

## **CABINET**

**18 OCTOBER 2022**

### **ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY 2022-27**

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member)  
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#### **Summary**

This annual summary report provides an update on the progress made against the School Place Planning Strategies 2018-22 and 2022-27. It highlights areas of demand for school places and makes recommendations to ensure that appropriate levels of good quality school places are available through to 2027. The report sets out the options to fund the proposals.

#### **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 sufficient good school places for the expected numbers of pupils, whilst managing published admission numbers (PAN) to avoid oversupply.
- 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 Plan Priority of 'Supporting Medway's people 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.

#### **2. School Place Planning Strategy**

- 2.1. In May 2022, as part of the School Place Planning Strategy, Cabinet approved the School Place Planning Strategy Principles. These guidelines ensure that any

changes are based upon improving schools and raising standards, so 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 have proven to be accurate, meeting 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 accurate and robust evidence and analysis.
- 2.3. Manageable levels of surplus school places are necessary to ensure that sufficient places are available for pupils who arrive during the school year and in subsequent years, 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. Medway will work towards this figure.

### 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 annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2022, using the latest available data. Appendix 1 sets out the forecasts for the various mainstream primary and secondary planning areas.
- 3.3. The forecasts in this report include 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. School place planning officers are working with planning and development colleagues on the Local Plan infrastructure delivery plan, looking at where and when new schools and expansions would be required across Medway. This will continue during the development of the Plan.
- 4.2. Medway's Local Plan, yet to be formally approved, highlights the need for an additional 27,000 homes across Medway by 2037. A number of these are already under construction, and the future publication of the Local Plan is expected to increase the rate of housebuilding. It is expected that the total population will increase from 279,000 to 330,000 in that time.
- 4.3. The number of approved and proposed housing schemes means that demand for school places is expected to rise in the future.
- 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 enough to fill a one form entry primary school.

- 4.5. In recent years Medway has received no basic need funding from government. The only funding available has been s106 developer contributions, paid by housing developers to offset the impact of pupils from new developments. For 2023/24 Medway has been allocated £17,049,927 in basic need funding. Section 9 of this report sets out proposals to utilise that funding together with available s106 receipts.

## 5. Early Years Sufficiency

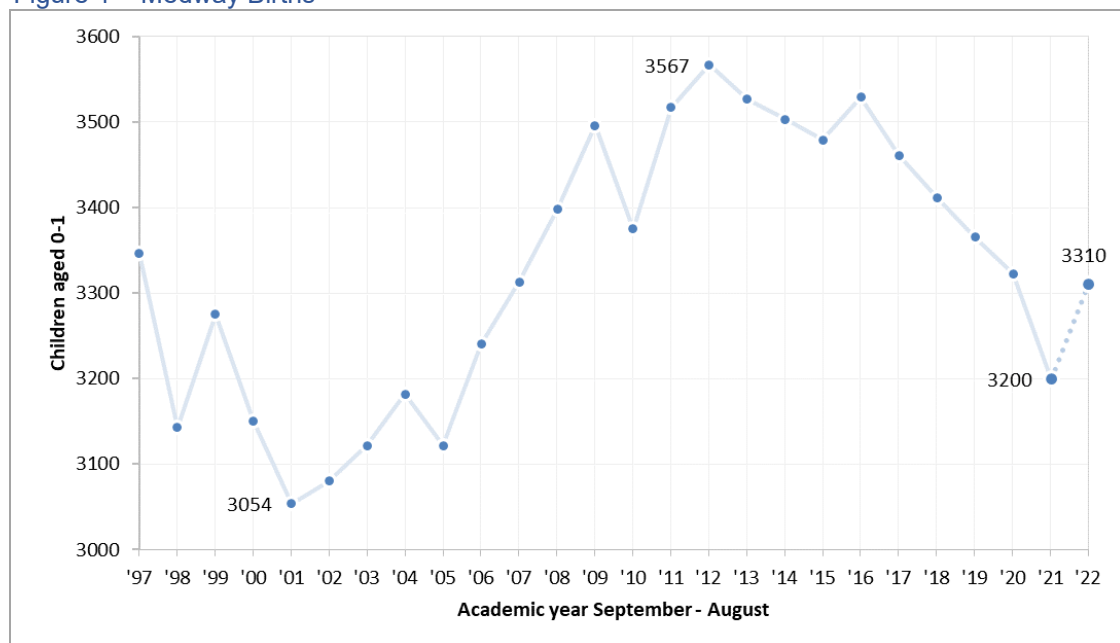
- 5.1. Local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, so far as reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). This means that parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and are delivered flexibly at a range of high-quality settings.
- 5.2. Medway is committed to supporting as many families as possible to take up the offer of free or funded places for an eligible two-year-old. There are sufficient registered places to accept all the potentially eligible two-year-olds in Medway.
- 5.3. The developments in 30 hours provision have not had a detrimental impact on the number of 15-hour places offered across Medway. The number of 30 hours places has increased significantly with the addition of 19 new providers.
- 5.4. The overall trend in Medway has seen a gradual decrease in the number of births. Births in individual areas tend to fluctuate, and there are some areas which have shown some small increases. This indicates that for the foreseeable future, sufficient places are available to meet demand. Whilst the position changes rapidly, there are over 1,000 full time childcare vacancies across Medway.
- 5.5. There are more than 248 Early Years providers within Medway, offering approximately 6,210 childcare places.

