

CABINET

20 OCTOBER 2020

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY 2018-22

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Summary

This annual summary report provides an update on the progress made against the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22. It highlights areas of demand for school places, action taken, and makes recommendations to ensure that sufficient good quality school places are available.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1. Medway Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The School Place Planning Strategy describes the principles, methods, and challenges of this duty.
- 1.2. Annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy provide up to date information and proposals to make sure there continue to be enough good school places for the expected numbers of pupils.
- 1.3. The proposals in this annual review of the School Place Planning Strategy follow the School Place Planning Strategy Principles. They also support the Council Strategy Priority of 'Supporting residents to realise their potential', and the outcome of 'All children achieving their potential in schools'. The proposals, if approved, would be delivered through available funding from the Education Capital Programme. Therefore, this is a matter for Cabinet as they form part of the existing programme. Addition of new proposals to the Council's Capital Programme may be a matter for full Council.

2. School Place Planning Strategy

- 2.1. In July 2018, as part of the School Place Planning Strategy, Cabinet, under decision 88/2018, approved the School Place Planning Strategy which included the revised Place Planning Principles. The strategy and principle

guidelines provide a framework for decision making centred upon improving schools and raising standards, ensuring that the Council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient good school places.

- 2.2. Several factors must be considered when deciding which schools to expand. These include forecasted pupil numbers, the OFSTED rating of the school, its current performance, and its popularity with parents. Medway's forecasts continue to be accurate, as proven by the Department for Education (DfE)'s benchmarks. Therefore, Members can be confident that the recommendations made in the School Place Planning Strategy annual reviews are based upon robust and accurate evidence and analysis.
- 2.3. Surplus school places are provided to ensure that places are available for pupils who arrive in Medway during the school year, such as pupils moving into new housing schemes. The nationally accepted level of surplus places is 5%, to ensure places are available without the risk of making schools unviable. However, given the high number of families with children of varying ages moving to Medway, a 5% surplus has not been sufficient in some areas. Therefore, at school place planning area level an 8% surplus is used for the reception year group. This will naturally reduce as in year admissions occur and increasing cohorts move through the school. This may be a little higher than the average surplus levels but will ensure sufficient places in areas of demand. It will also avoid the need and costs for emergency bulge classes and schools admitting over number which can prove difficult for schools to organise at short notice. Working to 8% surplus at reception intake should not affect the financial viability of schools. However, in certain circumstances, where all or most of the surplus in an area is at one school, the local authority will work in partnership with the Schools Forum to help mitigate any potential financial impact.

3. Annual review

- 3.1. Annual updates to the School Place Planning Strategy will make proposals for maintaining the appropriate level of school places in Medway. These proposals will be based on the most up-to-date information, as well as an analysis of local and national policy and strategy.
- 3.2. This annual review report, and the recommendations in it, are based upon the latest annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2020.
- 3.3. The forecasts in this report account for housing developments with planning permission. Schemes under consideration or at appeal will only be included in the forecasts when approved. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that as more housing schemes gain approval future forecasts will reflect this and demand for places will rise.

4. Medway overview

- 4.1. Medway's Local Plan, which is due to be published in 2021, highlights the need for in excess of 20,000 additional homes across Medway by 2035. A number of these are already under construction, and the publication of the Local Plan is expected to increase the rate of housebuilding. It is expected

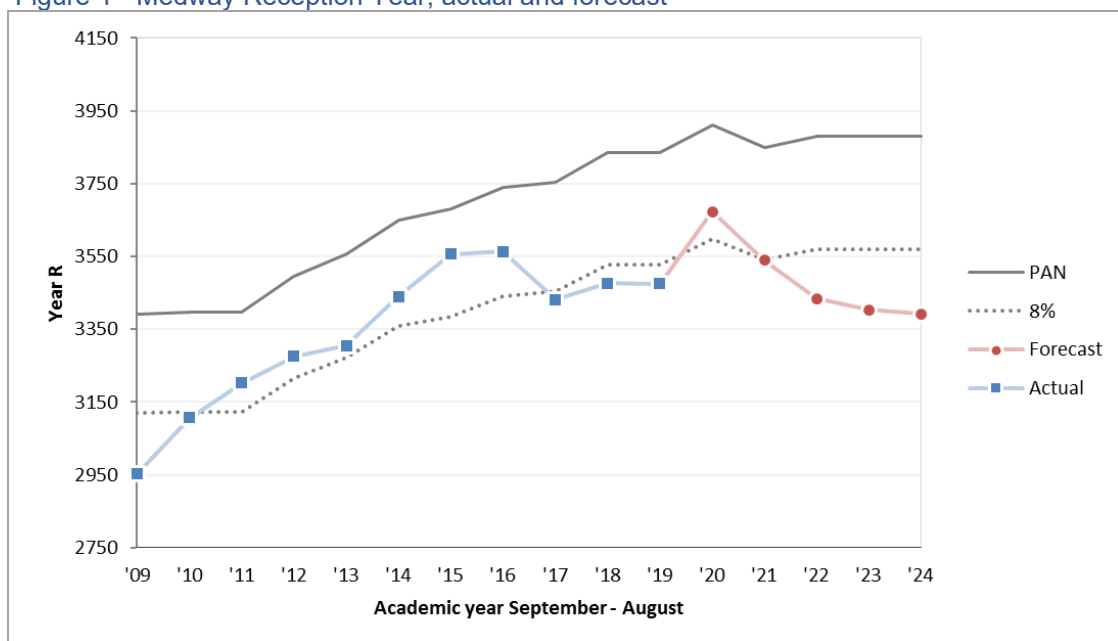
that the total population of Medway will increase from 278,000 to 317,500 in that time.

- 4.2. The number of approved and proposed housing schemes means that demand for school places is expected to rise in the future.
- 4.3. School place planning officers are working with planning and development colleagues on the Local Plan, looking at where new schools and expansions are likely to be required across Medway. This will continue to be refined during the development of the Local Plan.
- 4.4. The number of pupils expected from housing developments is based upon research by MORI. On average, for every 775 new houses with 2 or more bedrooms, 210 primary pupils will be produced. This is equivalent to a one form entry primary school.

5. Primary sector update

- 5.1. Reception figures have been rising over the last decade, but are now forecasted to peak in 2020, before reducing (Figure 1). This is based on recent and current birth rates and inward migration. The graph shows that, with the exception of 2020, the currently forecasted numbers are below the total Published Admission Number (PAN) of all reception places in Medway, and below the 8% surplus target. However, as more housing schemes are approved it is likely that reception forecasts will increase, particularly those 3 or more years ahead. Only looking at overall numbers can also distort the wider picture and areas of emerging local demand may be missed.

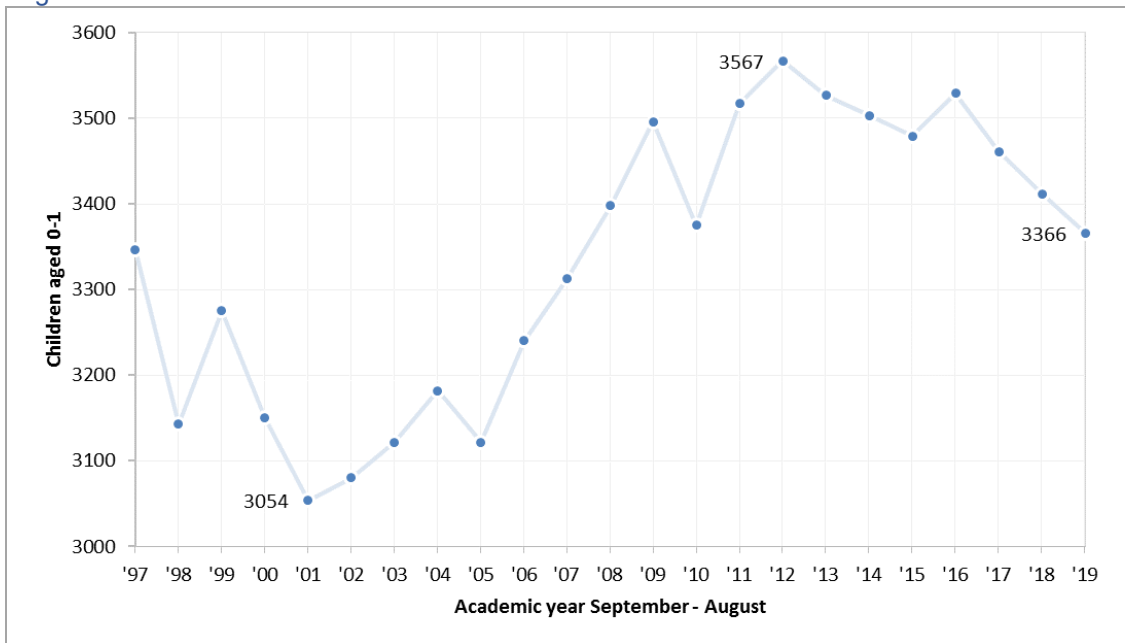
Figure 1 - Medway Reception Year, actual and forecast



