 to 348 for 1 September 2019
- alter the lower age range at Meadowfield School to formally include nursery provision for 1 September 2019.

And, subject to no new objections to the public notice

- a) Allocate £3.95 million from the Children, Young People and Education Capital budget;
- b) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the General Counsel (Interim) to enter into any necessary contracts / agreements on behalf of the County Council; and
- c) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into 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 without requiring a new Record of Decision.

**Note:** The proposal for growth is subject to planning permission being secured for the additional accommodation. If, for any reason planning consent is not achieved KCC proposes to regularise the designated number to reflect the current number on roll. Therefore, under these circumstances, the proposed designated number would be 280.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 As the strategic commissioner of school provision KCC, the Local Authority, has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent. This duty applies to special school provision, as well as mainstream settings. In accordance with KCC's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special

Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2017-19 we are seeking to reduce the number of children being educated out of their local area.

- 1.2 Meadowfield Special School is the District Special School for Swale, meeting the needs of pupils with profound, severe and complex special educational needs (PSCN) for children aged 4 to 19 years. All children who attend have a statement of special educational need or an Education, Health & Care Plan. Meadowfield is judged to be Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted in November 2014.
- 1.3 Over the past three years there has been an increasing demand for local places for children with PSCN including Autism. It is also important to note that there is no Special school on the Isle of Sheppey (Swale District) which means that significant numbers of pupils often have to travel long distances to the nearest suitable provision such as Maidstone and Tonbridge.
- 1.4 To meet the demand for places in Swale Meadowfield has taken additional pupils. On 30 March 2017, KCC's Education and Young People's Cabinet Committee endorsed the proposal to allocate £1.14 million of capital budget to provide additional accommodation in two phases (Record of Decision reference 17/00015). Meadowfield received a reception class room and new KS1 classrooms to accommodate the additional pupils in permanent accommodation.
- 1.5 Meadowfield School now has 282 pupils on roll but has a designated number of 209. In accordance with *The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013* ('the Prescribed Alterations Regulations') KCC is conducting an education statutory process in order to regularise the designated number to reflect not just the current number on roll but also allow for further growth. If, for any reason we are unable to secure planning permission for the additional accommodation, we will regularise the designated number to reflect the current number on roll without the growth. The proposed designated number under these circumstances would therefore be 280.
- 1.6 The designated number can differ from the commissioned number of places in any given year. The commissioned number reflects the need for places in that particular year and can be lower than an individual school's designated number. In exceptional circumstances schools can admit over their designated number by up to 10%. This means the potential capacity is greater.
- 1.7 KCC is also consulting on the proposal to extend the lower age range to age 3 to formalise the presence of Honey Bees (the observation and assessment nursery) which moved onto the current site in September 2013. Meadowfield would have the potential to offer the following places:

<b>Provision</b>	<b>Number of places (future)</b>
<b>Observation &amp; Assessment Nursery</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Post 16</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>348</b>

- 1.8 Subject to planning approval being granted, the final phase (three) of expansion at Meadowfield School would provide continuity of education provision for KS2 and above. New facilities would include much needed additional sports facilities and reconfiguration of KS2 classrooms.

- 1.9 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 10 October 2017 and 14 November 2017. A drop-in information session for parents was held on 19 October 2017.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- a. Capital – A feasibility study was completed to provide the School with accommodation to meet the needs of the additional children including: a new 2 storey 6th form centre combined with a 1.5 storey PE hall; some internal reconfiguration of current 6th form accommodation to accommodate the expanding pupils groups as they move through the school.
- b. The total cost of this project is estimated to be in the region of £3.95 million from Basic Need budget. The costs are estimates which may increase as the project is developed. If the cost of the project would be exceeded by more than 10% the Cabinet Member will be required to take a further decision to allocate the additional funding.
- b. Revenue - The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget. Special schools are funded using the DfE Place Plus funding methodology for High Needs Pupils. Revenue funding will also be allocated to enable the School to resource the new classrooms. At present, this is funded at a rate of £6,000 per classroom.
- c. Human – The School will appoint additional staff as the need arises.

## **3. Vision and Priorities for Improvement**

- 3.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition that “Every child and young person should go to a good or outstanding early years setting and school, have access to the best teaching, and benefit from schools and other providers working in partnership with each other to share the best practice as they continue to improve”, as set out in Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2016-2019.
- 3.2 The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017-21 identified the need to commission additional capacity at Meadowfield School.
- 3.3 The SEN Strategy launched in September 2014 sets out the intention to provide additional places, including those for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

## **4. Consultation Outcomes**

- 4.1 Approximately 500 hard copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, staff and governors at Meadowfield school, the Local Member for Sittingbourne South, Swale Borough Councillors (Roman Ward), the Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local libraries, Parish Councils, Swale Borough Council, and others.
- 4.2 A consultation page for Meadowfield School was set up on Kent.gov.uk. The link to the website was circulated to statutory stakeholders. All interested parties were provided with an opportunity to send in responses via the school, by post and email.
- 4.3 The consultation document was posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form, email and online was also provided.

