

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9 DECEMBER 2014**

### **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION FOR THE PROPOSED PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS AT RIVERMEAD SPECIAL SCHOOL**

Report from: Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults

Author: Paul Clarke, School Organisation and Capital Programme  
Manager

#### **Summary**

This report outlines the outcomes of the informal consultation period on the Council's proposals to 'increase pupil numbers', 'extend onto an additional site' and to 'alter the upper age limit' at Rivermead Special School, by way of statutory prescribed alterations.

#### **1. Budget and policy framework**

- 1.1 The proposals to make prescribed alterations to Rivermead Special School are consistent with the provision of the School Organisation Plan 2011-16 and the Special Educational Needs Policy and Strategy, and with the Council Plan Priority of 'Children and young people having the best start in life'.

#### **2 Background**

- 2.1 Following consultation Medway Council published "Special Educational Needs – An Inclusive Policy and Strategy for Medway 2009 – 2014", which set out the ambition that wherever possible the special educational needs of Medway children should be met so that they are able to learn and achieve in local provision, close to where they live. Generally, provision for children with SEN in Medway is good and children with SEN make good progress. However, the number of children from Medway educated outside local mainstream or maintained special schools is too high. This includes a number of children educated outside the Medway area or in independent provision.
- 2.2 Medway has agreed the principle that the trend to place children out of area or in independent provision should be reversed where possible and aims to educate as many children as possible close to where they live and to reduce the number of children and young people being educated outside of mainstream or local maintained special schools.

- 2.3 In recent years, there has been a significant growth in the number of primary age pupils in Medway with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We expect numbers to continue to grow, resulting in a need for additional capacity. This capacity will be required initially in the primary phase, but also in the secondary phase in the longer term.
- 2.4 Rivermead Community Special School is an OfSTED rated 'good' school providing education for pupils aged 11- 19 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as well as for those with speech and language difficulties whose needs are too complex to be supported within a mainstream setting.
- 2.5 On 15 July 2014, a report was presented to the Cabinet, which agreed to commence consultation on proposals to expand Rivermead Special School and to relocate onto an additional site.
- 2.6 Under decision 124/2014, the Cabinet instructed the Director of Children and Adults to commence the period of public consultation to allow views to be expressed on the proposal to make prescribed alterations to Rivermead Special School.
- 2.7 The first stage in the statutory process required the council to hold a period of informal public consultation. This took place over a four-week period between 6 October and 2 November 2014 and the results of this are set out in sections 4 and 5 of this report.

### **3. The Proposals**

- 3.1 The proposals consulted upon were, by way of statutory prescribed alterations;
- 1) To 'Increase the number of pupils at a special school'. There will be an increase in the numbers that attend the school by up to 60 primary aged pupils, enabling more pupils to be placed at Rivermead where it is the most appropriate provision, and thereby reducing the number of pupils needing to be placed outside of Medway.
  - 2) To 'Expand onto an additional site' to provide the accommodation for the increase in numbers. Primary aged pupils as well as years 7 and 8 will be sited at the additional site at the current Abbey Court Rainham site, whilst years 9 to 11 and sixth form will remain at Forge Lane. There would be some movement of pupils between sites as appropriate.
  - 3) To 'Alter the upper age limit at a special school' which will formally increase the age range to include children from 4 to 19.
- 3.2 It is proposed, subject to the outcome of the consultation period and subsequent period of statutory representation, to implement the changes on 1 September 2016.

### **4. Results of the Consultation**

- 4.1 The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, which came into force in January 2014 recommend

that an informal consultation be conducted where the views of all interested parties can be expressed, and all views taken into consideration.

- 4.2 The period of informal public consultation, where proposals were published and made available to interested parties, ran for four weeks from 6 October to 2 November 2014. The process included;
- public consultation documents circulated to the stakeholders and organisations listed in Appendix 1
  - publication of the consultation document (Appendix 2) on Medway Council's website, and on the schools' forum website
  - hand delivered consultation documents to residents local to Rivermead School and the Current Abbey Court Rainham site (a map highlighting distribution is attached as Appendix 5)
  - a public meeting held at the school on 15 October 2014 (transcript attached as Appendix 3).

- 4.3 There were 15 written responses in total to the consultation in the form of reply slips and emails, which were broken down as indicated below.

## **5 Proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils' and to 'Transfer to an additional site' and to 'alter the age range'**

- 5.1 The public consultation document (attached as Appendix 2) asked for a ticked response to one or other of the following statements:

*" I approve of the proposal to 'Increase the number of pupils', 'Expand onto an additional site' and to 'Alter the upper age limit' at Rivermead Special School."*

*" I object to the proposal to 'Increase the number of pupils' and 'Expand onto an additional site' and to 'Alter the upper age limit' at Rivermead Special School."*

- 5.2 15 responses were received to this consultation, of which 11 (73%) supported the proposal; one objected (6.6%) and three made comment without supporting or objecting to the proposals, although in each case the responses were broadly supportive.
- 5.3 Of the responses that supported the proposal, five were from parents, two from members of staff at the school, two from local residents in Rainham, one from the Chair of Governors at the school and there was one 'other'.
- 5.4 The objection came from a local resident near the Rainham site.
- 5.5 The responses without either approval or objection came from two local residents in Rainham and the Early Years Team at Medway Council.
- 5.6 The response form also provided space for further comment. The comments have been summarised against a series of categories matching the comments and concerns of the respondents in the tables below. *Some respondents offered more than one comment, and some reasons were included in more than one response, which has resulted in there being a higher number of reasons shown in the tables below than actual response sheets received.*

**11 approvals were received which included the following reasons**

<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>Reasons for response</b>
3	Good idea
5	More children will benefit from the expansion
3	Better accommodation and space
2	Provide appropriate provision for primary aged children
1	Approved but with concerns regarding possible increased traffic at the Rainham site.
1	Good use of the Abbey Court site.
1	Better transition to secondary for vulnerable children
2	Giving more children a better start to education

**1 objection was received which indicated the following reason**

<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>Reasons for response</b>
1	Parking and traffic issues local to the Abbey Court Rainham site.

**3 comments were received which raised the following concerns**

<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>Reasons for response</b>
1	Broadly supportive of the school expanding but parking and traffic issues local to the Abbey Court Rainham site.
1	Broadly supportive subject to their adjacent property being appropriately and securely screened – (ongoing boundary issue)
1	Could consideration be given to an Early Years foundation stage at the school

**6 Advice and analysis**

6.1 The remainder of this section sets out officer responses to the issues and concerns raised during the consultation period and highlighted in sections 5 above. The majority of responses were extremely supportive of the expansion with many writing how wonderful the school is and how the proposed expansion can only be of benefit to the current and additional pupils. The following paragraphs address the concerns raised, however, the majority of these were based upon an overriding view that these proposals are a good idea.

**6.2 How will the school prepare the current pupils for the changes ahead?**

6.3 The school is best placed to understand the needs of their pupils and how best to manage this. The Local Authority will support the school as necessary to keep disruption to a minimum. It is usual in these circumstances to engage the children in the design of new accommodation where possible and practical.

- 6.4 Will traffic safety and parking be considered at the site; there is already lots of traffic and congestion at the start and end of the day. Increased staffing will mean increased parking requirements, which will exacerbate the current problems.**
- 6.5 Parking near to schools is always a concern raised at the majority of school expansion consultations. All projects have to go through the planning process, which includes consultation with traffic and highways officers, who will have input into traffic management. The situation regarding parking will also be considered as part of the future design process and site management. The issue of parking was also raised at the public meeting and is addressed in paragraph 7.5
- 6.6 A local resident, whilst broadly supportive of the proposals did highlight an ongoing boundary issue whereby the residents intention was to secure better privacy and safety for both themselves and the school.**
- 6.7 Whilst this is an ongoing matter consideration for resolving this issue (should agreement not be reached before Abbey Court vacates), will be included within the enabling project to adapt the school for Rivermead's use.
- 6.8 The response from the Early Years team outlined a preference for the inclusion of a foundation stage at the school to provide for the whole school population.**
- 6.9 This request has been considered and discussed with the school, the result of which is the amendment of the statutory proposals to include children from age two where it is appropriate to do so.