- 5.2. Births in Medway reached their highest point in 2012 (Figure 2), and the children born that year created a peak in Reception in 2016. Another, smaller, peak in births in 2016 is the behind the increased forecasted Reception demand in 2020. The generally falling Reception forecast reflects the decreasing birth rate.

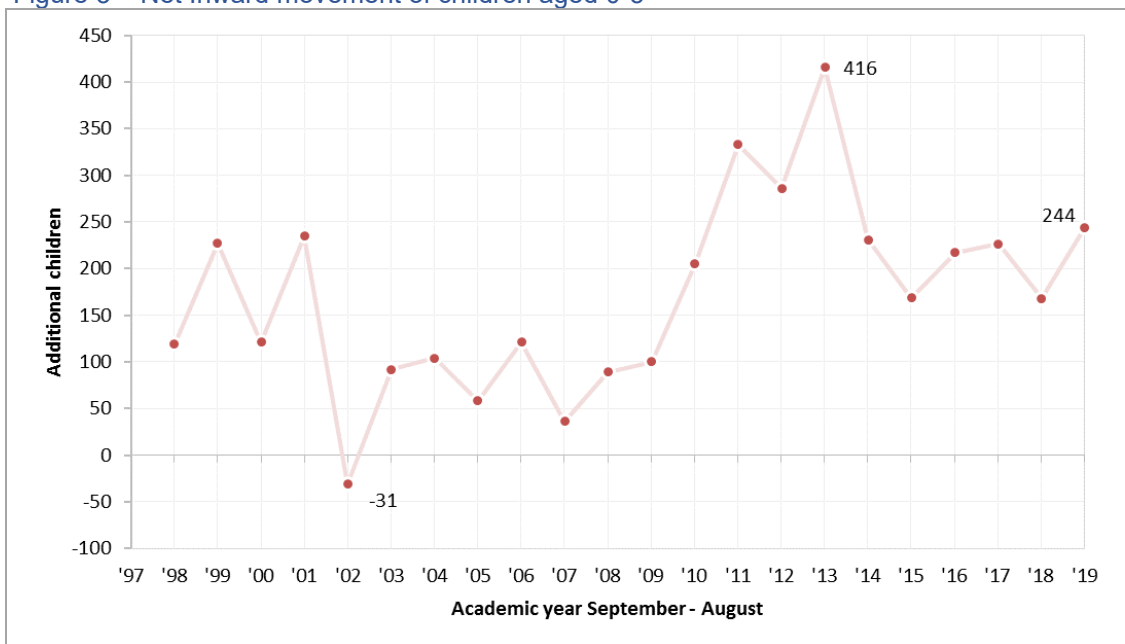
However, as new housing is completed, it is likely that new families and people planning to start families will move in, increasing the birth rate in the future.

Figure 2 - Births



5.3. The number of pupils is impacted by families with children moving into the area. Families move in with children of any age, therefore the impact on Reception numbers can be anything between immediate and 4 years' time. Since 2010, the number of pre-school age children moving into Medway has been higher compared to before 2010 (Figure 3). As the Local Plan progresses, an increasing number of housing schemes will come forward. Inward movement of pre-school age children can be reasonably expected to increase again in the future.

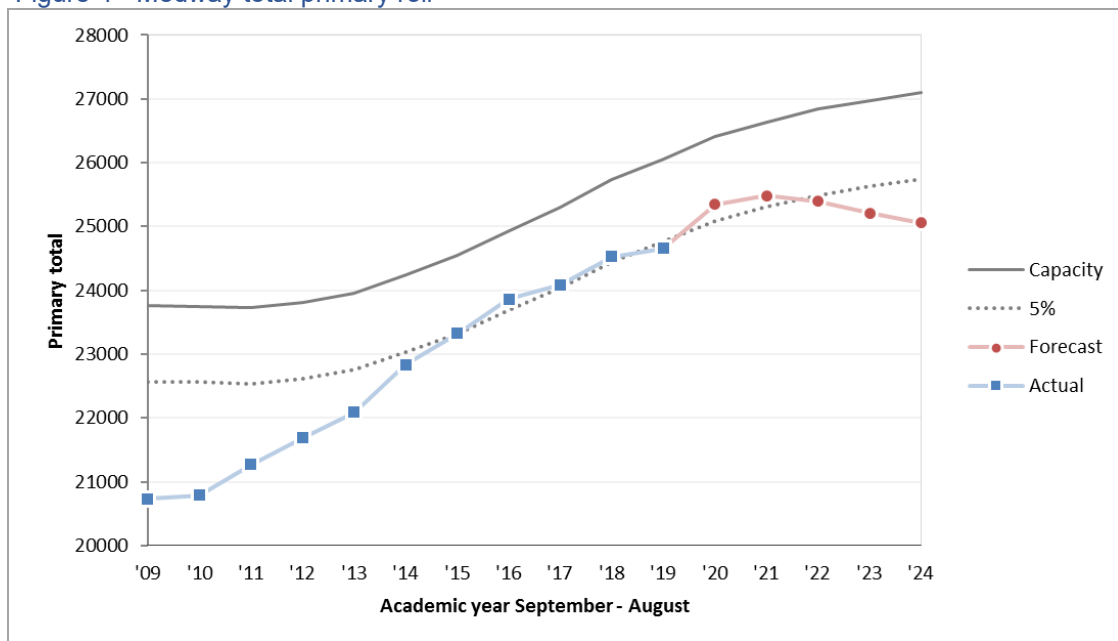
Figure 3 – Net Inward movement of children aged 0-5



5.4. Total pupil numbers in primary schools have increased as the larger Reception cohorts pass through the school system. They are forecasted to peak in 2021 (Figure 4). The expansion and new build work carried out as

part of the capital programme up to September 2018 has provided sufficient school places to meet demand, while maintaining a 5% surplus overall. However, some further primary capacity in some areas may be required as housing development increases. There may be some areas with more surplus capacity than others, but this is because parental preference can change year on year. This makes it challenging to determine in advance which schools will be popular, and which will fill more than others.

