

Consultation on Chatham Grammar, Fort Pitt Grammar, and Holcombe Grammar schools changing to co-educational provisions

3 May to 26 June 2022



Chatham Grammar, Fort Pitt Grammar, and Holcombe Grammar schools changing to co-educational provisions

This document is designed to:

- **Notify you of proposals to change Chatham Grammar, Fort Pitt Grammar, and Holcombe Grammar schools to co-educational provisions**
- **Explain why this change is being proposed**
- **Invite your comments on this proposal**

Why are the changes being proposed?

Medway has six grammar schools, three for girls, two for boys, and one is co-educational (teaches boys and girls). This means that there are more places for girls than boys at grammar schools.

To attend a grammar school, pupils must take the Medway test and be assessed as grammar. The current test process allows for a maximum of 25% of Medway pupils to attend a grammar school (23% plus up to 2% on review). This percentage could be increased, to allow more Medway pupils to go to grammar schools, but only if there is a more equitable split in the numbers of places available for boys and girls. The proposal allows for a minimum of 25% provision, whilst also providing better capacity for future growth in the local population and school cohorts.

Therefore, Holcombe Grammar (boys), Fort Pitt Grammar (girls), and Chatham Grammar (girls) are proposing to change from single sex to co-educational admissions. This will balance the numbers of boys and girls places, and over time, allow more Medway pupils to attend a grammar school.

Allowing more Medway pupils to attend selective grammar schools will also reduce pressure on non-selective secondary schools. This will help make sure there are enough school places for all Medway pupils, whether they wish to go to grammar school or not.

Having more mixed grammar schools will mean that boys and girls places will be more evenly spread across Medway. Pupils will not have to travel as far to go to school.

There is no evidence that a school being single or mixed gender has a significant impact on attainment. It is more important that schools provide good quality education with a variety of learning opportunities, support for their pupils, and provide a more modern and inclusive education. All three schools are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

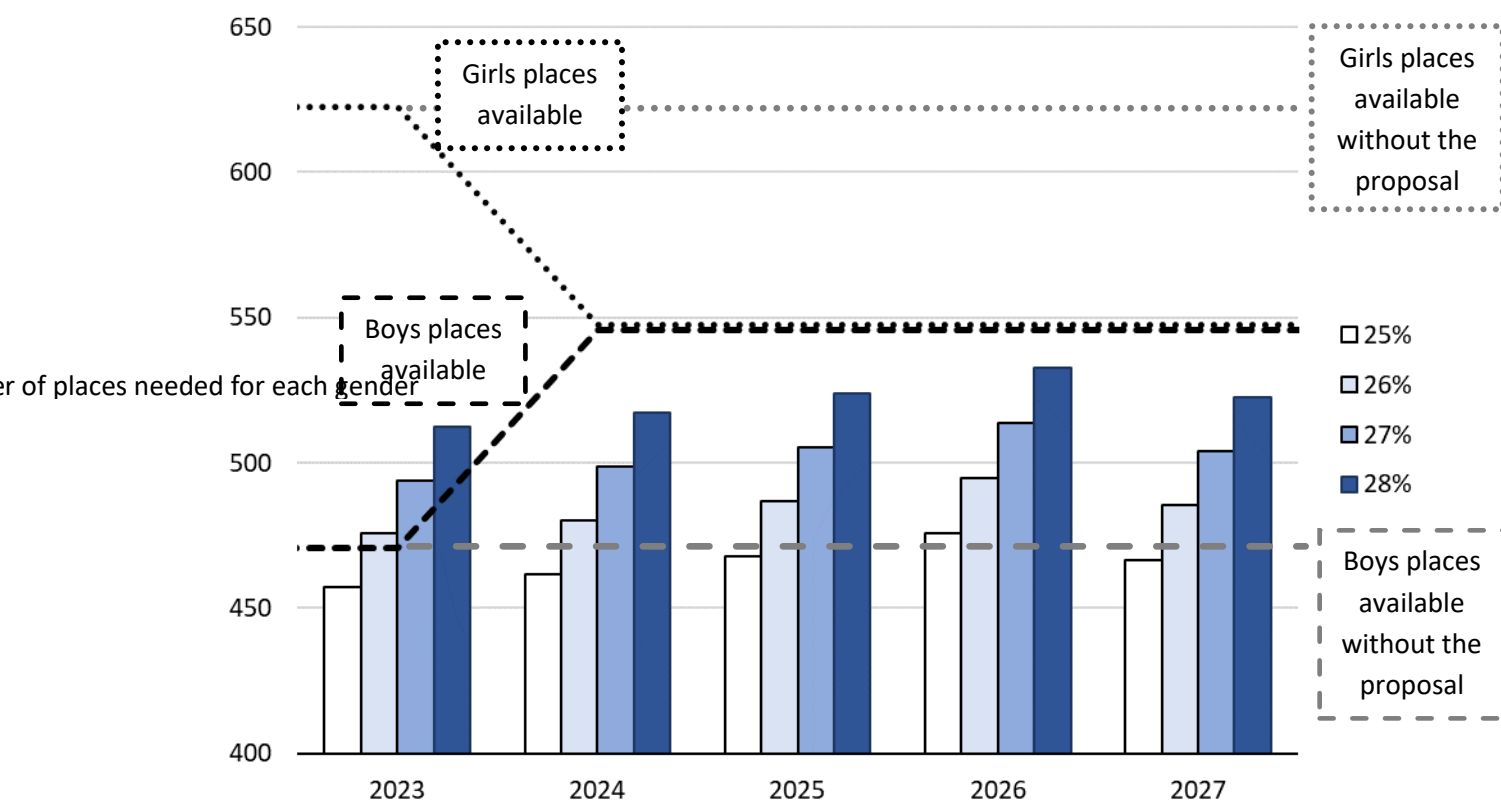
How will this affect the number of places?

