

**From: Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director for Education and Skills**

**To: Richard Long TD, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

**Subject: Proposed change to Five Acre Wood School**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper: None**

**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**

**Summary:**

This report sets out a proposal to increase the Designated Number of Five Acre Wood School, Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QF.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is requested to consider and endorse the decision to:

- (i) Increase the Designated Number of Five Acre Wood School from 465 to 580 places from September 2020.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The demand for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision has continued to grow and the pressure for places at Five Acre Wood School has increased commensurately, with strong parental preference. The school is keen to support additional students, making efficient use of the main school accommodation to increase its place capacity, whilst also ensuring it maintains its high quality of education.

1.2 The majority of additional teaching capacity to accommodate the proposed Designated Number has been created by internal reconfiguration within the main school accommodation at Boughton Lane, Maidstone. The school has remodelled existing teaching spaces to create 3 additional classrooms, whilst also making effective use of specialist resource rooms. The remainder of the capacity has been created at the Holmesdale satellite, Snodland, with the school now taking over the remainder of the Wolfe building and internally remodelling to provide additional learning spaces.

**2. Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed to increase the Designated Number from 465 to 580 places at Five Acre Wood School. This would provide urgently needed places in the Maidstone and Malling areas and would reduce potential travelling time for SEN pupils.

- 2.2 Legislation requires that statutory processes are undertaken where:  
The proposal is an increase of the designated number by 10% or 20 pupils (whichever is lesser).

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 **Capital** –There is no requirement for further additional accommodation to be provided for the proposed increase in the school’s Designated Number, and therefore no capital expenditure relating to this proposal.
- 3.2 **Revenue** – Five Acre Wood will receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to special schools through Kent County Council’s (KCC) funding formula
- 3.3 **Human** - The school will appoint additional staff as and when appropriate.

### **4. Raising Standards**

- 4.1 Five Acre Wood is judged as ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted, with leadership and management recognised as outstanding. The school meets the needs 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.

### **5. Policy Framework**

- 5.1 The proposal 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 The proposal reflects KCC’s aspirations to provide sufficient school places across the County, as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2020-24.

### **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 A public consultation was carried out by KCC, with support from the Governing Body, from 03 March 2020 to 31 March 2019 (midday). A consultation document was produced together with an Equality Impact Assessment which can be obtained from KCC’s website via this link:  
<https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/FiveAcrewood/consultationHome>
- 6.2 The consultation document was distributed via the school to parents/carers, members of staff and governors. The consultation was available on the

school and KCC websites and was emailed to all key stakeholders. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form in paper format and online was provided. A planned 'drop-in' information session to be held at the school was cancelled as a coronavirus precaution.

- 6.3 There were 15 responses to the consultation: 13 from parents/carers with 8 in support and 5 against. Responses from Ightham Parish Council and from a member of staff were supportive. Respondents in favour typically felt that other children should be able to benefit from the high quality of provision offered at Five Acre Wood; whilst those against were concerned about teacher workloads and potential negative impact on their child's learning. One respondent raised concerns with regards to traffic and parking with increased numbers of pupils attending the main Five Acre Wood site.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An assessment has been completed as part of the consultation process and found that there is no evidence that the change will impact negatively on pupils from Protected Groups or lead to them being treated less favourably. The school would remain co-educational and continue to welcome pupils with EHCPs regardless of gender identity, race, ethnicity or religion beliefs.

## **8. Views**

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

The following KCC Members have been consulted on the proposal:

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

### **8.2 The View of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body are fully supportive of the proposed change.

### **8.3 The View of the Principle**

The school Principle Peggy Murphy expressed her full support for the proposal.

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

The Area Education Officer fully supports the proposal and feels that it will provide much needed SEN places in Maidstone and Malling. Five Acre Wood School is an excellent school that is popular with parents and additional places will help to reduce unnecessary travel for pupils in Kent.

## **9. Conclusions**

- 9.1 This report sets out the proposal to increase the designated number of places offered at Five Acre Wood School, utilising additional teaching space created by internal remodelling within the main school site. This increase of Designated Number is 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.

## 10. Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is requested to consider and endorse the decision to:

- (i) Increase the Designated Number of Five Acre Wood School from 465 to 580 places from September 2020.

## 11. Background Documents

11.1 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>

11.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2020-2024  
[https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s88604/KCP%202019%20-%202023%20\\_Cabinet%20Committee%20-%20FINAL%20PW.pdf](https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s88604/KCP%202019%20-%202023%20_Cabinet%20Committee%20-%20FINAL%20PW.pdf)

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