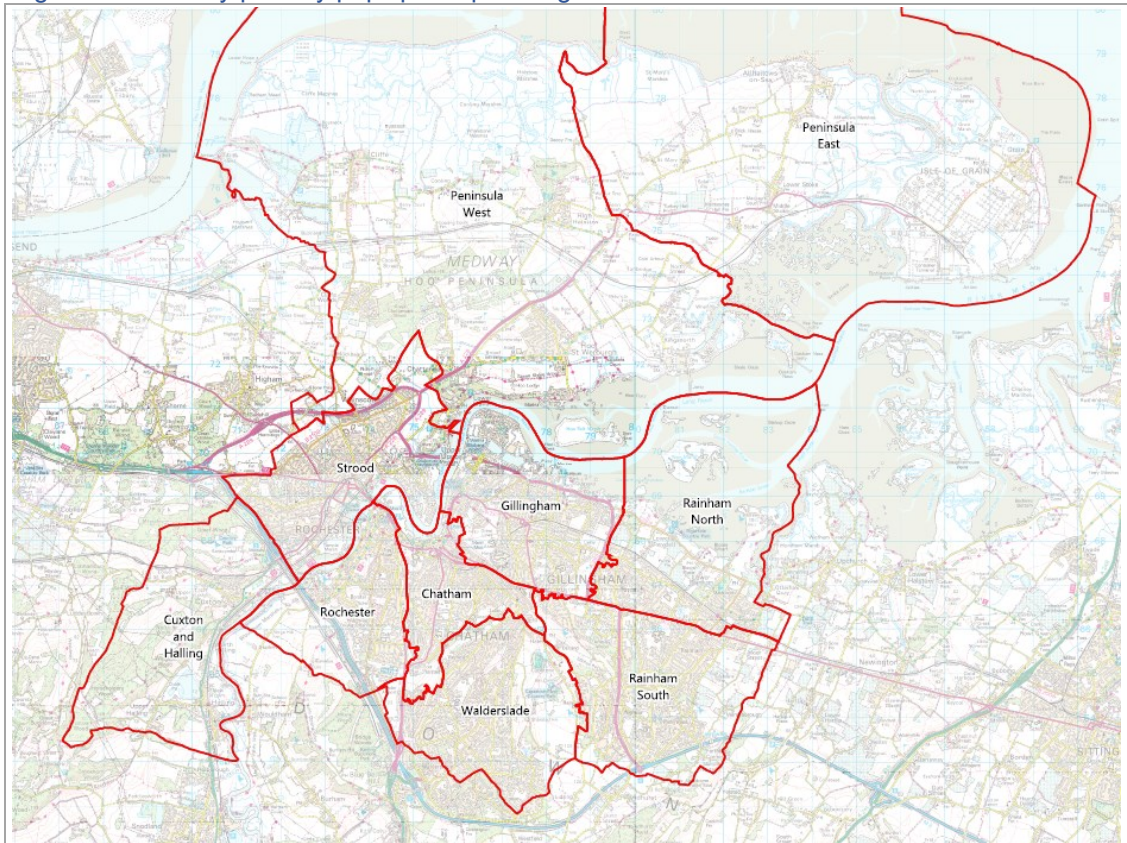
Figure 4 - Medway total primary roll



Primary pupil place planning areas

- 5.5. Medway has ten primary pupil place planning areas based on local geography. Generally, pupils who live in a planning area go to school in the same area, although in some areas there is significant cross-boundary movement. When planning school places, it is necessary to consider movement trends between neighbouring areas. Therefore, when assessing whether an area requires additional capacity the neighbouring areas are fully considered. This will ensure sufficient places are available but also that there is not an overprovision situation as this can impact upon less popular school's viability.

Figure 5 - Medway primary pupil place planning areas



- 5.6. Table 1 below shows where additional primary school places have been created between 2013 and 2020. This additional capacity has meant that the Council continues to meet its duty to provide sufficient school places in the primary sector.
- 5.7. This additional capacity should provide sufficient capacity for the next five years. However, Peninsula West is forecasted to have a localised shortfall, which may be met through excess capacity in neighbouring Strood and Peninsula East. Forecasts will continue to be monitored and updated twice each year, and compared with weekly birth numbers, to identify any variations from this position.

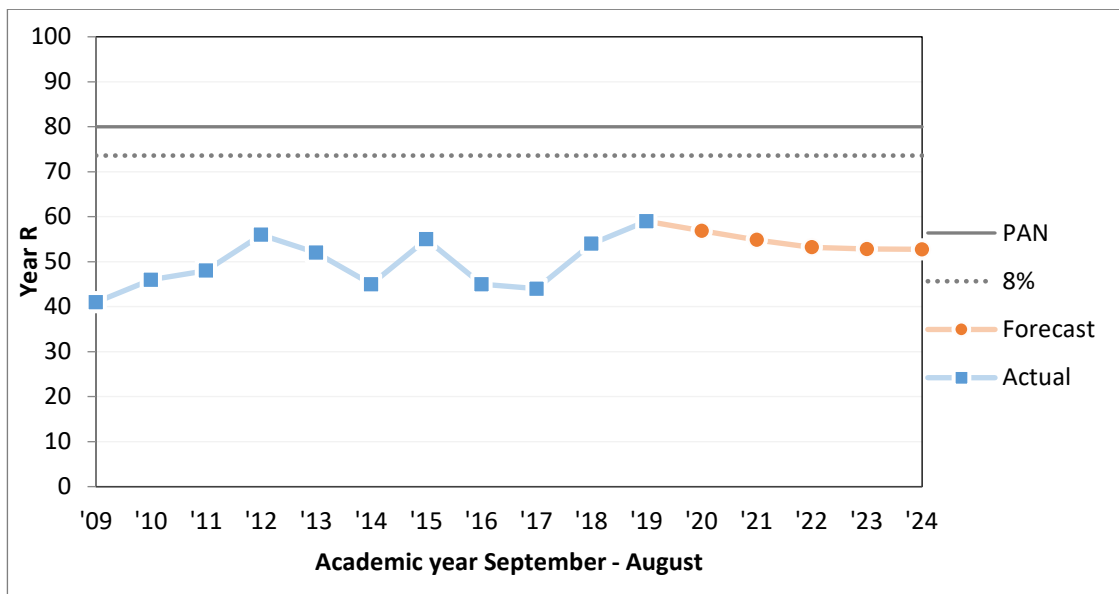
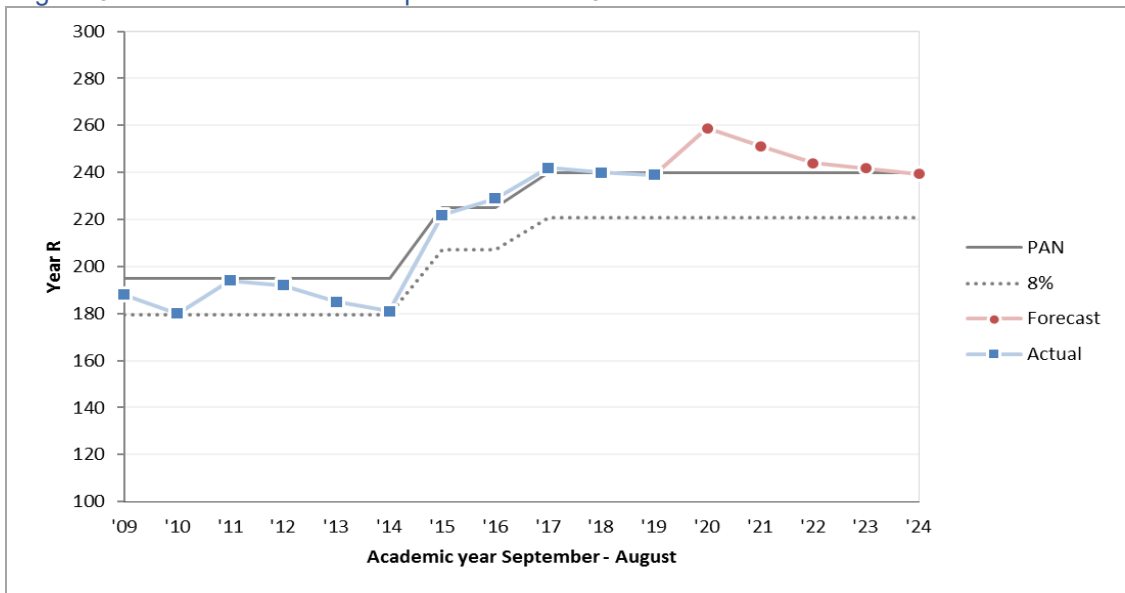
Table 1 - Additional primary places added 2013-2020