## **7 Public consultation meeting**

- 7.1 The public meeting took place at the school on the evening of 15 October 2014, where interested stakeholders were invited to listen to the proposals and then to ask questions and raise concerns. The meeting was chaired by the Children's Services Portfolio Holder (Lead Member), Councillor O'Brien, with an officer panel present comprising of; Hilary Gerhard (Head of School Challenge and Improvement) and Chris McKenzie (Head of Performance and Strategic Planning). An Observer Panel was also in attendance.
- 7.2 The Observer Panel comprised of a member from each of the political groups represented on the Council. These were Councillors Smith, Gilry and Royle. Cllr Hicks represented the Cabinet on the panel. The role of the Observer Panel was to ensure that all the points and concerns raised at the meeting, and the responses given, are accurately reflected in this and the subsequent Cabinet reports.
- 7.3 The meeting was generally very positive with attendees highlighting the school's positive impact upon the outcomes of its students, with parents particularly pleased that the additional provision will mean that more children will benefit from the education provided by Rivermead.

- 7.4 The issue of the split site was raised and how this would be managed. The headteacher outlined that the school ethos and vision is embedded throughout the pupils journey at the school and the split site will not affect this. The benefits that the expansion will create outweigh any challenges the split site may produce.
- 7.5 Parking at current site was raised however the headteacher responded that the parking situation at the Forge Lane site is likely to improve as there is likely to be less traffic at the site now that some year groups are to be relocated. The school have also made some recent changes to its traffic flow on-site which has improved access for the mini buses in turn reducing some of the previous congestion on the local roads.
- 7.6 A transcript of the public meeting is available as Appendix 3.
- 7.7 A drop-in open session took place on 5 November 2014 at Gun Wharf. Members of the Observer Panel, Cabinet and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to review the written responses to the consultation and the transcript of the public meeting to ensure that the concerns raised at the meeting are fairly and accurately reflected in this report.

## **8 Diversity Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment screening form is attached as Appendix 4 and considers how the proposed changes could impact upon various groups. The report shows that there could potentially be some impact upon certain groups, however it shows that any impacts are expected to be positive ones.

## **9 Impact of the proposal on arrangements for looked after children**

- 9.1 Looked after children receive a high priority for admission to all Medway schools. If necessary, the Council is allowed to place looked after children in schools that would otherwise be deemed full. This ensures that the Council can secure appropriate provision for children that are looked after by the Local Authority.

## **10 Publication of a statutory notice**

- 10.1 If Cabinet, at the meeting on 13 January 2015, accepts the recommendation to progress the proposals further, it would be necessary to publish a statutory notice and formal proposals of the proposed changes to Rivermead Special School, by way of prescribed alterations, to provide an opportunity for formal objection. This would run for a four-week period during February and March 2015. The process would follow the guidelines set out in 'School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 10.2 The statutory notice and full proposals will highlight and explain in detail the three prescribed alterations which are;
- Increasing pupil numbers at a special school
  - Expansion onto an additional site

- Alter the upper and lower age range of the school to admit children from age 2 to 19

10.3 The amendment to the age range alteration is in response to feedback received during the consultation period as set out in paragraphs 6.8 and 6.9.

10.4 Cabinet will also be requested to approve that, should no objections be raised during the statutory period, the determination on the proposals be delegated to the Director of Children and Adult Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services. However, if any formal objections are received during that time then the decision will revert to Cabinet.

## 11 Risk management

11.1 The following table highlights some of the key risks relating to the proposed project.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>
Increase in cost of placements	Failure to develop additional provision would result in an increase in the number of pupils educated in independent / out of area provision, thus increasing cost pressures for SEN provision and transport	The development of additional primary ASD provision will reduce the reliance on independent provision for pupils
The available budget is insufficient to cover the full costs of the scheme to adapt and refurbish buildings	Detailed design work is currently being undertaken, and it is expected that a suitable scheme can be delivered within the available funding	Working within the available funding envelope should mitigate this risk
Significant objection from key stakeholders	Key stakeholders could formally object to the proposals at the statutory representation stage	Engagement with the school and other key stakeholders has taken place both prior to and during the informal consultation stage, to ensure the proposals and their benefits are comprehensively communicated to stakeholders
Pupil forecasts do not accurately predict future levels of need	Recent increases in the birth rates and inward movement of families with children has resulted in significant additional need	The expansion of Rivermead, along with other SEN provision proposals will ensure that more capacity is available to cater for additional future demand

## 12 Financial and Legal implications

12.1 Funding for Medway’s maintained schools comes from central Government via the Local Authority in the form of the dedicated schools grant, which is a ring-

fenced sum of money for the provision of education across all Medway maintained schools. This money can only be used for schools (and certain specified services to schools), and cannot be used to fund other council services. The proposals would be expected to result in the avoidance of some additional cost to the DSG as less pupils will be placed in independent and out of area provision.

- 12.2 The project to enable the expansion and relocation of Rivermead Special School will need to be funded via the Children's Services Capital Programme which is mainly funded by Government and targeted grants.
- 12.3 The Council has the power under sections 18 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make "prescribed alterations" to a maintained school. The procedure for making prescribed alterations is set out in 'School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 12.4 From 24 January 2014 there is no longer a prescribed 'pre-publication' (informal) consultation period for prescribed alterations, there is however a strong expectation on Local Authorities to consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication of the formal proposals as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations. This consultation satisfies that expectation.

### **13 Recommendations**

- 13.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the responses to the consultation together with the advice and analysis from officers, and make comment for inclusion into the Outcomes of Consultation Report, which will be presented to the Cabinet on 13 January 2015, where the recommendation will be to progress the proposals to the Statutory Representation stage.

#### **Lead officer contact**

Paul Clarke, School Organisation and Capital Programme Manager

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#### **Background papers**

1) The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1289/schedule/4/made>

2) Medway's School Organisation Plan 2011 - 2016

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/School%20Organisation%20Plan%202011-2016%20revised.pdf>

3) Special Educational Needs – An inclusive policy and strategy for Medway 2009-2014

<http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=4073>



## **Appendices**

- 1) List of consultees
- 2) Consultation document
- 3) Transcript of Public Meeting
- 4) Diversity Impact Assessment screening form
- 5) Maps showing which residents received hand delivered consultation documents

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<b>List of Consultees for Public Consultation Documents</b>	
John Avey (Con)	Councillor via email
Ted Baker (Con)	Councillor via email
Nicholas Bowler (Lab)	Councillor via email
David Brake (Con)	Councillor via email
Matt Bright (Con)	Councillor via email
David Carr (Con)	Councillor via email
Diane Chambers (Con)	Councillor via email
Rodney Chambers (Con)	Councillor via email
Rehman Chishti (Con)	Councillor via email
Jane Chitty (Con)	Councillor via email
Trevor Clarke (Con)	Councillor via email
David Colman (Lab)	Councillor via email
Pat Cooper (Ind)	Councillor via email
Sam Craven (Lab)	Councillor via email
Howard Doe (Con)	Councillor via email
Jane Etheridge (Con)	Councillor via email
Philip Filmer (Con)	Councillor via email
Dorte Gilry (Lab)	Councillor via email
Paul Godwin (Lab)	Councillor via email
Christine Godwin (Lab)	Councillor via email
Sylvia Griffin (Con)	Councillor via email
Glyn Griffiths (Lab)	Councillor via email
Pat Gulvin (Con)	Councillor via email
Adrian Gulvin (Con)	Councillor via email
Paul Harriott (Lab)	Councillor via email
Vaughan Hewett (Con)	Councillor via email
Peter Hicks (Con)	Councillor via email
Stephen Hubbard (Lab)	Councillor via email
Isaac Igwe (Lab)	Councillor via email
Josie Iles (Con)	Councillor via email
Chris Irvine (Con)	Councillor via email
Alan Jarrett (Con)	Councillor via email
Geoff Juby (Lib Dem)	Councillor via email
Sheila Kearney (Lib Dem)	Councillor via email
Barry Kemp (Con)	Councillor via email
Craig Mackinlay (Con)	Councillor via email
Andrew Mackness (Con)	Councillor via email
Raymond Maisey (Con)	Councillor via email
Vince Maple (Lab)	Councillor via email
Tom Mason (Con)	Councillor via email
Teresa Murray (Lab)	Councillor via email
Mike O'Brien (Con)	Councillor via email
Tristan Osborne (Lab)	Councillor via email
Adam Price (Lab)	Councillor via email
Wendy Purdy (Con)	Councillor via email
Peter Rodberg (Con)	Councillor via email
David Royle (Con)	Councillor via email
Julie Shaw (Lab)	Councillor via email