## 6. Primary Schools

- 6.1. Births reached a peak in 2012 (Figure 1), and the children born that year created a surge in Year R class applications in 2016. Another smaller peak in births in 2016 is behind the Year R class peak in 2020. The falling Year R forecast reflects the current falling birth rate.
- 6.2. However, uncertainty caused by the Coronavirus pandemic is likely to cause an additional reduction in birth rates. People are less likely to have children when the future is uncertain. There appears to have been a negative impact on birth rates from December 2020 (9 months after the first lockdown started in March 2020). Lower births in 2020-2021 would impact the Year R numbers in 2025-2026.
- 6.3. However, as life moves back to normal and confidence returns, this reduction in rates is expected to slow, or even reverse. This has been shown in the indicative figures for 2021/22 academic year, which indicates around 110 more births in

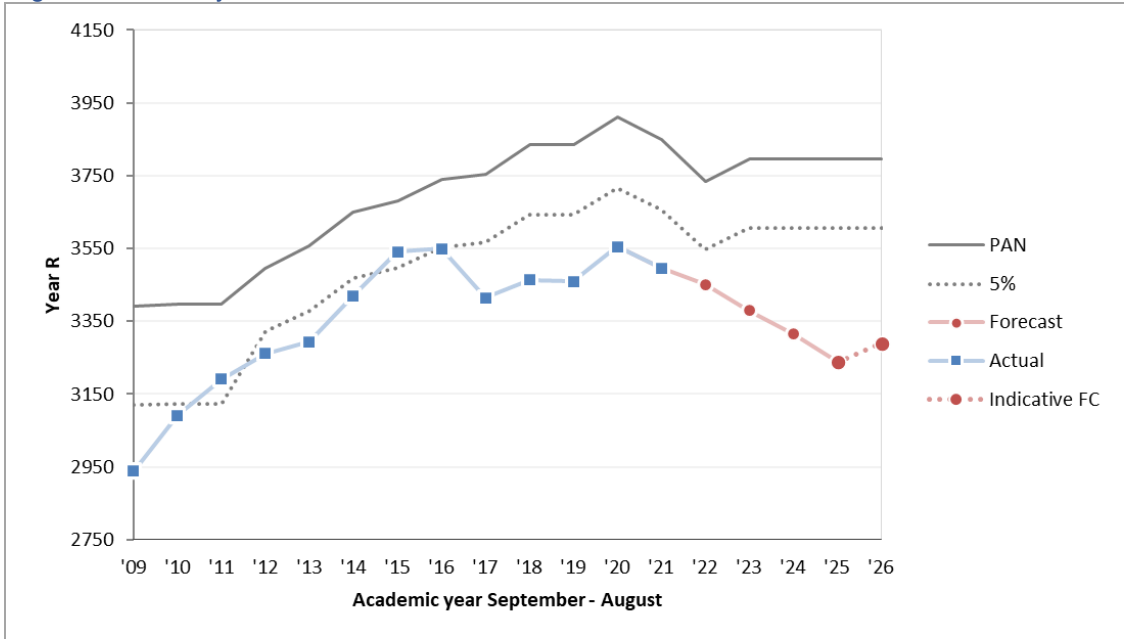
Medway than last year. This suggests that Year R forecasts will start to increase from September 2026. As new housing is completed, it is likely that new families and people planning to start families will move in, increasing immediate demand as well as the birth rate in the future.

Figure 1 – Medway Births



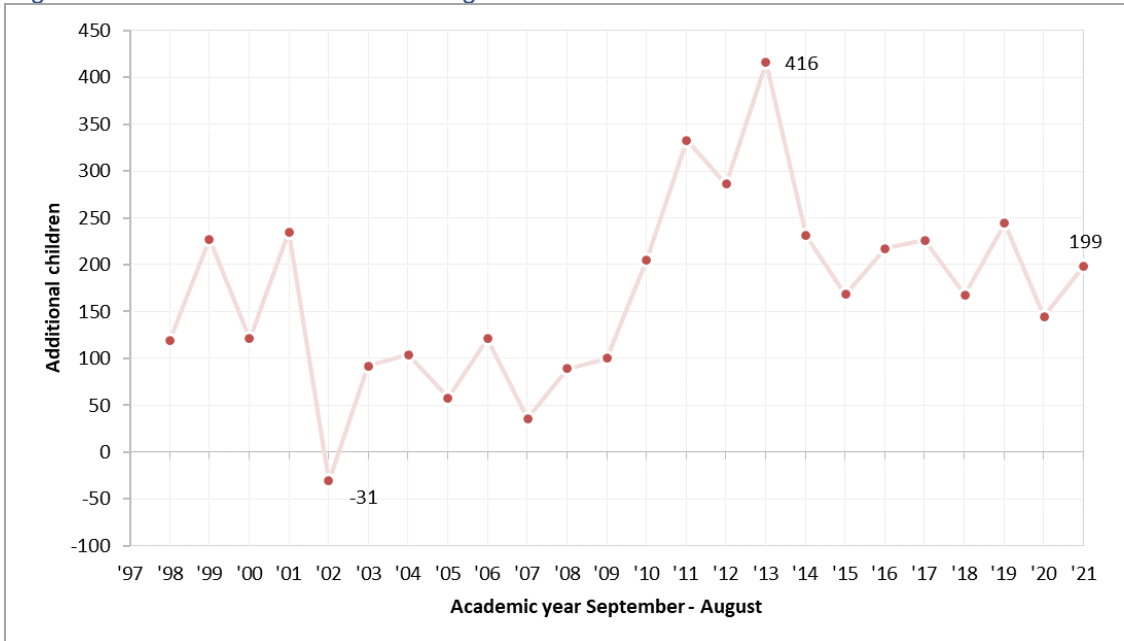
- 6.4. Year R figures having been rising over the last decade, but 2020 is expected to be the peak (Figure 2) for the foreseeable future. This is based on current birth rates and inward migration. The graph shows that the currently forecasted numbers are below the total Published Admission Number (PAN) of all Year R places in Medway.
- 6.5. As more housing schemes are approved it is likely that Year R forecasts will increase. However, officers have worked with schools to review PANs across Medway, as part of an overall assessment of school organisation arrangements, to ensure that sufficient capacity is available in areas of demand and likely inward migration. In areas where there is a danger of over provision some PANs have been reduced, which in some cases may be short term arrangements to ensure the viability of schools until expected demand increases again, whilst in other cases the reductions may be permanent. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- 6.6. The outcome of this will be the protection of schools' financial and educational viability, whilst retaining capacity within the system to enable a speedy and cost-effective solution to future rising numbers.

Figure 2 - Medway Year R, actual and forecast



6.7. The number of pupils is impacted by families with children moving into the area. Families can move in with children of any age, so the impact on Year R numbers can be anything between immediate, or in 4 years' time. From 2010, despite fluctuation, 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.