School	Planning Area	Number of extra places	Year implemented
Wainscott Primary School	Strood	210	2013
Brompton Westbrook	Gillingham	105	2013
Napier Primary School	Gillingham	210	2013
Saxon Way Primary	Gillingham	210	2014
Cedar Primary School	Strood	105	2014
New Horizons Academy	Chatham	630	2014
Woodlands Primary	Gillingham	210	2014
Cuxton Infant and Junior	Cuxton	70	2014
Hundred of Hoo	Peninsula	210	2015
St Thomas of Canterbury	Gillingham	30 (Bulge Class)	2016
Delce Academy Infant Phase	Rochester	210	2016
Bligh Infant and Junior	Strood	210	2017
Cliffe Woods	Peninsula	105	2017
St Mary's Island Primary	Gillingham	210	2018
Riverside Primary	Rainham	210	2018
Halling Primary	Cuxton	140	2018
Wayfield	Walderslade	30 (Bulge Class)	2020
Walderslade	Walderslade	30 (Bulge Class)	2020
Greenvale	Chatham	30	2020
Phoenix	Chatham	75	2020
Total		3240	

Peninsula West

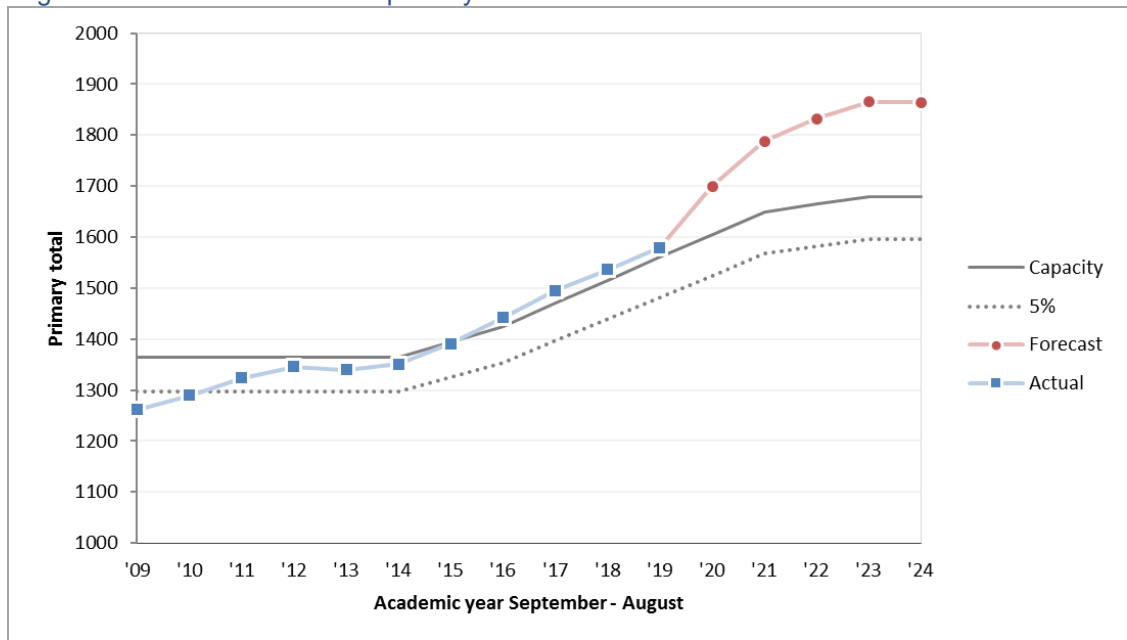
- 5.8. Peninsula West has six primary schools and covers the area from Four Elms Hill to High Halstow, including Hoo St Werburgh, Cliffe, and Cliffe Woods. Projects at Hundred of Hoo and Cliffe Woods have added 315 primary school places into the area. The graph below shows the forecast for reception in the Peninsula West (Figure 6a). Schools have generally filled to their PAN in the area, as soon as more places were added these were also filled. This is forecasted to continue. Figure 6b below, highlights the surplus in the neighbouring Peninsula East area meaning that overall in the wider peninsula are places are available.

Figure 6a - Peninsula West Reception Year with 6b Peninsula East below



- 5.9. The continued large reception numbers in Peninsula West mean the schools have filled to capacity and are forecasted to remain so (Figure 7). No additional provision is currently recommended for the area, as neighbouring areas have sufficient places to cater for demand. This situation will be kept under review to make certain that sufficient places are available overall.
- 5.10. Hoo and its surrounds are expected to be the main area for housing growth in the Local Plan, and so demand for school places will inevitably increase. The number of additional places required, and when and how they are provided will depend on the rate of house building. When developments come forward we will work with the developers and planning department to ensure that appropriate school places are provided in the right place and at the right time.
- 5.11. Local schools have already been identified for expansion in the future and some feasibility studies undertaken in readiness.

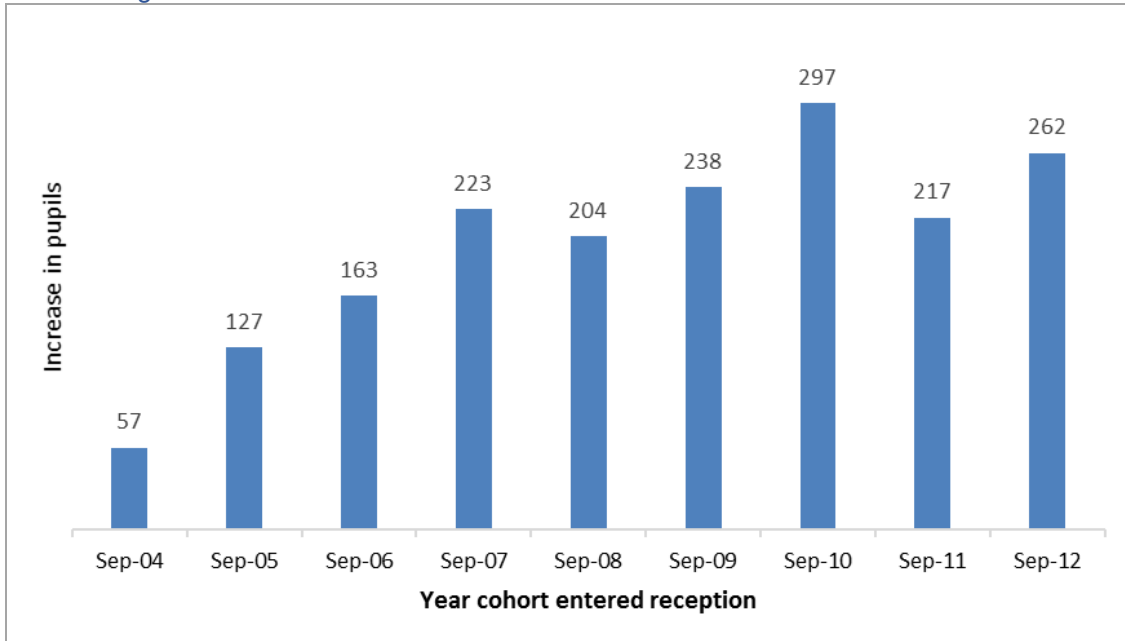
Figure 7 - Peninsula West total primary roll



6. Secondary

- 6.1. There are two secondary planning areas, one for the six selective schools, and one for the twelve non-selective schools. Both planning areas cover the whole of Medway, as secondary age pupils can travel much further than primary pupils. This also means a significant number of pupils can travel from outside Medway. These out of area pupils are accounted for when forecasting.
- 6.2. The pressure on places has begun to increase in year 7 as the larger numbers of primary cohorts feed into secondary education. This will extend through all year groups over time. Figure 8 shows how the reception cohort size has increased by the time each cohort reaches Year 7. This is caused by a combination of new families coming to live in Medway, and also pupils coming from outside of Medway to attend Medway secondary schools.

