

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Richard Long
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

20/00040

Unrestricted

Key decision: **No**

Subject: Proposal to change age range of Stone Bay (Foundation) Special School from 5-19 years to 4-19 years and increase the designated number from 80 to 90.

Decision:

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

- (i) agree to change the age range of Stone Bay (Foundation) Special School from 5-19 years to 4-19 years in order to provide reception places to help with the demand for specialist places for pupils from reception age.
- (ii) agree to increase the designated number from 80 to 90.
- (iii) issue a public notice to permanently change the age range of the school and increase the designated number from 80 to 90 and subject to no objections being received to the public notice, proceed with the proposal.

Reason(s) for decision:

1.1. Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority has a duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's commissioning plan for Education Provision in Kent 2020-2024 is a five year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent including SEND provisions. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:

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

1.2. KCC does not have enough local specialist provision and too many children and young people have to go to a Special School far from home to have their education, health and care needs met.

1.3. KCC have published a Strategy to improve the outcomes for Kent's children and young people with SEN and those who are disabled (SEND) as our current special school capacity has not kept pace with changing needs and we are spending too much on transporting children to schools far away from their local communities.

1.4 The overall increase in the Kent school population has inevitably led to an increase in the number of pupils subject to EHCPs. In addition to this there has been an increase in the number of children starting education in reception who have already had a diagnosis of ASD. It is anticipated that the demand for specialist places will continue to increase with the overall population growth, although Kent is exploring a range of approaches that will support more pupils in mainstream settings. Specialist resource Provisions run by schools are part of this continuum of support.

1.5 It is proposed to lower the age range of Stone Bay School from 5-19 to 4-19 and at the same time, increase the designated number from 80 to 90. Stone Bay school specialises in providing both day and residential education for pupils aged 5 to 19 years who have a diagnosed autistic spectrum disorder, (ASD) along with severe and complex learning needs. All pupils have an Education, Health & Care plan. The school currently provides for children from Year 1. It is proposed to lower the age range to include 4-year-old children to include a reception class from September 2020. This will benefit pupils enabling them to start their education in an ASD specific provision. The school has been seeing this demand coming through since it opened its Key Stage 1 provision but has not been able to admit 4-year-old pupils as its designation does not allow it to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Extending the age range to enable them to admit 4-year-old pupils would allow the school to encourage and embed communication at a younger age, providing a positive learning experience for the children in an Early Years Foundation Stage appropriate environment.

Legal Implications

Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority has a duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. If this decision does not take place there will be a risk that we cannot meet our statutory duties to provide education provision.

Equalities implications

An EqIA has been completed and identified no negative impacts and the following positive impacts:

- Reception aged children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), profound, severe and complex needs and additional comorbidities needs in the Thanet district will be able to attend provision local to their homes.
- There will be an increase in the total number of places available for children with Complex Needs and ASD.

Data Protection implications

An impact assessment identified no adverse implications and KCC did not handle any personal data relating to this decision.

Financial Implications

4.1. Capital

The School is proposing to refurbish and reconfigure current classrooms to accommodate a reception class with a care suite and toilets and create an outdoor learning and play area this has been costed at £75,000.

4.2. Revenue Costs

As per KCC policy a total of £6,000 per newly provided classroom will be provided to the school from the DGS revenue budget.

4.3. Human

KCC will work closely with the senior leadership teams of the school to ensure that all appropriate accommodation and facilities are provided to enable them to deliver an effective curriculum.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

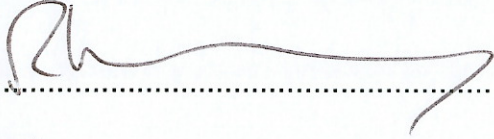
The report will be shared with Members of the CYPE Cabinet Committee for comment, prior to a decision being taken.

An education consultation was held from 3 March 2020 to 31 March 2020 and a copy can be found via this link: <https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/Stonebay/consultationHome>

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Foreland Fields, St Anthony's and Laleham Gap Special Schools in Thanet do not provide for the needs of pupils with the complexity of need catered for by Stone Bay School.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'R' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that ends in a small hook.

Signed

12th May 2020

date