Diana Smith (Lib Dem)	Councillor via email
Andy Stamp (Lib Dem)	Councillor via email
Kelly Tolhurst (Con)	Councillor via email
Rupert Turpin (Con)	Councillor via email
Tony Watson (Con)	Councillor via email
Les Wicks (Con)	Councillor via email
David Wildey (Con)	Councillor via email
Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny members	Email Teri Reynolds to distribute
Medway Youth Parliament	Email Jackie Keskeys to distribute
Mark Reckless MP	MP via email distribution list
Rehman Chishti MP	MP via email distribution list
Tracey Crouch MP	MP via email distribution list
Patrick Leeson, Director of Educational Services, KCC	Kent LA via email distribution list
Alex Tear, Director of Education	Diocese & O&S via email distribution list
Professor Anne Bamford, Director of Education	Diocese of Southwark via email distribution list
Mark Devlin, Chief Executive (PA – Michaela Jones)	Medway NHS Trust via email distribution list
Dr Peter Green, Shadow Accountable Officer for Medway Clinical Commissioning Group	Medway PCT via email distribution list
Neil Davies, Chief Executive	Medway Council via email
Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community & Culture	Medway Council via email
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children's & Adult Services	Medway Council via email
Simon Wakeman, Communications	Medway Council via email
Mark Holmes, Early Years (cc Richard Cooke & Caroline Webber)	Medway Council via email
Helen M Jones, AD Commissioning & Strategy	Medway Council via email
Phil Watson, AD Children's Social Care	Medway Council via email
Pauline Maddison, AD Inclusion (SEN)	Medway Council via email
David Quirke-Thornton, Deputy Director of Social Care	Medway Council via email
Richard Hicks, AD Customer First, Democracy & Governance	Medway Council via email
Stephen Gaimster, AD Environment & Regeneration	Medway Council via email
Stephanie Goad, AD Communications, Performance & Partnership	Medway Council via email
Tricia Palmer, AD Organisational Services	Medway Council via email
Andrew McGrath, AD Frontline Services	Medway Council via email
Perry Holmes, AD Legal & Corporate Services	Medway Council via email
Mick Hayward, Chief Finance Officer	Medway Council via email
Tracey Stephens, Schools HR Manager	Medway Council via email
Ralph Edwards, Head of HR	Medway Council via email
Anne Robinson, Governor Services	Medway Council via email
Norman Gregory, Insurance Officer	Medway Council via email
Tracey Barefoot, Health & Safety Adviser	Medway Council via email
Christine Wilson, Head of Legal Services	Medway Council via email
Steve Hewlett, Head of Integrated Transport	Medway Council via email

Dave Harris, Development Control Manager	Medway Council via email
Jill King, Section 106 Monitoring Officer	Medway Council via email
Customer Contact Seniors	Medway Council via email
Simon Harrington, Student Services Manager	Medway Council via email
Shelley Marsh, Student Services Operations Manager	Medway Council via email
Hilary Gerhard, School Challenge & Improvement	Medway Council via email
Jacqui Moore, School's Commissioning & Traded Services	Medway Council via email
Chatham Contact Point, Riverside One	Contact Point – via post
Rochester Contact Point	Contact Point – via post
Gillingham Contact Point	Contact Point – via post
Rainham Contact Point	Contact Point – via post
Strood Contact Point	Contact Point – via post
Black Lion Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre – via email distribution list
Splashes Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre – via email distribution list
Deangate Ridge Sports Complex	Leisure Centre – via email distribution list
Hundred of Hoo Swimming Pool	Leisure Centre – via email distribution list
Kings Rochester Sports Centre (formerly Sterling Centre)	Leisure Centre – via email distribution list
Strood Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre – via email distribution list
Chatham Library	Library – via email distribution list
Cuxton Library	Library – via email distribution list
Gillingham Library	Library – via email distribution list
Grain Library	Library – via email distribution list
Hempstead Library	Library – via email distribution list
Hoo Library	Library – via email distribution list
Lordswood Library	Library – via email distribution list
Luton Library	Library – via email distribution list
Rainham Library	Library – via email distribution list
Rochester Library	Library – via email distribution list
Strood Library	Library – via email distribution list
Thomas Aveling School Community Library	Library – via email distribution list
Twydall Library	Library – via email distribution list
Walderslade Hook Meadow Library	Library – via email distribution list
Walderslade Village Library	Library – via email distribution list
Wigmore Library	Library – via email distribution list
Mr Mike Ongley	GMB via email distribution list
Karen White – Delce Junior	NAHT via email distribution list
Ms Julia Harris	NASUWT via email distribution list
Nicola Brocklesby	ATL via email distribution list
Ms Sue Calder & Mr Nick Childs	NUT via email distribution list
Mr Michael Barton	Voice via post – 38 Arden Street, Gillingham, Kent. ME7 1HR
Julia Bell	ASCL via email distribution list
Assistant Branch Secretary Medway Towns LG Tania Earnshaw	UNISON via email distribution list
Ms Sharon Wentworth & Malcolm Bonnet	UNITE via email distribution list
Baha'I Community of Gillingham – Mr F Forghani	faran.forghani@blueyonder.co.uk - BCC field

Bangall Language School Shishu Kishor Club – Nilufar Chowdhury	niluchy@hotmail.co.uk - BCC field
Community Interpreting Service – Elizabeth Bird	cis@medway.gov.uk - BCC field
Hindu Sabha – Mr Ajay Attra	ajayattra@hotmail.com - BCC field
Kent Muslim Welfare Association - Dr Craig Kennett AKA Azeem Nader General Secretary	anwarkhan1987@hotmail.com - BCC field
Kent Ramgarhia Darbar Sikh Temple & Community Centre – Mr M S Paddom	jasmissan@hotmail.com - BCC field
KUT O Chinese Association	enquiries@kut-o.com - BCC field
Medway English Training Community Interest Company – Cathy Rahmazadeh	cathy@metcic.co.uk - BCC field
Medway Town Gurdwara Sabha – Parminder Singh Upple	psupple@hotmail.co.uk - BCC field
Siri Guru Ravidass Bhawan	info@ravidassia-medway.co.uk - BCC field
Swarah Arts Foundation – B Balagopal	balagopalkent@gmail.com - BCC field
Medway Human Rights & Equality Council – Azhar Mahmood	emcap@hotmail.com - BCC field
Polish Saturday School – Monika Limanowska	mlimanowska@yahoo.com - BCC field
Czechoslovak Society in Medway – Lenka Wyatt	lenka.wyatt@medway.gov.uk - BCC field
All Playgroups, Pre schools & Nurseries within Medway	Email addresses in consultation folder on w drive – BCC field
Adjacent Residents to school	Paul Clarke
All Governors, staff & students	Paul Clarke
Chairs of Governors	All Medway Schools – via email to Governor Services
All Headteachers (schools forum & SIB)	All Medway Schools
Medway Website	via Alterian web publisher
Any additional bodies i.e parish council	N/A

# Consultation on the expansion of Rivermead Community Special School; 6 October 2014 until 2 November 2014



*Raising achievement through quality  
learning environments*

## Proposals to make prescribed alterations to Rivermead Community Special School

This document is designed to:

- **Notify you of Medway Council's proposals to make statutory prescribed alterations at Rivermead Community Special School with effect from 1 September 2016;**
  - 1) **To 'Increase the number of pupils at a special school'. There will be an increase in the numbers that attend the school by up to 60 primary aged pupils, enabling more pupils to be placed at Rivermead where it is the most appropriate provision, and thereby reducing the number of pupils needing to be placed outside of Medway.**
  - 2) **To 'Expand onto an additional site' to provide the accommodation for the increase in numbers. Years 1-8 will be sited at the additional site at the current Abbey Court Rainham site on Long Catlis Road, whilst Years 9 to 11 and sixth form will remain at Forge Lane. There would be some movement of pupils between sites as appropriate.**
  - 3) **To 'Alter the upper age limit at a special school' which will formally increase the age range to include children from 4 to 19.**
- **Explain why these changes are being proposed;**
- **Invite your comments on these proposals;**
- **Inform you of, and invite you to, a public meeting to be held at Rivermead School on Wednesday, 15 October 2014 at 6.30pm, where these proposals will be discussed and questions will be answered.**

### Background

Rivermead is a community special school, which currently provides education for pupils mainly with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), but also those with speech and language difficulties, between the ages of 11 and 19 whose needs are too complex to be supported within a mainstream setting. In its most recent OfSTED inspection, in 2012, it was rated as 'good'.