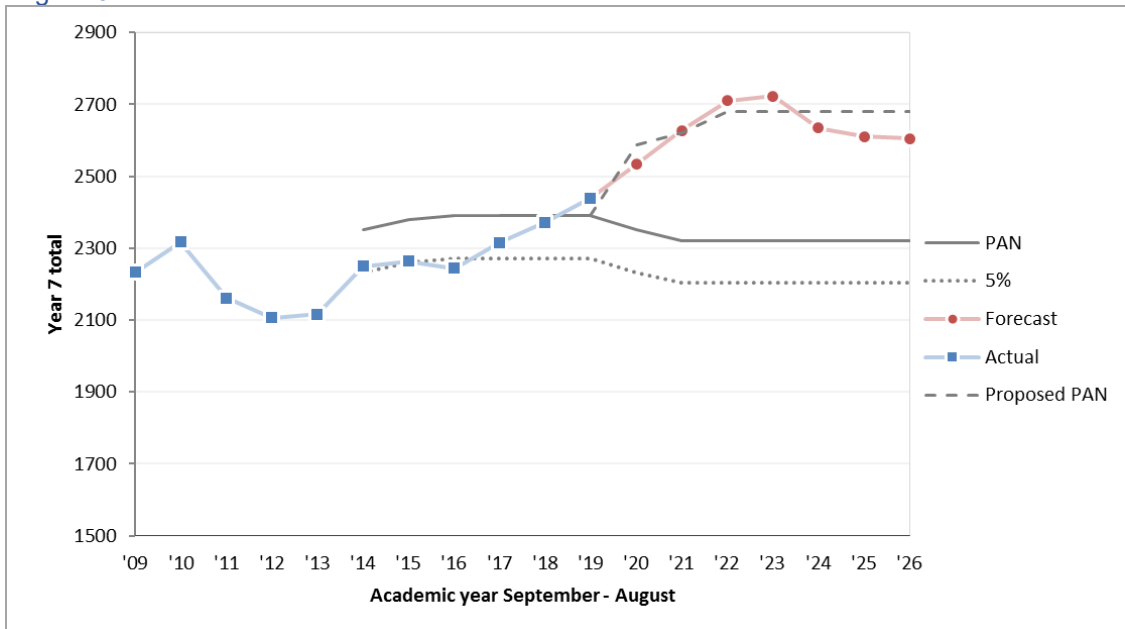
Figure 8 – Number of additional pupils joining a cohort in the time between starting reception and starting Year 7



Non-Selective

- 6.3. Demand for year 7 non-selective places has been rising steeply from 2016 and is forecasted to continue until at least 2023 (Figure 9). Sufficient capacity in year 7 intakes has been available up to 2019 due to spare capacity in older year groups. Year group rolls were lower in the past, and so current older year groups are smaller. However, this leaves a shortfall in the future and schools cannot be expected to continue to meet demand within current capacity.

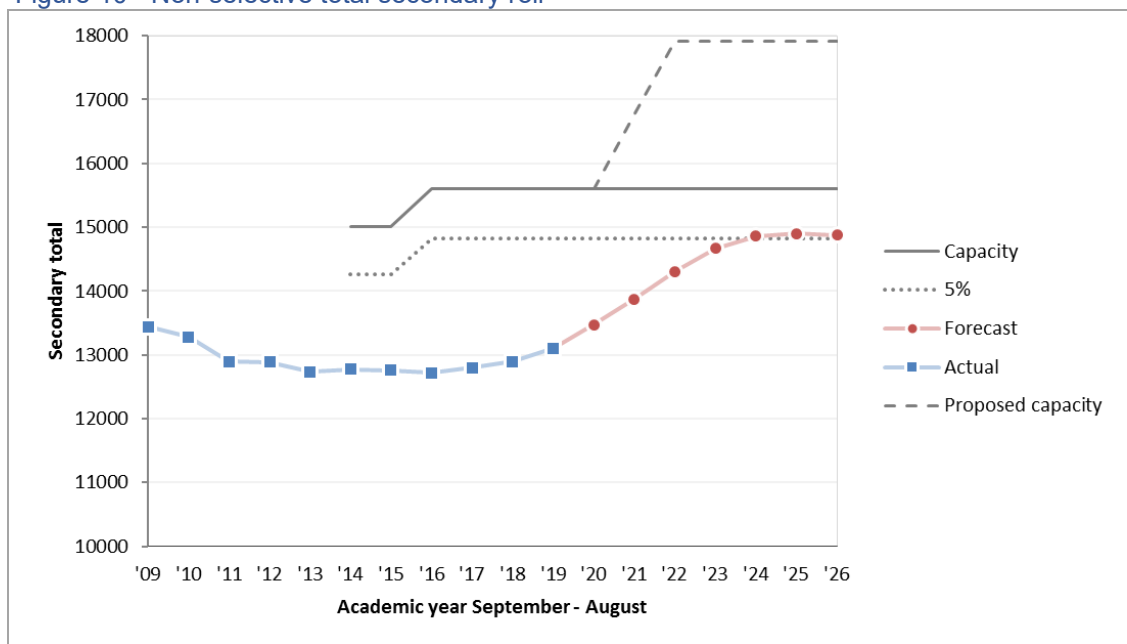
Figure 9 - Non-selective Year 7



- 6.4. This shortfall is planned to be met through the provision of the two new Free Schools; Leigh Academy Rainham and The Maritime Academy in Strood. These will be delivered and funded through the Government's Free School programme. Free schools are new academies, rather than academies which have converted from an existing school.

- 6.5. Initially the target date for opening the free schools was 2020, in time to meet demand. However, delays in the programme have meant that the targeted opening dates are now 2021 and 2022, resulting in the number of pupils forecast to exceed current capacity before the free schools open. As an intermediate solution, in 2020, ten existing secondary schools have agreed to admit bulge classes to varying degrees.
- 6.6. In 2021, even with the free school in Rainham opening, demand will exceed supply and further bulge classes will be required. Thomas Aveling and Robert Napier will take a second bulge class of 30 pupils each, and the new Leigh Academy Rainham will take an additional 60 pupils. The extra capacity from these bulge classes, and the free schools, are shown on the graph as the proposed Published Admission Number (PAN) dashed line.
- 6.7. The capacity provided by the new free schools is forecasted to be sufficient for the total non-selective rolls (Figure 10). These figures are based upon the current primary school rolls and approved housing. As further housing developments are approved, there is likely to be an increase in secondary numbers.

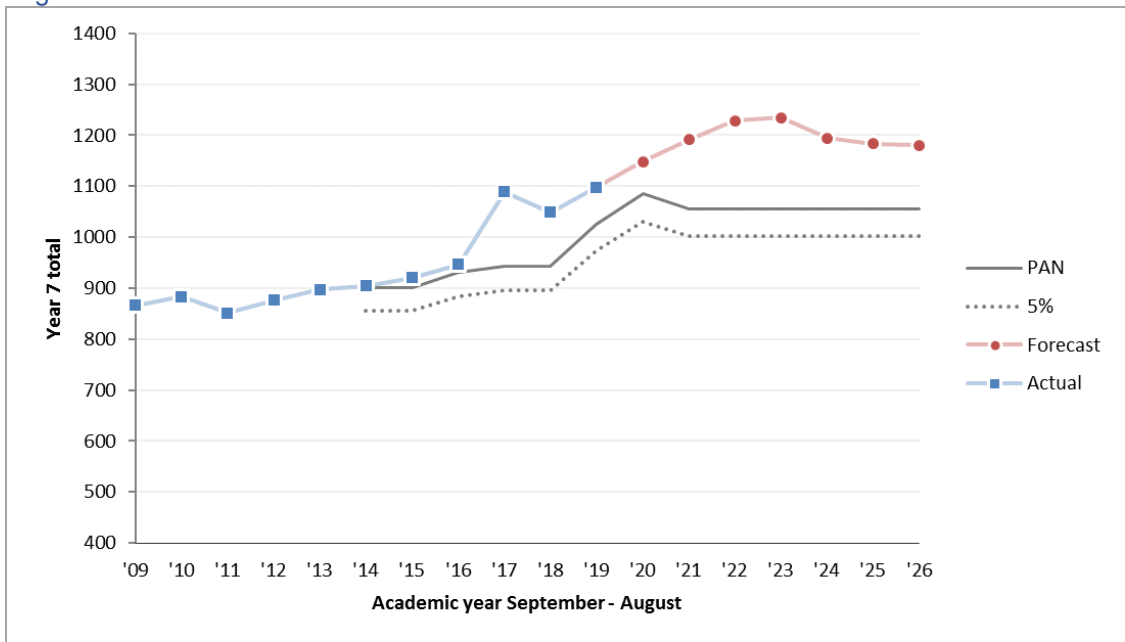
Figure 10 - Non-selective total secondary roll



