

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

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

**Subject:** Proposed changes to specialist provision in Maidstone and Malling

**Decision Number:** 18/00062

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** 15 January 2018 - the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2018-22 - Cabinet

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

**Electoral Division:** Paul Cooper – Maidstone South, Sarah Hohler – Malling North, Rob Bird – Maidstone Central, Dan Daley – Maidstone Central, Ian Chittenden – Maidstone North East

**Summary:**

This report sets out proposed changes to specialist provision in Maidstone and Malling.

**Recommendation(s):**

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

- (i) increase the designated number of places offered at Five Acre Wood School from 330 to 465 places (including Satellite and Nursery provision) from 15 March 2019.
- (ii) expand the Satellite provision of Five Acre Wood School at Holmesdale School, Malling Road, Snodland ME6 5HS from 70 to 150 students aged 11-19 with moderate to severe learning difficulties from 15 March 2019.
- (iii) establish a Satellite provision of Five Acre Wood School at Palace Wood Primary School, Ash Grove, Allington, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 0AB for 30 students aged 4-11 with moderate to severe learning difficulties from 01 September 2019.
- (iv) establish a Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) at East Borough Primary School.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 As the strategic commissioner of school provision, the Local Authority (LA) has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-22.
- 1.2 Kent County Council's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2017-2019 identified the need to add additional specialist provision across the County. The SEND Strategy shows the need to create 209 extra places in Special schools and 164 in mainstream schools.
- 1.3 Around 3.0% of the total school population for which the Local Authority is responsible have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), which are legal documents that describe the help given to students who have the greatest difficulty learning.
- 1.4 In recent years, Kent has experienced place pressure through all phases of education, including Special Educational Needs (SEN) with the number of EHCPs continuing to increase as a result. The increased place pressure has been evident for all the main SEN need types, with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) being the most prevalent and fastest growing need type.
- 1.5 Commensurately, the demand for places at Five Acre Wood School has continued to increase, with strong parental preference. The school caters for pupils with EHCPs for profound, severe and complex needs (PSCN), including ASD. Currently over a third of pupils have ASD as their primary need type. Five Acre Wood is now at capacity at the main school site and its satellites, which is restricting its ability to grow and to provide adequate places needed for local Kent children.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1 In response to growing pressure for SEN places in Maidstone and Malling, Kent County Council with support from the school proposes to increase the designated number of places offered at Five Acre Wood School from 330 to 465 places (including Satellite and Nursery provision) from 15 March 2019.
- 2.2 The Five Acre Wood proposal includes expanding the Satellite provision at Holmesdale School from 70 to 150 students aged 11-19 with moderate to severe learning difficulties from 15 March 2019. It would establish a Satellite provision of Five Acre Wood School at Palace Wood Primary School for 30 students aged 4-11 with moderate to severe learning difficulties from 01 September 2019.
- 2.3 The proposed Satellite at Palace Wood Primary School would entail the relocation of the existing Satellite provision at East Borough Primary School, part of the Valley Invicta Academies Trust. This Satellite would offer 'all-through' Primary provision, with the current Key Stage (KS) 2 children transferring from East Borough to Palace Wood and the creation of KS 1 places. The new facility would offer greater resources and larger dedicated teaching area. It would also allow additional children who would benefit from being within a mainstream school environment the opportunity to

transfer from the main Five Acre Wood (FAW) site, where this is suitable for their needs.

- 2.4 Linked to this proposal, KCC is supporting Valley Invicta Academies Trust to establish a Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) at East Borough. The SRP would provide additional SEN provision in the Maidstone area, offering up to 15 places for Primary aged students with EHCPs with a diagnosis of ASD. Places would be commissioned and allocated by the local authority.
- 2.5 The proposal also includes expanding the FAW Satellite within the Wolfe building at Holmesdale School. The expansion would offer additional Secondary and Sixth Form (KS3-5) capacity in a mainstream setting. This would create capacity within the main FAW site and enable specialist rooms, that are currently mainly used to provide general teaching capacity, to be fully utilised.
- 2.6 Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for the education consultation in accordance with the Council's equality duty, having due regard to equality considerations when commissioning additional school capacity.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 **Capital** – There is no additional capital expenditure required for this proposal.
- 3.2 **Revenue** – FAW and East Borough will receive additional revenue funding in accordance with the Pupil Growth Policy established by KCC and the Schools' Funding Forum.
- 3.3 **Human** - The schools will appoint additional staff as and when appropriate.