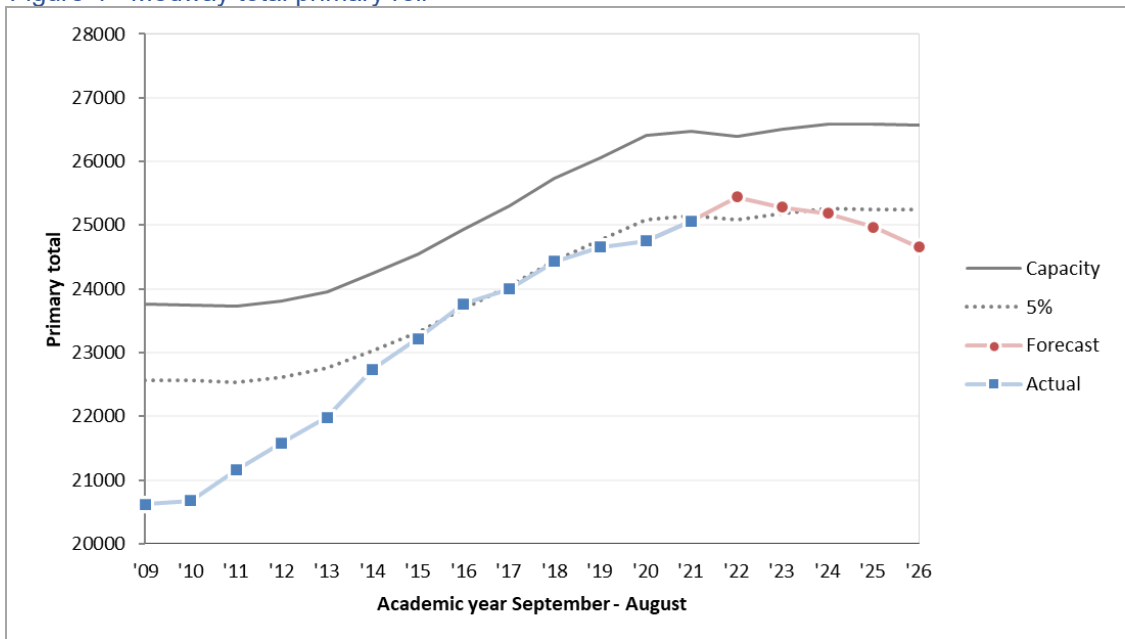
Figure 3 – Net movement of children aged 0-5



6.8. Total pupil numbers in primary schools have increased as the larger Year R cohorts pass through the school system. They are forecast to peak in 2022 (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, however, whilst demand is falling in the short term some further primary capacity in some areas is likely to 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 be less so.

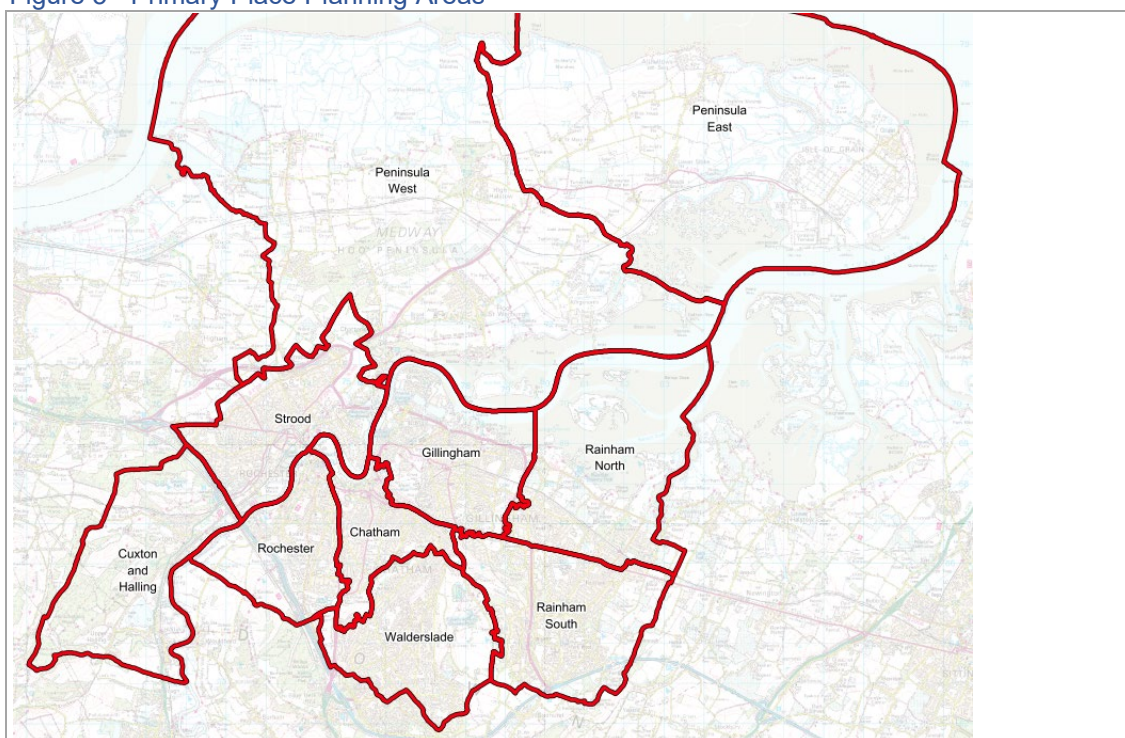
Figure 4 - Medway total primary roll



### Primary pupil place planning areas

6.9. 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 between neighbouring areas. Appendix 1 - section 3 outlines the forecasts for each planning area.