Medway is currently experiencing a period of significant demographic growth in the overall number of primary age pupils. The increase in the number of primary age pupils with statements requiring specialist provision in Medway is increasing at a quicker and more significant rate. This means there is a need for extra capacity within Medway's special schools.

### Why is there a need to expand Rivermead Community Special School?

Mainstream school forecasts show an expected increase in primary age pupils in Medway of 10 per cent between 2011 and 2016 (Source: Medway's School Organisation Plan 2011-16) resulting from an increased birth rate and significant amounts of net inward migration to the area.

Medway has agreed the principle that the trend to place children out of area or in independent provision should be reversed where possible and aims to educate as many children as possible close to where they live and to reduce the number of children and young people being educated outside of mainstream or local maintained special schools.

In recent years, there has been a significant growth in the number of primary age pupils in Medway with ASD. We expect numbers to continue to grow, resulting in a need for additional capacity. This capacity will be required initially in the primary phase, but also in the secondary phase in the longer term.

Currently specialist provision for primary aged pupils with ASD outside of the mainstream is provided for at the Marlborough Centre, part of Hoo St Werburgh Primary School. The Centre provides education for children with needs much greater than was originally intended.



Rivermead School is currently located in a Victorian school building, which was previously an infant school. In March 2012, Ofsted inspectors raised concerns over the inadequacy of the accommodation. The Lead Inspector stated that the limitations placed on the school by the space available to it would affect its capacity to improve in some areas of its work. Since then, additional modular buildings have been added to the site to cater for demand, which has added to the over-crowding on the site.

The proposals are to expand Rivermead School into the vacated Abbey Court site on Long Cattis Road Rainham, while also retaining the current Forge Lane site. The relocation would result in a split-site arrangement but the school are supportive of this as it suits their operation and vision for the future, and managing the sites in this way would afford the school flexibility to manage transition appropriately. No pupils will be displaced by the proposed changes.

Whilst the proposals may need to be phased in over a number of years the intention of the proposals is that the primary aged children, Years 1 to 6, would be located at the vacated Abbey Court Rainham site along with Years 7 and 8. This would aid transition, as not all pupils with the needs provided for at Rivermead are ready for secondary transition at Year 7.

The Key Stage 4 pupils (Years 10 and 11), sixth form and outreach would be based at the Forge Lane site. The sixth form pupils at Rivermead attend Mid Kent College, which is only a short distance from the Forge Lane site. The close proximity of the college to the school enables the school to utilise the same support staff at both sites enabling continuity as the learners progress to college and makes the most effective use of resources. This also facilitates Key Stage 4 link courses with the college, which are important in preparing the young people for transition.

The proposals will enable the council to place children with more complex needs into an appropriate provision in Medway. Recently that has not always been the case due to pressure on places. These proposals mean that pupils could remain local to their homes and families, giving the opportunity for pupils to feel better integrated into their community. The proposals will also increase diversity and choice across Medway's special educational provision by offering more places to a wider base of pupils with a wider range of need, promoting equality of opportunity for vulnerable pupils.

The proposals will lead to better overall control of the coordination of SEN provision, not only within Rivermead itself but also across Medway. It will also ensure that the council is in a stronger position to monitor the quality of the delivery of the provision. This in turn will improve the outcomes for children according to their individual needs.

## Funding for the scheme

This project to adapt the premises to ensure suitability for Rivermead's pupils would be funded through the council's Children and Adults Capital Programme.

Under current arrangements some pupils who live within Medway are placed in alternative schools outside of the Local Authority due to lack of appropriate provision in Medway. Increasing the number of pupils provided for as proposed, gives the opportunity to reduce the number of pupils sent out of area, resulting in a significant cost saving. These savings would be ring fenced for education and would be invested in Medway schools.

The average annual cost of placing a pupil with ASD outside of Medway is approximately £26,000, exclusive of transport costs. This compares to the cost of providing a place at Rivermead of between £13,000 and £17,000 depending upon the level of pupil needs. This represents a potential annual saving of up to £13,000 per pupil.

## The next stages and proposed timeline

Following the four-week consultation period, Medway Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review a report on the responses and comments received.

Medway Council's Cabinet will then consider the responses to this consultation and the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. They may decide not to proceed with the proposals, or to authorise a four-week period of statutory representation when notices will be published to give interested parties the opportunity to formally object or comment.

If there are no objections to the Statutory Notice period, Medway Council can decide to go ahead with the proposals.

If there are one or more objections, Medway Council as Schools Commissioner, under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, will consider the objections before determining the outcome.

Four week Public Consultation period	6 October – 2 November 2014
Public Consultation meeting at Rivermead School	15 October 2014 (6.30 pm start)
Report to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Outcomes of Consultation	9 December 2014
Report Outcome of Consultation to Cabinet	13 January 2014
Four week Statutory Notice period	February/March 2015
Council decision on proposals	April/May 2015
Implementation of expansion proposals if approved	From 1 September 2016

This timeline is subject to change. No decisions will be made until the consultation has been completed and local views have been carefully considered.

## How to make comments

We would like to hear your views on these proposals. Please let us know by completing the reply slip at the end of this leaflet or by writing a letter to:

School Organisation  
Medway Council  
FREEPOST RRUY-XYXR-SGYY  
Level 4, Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
CHATHAM  
ME4 4TR

Alternatively hand the form or letter in to the School Office at Rivermead Community Special School, Forge Lane, Gillingham ME7 1UG who will forward it on your behalf.

You may also email your comments to [prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk](mailto:prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk)

All responses must be received by Sunday, 2 November 2014.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to acknowledge receipt.

## Proposals to make prescribed alterations to Rivermead Community Special School

**REPLY SLIP**

Please complete this form, and add any comments you wish below.

Forms and letters should reach us by **Sunday 2 November 2014**.

Please return to:

**School Organisation  
Medway Council  
FREEPOST RRUU-XYXR-SGYY  
Level 4, Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
CHATHAM ME4 4TR**

Alternatively hand the form or letter in at the School Office at Rivermead Community Special School in Forge Lane, Gillingham, Kent ME7 1UG, who will forward it on your behalf.

It would be helpful to have the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**I am (please tick)**

- Parent/Guardian       Governor       None of the above (please specify)
- Member of Staff       Local Resident

With regard to the proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils', 'Expand onto an additional site', and 'Alter the upper age limit' at Rivermead Community Special School.

**Please tick one box**

- I approve of the proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils', 'Expand onto an additional site', and 'Alter the upper age limit' at Rivermead Community Special School
- I object to the proposals to 'Increase the number of pupils', 'Expand onto an additional site', and 'Alter the upper age limit' at Rivermead Community Special School

**Comments**

Please give your reasons as fully as possible. This will help careful consideration to be given to the arguments in favour and against the proposal. You are able to provide additional sheets of paper as required.