### **4. Raising Standards**

- 4.1 Five Acre Wood is recognised for its expertise in providing outreach support to mainstream schools. There are clear benefits to the schools through a partnership.
- 4.2 FAW is judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, with Leadership and management recognised as outstanding. The school meets the need of all groups of pupils and pupils make outstanding progress, their achievement is excellent compared with pupils of the same age in other schools. The school uses its current partnerships with other schools well to extend its range of learning for some pupils, school leaders recognise there is scope to build on this further. The school will recruit additional staff as required to ensure that the high quality of education can be maintained for the additional pupils.
- 4.3 Palace Wood is judged "Good" by Ofsted and the report acknowledges that the determination and drive of senior leaders have brought about significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and to pupils' outcomes. Palace Wood offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which focuses on the needs and experiences of the children and develops enquiring minds. The school wants its children to be independent, self-

motivated learners who are inquisitive, who persevere, who are happy, positive and determined, and most of all, proud of themselves. They also want the children to be excellent role models for each other by being responsible, polite, honest and show empathy for each other.

- 4.4 The FAW Satellite at Holmesdale has been operating successfully since January 2016. In that time, the provision has provided excellent opportunities for Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 students to access high quality Five Acre Wood education within a mainstream setting. To accommodate the additional places, FAW would need additional teaching areas within the Wolfe building. This will enable FAW to build on the excellent learning environment that is established at Holmesdale, whilst ensuring continuity is maintained for existing students. The expansion will create additional places for FAW pupils that would benefit from being educated in a mainstream Secondary setting.
- 4.5 East Borough Primary School is a Valley Invicta Primary School, part of the Valley Invicta Academies Trust. The school is popular with parents and academically successful. The school seeks to establish a warm and welcoming environment where pupils are encouraged to aim high. It provides a quality education to all pupils helping them to learn, as future citizens and lifelong learners. Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that is enriched with trips, visits, productions, extracurricular activities and wrap around care. The school is ideally located to help meet the forecast pressure ASD places in Maidstone urban area.

## **5. Policy Framework**

- 5.1 These proposals 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 school places across the County, as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-22.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 An education consultation was completed prior to the Cabinet Committee. Approximately 2300 hard copies of the consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, school staff and governors, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local libraries, Parish Councils, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and others. The consultation document was posted on the KCC website and the document was widely circulated. An opportunity was also provided to send in written responses via response form, email and online.
- 6.2 The consultation was advertised on the KCC and school websites and drop-in’ information sessions were held as follows:

- Open session 16:00 to 17:30, Thursday 27 September at East Borough Primary School
  - Dedicated session for current East Borough FAW Satellite students' parents 16:00 to 17:00, Monday 1 October at Five Acre Wood School
  - Open session 17:00 to 18:00, Monday 1 October at Five Acre Wood School
  - Open session 16:30 to 18:00, Wednesday 3 October at Palace Wood Primary School
- 6.3 Following the closure of the consultation period, 65 responses were received regarding the Five Acre Wood, Palace Wood and Holmesdale School proposals: 52 agreed with the proposals, 7 disagreed and 6 were undecided.
- 6.4 East Borough Primary School also consulted its parents and stakeholders on the proposed establishment of an SRP, utilising the combined consultation process for the linked proposals. A total of 83 responses were received with 73 agreeing with the proposals, 2 disagreeing, 2 blank and 6 undecided.
- 6.5 A summary of the responses is available in Appendix A.

## **7. Views**

### **7.1 The View of the Local Members**

The following KCC Members have been consulted on these proposals:

Paul Cooper – Maidstone South  
 Sarah Hohler – Malling North  
 Rob Bird – Maidstone Central  
 Dan Daley – Maidstone Central  
 Ian Chittenden – Maidstone North East

### **7.2 The View of the Headteacher and Chair of Governors**

The Governing Bodies are fully supportive of these proposals and have been involved in their formation.

Mark Chatley, Headteacher Palace Wood Primary School -  
 'Palace Wood are incredibly excited about the prospect of supporting the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 satellite provision from Five Acre Wood. We hope that it can be a positive experience for the staff, parents, children and governors from both schools which can improve the educational offer for all involved.'

### **7.3 The View of the Area Education Officer**

The Area Education Officer for West Kent fully supports the proposal and feels that it would provide much needed SEN places in Maidstone and Malling. Five Acre Wood School is an excellent school that is popular with parents. It is now at full capacity and the additional places would ensure that local Kent children can benefit from much needed PSCN places. I am also pleased to establish much needed ASD provision in East Borough School.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This report sets out the proposal to increase the designated number of places offered at Five Acre Wood School via additional places on the main site, expansion of the the Satellite provision at Holmesdale School and the establishment of a Primary Satellite provision at Palace Wood Primary School. It also includes the establishment of a SRP offering ASD places at East Borough Primary School. This expansion and SRP are needed to ensure that there are sufficient SEN places for children in the Maidstone and Malling area. Without the additional places there is the potential for children to have extended travelling times.

## 9. Recommendation(s)

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## 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 2018-2022 [https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/66990/Kent-Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-2018-22.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/66990/Kent-Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-2018-22.pdf)
- 10.3 Kent County Council's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2017-2019 [https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/13323/Strategy-for-children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/13323/Strategy-for-children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities.pdf)

## 11. Report Author

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