Figure 5 - Primary Place Planning Areas



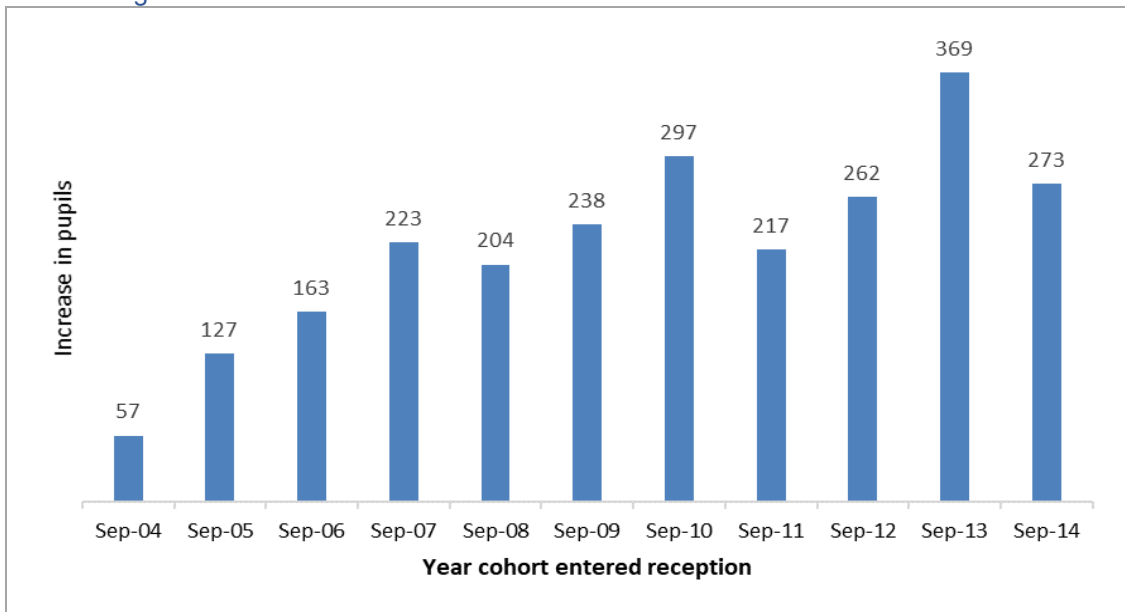
## **Primary summary**

- 6.10. Between 2013 and 2020, 3,240 primary school places have been added. This additional capacity has ensured that the Council continues to meet its duty to provide sufficient school places.
- 6.11. These additional places should generally provide sufficient overall capacity for the forecast period. Forecasts will continue to be updated twice each year and compared with weekly birth numbers to identify any variations from this position in advance, enabling officers to plan accordingly.
- 6.12. In July 2021, to help meet demand for places in the Peninsula West area, the one area with pressure on places, the Cabinet granted approval, under decision 84/2021, to expand the Hundred of Hoo Primary School by 1 Form of Entry. This project will be funded primarily through section 106 receipts and will enable demand from recent and upcoming housing developments in the immediate area to be met.
- 6.13. As the majority of graphs in Appendix 1 – section 3 show, demand for Year R places is falling in line with declining birth rates. However, with the number of housing schemes expected in the coming years, demand will rise again, and the Council is in a good position to cater for the additional applications. In the short term however to protect the viability of schools, officers are assessing where a reduction in the PAN of schools might help. To date, reductions at Twydall Primary School, Parkwood Primary School, Napier Primary School, Crest Infant School and St Peter's Infant School, together with the removal of the infant phase at Delce Academy have formed part of that PAN reduction programme. Discussions will continue with these schools to determine when a return to the formal PAN is appropriate and necessary, as well as with other schools should the need arise for further reductions.
- 6.14. To meet demand from the major housing development at Rochester Riverside, the Rochester Riverside Church of England Primary School opened in September 2022, admitting pupils into year R initially. The new permanent building is not yet ready and so the school is operating from temporary premises.

## **7. Secondary Schools – Non-selective**

- 7.1. There are two secondary planning areas, one for the six selective schools, and one for the fourteen non-selective schools. Both planning areas cover the whole of Medway, as secondary age pupils can more independently travel 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.

Figure 6 – Number of additional pupils joining a cohort in the time between starting Year R and starting Year 7