- 4.4 The AEO and her colleagues were available at Meadowfield School during parents/carers evening on 19 October 2017 between 4pm and 7pm. Providing an opportunity for parents/carers to view plans of the proposed expansion and ask any questions.
- 4.3 Following the closure of the consultation period 60 responses were received. 52 were positive, two were negative and six were undecided. A summary of all written responses is attached at Appendix 1. The Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Education has been passed a copy of the full set of responses for his consideration.

## **5. Views**

### **5.1 The view of the Local Member for Sittingbourne South:**

The Local Member, Mr John Wright has been informed of the proposed changes to the school.

### **5.2 The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:**

The school supports the planned capacity increase and the Local Authority's endeavours to permanently increase the designated number of the school

### **5.3 The view of the KCC Head of SEN Assessment and Placement**

Kent's SEND Strategy sets out to improve the educational, health and emotional wellbeing outcomes for Kent's children and young people with SEN and disabilities, particularly by addressing the gaps in provision and providing additional places for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). As the district special school, Meadowfield School is able to cater for pupils with profound, severe and complex needs including those with learning difficulties who have ASD.

Pupils with the most complex special educational needs are identified through an assessment and a plan of support known as an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Admission to Meadowfield School requires an EHC Plan. Nationally, the number of children needing with Plans increased by 12.1% over 2016, however in Kent we have seen above average increases were seen in Swale (and across East Kent) as well as neighbouring Maidstone District.

For many pupils with SEN, a local mainstream Primary school can offer appropriate early help and a suitable placement, with a small proportion needing a level of support that is only found in a school like Meadowfield. However, when those in mainstream schools reach Secondary age, an increasing number require access to specialist teaching, a highly differentiated curriculum and integrated therapy provision.

As the current bulge of primary aged children moves into the secondary sector, it is likely that the pupils who need specialist places would only be able to access provision by travelling long distances. There are already significant numbers of pupils who have to travel from the Isle of Sheppey. Without capacity in local provision, the nearest suitable alternatives are most likely to be in Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells.

Meadowfield School is Swale's only existing Special school. In order to keep pace with demand for specialist provision for local children we are proposing an increase in the number of pupils for whom it can offer effective and suitable specialist education.

#### 5.4 The view of the KCC Area Education Officer:

The Area Education Officer wholeheartedly supports the proposals to expand the school. This proposal will ensure that children with profound and complex needs living in the locality are provided with the right environment in which to learn and reach their full potential without being transported long distances to the nearest appropriate school.

Meadowfield School is Outstanding with an inspirational Principal who is very well supported by strong leaders and managers including the governing body. Ofsted has observed that from the Nursery to the sixth form, pupils develop a joy of learning at Meadowfield School.

To meet the local demand for places Meadowfield School has taken additional pupils over the past three years predominately in Year R – KS1. The school has now exceeded its designated number; and in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, KCC proposes, subject to planning consent, to increase its designated number to 348 to allow for further growth and continuity of education for KS2 and above.

### **6. Proposal**

- 6.1 These proposals are set out in accordance with Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that KCC intends to make prescribed alterations to increase the designated number at Meadowfield School from 209 to 348 for 1 September 2019 and to alter the lower age range at Meadowfield School to formally include nursery provision for 1 September 2019.
- 6.2 Local Authorities must have regard to the Department for Education (DfE) Statutory Guidance - Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools (April 2016) when exercising functions under *The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013*.
- 6.3 When seeking to increase the number of places of all categories of special schools by 10% proposers must follow the statutory process set out in part 5 of the DfE's Statutory Guidance (April 2016)
- 6.4 The proposed alterations to Meadowfield (Foundation Special) School are subject to KCC statutory decision making process and planning. Decisions will be taken according to statutory procedures, including a 5 day proposed decision publication period before the decision is taken and a 5 day call-in period after the decision is taken.
- 6.5 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.
- 6.6 There will be an impact on KCC's property portfolio with the value increased.

### **7. Delegation to Officers**

- 7.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. For information it is envisaged, if the proposal goes ahead, that the Director of Property & Infrastructure Support will sign contracts on behalf of the County Council.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The increasing demand to provide places for pupils with PCSN and ASD has led to Meadowfield School taking additional children over a three year period. The school requires new accommodation and facilities in order to cater for the needs of the additional children. Increasing the school's physical capacity is in line with our vision to ensure that children and young people in Kent get the best start in life as set out in KCC's Strategic Statement 2015-20 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes' and the 'Commissioning Plan for Education – Kent' (2017–2021).

## 9. Recommendations:

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## **10. Background Documents**

- 10.1 Vision and Priorities for Improvement <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/vision-and-priorities-for-improvement>
- 10.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017-21  
[www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision](http://www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision)
- 10.3 SEND Strategy [www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategy](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategy)
- 10.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment  
[www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

## **11. Contact details**

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