The Medway test currently allows for a maximum of 25% of Medway Year 6 pupils to attend a selective school. This 25% should be split into roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. Therefore, equal numbers of girls and boys places are needed. To increase the percentage of Medway pupils able to go to a selective school, and to make the system fairer and more equitable, the number of places available must also be increased equally. The graph below shows how many places would be needed for different pass percentages, and how many girls and boy's places are available. Currently, the lack of boy's places limits the pass rate to 25% of the cohort. The pass rate must be the same for both girls and boys. This means that the additional girls places are often not taken up by Medway girls, but by out of area girls, or pupils who were not initially successful in the Medway Test that acquire a place on appeal directly to the schools.

If the proposals are approved, then most selective places in Medway will be mixed gender. This means that while more places will be available for boys than currently, they are not ringfenced for boys. So, if more Medway girls pass the Medway Test, then they will still be able to attend a Medway selective school.

Changing the three schools to mixed gender makes the places available for girls and boys equitable. The effect of this is shown in the graph below. With more places available for boys, the pass rate could then be increased to include a minimum of 25% of the cohort, based upon current forecasts.

Figure 1 - Numbers of places required and available, showing the effect of making the proposed change to mixed gender. The coloured bars show the number of places needed for girls and boys at different percentage pass rates. The dotted lines show the forecasted number of girls and boys places available with mixed gender places split 50/50 between boys and girls. If the proposals are implemented, from 2024 the number of boys and girls places available would be roughly equal. However, mixed places can be taken up by boys or girls, so should more girls pass the Medway test than boys then places will still be available.



The change in the Medway test pass percentage will mean more Medway pupils will be able to attend Medway selective schools. This will in turn mean that fewer pupils from outside of Medway will be able to come to Medway selective schools, particularly those from more distant locations. The proposed changes will not affect any pupils currently attending Medway grammar schools.

The table below shows a breakdown in the number of pupils that attended in Year 7 in Medway selective schools. On average there have been 134 out of area girls attending Medway selective schools in Year 7 each year. The proposed change to mixed gender will reduce the number of girls places by 75, which is less than the average number of out of area girls. Therefore, no Medway girls will be disadvantaged by the proposals. Indeed, the outcome of the proposal is that more Medway Boys and Girls will be able to access a place at a grammar school.