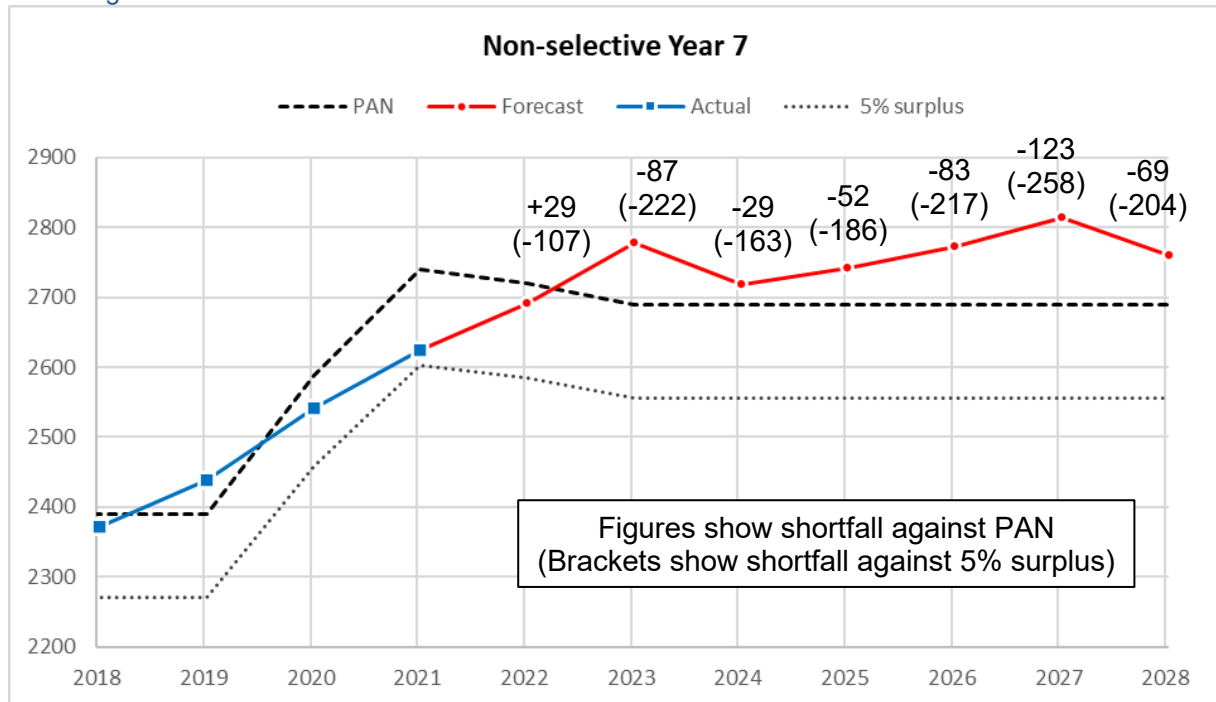


- 7.2. The recent bulge in primary age pupils is now transferring to secondary schools. The pressure on places has begun to increase in year 7 as the larger numbers of primary cohorts feed into secondary education. This will extend through all year groups over time. Figure 6 shows how the Year R cohort size has increased by the time cohort reaches Year 7. This is caused by a combination of new families coming to live in Medway, and pupils coming from outside of Medway to attend Medway secondary schools.
- 7.3. Year 7 non-selective rolls are forecasted to exceed current PANs from 2023. Figure 7 and the table below show the forecasted shortfall compared to the PAN and compared to the 5% surplus level. In 2023 the shortfall is forecasted to be 87 places, rising to 123 in 2027.

	2022 /2023	2023 /2024	2024 /2025	2025 /2026	2026 /2027	2027 /2028	2028 /2029
Non-selective forecast (including housing)	2691	2777	2719	2742	2773	2813	2759
Future non-selective PAN	2720	2690	2690	2690	2690	2690	2690
Surplus/Deficit	+29	-87	-29	-52	-83	-123	-69
Extra Forms of entry required	1	4	2	3	4	5	3



Figure 7 - Non-selective Year 7 forecast



7.4. To ensure that the pressure on places as set out in the above table and graph (Figure 7) is met, officers are working with schools and Trusts to formulate a plan for the life of the forecasts. This will look at where permanent expansions, indicated within the programme of capital works set out in section 9, and bulge classes as necessary within existing capacity, can be provided to meet the shortfall. The additional need is highlighted in the 'Extra Forms of entry required' row on the above table. The schools which will be providing these additional

2022 /2023	2023 /2024	2024 /2025	2025 /2026	2026 /2027	2027 /2028	2028 /2029
Hundred of Hoo (B)	Hundred of Hoo (B)	Maritime (B)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)
Howard School (B)	Leigh Rainham (B)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)
N/R	Strood Academy (B)	N/R	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)
N/R	St John Fisher (B)	N/R	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)
N/R	Maritime (B) (R)	N/R	N/R	Thomas Aveling (R)	Leigh Rainham (B)	Maritime (B) (R)

places are listed by year in the table below.

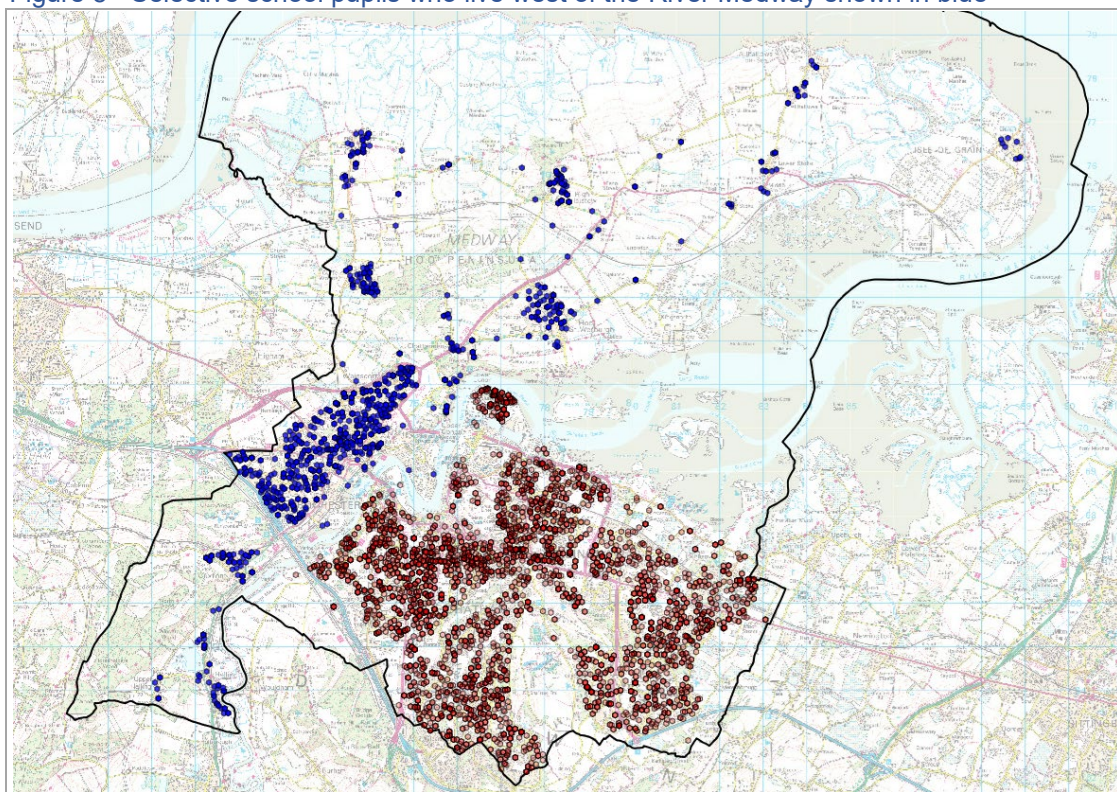
P= Permanent, B= Bulge, R = Reserve

7.5. When planning to meet the excess demand, officers will need to factor in future growth in numbers as each cohort progresses through the school allowing for in year admissions. Therefore, when planning to meet the demand we will include a level of additional capacity above the initial demand to ensure places are met without the need for future emergency bulge classes as the capacity will be in place or planned to be so.

## 8. Secondary Schools - Selective

- 8.1. As part of the local plan proposals, 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 372 pupils from the peninsula area, 747 from Strood, and 121 from Cuxton and Halling travel daily into Rochester, Chatham, and Gillingham to attend a grammar school (Figure 7). With housing numbers expected to grow in future years, particularly on the peninsula, demand for grammar school places is likely to increase further.

