

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Beverley Fordham, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NUMBER:

To be allocated by Democratic Services

Executive Decision – key

Proposal to remove the specialist resource provision (SRP) at River Primary School, Dover from September 2026.

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- I. **Issue** a Public Notice to permanently remove the specialist resource provision for pupils with speech and language needs at River Primary school, and following a representation period of four weeks with no substantive objections received, then implement the decision;
- II. **Delegate authority to** the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education to take all steps necessary to issue a Public Notice; and
- III. **Delegate authority to** the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements as required, to implement the decision, subject to there being no new substantive objections received during the notice period.

Reasons for decision:

The specialist resource provision (SRP) at River Primary School was commissioned for pupils with speech and language needs. When full, it was expected that 12 pupils will be on roll. Currently there are only four pupils accessing the SRP and all will move on to secondary school within the next two years.

In light of the low number of pupils in the SRP, the Governing Body of the school has requested KCC remove the provision from September 2026. Consideration has been given to broadening the need type that the SRP can support, but the accommodation and site constraints at River Primary School mean the premises do not easily lend themselves to such a proposal. Therefore, the proposal is to remove the SRP.

The paucity of pupils placed in the SRP at River Primary School is due to a number of factors:

- a) The introduction of The Balanced System® across the County, which is upskilling mainstream staff, provides a strategic approach to supporting pupils with speech and language needs. This means that the needs of a greater number of pupils can be met within their local school rather than through an SRP.
- b) There are increasing numbers of pupils with additional communication needs rather than solely speech and language, in particular, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Therefore, we need to commission SRP places which have the resources and facilities to support pupils who have multiple communication needs, including speech language and communication needs (SLCN) and ASD.
- c) The SRP at Whitfield Aspen School has grown significantly as it has the existing resources and expertise to support pupils with multiple need types.

In addition, the SRP panel data for 2024/25 demonstrates that there is a need for SRP provision which will meet the needs of ASD pupils. This will be addressed in the primary sector through the commissioning of a new 14 place primary SRP at The Downs CE Primary School in Walmer (ASD/SLCN).

Financial implications:

No capital funding is required to implement the proposal.

Places in the SRP are paid by KCC on an annual basis and funded from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a specific ring-fenced grant from the Department of Education. There are no General Fund implication to this request. Appropriate ongoing revenue funding will continue to be provided to support the current pupils in school.

The SRP is currently commissioned for 12 places where only 4 are being occupied. The local authority must pay for places regardless of whether they are filled or not. If vacant these places are paid at £10,000 per vacant place or £80,000 in total. This would increase to £100,000 when the 2 children leave at the end of year 6. Whilst it is recognised the School would require funding for a minimum number of places to ensure ongoing sustainability, for this provision to remain open would not be considered value for money. This saving will ultimately be reinvested to cover future revenue costs of a wider increase in SRP places (in line with a SEN financial recovery plan) outlined as part of the SRP Review and future Commission intentions ([key decision - 25/00085 - Specialist Resource Provision Review and Commissioning Intentions](#)).

Legal implications:

The proposal to remove the current provision will be required to go through the statutory process under the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

Equalities implications:

An EQIA has been completed. This finds that the proposals will have little impact given the falling numbers on roll. Should the SRP be removed, both KCC and the school staff are committed to ensuring that pupils supported by the SRP will continue

to receive high-quality teaching and learning support to achieve the outcomes identified in their education and health care plan (EHCP).

The resources freed up by this proposal can be utilised to create provision for disabled who have multiple issues (speech language and communication needs and autistic spectrum disorder for instance), which will have a positive impact.

Data Protection implications:

A DPIA is not required.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 20 January 2026.

A consultation was held between 10th November and 8th December 2025. There were 48 responses to the consultation, 45 via Let's Talk Kent web page and 3 via email. Of the 48 responses, 2 were in favour and 46 were against. 45 of the responses were from parents/carers, 1 from a governor and 2 from other parties. Comments were received from 26 respondents.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The option to keep the SRP open for purely speech and language needs was not viable as insufficient pupils with this need are being identified to keep the provision viable. The changing needs of pupils mean that SRPs now need to provide for pupils who may have wider communication needs in addition to purely speech and language.

The option of broadening the need type that the SRP can support was considered and discarded as the accommodation and site constraints at River Primary School mean the premises do not lend themselves to supporting other need types.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

Signed

Date