Selective

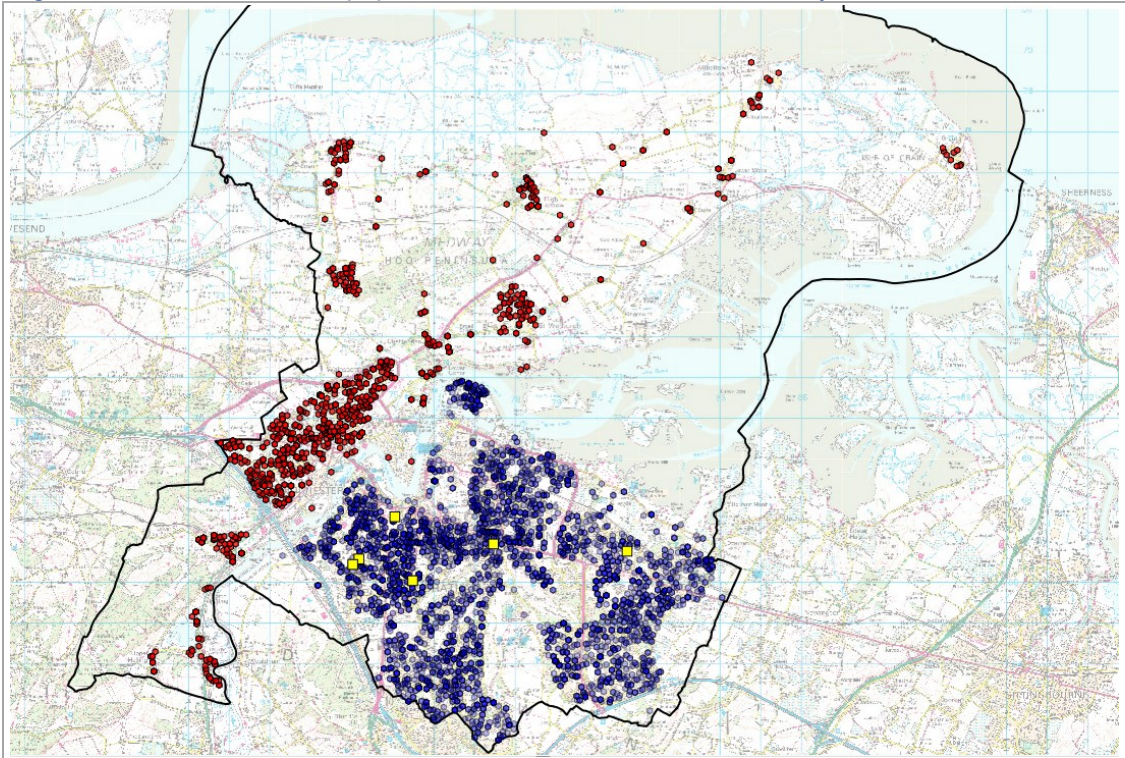
- 6.8. Secondary selective schools are also facing pressure on places (Figure 11). Schools have been admitting over their PAN, using surplus capacity from older year groups. Three projects were carried out to provide additional capacity, at Sir Joseph Williamson’s Mathematical School, Rainham Mark Grammar School, and Holcombe Grammar School. This is reflected in the increasing selective PAN between 2015 and 2018.
- 6.9. Rochester Grammar School was also successful in applying for funding under the government’s Selective Schools Expansion Fund (SSEF) and will provide an additional 1FE from 2020. Chatham Grammar for Girls is also undertaking a project to increase capacity which is funded through government initiatives.

Figure 11 - Selective Year 7



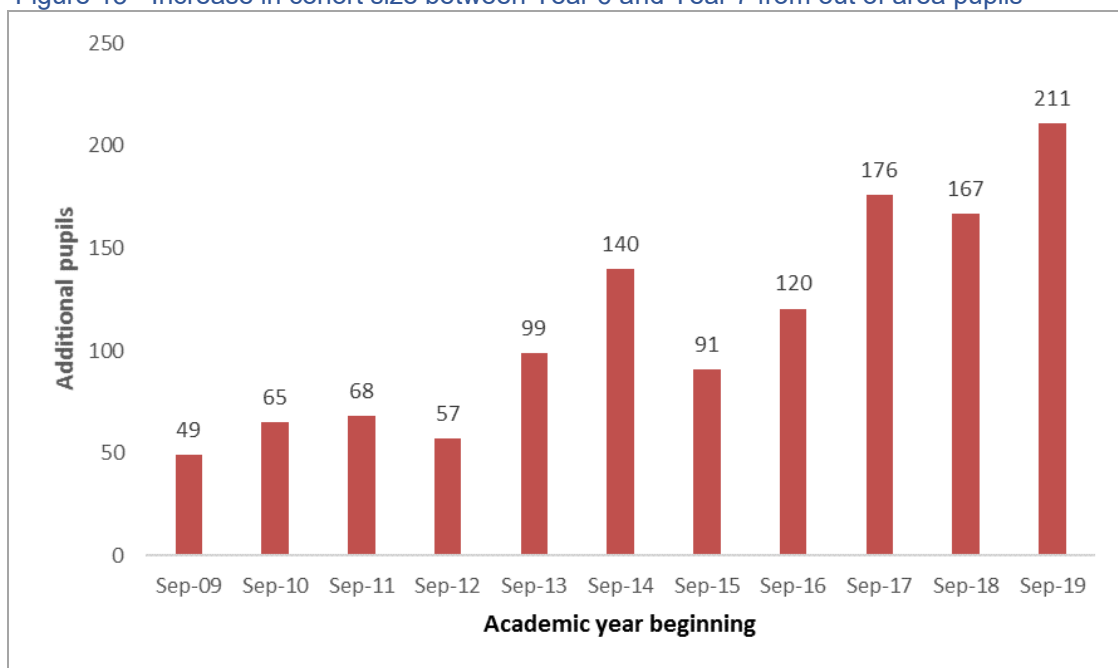
- 6.10. This expansion programme will provide places for the next few years. Current forecasts expect that selective Year 7 rolls will continue growing, above the additional capacity provided. In 2020, the shortfall is forecasted to be 63 places, growing to 179 places in 2023.
- 6.11. These forecasts include approved housing developments, but Medway’s local plan will involve significant numbers of additional dwellings. This will increase future pupil numbers further but build rate will affect the time that these pupils arrive.
- 6.12. There will be a large number of dwellings built on the peninsula around Hoo. There is no grammar school provision west of the River Medway, and so currently 369 pupils from the peninsula area and 671 from Strood travel daily into Rochester, Chatham, and Gillingham to attend a grammar school (Figure 12). With housing numbers expected to grow in future years, demand for places is likely to increase further.