Figure 8 - Selective school pupils who live west of the River Medway shown in blue



- 8.2. 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 some Grammar Schools will require some additional capacity to meet demand.
- 8.3. 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 who pass the test and apply in the appropriate manner.
- 8.4. Therefore, it is recommended that the opportunity for providing selective education on the peninsula is explored, and officers are investigating how this may be taken forward. This will need to be in the form of an annexe to one of the current grammar schools that serve the area. This is a complex and lengthy process with no guarantee of success and would be dependent upon a site and sufficient funding becoming available.
- 8.5. 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 from varying backgrounds.

- 8.6. The overall grammar school forecasts (Appendix 1 – section 4) against actual capacity and indicates that demand will continue to exceed available capacity. 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 further beyond current capacity.
- 8.7. Officers are exploring ways to enable more Medway resident pupils to access grammar schools. A consultation has been completed on three grammar schools changing to co-educational which will enhance that access. On 23 August 2022 under decision 101/2022, Cabinet approved the progression of the proposals. The final decision on these changes will be made by the Regional Schools Commissioner in early 2023.
- 8.8. Should this be implemented the percentage of Medway pupils passing the test could increase from a current maximum of 25%, which could in turn reduce pressure upon non-selective places.

## 9. Proposed primary and secondary mainstream actions

- 9.1. The following projects provide additional provision to meet demand coming through as highlighted by the forecasts. Not all the projects listed below will be able to be funded with the recently announced £17.05m basic need grant allowance, but current and future S106 funds will continue to play a major part in topping up budgets and therefore may allow for a programme in excess of the grant. Projects will be prioritised within the available funding. The costs listed are indicative estimates at this time with further analysis required following approvals. Projects will be subject to a formal design, planning, tender process and follow appropriate procurement routes.

### **Primary**

- 9.2. St Nicholas Church of England Infant School change to Primary £1.5m - This project has already been agreed by the Council using borrowing in advance of S106 funding, which can now be avoided. Spend proposed in financial year 2023-24 with project completed by September 2024, with the future S106 funding receipts redirected to alternative projects in the area.
- 9.3. Hundred of Hoo Primary £700k – to fund the gap between current available S106 funding (£2.1m) and the cost of the project (£2.8m) due to escalating costs and planning conditions. It is proposed to spend the grant funding in financial year 2023-24, using the available S106 funding in 2022-23 to complete the project by September 2023. This project is already approved and underway, but there is insufficient S106 funding available for the entire project. Utilising part of the basic need grant would enable the project to proceed in what is the most pressured area for primary places. This grant funding requirement may reduce as further S106 funds are received as the project progresses, with any unused basic need grant funding redirected to other projects.
- 9.4. Luton Primary School nursery modular replacement. The current Nursery building at Luton Primary School is no longer fit for purpose and ongoing

maintenance on the unit is making the building inefficient. Replacement would improve the learning environment as well as reduce school and council costs in ongoing maintenance costs. The expected funding requirement of £250k would be utilised during 2023-24 financial year.

## **Secondary**

- 9.5. The Co-educational proposals at the three grammar schools will require appropriate toilet and changing facilities. Anticipated total spend of £2.5m – spend in 2023-24 in readiness for implementation of co-education in September 2024. (Subject to Regional Schools Commissioner approvals).
- 9.6. Accommodation for second year of the Maritime Academy's temporary occupation of the Twydall Primary School site, due to its permanent site not being available. This will comprise of the addition of a science laboratory and a Design and Technology room. The estimated cost for this work is £350,000. This will be required for September 2023.
- 9.7. 1Form Entry (FE) expansion at Victory Academy £3.0m – to enable increase in PAN from 210 to 240. Spend proposed for 2023-24 and 2024-25, with project completed by September 2025.
- 9.8. A new science block at Greenacre Academy £3.7m – to enable the PAN increase at the school from 160 to 190 by releasing space within the school currently taken by extremely outdated science labs which would convert back into general classrooms. Spend proposed in 2023-24 and 2024-25, with project completed by September 2025.
- 9.9. Additional classroom block and internal reconfiguration at Hundred of Hoo – to release capacity within the main school to admit increased numbers and demand from new housing. Indicative estimates sit in the region of £3.2m. Project to be completed as funding becomes available. Additional funding from ongoing developments with S106 receipts expected to be received during the project will be utilised in this project, which may reduce the demand upon the basic need grant funding.
- 9.10. 1FE expansion at Robert Napier £2.85m – to enable increase in PAN from 180 to 210. Spend proposed for 2023-24 and 2024-25, with project completed by September 2025.
- 9.11. Additional Furniture at St John Fisher to enable the bulge class of 30 additional pupils for 2023, which will stay at the school for the duration of their secondary education. Cost estimated at £32,500.
- 9.12. Expansion at a Grammar School by 1FE £3.2m – to enable increase in the PAN by 30 pupils. Spend proposed in 2024-25 and 2025-26, with project completed by September 2025.
- 9.13. The total estimated cost is £21,282,500 providing 1010 permanent places, summarised in the table below, which also includes 180 temporary places.

School	Sector	Increase in places	Est Cost
St Nicholas Infants	Primary	70	£1.50m
Hundred of Hoo Primary	Primary	210	£0.70m
Luton Primary	Primary	Zero	£0.25m
Grammar co-education	Secondary	Zero	£2.50m
Maritime Academy Temp site	Secondary	180 temp	£0.35m
Victory Academy	Secondary	150	£3.00m
Greenacre Academy	Secondary	100	£3.70m
Hundred of Hoo Secondary	Secondary	150	£3.20m
Robert Napier	Secondary	150	£2.85m
St John Fisher	Secondary	30	£0.0325m
A Grammar School	Secondary	150	£3.20m
Total		1010 (1190)	£21,282,500