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## Who to contact

✉ School Organisation, Medway Council, Level 4, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR

📧 Email: [prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk](mailto:prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk) Website: [www.medway.gov.uk/schoolsconsultation](http://www.medway.gov.uk/schoolsconsultation)

📞 Minicom: 01634 333111

This information can be made available in other formats from **01634 333333**

If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring **01634 335577**

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中文	331781	हिंदी	331783	PolSKI	332373	ଏଓଡ଼ିଆ	331786	فارسی	331840	Lietuviškai	332372

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING**  
**RIVERMEAD SCHOOL**

**HELD ON 15<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2014**

Chaired by: Cllr Mike O'Brien

Listening Panel: Cllr Peter Hicks, representing the Cabinet  
Cllr David Royal, (Conservative) Chair of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Mrs Dorte Gilry, (Labour)  
Cllr Mrs Diana Smith (Liberal Democrats)

Officers: Hilary Gerhard, Head of School Challenge and Improvement  
Chris McKenzie, Head of Performance, Intelligence and Strategic Planning

**Welcome by Mike O'Brien who chaired the proceedings.**

Welcome to this public consultation, every word that is spoken tonight will be recorded through the microphones. Which is why later on when we invite you to ask questions, you will be given a microphone and if you could just say, who you are whether you are a parent, member of staff, resident or whatever and your name and then we can keep a good record of everything that is going on.

Having now formally opened the meeting, can I introduce Hilary Gerhard and Chris McKenzie and on my left we have what is called a listening panel and they will report back to their groups their interpretation of what has happened here this evening. (The listening panel are introduced individually)

First of all I will pass you over Chris McKenzie to outline the proposals all the technical elements and then will open the floor for questions. If you put your hand up when you want to ask questions I promise that everybody who wants to ask a question will be able to do so and we will move the meeting through like that.

At the end I will summarise the key points and I will check with the independent panel to make sure I have summarised the points correctly. I have reminded you about everything being recorded so hopefully nobody minds being recorded but that is what we do. I will now pass over to Chris McKenzie to outline the plans for the expansion of Rivermead Special School.

**Chris McKenzie**

I am going to take us through a fairly brief presentation on the proposals; hopefully you have all seen and had copies of the actual consultation document. We have got copies here and there are some spare copies which my colleagues at the back of the room have as well, so if you haven't had a copy please do ask them for a copy either now or at the end of the meeting. That sets out all of the detail of the proposals and I will run through some of the key aspects of the proposals this evening to ensure that they are clear before we move on to ask any questions.

(Power Point presentation)

The purpose of the meeting and this presentation, first of all is to explain what is being proposed and why. As Cllr O'Brien said we will then invite questions and comments on the proposals. What I will also do in my presentation is explain the next steps and what happens after today's meeting.

If I can give a bit of context first of all to the proposals. Medway Council has published a Special Educational Needs Strategy which sets out our policies and strategies around the Special Educational Needs education in Medway and within that strategy we have a number of aims particularly around the education of children and young people with special educational needs and I have highlighted the key aims that are relevant to the proposals here.

First of all we aim to educate as many children as possible close to where they live so what we want is for children to attend local schools wherever possible. We want to reduce the number of children educated outside of mainstream or local maintained special schools and linked to that we want to reverse the trend to place children out of area and independent provision. So what that means is where we don't have sufficient places within Medway to place all children within local Special Educational Needs provision then it does mean on some occasions that we have to place children out of area or in independent non-maintained provision and it is a very clear aim of the council to try and reverse that trend and educate as many children as possible close to where they live.

Some further context to the proposals. In Medway we have seen in recent years, quite a significant increase in the birth rate, so we have had more children being born in Medway and that has continued to rise in recent years, certainly for the last 5 – 7 years we have certainly seen an increase in the birth rate. What we have also seen during this period is movement of families into Medway with children. What that has also done is meant there has been an increased demand for school places within Medway. There are also a number of housing developments planned in Medway and again that will bring additional families into Medway we expect with additional children who will require places in Medway.

What we have seen in recent years is an increase in the overall demand for primary school places, particularly in Medway so we have seen the number of primary age children growing as a result of these factors, which has meant that we have had to increase primary school provision within Medway. It follows, because we have had that increase in primary age pupil numbers there has also been an increase in the number of primary aged children in Medway who have special needs for whom we want to find places within Medway.

Actually that increase in numbers has been even more significant in terms of children with special educational needs, as the overall numbers of children have increased, actually the proportion of those children that have special needs has increased at the same time, so what that means is that the number of children with special needs in Medway that need to be placed has been increasing at a faster rate. What we have also seen and all of the evidence points to the fact that the complexity of need is also increasing so what we are seeing is that more children with special needs or a higher proportion of those children with special needs have much more complex needs than perhaps was the case in the past as well and historically there has been a lack of capacity for us to be able to meet all of those needs in Medway schools or in Medway special schools. Certainly in previous years we haven't increased the number of places in special schools at the same pace at which the number of children have increased. What that has meant is we have had to place more children either out of area, so not in the Medway area and not at local schools but also in independent, non-maintained provision, so independent provision that isn't maintained by the local authority or provision that isn't funded by central government.

A little bit about Rivermead to help give some context as well. Really pleased to say at its most recent inspection in September Rivermead was rated as a good school and I think congratulations to the school for that achievement, that is absolutely fantastic. The school currently provides for pupils aged 11 – 19 with these special needs – autistic spectrum disorder, speech language and communication and physical difficulties as well within the school.

So Rivermead is a good school and we need additional places in Medway, in particular the number of children with autistic spectrum disorders that require places in Medway has increased and we would expect to continue to increase in the next few years as well. Our proposals are to try help us meet that additional need for places in Medway. The proposal has a number of different elements,

there are a number of formal elements that we have to include within our proposals. The first element of that proposal is to increase the pupil numbers, so we are proposing that there will be more children attending or able to attend Rivermead School and that helps us to meet the need for additional places within Medway.

The second part of the proposals is an expansion on to an additional site, which will provide the accommodation for the additional pupils. What we are not planning to do is expand this site any further or to provide any additional accommodation here or take lots of additional pupils on to this site. The proposal is to utilise another site in Medway that will be becoming vacant from the end of next year. We will then do some modification works to those buildings to make sure they are suitable for the needs of the children that will attend Rivermead and that school will then become part of Rivermead as well. So the school from that point onwards would operate from two sites. Both this site, the Forge Lane site, so this would be retained and also another site in Rainham which is currently used by Abbey Court special school which is a school for children with profound multiple difficulties and severe learning difficulties that we are relocating to another site in another part of Medway. So the school will expand and it will also be based across two sites.

The intention would be for the younger children to be based at the other site, so primary aged children and also potentially years 7 and 8 as well and then from years 9 onwards to be based at the Forge Lane site. So the added benefit there is you have got less year groups here on the Forge Lane site which means the school would be able to make better use of these buildings for those pupils in years 9 and above.

The final part of the proposal is to alter the upper age range at the school to formalise the sixth form arrangements, the school is actually in terms of the age range is designated to take pupils from 4 – 16 although it does not take pupils in the primary phase currently it is designated to take pupils in that age range so we don't need to expand the age range to incorporate the lower age range and although the school already takes children up to 19, formally the designation of the school hasn't been changed to do that so this is formalising some of those arrangements that are already in place. What it will mean in real terms is that the school will start to take pupils in the primary phase as well as in the secondary phase as well.

This consultation forms part of the statutory process the council has to follow when making proposals. This consultation is actually the first step in that process so this is an informal consultation process and the intention of this process is designed to make sure that we understand the views of all stakeholders. We have a public consultation meeting, which is this evening and really would welcome your views, your comments and your questions to the panel. As Cllr O'Brien said the meeting is recorded so we have a record of any questions that are asked and any responses and they are then a matter of public record and they form part of the report that then goes on to the council's cabinet. This is the first part of that proposal.

The other ways you can make your views known is also by completing the consultation form, so there is a consultation form, as I say there are extra copies at the back and on the back page there is the space for you to write down your comments and to state whether you agree or disagree with the proposals that are being put forward. You can also write to us at the council, you don't have to fill out the form as well, so you can write us a letter and let us know your views that way. All of that is explained within the proposal document.

