

DECISION REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

From: Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Proposal to change the age range of Blean Primary School, Blean, from 4-11 years to 3-11 years.

Decision no: 25/00009

Key Decision: YES

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 27 February 2025

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Canterbury North – Robert Thomas

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This report outlines the proposal to permanently expand the age-range of the Blean Primary School in Blean from 4-11 years to 3-11 years to establish a school run pre-school provision.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member consider the following proposal:

- 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

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This proposal to lower the age range of Blean Primary School, Blean will create additional pre-school places for three and four year olds and will help to meet the need for nursery places in the area and the commitment to development of 2,741 early years places in Kent to meet the demand of the new Government entitlements.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 To support the delivery of this programme, Blean Primary School intends to refurbish a spare classroom next to its reception classes to create a nursery class.

3. Background

- 3.1 The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024 to 2028 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 set 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.

The Proposal

- 3.2 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 create a pre-school provision at the school. The provision would admit up to 26, 3-4 year olds.
- 3.3 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. The pre-school will have access to a dedicated outdoor space for the pre-school and a separate entrance.
- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 Kent County Council and Blean Primary School conducted an informal education public consultation from 4 November to 2 December 2024 and consulted with stakeholders. A total of 17 responses were received with 12 supportive, 2 against and 3 undecided. The outcome analysis of the consultation can be found in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 The KCC member for Canterbury North was consulted during the consultation period.

Securing Kent's Future and Framing Kent's Future

- 3.7 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 duty applies to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, as well as mainstream settings.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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.'

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 Blean Primary School proposed the age range change and have capacity within the school to create a nursery class. The option of not supporting the School was dismissed as it serves no useful function.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Capital

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

5.2 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 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).

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 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 including Early Years provision.
- 6.2 Statutory Guidance on 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.
- 6.3 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.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed that indicates that there are no issues.

8. Data Protection Implications

- 8.1 There are no data protection implications for this proposal

9. Other corporate implications

- 9.1 There are no other corporate implications identified for this proposal.

10. Governance

- 10.1 Once a key decision is made, Kent County Council's Constitution (Section 10, Executive Scheme of Officer Delegation), provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions required to implement it.
- 10.2 The statutory process for making prescribed alterations to schools has 5 stages
1. Publication – Public notice issued for 4 weeks
 2. Representation – in the 4 week public notice period any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the local authority to be taken into account by the decision maker.
 3. Decision – The decision must be made within 2 months of the end of the representation period. The decision maker can
 - reject the proposal;
 - approve the proposal without modification;
 - approve the proposal with modification
 - approve the proposal, with or without modifications subject to certain conditions (such as the granting of planning permission) being met.

4. Referral - For the change of age range proposal, the Diocesan Bodies or the Governing Body may refer the decision to the School's Adjudicator, within 4 weeks of the decision being made.
5. Implementation - A proposal must be implemented in the form that it was approved, including any modifications made by the decision maker.

11. Conclusions

11.1 This proposal will ensure that there are sufficient pre-school places for children in Blean and the surrounding area and will increase choice for parents and families. It will help to meet the commitment to the development of 2,741 early years places to meet the demand of the new childcare entitlements.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member consider the following proposal:

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12. Background Documents

- 12.1 Consultation [School consultations and public notices | Let's talk Kent](#)
- 12.2 Equality Impact Assessment (available on the consultation website)
- 12.3 Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers October 2024. [School organisation: local-authority-maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.4 Kent Commissioning Plan 2024 to 2028 [Commissioning Plan for Education Provision - Kent County Council](#)
- 12.5 School-Based Nurseries Capital Grant 2024 to 2025. [School-Based Nurseries Capital Grant 2024 to 2025 - information for applicants](#)

13 Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1 - Consultation Outcome Report

14 Contact details

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