

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NUMBER:

25/00009

For publication

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Proposal to change the age range of Blean Primary School, Canterbury, from 4-11 years to 3-11 years from September 2025

Decision:

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

- I. Agree to Issue a Public Notice to permanently change the age range of the Blean Primary School from 4-11 years to 3-11 years to establish a school run pre-school provision, and following a representation period of four weeks with no substantive objections received, implement the decision.
- II. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education to Issue a Public Notice.
- III. Delegate authority for the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to make minor revisions as required to the proposal following a representation period of four weeks.
- IV. Delegate authority for the Corporate Director of 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 no new substantive objections received during the notice period.

Reason(s) for decision:

As Blean Primary School is a community school, the decision maker is the Local Authority and requires a statutory process to lower the age range of the school. The proposal to lower the age range therefore requires a public notice.

In Spring 2023, the Government announced its ambition of extending the free entitlements to younger children in three phases. Phase one implemented in April 2024, saw children of working parents entitled to 15 hours of funding the term after they turned two. In September 2024, phase two extended this offer to working parents of those children aged 9 months plus and then in September 2025, phase three will see the working parent entitlement extending to 30 hours for all eligible children.

Blean Primary School currently provides early years education for children who turn five when in the Reception class. The school have proposed to lower the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 years to provide a pre-school provision at the school.

The proposed pre-school provision at Blean Primary School will be to for up to 26 children and will be accommodated in a spare classroom within the school, adjacent to the reception classes.

Blean Primary School was judged “Outstanding” by Ofsted in March 2022. The Local Authority is confident that the strong and effective leadership of the school has the capacity to establish a successful pre-school provision, ensuring there will be additional pre-school places available for local families.

Securing Kent's Future

The 'Securing Kent's Future' strategy outlines the measures that KCC intend to take to ensure that Kent remains financially stable, now and long into the future. It describes the statutory priorities, one of which being the statutory duty to ensure sufficient school and nursery places are available to any child or young person who requires one.

This proposal is necessary for KCC to continue to deliver the statutory duty, in a cost-effective way, in line with the guidelines described in the Securing Kent's Future strategy. It will help to maintain KCC's strategic role in supporting schools in Kent to deliver accessible, high quality education provision for all families.

Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy 2022-2026

This proposal will help to support Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy (2022-2026) Priority 1 - Levelling up. 'To maintain KCC's strategic role in supporting schools in Kent to deliver accessible, high quality education provision for all families.'

Capital

The school will fund any capital costs which are required for the refurbishment of the classroom and outdoor space.

Revenue

The school will be responsible for establishing the nursery and responsible for all revenue costs associated with the running of the provision. The school will also be responsible for appointing staff as required. The school will receive income for nursery places either from parental contributions or funding for the provision of free entitlements to eligible children (administered by KCC and fully funded by an external grant from the Department of Education).

Legal Implications

KCC, as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school and nursery places are available.

The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024 - 28 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out KCC's future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. It also sets out how we will carry out our responsibility for early education and childcare. Early Education and Childcare is legislatively governed by the Childcare Acts of 2006 and 2016. These place a duty on all local authorities to improve outcomes for young children, to cut inequalities between them, to secure sufficient childcare, with adequate flexibility to allow parents to work.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/education-provision/education-provision-plan>

Statutory Guidance on the changing of age range of a maintained school can be found in the Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers October 2024 This guidance primarily relates to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

Following the initial informal consultation which has been undertaken, a Statutory Consultation must

be undertaken, comprising the issuing of a public notice and a 4 weeks consultation period. Should any significant objections, not already considered by the Cabinet Member when taking this decision to issue the public notice, be received during the notice period, a separate decision may be required dependent on the level of modification required in order to continue the proposal and allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

This decision was considered and endorsed at the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 27 February 2025.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

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

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signed

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date