This public meeting forms part of this informal consultation period which will last for 4 weeks again the timeframes are set out within the document. What happens next is a report is taken to our children and young people O&S committee which is a cross part committee which will consider the views being put forward during the consultation so officers will report to members who sit on the O&S committee to let them know what has been discussed, what comments have come forward, how many people agree and disagree with the proposals. That meeting will take place in December 2014. Following that discussion and consideration at the O&S committee meeting, the report will then go on to Medway's Cabinet who will be the decision maker in this case and they will review the responses including any responses from the O&S committee in Jan 2015. Having taken

all those points into consideration the Cabinet can either decide to stop the process at that stage or to proceed to the next stage of the statutory process. The next stage is known as the statutory consultation period and that is another four-week period when the council would have to publish statutory proposals and give people the further opportunity to consider those and put forward any objections to the proposals.

If no objections are received during that period, then the Cabinet would typically delegate powers to the Director of Children and Adults to determine the outcome of the proposals, so to decide whether to go ahead with the proposals or not. If there are objections however at that stage then the report would go back to Cabinet as to whether the proposals should be taken forward or not.

So finally this is just a summary of the key dates in the consultation and the next steps. We are currently in the public consultation period, which is running from 6<sup>th</sup> Oct to 2<sup>nd</sup> November. O&S will consider the report on 9<sup>th</sup> December, Cabinet in January on 13<sup>th</sup>. We would run the statutory notice period between February and March with the final decision taken in April and May. The intention would be for the implementation subject to approval to take place from 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2016, so that is when the proposals would take effect from.

Cllr O'Brien

Has everyone had a copy of the consultation document? I am very pleased to have the opportunity to say a big thank you to both the Chair of Governors Ian Chappell and Headteacher, Tina Lovey who are both here this evening. Thanks for facilitating the meeting and all the arrangements here. I ask Tina, is there anything you would like to add to this please?

Tina Lovey

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, thank you for coming along this evening. We would like to welcome you to Rivermead School on behalf of myself and Ian Chappell as Chair of Governors. I just want to talk to you a little bit about our school really. I am sure Chris has clearly identified why there is a need in Medway but if you don't know our school really well it is good for me to express why we think that this is important. We have just had Ofsted as you have just been told and if you are parents of the school, you would have known this. We got good with elements of outstanding and I couldn't be prouder of us as a school, our learners, our learners, our parents, our governors and all of our staff who played a massive part in that.

I think Ofsted quoted on their report as us being, we create a calm, purposeful working environment and that is absolutely essential to any young child living with autism that we create that learning environment for them. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were able to take on the little ones and actually what I would call 'Rivermead' them? Parents are nodding at the front here. So Rivermead them all the way through. We have an effective partnership already with Mid Kent College. We support these young people going into independent working lives, and independent careers, but to be able to take them on from a very young age and again Ofsted said that we have a kind and caring nature. A lot of what we do is very person-centred and it means a lot to us, all of us to ensure that these children can be the very best that they can possibly be. Our passion as a school is to nurture in a complete holistic way, to provide an excellent education but for them to be treated in a complete holistic way so that we cater for their every need, alongside the parents of course. Again, to be able to do this as a through provision would be an exciting opportunity for us and the local community as well. Thank you very much for listening to me.

Cllr O'Brien

Can I also mention that is it very nice to see two of your local councillors here, Cllr Adam Price and Cllr Mrs Pat Cooper who have come along to join in with the meeting this evening so thank you both for attending. Now is your opportunity to ask questions and we will make sure you have the opportunity to ask questions. Would you please give your name and whether you are a parent, member of staff, a homeowner, or, I have just noticed the first one, a pupil.



Daniel Hopkins – Student

What is happening about the sixth form, is it going to be based at Mid Kent or here?

Hilary Gerhard

Currently this school works very effectively with Mid Kent College and students are supported in that transition from Forge Lane site to go over to Mid Kent College and it is the intention that that will continue as that is working really well. As we have said a couple of times already this evening, the Ofsted report also makes a clear note of the really good work that is happening in terms of that partnership. I am sure there are some really exciting courses that you will be looking at and for all of us, it is about making sure that all young people are ready for the next stage in learning and make a really smooth transition as Mrs Lovey has already said, this is a school that really provides that support for making sure that everything is working well. Here or at Mid Kent, I am sure that all pupils will do as well as possibly can.

Louise Collins, Parent

My son Harry is a very happy pupil here at Rivermead, I just want to ask if this much needed extra provision particularly for younger years is going to take any funding away from any other providers already within Medway?

Chris McKenzie

One of the principals of the proposals is that it will mean we spend less money on educational provision because what we will be able to do is provide for more children in Medway maintained provisions and it costs us a lot less to place children at Rivermead than it would to send them to out of area provision, to independent provision which can often be more costly. So actually rather than taking money away from Medway schools, if anything, it will actually increase the amount of money that we have in Medway to fund additional provision in other Medway schools.

Louise Collins, Parent

So that means there's going to be no other closures?

Chris McKenzie

No we need more provision in Medway so the intention is to provide additional places, not to reduce the number.

Cllr O'Brien

We are talking expansion, we are not talking closures.

June Patey, Parent

My son Harry who comes here is in year 10, I also have 4 other children and 3 of them are on the spectrum as well, including young Lucy here. The provision for the younger years will be fantastic, I am asking whether they will still need to be stated to be able to come to the new provision at Rivermead?

Hilary Gerhard

The answer is yes. This is a designated special school and all pupils will have a statement of special education need.

June Patey, Parent

So at the moment she goes to a mainstream primary school and we are going through the process for her being referred back to paediatrician she was diagnosed at 2 and now that she has come to be 7 that things are coming to a head for her with behaviour and different issues, so we are starting the process. For me the provision for younger children will be fantastic even if I didn't have Lucy, I think it will be great that there will be a new provision for the younger children in the area.

Hilary Gerhard

And that is very much the philosophy that is behind this. As Mrs Lovey also said in her talk it is about making sure that those children that have a very early diagnosis are actually in the right provision and are given the support that they need.

June Patey, Parent

We are lucky she goes to a small village school so the support she has there is fantastic but if we lived somewhere else and it was a bigger primary school she would be having more issues than she has got now so fortunately we are lucky where she goes. The secondary school, I can't imagine her going somewhere like Hundred of Hoo or a big secondary school so for me, personally I desperately want her to be able to come to Rivermead because it made such a difference for Harry even though they all have a diagnosis of Asperger's, they are different. Adam has Asperger's but he is managing at mainstream at Hundred of Hoo. My eldest son is the same and he is now at college full time. But for Harry he was higher on the spectrum so needed that support which Rivermead have given him 100% and I fully back anything that Rivermead can do for my children.

Hilary Gerhard

Thank you very much I think that really sums up doesn't it, what good schools, and good provision and good support can do in terms of helping all pupils, everybody's sons and daughters do as well as they can.

Paul LeBretten, Parent

Parent of Ethan who is very happy here. It was mentioned in the timescale, and obviously timescales are things that can change quite a lot but the final date for the implementation for the expansion proposals being 1<sup>st</sup> sept 2016. Can I be clear is that when the planned intake will begin?

Chris MacKenzie

Yes, that is absolutely right, that is when we would expect the school to take on additional pupils in the primary phase from September 2016.

Paul LeBretten, Parent

The consultation paper, it seems to say slightly different things on different pages but if I can just check that it is planned that Years 9 – 11 will remain at this site?

Chris McKenzie

Yes, that is correct.

Tina Lovey

Obviously you are right in what you are thinking Years, 9, 10 and 11 will be here but where it might have differed in the consultation is that when Year 9 does PE we may use the space and we will transport the children to the site in Rainham simply because they have got an abundance of field at the back. So here we haven't got that and we are having to hire extra space for our learners to do PE whereas if we go to that site, actually, we have got it for free because it will be part of our school. It will be a massive benefit.

Michael Barton – Secretary of the Medway branch of VOICE the education union

I am also a resident in Gillingham North ward have been for just over 19 years. I was also a member of the staff of the Medway Central Service, which became the new Rivermead School just over 11 years ago now. When, at that time Rivermead was formed, it seemed clear to some of us that whilst it was great to have the Forge Lane site which had just become available then through the reorganisation, the former infant school moving, it wasn't going to be adequate indefinitely for the sort of school that Rivermead would in time become. As it has turned out.

Since then of course, Rivermead has gone from strength to strength, its Ofsted reports have always been a joy to read and it has been really wonderful as a former member of the service that was there before this came about to actually see the provision going from strength to strength.