Figure 12 - Selective school pupils who live west of the River Medway shown in red



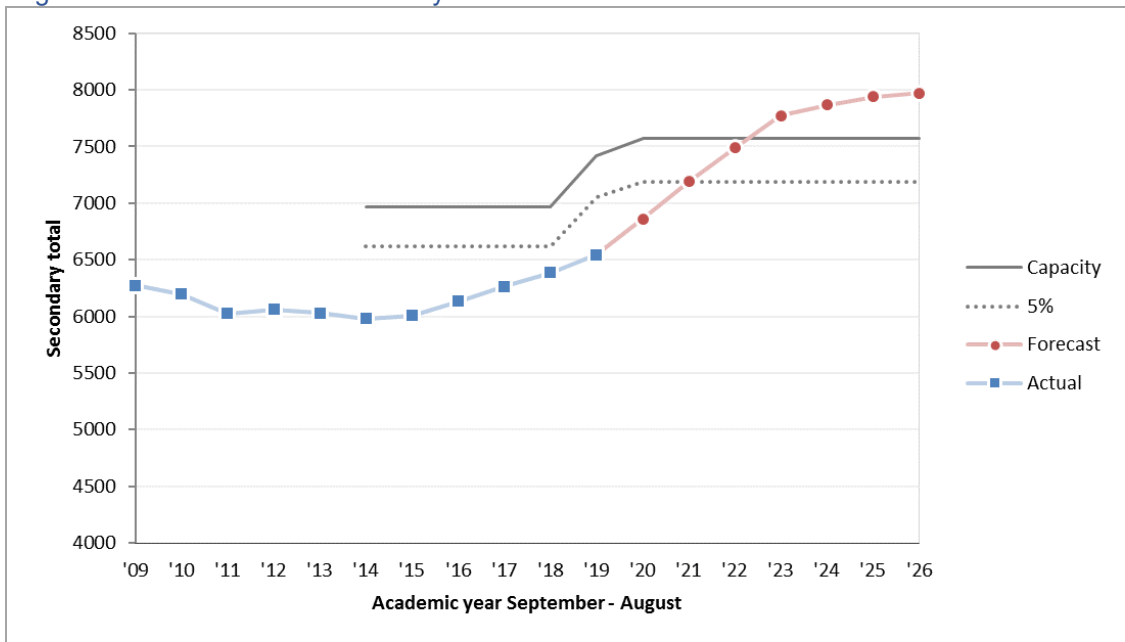
- 6.13. The Government's Free School programme does not include new grammar schools and therefore the Council is responsible for ensuring sufficient selective places. As funding becomes available, potential projects will be assessed for their viability, value for money and cost per pupil. It is likely that over time all six Grammar Schools will require some additional capacity to meet demand. This may prove challenging, as further expansion opportunities at the sites will be limited.
- 6.14. Medway grammar schools have altered their admissions criteria to prioritise applications based on distance rather than score in the Medway test. This will help to ensure that sufficient places are available for Medway pupils. Figure 13 shows the increasing numbers of additional pupils who join a cohort when it moves from Year 6 to Year 7.
- 6.15. Each year, providing parents utilise all preferences available to them, any Medway child who is deemed selective through the Medway test process has been able to access a place at one of the grammar schools, with capacity as it currently stands that is expected to be the case going forward.

Figure 13 - Increase in cohort size between Year 6 and Year 7 from out of area pupils



- 6.16. Having grammar school provision on the peninsula area will significantly reduce travel patterns through Medway and in turn pupil time spent travelling. Over time this will free up places in the urban grammar schools for local children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 6.17. Within decision number 121/2019 from the 2019 annual review of the School Place Planning Strategy, Cabinet authorised officers to explore the establishment of an annexe of one of Medway's Grammar Schools. Whilst some work was undertaken initially, this has slowed due to the COVID-19 crisis and will be picked up again as soon as is possible.
- 6.18. Initial investigations have found that this is a difficult and lengthy process with no guarantee of success and amongst other matters would be dependent upon a site and sufficient funding becoming available.
- 6.19. The overall grammar school forecasts (Figure 14) against actual and proposed capacity and indicates that when the current grammar school expansions are complete, then sufficient overall space should be available to 2022. However, it is important to note that the graph only takes approved housing schemes into consideration, and therefore it is reasonable to expect that as more housing schemes come forward following the adoption of the Local Plan, demand will increase beyond current capacity.

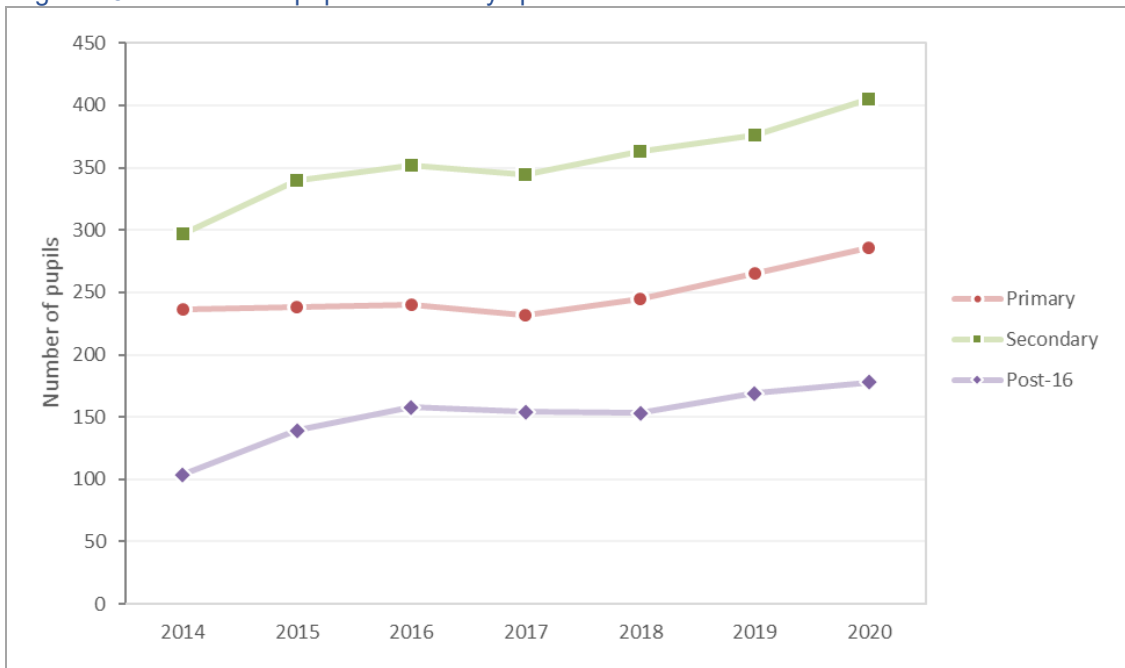
Figure 14 - Selective total secondary roll



7. Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

7.1. In line with increasing pressure on mainstream places, demand for special school provision has also risen (Figure 15). In recent years, the Council has taken action to provide appropriate additional provision and to reduce the numbers of pupils placed in expensive independent or out of area settings. This supports the SEND Strategy of increasing local provision for children with special educational need and disability.

Figure 15 - Numbers of pupils in Medway special schools



7.2. SEND Pupil numbers in Medway have been rising in recent years. The Council has expanded primary provision in both mainstream and special schools to meet demand. However, the larger primary cohorts are now

reaching secondary school age and therefore further secondary places are required to meet this demand over the coming years.

- 7.3. A SEND needs analysis was carried out in 2019 and the main areas of need highlighted were for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Severe learning Difficulties (SLD)/ Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), particularly for secondary aged pupils.
- 7.4. Where possible, pupils with SEND are placed in a mainstream school with appropriate support or in a resourced provision within a mainstream school. However, some pupils' needs can only be met within a special school.
- 7.5. Without sufficient places in Medway special schools, the Council must rely on independent and out of area provision. Placing pupils in out of area provision takes them away from their local area, family, and support network, which can impact on their education and wellbeing. Numbers of SEND pupils are increasing nationally, resulting in out of area provisions experiencing pressure on places reducing options for placements. Moreover, placements at independent schools are much more expensive than in state schools, in most cases without better outcomes for pupils. While state schools out of the area are similar in costs, transport costs are higher and the pupils concerned often have long journeys and do not have the chance to engage regularly with friends where they live, this also reduces the Council's ability to monitor provision robustly.
- 7.6. The increasing demand for specialist placements within Medway is a challenge. If the current rate of growth continues, it is estimated that Medway will need 484 more special school places, 200 more resourced provision places and 500 more children supported in mainstream placements by 2024/25. Therefore, we need to work closely with a wide range of schools and partners to enable these places to be developed to ensure we make best, and most creative, use of the resources we have to meet the needs of our children and young people locally wherever possible.
- 7.7. To assist in meeting the additional and increasing demand a number of projects and programmes have been undertaken and the following sections outline actions taken in recent years.
- 7.8. In 2015/16, expansions at Danecourt for 40 primary pupils with ASD and some SLD and the primary expansion at Abbey Court for 68 pupils with SLD/PMLD were undertaken.
- 7.9. The Department for Education launched a SEN capital programme in 2018, which allocated £2.3m to Medway over 3 years to provide additional places and facilities for pupils with Education Health and Care Plans. Following a series of consultations, the following projects were selected, and created an additional 164 places and contributes towards a further 160.