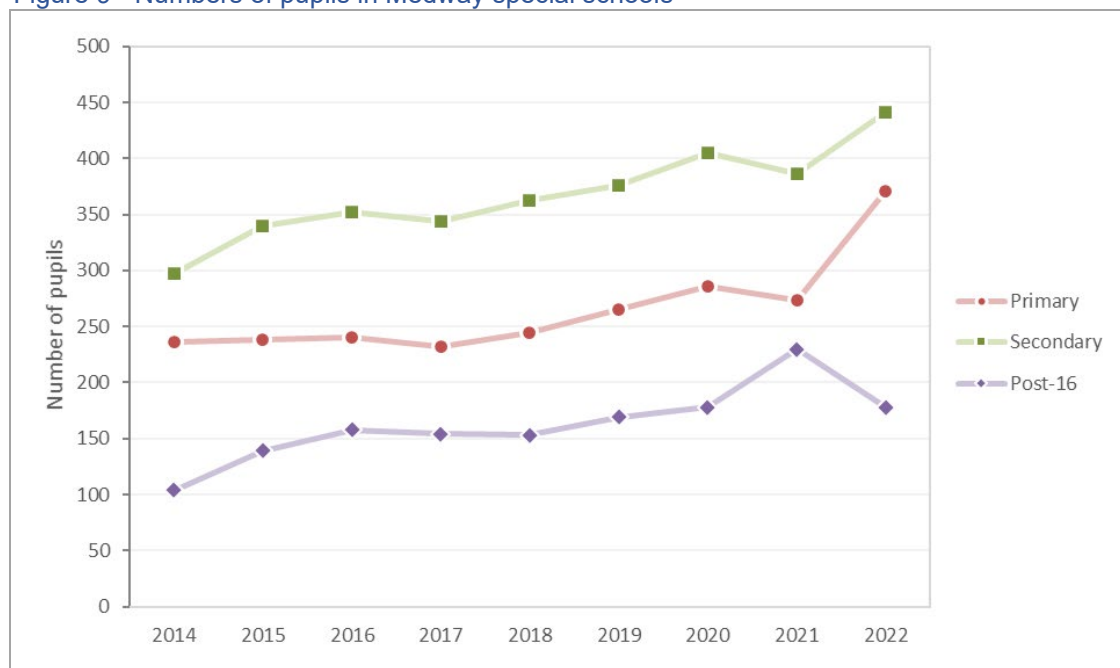
- 9.14. Should initial estimates prove to be light given the rate of escalating construction costs, we will prioritise the secondary proposals in the order above and await sufficient S106 funding in the future to complete (without the expectation to borrow in advance). There is approximately £1.4m in developer contributions received, which can be added to the grant funding, as appropriate, to provide affordability for the majority of the programme immediately together with £2.3m in s106 contributions still to come from developments which are underway, which we would expect to receive within the duration of this programme.
- 9.15. There is also the potential for up to £12.6m from approved housing schemes with S106 agreements in place yet to be started. Whilst not all of this will be realised as the developments may not go ahead, it is reasonable to assume that a fair proportion of this funding will be received over the coming years. This figure will increase as more housing developments are put forward and will provide funding to complete this programme and for future projects to ensure demand is met.
- 9.16. The above proposals, together with occasional bulge classes at the two new free schools, should ensure that Medway has sufficient school places for the foreseeable future (5 years for primary and 7 for secondary). Additional housing expected through the local plan will impact upon the demand, but there is a proposed plan in place to meet that demand, dependent upon the timing, location and phasing of the new developments, however, funding for that is fully reliant upon future Section 106 contributions.
- 9.17. The DfE's average cost per pupil expectation from the basic need grant is £22,258 per additional pupil. The average cost per pupil for these proposals is £20,725 per additional pupil excluding the temporary provision at the Maritime Academy. Therefore, our proposals represent better value for money than the DfE expectations, and £2.5m of that is on the co-education proposals, where no direct additional pupil places are created, although the proposals may result in freeing up some spaces in the non-selective sector, which if included would show an even better cost per pupil. There will be no additional children either at Luton Nursery. The DfE do score Local Authorities on cost per pupil, and we need to be mindful of this, but this proposed outcome sets Medway ahead of DfE expectations.

## 10. Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 10.1. In line with increasing pressure on mainstream places, demand for special school provision has also risen (Figure 8). 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 9 - Numbers of pupils in Medway special schools



- 10.2. The SEN Capital Programme, a central government initiative between 2018 and 2021, has meant that a total of £2.3m was allocated to Medway and provided 164 additional places and facilities for pupils across Medway with Education Health and Care Plans.
- 10.3. Work is ongoing to create additional SEND places within resourced units in mainstream schools. One of the challenges of this is the lack of available space in secondary mainstream schools, made more difficult by the increasing numbers of mainstream pupils. Therefore, additional physical capacity will be required to enable the resourced provisions and the proposals are set out in sections 11.1 to 11.8.
- 10.4. Despite the actions to increase specialist provision in recent years, demand continues to increase, and a needs analysis has been undertaken to assess future demand for SEND provision. The needs analysis has highlighted that significant additional SEND provision will be required and currently officers are exploring the options of when and where to provide this as well as seeking appropriate funding streams. Appendix 2 sets out the forecasts for the various need types.
- 10.5. The main areas of need highlighted in the needs analysis are for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Severe learning Difficulties (SLD)/ Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD).
- 10.6. The proportion of children and young people with and Education, Health and Care Plan catered for in a mainstream school in Medway is below national. This picture is complex with some non-selective secondary schools having a higher

proportion than national. Work is taking place to ensure mainstream schools receive the appropriate support and resources to enable them to cater for an increasing proportion of children with SEND.

- 10.7. Wherever possible, children with SEND will be placed within a mainstream setting with appropriate support packages in place. However, despite this there will continue to be demand for specialist places in special schools.
- 10.8. Expansions at Abbey Court School and Bradfields Academy to provide additional secondary SEND places are close to completion. 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. With funding now available, it is expected that the secondary relocation will commence from January 2023. The Abbey Court project will provide 56 additional places for pupils with SLD and PMLD and Bradfields 100 places for pupils across the range of ASD.
- 10.9. An ASD resourced provision is underway at Strood Academy for 25-32 secondary aged pupils. This capital project is at the planning and tender stage and is expected to be completed for September 2023. This project is funded through the previous resourced provision programme. The resourced provision opened in the existing building for five pupils in September 2022
- 10.10. Officers are currently working with the DfE and the Parallel Learning Trust (PLT) to explore the option of relocating and expanding Inspire Free School from its current restricted site in Wayfield to Cornwallis Avenue in Gillingham. This will provide 160 places for pupils with ASD and SEMH. This school will be funded through the DfE's free school programme, with the Council contributing the site. This will provide a significant increase in capacity to meet expected demand and make a major difference to Medway's young people by reducing the need for out of area placements. Currently, the project is progressing through the final design and pre planning stages. It is expected that subject to formal DfE approval that the school will be in place for September 2025.
- 10.11. It is recommended that the Council supports wider work to explore the opportunity of providing further additional specialist provision as required to meet future demand including residential accommodation within Medway to reduce the reliance upon potentially expensive and distant out of area provision.

