

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

**To:** Richard Long, TD, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

**Subject:** **Proposed alteration to Lower age range of Kings Hill School to establish a nursery class**

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Decision Number:** 19/00081

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

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

**Electoral Division:** Matthew Balfour - Malling Rural East

**Summary:**

This report sets out a proposal to alter the lower age range of Kings Hill School, Crispin Way, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4LS to enable the establishment of a nursery class.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- (i) alter the lower age range of Kings Hill School from 4-11 years to 2-11 years; and
- (ii) to enable the school to establish a nursery class from September 2020.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Kings Hill School currently provides early years education for children who turn five when in the Reception class. Analysis by KCC Early Years relating to the sufficiency of nursery places in the local area indicates that there is a deficit of 80 nursery spaces in Kings Hill. Pressure for early year places has increased as additional houses have been built at Kings Hill and the demand is set to continue to increase as the 635 homes in 'Phase 3' are occupied. There is also a similar pressure for nursery places in the neighbouring area, with sufficiency data indicating a 106-space deficit in West Malling. This total 186 space deficit commonly necessitates parents traveling further afield to access nursery provision.

1.2 There are various local private early years care providers who have long waiting lists and do not have the capacity to expand. KCC is also working with another local primary school on a proposal to establish nursery provision.

## 2. Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed to permanently alter the lower age range of Kings Hill School from 4-11 years to 2-11 years, to enable the school to run a nursery.
- 2.2 In both September 2013 and 2014 the school offered 90 Reception places (three classes) rather than its usual 60; these 'bulge years' were to ensure a sufficient number of Reception places were available. The school was provided with two additional classrooms to accommodate these larger year groups. The additional classes will be leaving over the next two years (currently in Years 5 and 6). Therefore, two additional classrooms will become available; one in September 2020 and one in September 2021, resulting in an overall loss of 60 pupils.
- 2.3 The nursery will initially provide 30 spaces in September 2020 that will increase to a maximum of 45 in 2021. Therefore, even with the establishment of the nursery, the school's total roll will decrease over a two-year period from 480 to a maximum of 465; a decrease of 15 pupils.
- 2.4 Legislation requires the LA to undertake a statutory process for proposed: Alteration of upper or lower age range by 1 year or more (for community schools including the adding or removal of sixth form or nurse provision)
- 2.5 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. Comments received from the neighbouring primary school have been considered, but no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

## 3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 **Capital** – There is no capital expenditure required by KCC; The scheme will be funded by the school, utilising existing capital funds and via a loan from KCC.
- 3.2 **Revenue** – The school will receive revenue funding from the County Council based on the number of children in the setting and hours they attend.
- 3.3 **Human** - The schools will appoint additional staff as and when appropriate.

## 4. Raising Standards

- 4.1 Kings Hill School was judged Good by Ofsted during a full inspection in January 2013 and the school maintained its Good rating following a short inspection in July 2017. Inspectors noted that 'The leadership team has improved further the quality of education in the school since the last inspection' and had 'established a new vision for the school and set high expectations for pupils and staff.' Inspectors also noted that 'the school's culture is based upon the values of responsibility, courage, resilience, respect, cooperation and kindness'.

## 5. Policy Framework

- 5.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition “to ensure that Kent’s young people have access to the education, work and skills opportunities necessary to support Kent business to grow and be increasingly competitive in the national and international economy” as set out in ‘Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council’s Strategic Statement (2015-2020)’
- 5.2 These proposals reflect KCC’s aspirations to provide sufficient Early Years places across the County, as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2019-23.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 A public consultation was carried out by KCC, with support from the Governing Body, from 16 September 2019 to 14 October 2019 (midday). A consultation document was produced together with an Equality Impact Assessment which can be obtained from KCC’s website.
- 6.2 The consultation document was distributed via the school to parents/carers, members of staff and governors. The consultation was available on the school and KCC websites and was emailed to all key stakeholders. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form in paper format and online was provided.
- 6.4 A ‘drop-in’ information session was held at Kings Hill School, Crispin Way, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4LS on Wednesday 25 September 2019 from 6 to 8pm. This provided an opportunity for interested parties to ask questions and complete a response form. The session was attended by two parent who was in favour of the proposed changes.
- 6.5 There were 8 responses to the consultation: 5 from parents/carers and one each from the Local KCC Member, neighbouring local Primary school and Parish Council; 7 of the responses were positive.
- 6.6 All 5 responses from parents were positive and the majority also included enquiries regarding how to secure a place within the proposed nursery class as places are very limited in the Kings Hill area. The neighbouring local primary school are also working with KCC on a proposal to establish nursery provision and their response is recorded as undecided.

## **7. Views**

- 7.1 The View of the Local Members  
The KCC Member for Malling Rural East, Matthew Balfour, has been consulted and entirely supports the proposal.
- 7.2 The View of the Governing Body  
The Governing Body are fully supportive of the proposed change.
- 7.3 The View of the Headteacher – Alice Early  
‘Kings Hill School currently has two bulge years in Years 5 and 6 that will be leaving the school in summer 2020 and summer 2021. This will result in a loss of 60 pupils and spare capacity within the school. As part of our long-term strategic planning, the governing body and the Headteacher would like

to open a Nursery Class from September 2020 to initially provide for 30 pupils in the first year increasing to a maximum of 45 in the second year.

The School feels that as there is a large deficit of Nursery spaces both on Kings Hill and in the wider community such as West Malling, the school is well placed to meet the needs of the local community for Early Years provision. Additional housing in the area will continue to put pressure on spaces.

In addition, the school plans to upgrade the facilities for its existing pupils including a new ICT suite and library as well as improved outdoor space for EYFS as the Nursery will be located in the existing ICT suite. Financially the school is in a strong position to make such an investment also through the support of a loan from KCC which is already approved. The location of the Nursery will be suitable as it is at the far end of the school building and can easily accommodate its own entrance ensuring that the Nursery can function without interference with the running of the school.

The Nursery will be staffed by a qualified teacher as well as teaching assistant's dependent on the number of children attending and will therefore provide a quality education for early years under the leadership of the Early Years leader and Headteacher. Kings Hill School is a good school and is currently oversubscribed.'

#### 7.4 The View of the Area Education Officer

The Area Education Officer supports this proposal and feels that the change of age range and establishment of the nursery will benefit Kings Hill families with the offer of needed local provision.

### 8. **Conclusions**

- 8.1 This report identifies the need for additional early years provision in Kings Hill and West Malling. The proposed alteration to the lower age range of Kings Hill School will enable the school to offer nursery places that will help to address a local deficit of places. It will also ensure that the school can make the best use of their existing accommodation.

### 9. **Recommendation(s)**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- (i) alter the lower age range of Kings Hill School from 4-11 years to 2-11 years; and
- (ii) to enable the school to establish a nursery class from September 2020.

### 10. **Background Documents**

- 10.1 Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020 <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/increasing-opportunities-improving-outcomes>

10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2019-2023  
[https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s88604/KCP%202019%20-%202023%20\\_Cabinet%20Committee%20-%20FINAL%20PW.pdf](https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s88604/KCP%202019%20-%202023%20_Cabinet%20Committee%20-%20FINAL%20PW.pdf)

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