School	Year	Benefits	Pupils
Bradfields	1	Increase provision and improve facilities for ASD, MLD	27
Thomas Aveling	1	Hearing Impaired Unit	24
Hundred of Hoo	1	St Werburgh Centre for ASD	20
Danecourt	2	Expansion of premises	12
Hoo St Werburgh Primary School	2	Expansion of Marlborough Unit for primary age children with ASD	15
Elaine Academy	2	Expansion of SEMH unit for primary children	12
Hundred of Hoo	3	St Werburgh Centre rebuild	12
Bradfields	3	Primary Expansion	20
Rivermead	3	Post-16 life skills hub	12
Bradfields	3	Therapy class	10
Inspire Free School	3	Contribution towards the Inspire Free School expansion and relocation	(160 total)
		Total excluding Inspire School	164

- 7.10. A further £2.5m has been made available by the Council to create up to 250 additional resourced unit places within mainstream schools. This will provide the opportunity for pupils with SEND to remain within a mainstream environment where that is appropriate. A programme to deliver this need is currently under development.
- 7.11. The Council has worked in partnership with the DfE, to acquire in-principle agreement for a Free School to be built on Council land at Cornwallis Avenue, Gillingham. This will provide 160 specialist places for secondary aged pupils with SEMH and ASD with challenging behaviour. It is expected that the school, which will result in the expansion and relocation of the Inspire Free School currently located in Walderslade, will be ready to occupy by 2023.
- 7.12. In August 2020 Cabinet approved expansions at Abbey Court and Bradfields (decision numbers 96/2020 and 97/2020 refer) to provide additional secondary SEND places. Abbey Court's primary provision was relocated in 2016 to a new purpose-built accommodation. The site included sufficient space so that additional accommodation could be built there at a later date and the secondary provision transferred there. This project will provide for 56 additional places for vulnerable of pupils with the most severe of needs. The project at Bradfields will provide for 100 additional pupils mostly with ASD.
- 7.13. The targeted opening for both projects is September 2022.

8. Alternative Provision (AP)

- 8.1. The Beeches AP free school, targeted to open in the autumn of 2022, will provide primary-age Alternative Provision for up to 50 pupils, providing on-site placements, outreach and training to primary schools.
- 8.2. Current secondary capacity within AP is sufficient, and there are no plans to increase place numbers in state-funded AP.

9. Risk management

- 9.1. There are no risks resulting directly from this report, however the following would be assessed as risks should recommendations from individual proposals flowing from this report not be implemented.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient good quality school places	If insufficient school places are made available to meet demand, the Council would be failing to meet its obligations.	Implement proposals to provide additional good quality places in the areas of demand.	C1
That insufficient funding is available to fund proposals to provide sufficient places	Basic need funding is limited and the extent of the emerging need may mean that unless additional funding can be sourced, projects to provide places may not be able to be implemented, which could mean that the council fails to meet its statutory obligation.	Explore options to fund projects including bidding for funding initiatives. Look at cost effective ways to supply places.	A1
That the level of forecast pupils fails to materialise	Should the expected numbers of pupils fail to materialise, then any funding committed could have been better spent elsewhere.	Continue to monitor births, migration and housing developments and accuracy of forecasting.	D3
Applications for Free Schools increases	Applications for Free Schools could be a risk to strategic planning framework as the Council has no control over where or by whom the application is made.	Monitor all applications to Secretary of State, and work with DfE to influence outcomes of applications to suit, and fit in with, the Councils wider pupil place planning strategy.	A2
Other Local Authorities placing children in Medway	Other authorities are placing children into Medway schools, including unaccompanied asylum seekers, which adds pressure to the system and is difficult to plan for.	Retain a certain level of flexibility within the system to meet unexpected inward movement of children requiring a school place.	A3

10. Consultation

- 10.1. No consultation is required for this report but any specific proposals that are progressed as a result of this report will include a consultation process as appropriate.
- 10.2. No Diversity Impact Assessment accompanies this report. Assessments will be provided for individual proposals brought forward as a result of actions from this report.

11. Financial implications

- 11.1. All projects approved and undertaken as a result of this report will be funded through the Children and Adults' Capital Programme. Funding implications for proposed projects will be included in subsequent procurement board reports requesting funding approval for each individual project.
- 11.2. Where appropriate, developer contributions will be sought from new housing schemes to assist with the provision of school places in areas of demographic growth. Developments resulting from the Local Plan will be considered accumulatively to identify the most suitable and wider use of developer contributions or developer provided schools to provide the most benefit.
- 11.3. Occasionally, additional funding sources and initiatives become available such as free school waves or targeted basic need initiatives. Where possible the Council will seek to make use of those opportunities to reduce the demands upon the limited funding currently available.
- 11.4. The Government's Free School programme provides an opportunity to create additional provision without the responsibility for funding. The funding waves announced under this programme are separate from the Free School presumption process, where new schools from housing developments are funded by the Council. All opportunities to benefit from future Free School waves will be explored. This is particularly relevant to secondary provision which requires significantly higher capital funding than primary schools.
- 11.5. Medway Council receives an annual basic need grant from central government. This is calculated from the School Capacity return which the Council submits each year. The table below highlights the levels of funding due to be received until 2021/22. The table shows that the DfE has determined that Medway will receive a nil grant award for 2020/21 and 2021/22. At a national level, the Department for Education may offer further opportunities to bid for targeted funds to deliver the basic need for school places, although there is no guarantee that there will be opportunities or that bids will be successful.

Year	Funding allocation
Carry over	£1.9m
2015 –16	£2.2m
2016 –17	£2.3m
2017 - 18	£9.0m
2018 - 19	£3.1m
2019 - 20	£3.8m
2020 - 21	£0
2021 - 22	£0

- 11.6. There is £12.2m in agreed section 106 contributions for education outstanding from developments either underway or yet to start. However, the receipt of these funds is reliant upon housing schemes completing, and with the funding received in instalments at agreed trigger points over time it is uncertain when this funding will be available which adds complexity to the challenge of planning additional school places utilising this funding.

- 11.7. However, when the average cost of expanding and building schools is taken into account the scale of the challenge in providing sufficient school places from Section 106 agreements alone is highlighted:
- 1FE primary expansion £2.1m
 - 2FE new build primary school £6.5m
 - 6FE secondary school £25m

12. Legal implications

- 12.1. 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.
- 12.2. From 24 January 2014 there is no longer a requirement for a ‘pre-publication’ (informal) consultation period for prescribed alterations, there is however a strong expectation on Local Authorities to consult interested parties to develop their proposals prior to formal publication as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations. Specific proposals brought forward from this report will go through this consultation processes.
- 12.3. Where an expansion is proposed at an academy it falls to the academy trust to carry out the appropriate statutory consultation. In these circumstances the Regional Schools Commissioner is the decision maker on the proposals. If these proposals are to meet basic need for school places, then responsibility for funding falls to the Council. All decisions on funding approval will follow the Council’s procurement procedures.

13. Recommendations

- 13.1. The Cabinet is asked to:
- 13.1.1. note the continued excellent progress made against the School Organisation Plan and School Place Planning Strategy frameworks, which have ensured that the Council has met its duty and sufficient school places are currently available to meet the increasing demand;
- 13.1.2. authorise officers to undertake further feasibility studies and statutory consultations as necessary to ensure that plans are in place to meet demand as and where it emerges;
- 13.1.3. note the ongoing work being undertaken to ensure sufficient Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision is available within Medway as set out in section 7 of the report.

14. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 14.1. By approving the recommendations in section 13, the Cabinet will be ensuring that the Council meets its statutory duty to ensure sufficient good quality school places are available

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Appendices

None

Background papers

[School Place Planning Strategy](#)

[SEND Strategy](#)