The concern now really is that a split site is never an ideal situation, however unfortunately of course within the constraints in which the council has to work in, I am sure it is the best they can do and I know we wouldn't be here tonight looking at this proposals if it wasn't the best that Cllr O'Brien and his team could do. However I would just exercise this little note of caution here that let's just be really aware and let's just see if we really can, as a community as a whole do the best we can. It is just unfortunate that the way education provision, buildings and so on become available is like in this case, an academy, yes that's where all the funds go nowadays, making a site available to Abbey Court, Long Catlis Road site which has now fortunately become available for Rivermead.

I really would be interested to know a bit more, a bit further than what we have seen here, the thinking that is going into this, how the problems that come up with a split site, have they been foreseen and the work that is going I hope, into making sure that they don't become a real burden, because this particular group of young people, with this particular range of needs on the autism spectrum, in cold hard economics, not just having more provision in Medway being one that has been pointed out here, in cold hard economic, these young people, the right provision for them early on really does make the difference between being able to get out into society and hold in many cases really responsible, key jobs in the community or if they don't get the right provision early on, a much less favourable life pattern. Of all the groups of special needs children that there are, I would regard this as the one group where even in cold hard economic terms; it really is vital they get the right provision.

Cllr O'Brien, I have gone on a bit, you know me and you know my background is education and I am concerned about these things passionately. I really do hope that we can be a little bit more reassured as split sites can bring such problems that the detail and the structures will be there.

Cllr O'Brien

We all share that passion and that is why we are so excited at the opportunity that we now have to expand the facilities for Rivermead students and pupils. Who wants to answer the bit about the split site?

Chris McKenzie

In terms of the arrangements, we are looking at a split site for the pupils but in discussions with the school, certainly the school have indicated so far that they are supportive of those arrangements because it supports their vision and I think this is where probably Mrs Lovey if you don't mind coming in with a little bit about that as well....

Tina Lovey

To be perfectly honest, split site or no split site clearly it is the ethos and vision of the school that will completely embed all the way through whether in one building or two buildings. I do understand concerns for a split site but just to reassure. We currently already have a split site you could argue because we have a provision in our 6<sup>th</sup> form at Mid Kent College. We accommodate 20 learners there and are looking to expand and grow next year to 25 learners. We accommodate the split site and we transfer students where we need to. Staff are transferred between this site and that site and what we have got to remember here as well is, although yes it is on a split site, it takes 8 minutes door to door from Rivermead to the Rainham site which is not too long at really. If it was a split site and we're talking about 20 minutes in between we could have a real issue but really it is minimal time between here..... that's on a clear day, I will say. I can see my councillor friends at the front there thinking I'm speeding! I hope that answers some concerns because yes, I do appreciate there are concerns but we seem to be working well with the split site now. I am sure it will also come with additional challenges but ones that I feel staff, governors and learners are able to cope with.

Jane Booth, Parent

I have a son, Kieran Booth here in Year 9 so he would be Year 11 so he would stay at this site. My question is more that Mrs Lovey could answer, I am thinking what is going to happen here for Kieran in regards to SEAL groups, their form groups, they have a mix from Years 7, 8, 9 everything, it is a mix throughout, so that will obviously change if the younger years are not going to be here. What about the teaching staff? Some of the teaching staff that he has got to know are going to then be moved over to the new site. Obviously I know there will be some new ones to take over the primary but how much is that going to impact on the children who have stayed behind.

Tina Lovey

Thank you for your question Mrs Booth. I just want assure all parents and carers to be honest with you we mix and match staff as it is already. We try and add as much consistency as possible when the staff work up at the college, we have got our 20 learners up there doing courses and consistency is everything for our learners because they are ASD, they like structure and we don't want to change that. Rest assured, the SEAL groups will continue here so if your son or daughter is going to be in the upper school when this development takes place. I can't say that nothing is going to change because of course it is, but we will ensure we inform the learners every step of the way. There are going to be teaching staff utilised down at the new site. For instance, two of our staff, I don't want to name them as they may change, who teach our most vulnerable in Year 7 and 8 are positively foaming at the mouth to have the opportunity to get stuck into the younger ones. We have some of our support staff who are more trained particularly to deal with younger, because they have come through primary and we have utilised them with the secondary and the older ones, they are really excited with this proposal because they can go back to their primary roots.

We teach in KS3 and KS4 and we do try to actually keep our teaching staff and our support staff quite separate in those key stages, so with regards to your question, actually consistency will be kept. Because your son is in Year 9, by the time these changes have been implemented he will be in Year 11 he will already have consistency from Year 10. Changes will happen because staff move on however the way I am planning things, it will be minimal change.

Cllr O'Brien

Is that reassuring Mrs Booth? I think the main message to reassurance comes from the fact that all the staff, the Chair of Governors who I think has been here 14 years now, sorry 10 years as Chair of Governor, all of them have got your children at the centre of everything that they do.

Cllr Mrs Pat Cooper

As ward councillors we know this school well and we have been advocating for some time for this school to expand because the site is just not big enough for every pupil who needs to be here. I can remember going way back and so can Cllr Gilry when this was Forge Lane infant school. It was a brilliant infant school but when the need came for it to change we had the listening panel here and I can remember that well because I was on it, to change the school from what it was, to what it is now and we welcomed that fact. I think it is a really brilliant thing that you are going to expand to the site in Rainham. We do have a game in Medway, where, you know the game of squares where you have to move all the squares around, to move pupils from one school to another and one building to another. It seems to be working out okay so far.

Obviously there are going to be things that will need to be sorted out. I did ask at the O&S committee for clarification about transport because I know pupils will need to be transported from here over to the new school. Medway Norse has the contract and Medway Norse has told us that the contract will go with the school and that you will still be able to transport the children over there with Medway Norse. On the whole I think this is a good move and I don't know if Cllr Adam Price would also like to say something?

Cllr Adam Price

We are also aware that parking is a general issue in the area and we have got a current consultation, which is outside the scope of Children and Adults Directorate remit because it is on the Regeneration side. It is just that with the ever-growing population of students in this area we are having to push residents parking further and further. At the moment it is up at the top of Parr Road, this consultation is about extending it down. Really my question was going to be about the transport between both sites. Because there will be certain staff that will have to transport between both sites, is there going to be adequate parking spaces on either site? Are you actually discussing this with the local authority? I don't think up at the Rainham site it is so much of an issue but it is an ever increasing issue within Gillingham North ward and obviously those staff who are actually going to be possibly working between those two sites and indeed the parents who might have children, dropping them off at one and then going on to the next one, that's what I wanted to ask.

Cllr O'Brien

So parking at this school rather than the Rainham one?

Tina Lovey

Clearly parking is an issue but actually the proposals that are being made are going to be of benefit to this site here at Gillingham because if you consider that we are taking two whole year groups year 7 and 8 away from Rivermead site and we are going to place them at the Rainham site, the Abbey Court site at Rainham actually takes away, you are looking at approximately 30 students. So, couple that with the amount of minibuses not needing to come to the Forge Lane site, they will instead going to be using the Abbey Court site which is actually bigger than this site, it is actually going to take a bit of weight off of the Forge Lane site.

You talked about as well the capacity for staff as well. Well clearly the knock on factor of that is because if we are reducing the numbers here, we are putting the numbers up at the Abbey Court site, it will actually reduce the staff members here so it is going to have a big impact on staff

parking outside of the school. We do have limited parking within the school site but it will actually be of benefit to the local community because it is going to let up on the parking, which we do acknowledge is a problem at the moment.

Because I have talked about it being a problem at the moment we have made alternations to our site and the minibuses are coming in at different entrances and exiting and we have been talking to the local residents and we have come to some conclusions so I feel we have satisfied the local residents that have come to us to speak to us.

Cllr Adam Price

In this particular area we have problems with the actual lack of a polling station and I know that previously this school had been asked whether there was room possibly for people to be able to come and vote. If there is going to be year groups moving out perhaps that could be a bonus to the community because this is actually quite central to the polling district where people from the surrounding area need to go to vote and at the moment they are having to go over to St Mary's school which is way over that side. I know it is separate to education but it is also something which may be of benefit to people in the area so perhaps that could be looked into.