## 11. Proposed SEND actions

- 11.1. Medway has recently been allocated funding for SEND capital projects over a two-year period (2022-23 and 2023-24) totalling £7,961,522. The following projects are proposed to make use of that funding, and all costs are indicative at this time.
- 11.2. One SEMH Secondary Resourced Provision at approx. £2.4m (25-32 pupils)
- 11.3. One MLD Secondary Resourced Provision at approx. £2.4m (25-30 pupils)
- 11.4. One ASD Secondary Resourced Provision at The Howard School approx. £2.2m (25-30 pupils).

- 11.5. SEMH Primary Resourced Provision at Delce Academy £250k (25 pupils).
- 11.6. Two further ASD Resourced Provisions at selective school sites yet to be identified £4.6m.
- 11.7. Interim increase in capacity at Inspire Special School until new build is complete at Cornwallis Avenue from 50 to up to 90 pupils. £1.2m.
- 11.8. The above projects totalling approximately £13m, will be delivered in priority order based on available funding. Officers will explore all options to secure the additional funding required to complete the programme.

## 12. Alternative Provision

### **Current and future position**

- 12.1. There are currently 150 children who have their education provided through alternative provision because they are unable to access school due to an exclusion or a health need. This provision is provided through 2 Pupil Referral units, a hospital school provision and the independent sector.
- 12.2. In response to supporting the behavioural needs of primary, KS3 and 4 pupils, the local authority supported the proposal for a free school, which will be an 'alternative provision' setting called The Beeches and will be managed by The Rowans (of The Inspiring Change Multi Academy Trust).
- 12.3. The 50-place provision on the site adjacent to The Rowans is planned to open September 2023.
- 12.4. A key element of The Beeches offer will be outreach and reintegration, through which support in managing the behavioural needs of children is provided to teachers.
- 12.5. The Inspiring Change Primary Behaviour Support Service, provided by The Inspiring Change MAT, is supporting primary schools with 25 children in the interim period before The Beeches opens.

### **Proposed Alternative Provision actions**

- 12.6. A full review of alternative provision is planned for the Autumn term 2022. The review will consider how AP aligns with and supports the wide SEND system, as outlined in the SEND Green paper 2022, and further increase the capacity of Alternative Provision to support pre-emptive and reintegration activity, including revolving door and outreach.

## 13. Climate change implications

- 13.1. No climate change implications arise directly from this report, however as all projects are progressed, designs and construction methods will consider such impacts and look to contribute to the councils ambitious and exciting climate change agenda.



- 13.2. By creating local provision for children and young people, it is expected that there would be a reduction in car journeys across Medway which will reduce any impacts upon air quality.
- 13.3. Pupils are encouraged by schools to walk or cycle to school, and this becomes more achievable if the provision is local.
- 13.4. As part of the schools' maintenance and condition programme, as well as when expanding or building schools, officers will look to utilise methods and materials to help reduce the carbon footprint, examples include replacing fossil fuelled heating systems with greener alternatives, LED lighting, improving insulation, photovoltaics and providing vehicle charging points and where possible using local contractors.

## 14. Risk management

- 14.1. 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.  The strategy refers to s106 contributions that have been requested but have not been agreed through the planning process and therefore may not be realised.	Explore options to fund projects including bidding for funding initiatives. Look at cost effective ways to supply places.	B1
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

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Applications for Free Schools increases	Applications for Free Schools could be a risk to strategic planning framework as the Council has less 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 Council's wider pupil place planning strategy.	C2
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.	B3

## 15. Consultation

- 15.1. 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.
- 15.2. No Diversity Impact Assessment accompanies this report. Assessments will be provided for individual proposals brought forward as a result of actions from this report.

## 16. Financial implications

- 16.1. 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.
- 16.2. 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.
- 16.3. In recent years no basic need funding has been provided by central government to Medway Council to provide additional places. Therefore, funding of projects was reliant upon education section 106 receipts, or council borrowing in advance of future developer contributions due to the delay in receiving funding through this avenue. For 2023/24 the government has allocated £17,049,927 in basic need funding to Medway, and £7,961,522 for SEND. Officers will seek to fund the projects proposed in sections 9 (mainstream) and 11 (SEND) using the most suitable combination of basic need and available section 106 funding therefore removing the need to borrow further funding.

16.4. The table below sets out the received, agreed, and requested Education Section 106 funding.

Education S106 receipts available	£1.4 million
Education S106 funds to come from started developments	£2.3 million
Agreed S106 to come from developments not yet started	£12.6 million
S106 funding requested from developments not yet agreed through the planning process	£4.9 million

16.5. 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.

16.6. 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. However, the availability of land is an issue. Officers will seek to secure Free School provision for Medway as required and discussions with the DFE will continue.

## 17. Legal implications

17.1. 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.

17.2. 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.

17.3. 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.

## 18. Recommendations

### 18.1. The Cabinet is asked to:

- i) Note the 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 demand.
- ii) Note that the Council has been allocated £17,049,927 basic need allocation, and £7,961,522 SEND allocation.
- iii) Support the strategy as set out in sections 9 and 11 of this report, with individual schemes being brought forward to Cabinet and Council seeking approval to be added to the Capital Programme in due course.
- iv) Authorise officers to commence the detailed feasibility studies, design, planning, and procurement processes at the appropriate times for the projects set out in sections 9 and 11 of the report, ensuring that appropriate procurement processes are completed.
- v) 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.

## 19. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 19.1. By approving the recommendations in section 18 of the report, 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:

Appendix 1 – Mainstream Forecasts  
Appendix 2 – SEND Forecasts

### Background papers:

School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27  
<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=63361>