Cllr O'Brien

That is not something, I don't think that is for here this evening Cllr Price but that is registered.

I think one of the things for the parents here is, when I talked about the staff, putting children at the very centre, you will notice it is cross party support for this, so we all put children very much at the very centre of everything that we do.

Louise Collins, Parent

Not so much a question but a comment in support of the split site because you are going to be retaining that 'moving up to big school' feel for the younger children when they are moving from the Rainham site so personally from a parent's point of view. Some people may think that as a negative but I don't.....

Cllr O'Brien

I think that it is very much a positive, thank you Mrs Collins. I think Paul you wanted to say something?

Parent

Bearing in mind there will be pupils moving here to the other site, are there any plans to increase numbers of children of years 9 – 11 age and if so, is it possible that pupil ratios might change, because that.....?

Chris McKenzie

I'll start, and again if there is anything you want to come in on Mrs Lovey. The proposals primarily are about expanding places in the primary phase. There is no part of the proposals at this stage where we are saying we will want to expand the secondary provision. That would be a decision for the school in consultation with the LA as to whether the school felt they could accommodate pupils in those other year groups and I would expect that will be a decision that will require some significant thought from the school. The proposals are not about changing ratios of staff to pupils, I would expect the school would say they would intend to maintain the same staff/pupil ratio?

Tina Lovey

Just to reassure parents, staff ratios will not change to learners. If I looked at our school right here right now we do have a couple of free places in Year 11 and Year 9. Year 10 completely packed. If I am foreseeing for the future our current Year 7 and Year 8 are packed so we haven't got any room for expansion. The absolute maximum that we will take is 20 in a year group. So again it is not looking to change any ratios but more to expand for the younger ones coming through to have, more of, as Mrs Collins says, a lower school and an upper school. It gives the students something to aspire to.

Cllr O'Brien

If, after this evening, it isn't the end of the story. There is a feedback form at the back of the consultation document. If you think of something later, please do send in your questions.

I think, if I can sum up. Everyone who wanted to ask a question has asked a question. Broadly supportive, in fact very supportive, whole-heartedly supportive.

I believe the issues of parking have been addressed that the ward councillor raised and I can't think of any negatives actually, have I missed any negatives? About the split site. The comment was made about the split side but I think about the comments received from parents here there are tremendous advantages, that feeling of going up into the big school rather than going straight into the big school so it does help with that transition.

Listening panel, are there any points you would like to ask clarification on?

Cllr Mrs Gilry

I think the school has got a good reputation and I think that the increase and the moving to the site will be great. Something I picked up from the parent with 3 young children there, her worry about a statemented child to come here. That is something I will bring up at a later date; that it is taking that long for your child to be statemented because if she needs to get the Rivermead education it is sooner rather than later. That is what I picked up from the audience.

Tina Lovey

I just wanted to say that the statutory process has changed so no longer do we have these excessive long waiting times for statements to be addressed and taken into consideration. Under the new educational health care plans I think it is within 16 weeks, from start to finish, which is still a long time I know for parents but within 4 months you should know whether your child is going to be statemented or not, which is a lot better than it was before.

Cllr Mrs Gilry

Cllr O'Brien could I come back? I believe the parent said the child was diagnosed at 2 and is 5 years down the line' that is more than 16 weeks even on my bad maths, OK?

Cllr O'Brien

I think that is an issue we can't discuss here but certainly that we can take up but the point is certainly noted.

Cllr Mrs Gilry

I think it is excellent that we are actually making provision for Medway children within Medway and not having to send them far away and I think should be applauded.

Cllr O'Brien

Diana, David are you happy? Cllr Peter Hicks is the cabinet member for community safety in Medway by the way and he has got another meeting he needs to rush off to, so he is not going to disappear because he has lost interest, in fact he really wanted to leave about 5 minutes ago. So thank you very much Peter. Was there anything you wanted to say before you leave?

Cllr Peter Hicks

Very happy with what has been said at the meeting.

Cllr O'Brien

Thanks very much Peter. Can I say to the children here you have been absolutely fantastic, well done. You have been very good, I hope that continues.

Thank you everyone, as I said before if you think of any questions later, do make sure you write them down and send them in.

Meeting closed.



# Diversity impact assessment

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Expansion, relocation to an additional site and alteration to the age range at Rivermead Special School</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>12 November 2014</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>Paul Clarke – School Organisation and Capital Programme Manager Ext 1031</b>

## **1 Summary description of the proposed change**

- *What is the change to policy/service/new project that is being proposed?*
- *How does it compare with the current situation?*

The proposals are;

- 1) to expand the school to admit primary aged pupils. Currently Rivermead provides a good education for pupils with special educational needs primarily for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Demand for ASD primary places has risen in recent years in line with the increase in primary aged children across Medway. The proposals will address this issue by providing at least 60 additional primary aged places.
- 2) To add an additional site. The additional site is necessary to accommodate the extra pupils. The site at Abbey Court Rainham has been identified for this when Abbey Court vacate the site. The current site at Forge Lane will remain with Rivermead for the older age groups. It will be for the school to best decide how to manage the age groupings.
- 3) To extend the age range to include pupils aged between 2 and 19 so that the whole age range can benefit from the proposals over time and where appropriate. Currently Rivermead provides education for children aged 11-19.

## **2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment**

- *Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.*
- *Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile*

A period of informal consultation has been held during which time interested stakeholders were able to respond to a consultation document. There was also a public meeting held at the school to enable members of the public to listen to the proposals and ask any questions. The responses to the consultation and the public meeting were very much in favour of the proposals. Some concerns were raised; these were mainly around traffic and parking at the school sites.

The school have been comprehensively included within the consultation and are very supportive of the proposals and consider, as did the majority of written and verbal responses, that the expansion to include

# Diversity impact assessment

primary aged pupils will provide a benefit and positive impact upon a greater number of people than the current situation allows.

### 3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to :

- Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?

*(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)*

Protected characteristic groups	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age		Yes	Yes
Disability		Yes	Yes
Gender reassignment	NA		
Marriage/civil partnership	NA		
Pregnancy/maternity	NA		
Race	NA		
Religion/belief	NA		
Sex	NA		
Sexual orientation	NA		
Other (eg low income groups)			

### 4 Summary of the likely impacts

- Who will be affected?
- How will they be affected?

There are not expected to be any adverse impact upon any of the named groups above as a result of these proposals. A positive impact is expected for the identified groups due to age and disability. The proposals will enable a greater number of pupils to access the excellent education provided by Rivermead by age as the proposals include the addition of pupils aged 2-11 where currently that is not the case, and in turn by disability as the school provides education for children with special educational needs.

# Diversity impact assessment

**5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?**

- Are there alternative providers?
- What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?
- Can demand for services be managed differently?

**No adverse impacts expected**

**6 Action plan**

- Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
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NA see above

**7 Recommendation**

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:

- to proceed with the change implementing action plan if appropriate
- consider alternatives
- gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

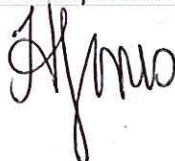
**Proceed with proposals as outlined in the outcomes of consultation report.**

**8 Authorisation**

The authorising officer is consenting that:

- the recommendation can be implemented
- sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned
- the Action Plan will be incorporated into service plan and monitored

Assistant Director



Date

19/11/14

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment

RCC: phone 2443 email [annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk](mailto:annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk)

C&A: phone 1031 email [paul.clarke@medway.gov.uk](mailto:paul.clarke@medway.gov.uk)

BSD: phone 2472 or 1490 email: [corpipi@medway.gov.uk](mailto:corpipi@medway.gov.uk)

PH: phone 2636 email: [david.whiting@medway.gov.uk](mailto:david.whiting@medway.gov.uk)

Send completed assessment to the Corporate Performance & Intelligence Hub (CPI) for web publication





**Rivermead Consultation October 2014**  
**Extent of hand delivered consultation documents**  
**Around Rivermead's Forge Lane site**

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**Rivermead consultation October 2014 -  
extent of hand delivered consultation documents  
around Abbey Court Rainham site**

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