Table 1 - The number of Year 7 pupils who attend Medway selective schools

	Total Year 7 girls	Total Year 7 boys	Year 7 Girls living in Medway	Year 7 Boys living in Medway	Year 7 Girls living outside Medway	Year 7 Boys living outside Medway
2018	552	493	437	412	115	81
2019	606	490	444	397	162	93
2020	648	485	492	412	156	73
2021	603	482	482	388	121	94
2022	570	485	454	402	116	83

Table 2 below shows the potential impact of the proposal if it had been implemented from 2018, with the pass rate set at 27% of Medway pupils (27% is used as an example and does not mean that 27% will be the figure upon which future pass rates are determined)

Table 2 – How the proposal could have altered the estimated number of Year 7 pupils who attend Medway selective schools, with the pass rate set at 27%

	Total Year 7 girls	Total Year 7 boys	Year 7 Girls living in Medway	Year 7 Boys living in Medway	Year 7 Girls living outside Medway	Year 7 Boys living outside Medway
2018	552	493	472	445	80	48
2019	606	490	480	429	126	61
2020	648	485	531	445	117	40
2021	603	482	521	419	82	63
2022	570	485	490	434	80	51

How will this impact Medway girls?

The outcome of this proposal will mean that more Medway girls will be assessed as grammar and able to attend a Medway grammar school.

Currently there are many more places available for girls than boys. While this means that more girls can attend a selective school overall, it is a disadvantage for girls who live in Medway. The Medway test pass rate is limited by the number of boys places available. This in turn currently limits the number of Medway girls who can attend a Medway selective school. By changing to mixed gender more places will be made available for boys, but this will also allow the pass rate to increase, allowing more Medway girls to attend a Medway selective school.

If more Medway girls were to pass the Medway test than boys, then they would still be able to attend a Medway selective school as the mixed places are not limited to a 50/50 split between boys and girls. Having more mixed places makes the system more flexible. There will still be 205 places for girls only at Rochester Grammar School, and 203 places for boys only at Sir Joseph Williamsons Mathematical School.

For the desired outcome of more Medway boys and girls being able to attend a grammar school than currently do to be realised, parents will need to apply for a place appropriately. I.E., using all their preferences and not restricting the number of schools nominated on the application form. Parents of boys and girls will have five schools to name on their application form and it is recommended, to ensure a place is offered, that all five are used. Currently girls have four options and boys three.

The process

The Department for Education (DFE) has set out the requirements and processes for making changes to academies in the guidance 'Making significant changes to an open academy'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-significant-changes-to-an-existing-academy>

The purpose of the guidance is to ensure that academy trusts do not take decisions that will have a negative impact on other schools in the area, and that changes can be implemented quickly and effectively where there is a strong case for doing so. It is also expected that, where possible, additional new places will only be provided at schools that have an overall Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding'.

The guidance also sets out the processes required to implement this proposal, and this consultation period is the first stage in that process.

The three schools are all academies. This means that they must request permission from the Regional Schools Commissioner to make the proposed changes. The proposals are being made in partnership with Medway Council and the Trusts that operate the three schools. The trusts have asked the Council to co-ordinate the process.

This informal consultation is the first step, to gauge views on the proposals. If the change is approved for progression by the council's cabinet, the schools will then need to consult on changes to their admissions arrangements. The three schools will then need to submit individual business cases to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

If the change is formally approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner, the new admissions arrangements would start from September 2024. The three schools would start accepting boys and girls in Year 7, and over time the whole school would become co-educational.

The schools may need some physical changes to areas such as toilets and changing rooms. These will be funded through the Council's Schools Capital Programme. This may include contributions from housing developments or government grant schemes where available. Any proposed building requirements will need to be approved by the Council's cabinet.

The next stages

Following the seven-week consultation period, Medway Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee may ask to see a report on the responses and comments to this proposal, which would be presented to them at the next available opportunity.

Medway Council's Cabinet will consider the responses to this consultation and the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Medway Council's cabinet may agree to fund the proposal and to agree to proceed to the next stage, where the three schools will begin their consultation on changes to their admissions arrangements. The schools will then submit the outcomes and a business case to the Regional School Commissioner.

The Regional Schools Commissioner will consider the results of the consultation and the business cases when making their decision. If they approve, the schools will become co-educational from 1 September 2024.

Next steps – timings subject to change as necessary

Consultation period	3 May to 26 June 2022
Drop-in session at Holcombe Grammar School	18 May 2022 4pm to 5pm
Drop-in session at Fort Pitt Grammar School	24 May 2022 4pm to 5pm
Drop-in session at Chatham Grammar School	8 June 2022 4pm to 5pm
Report to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Outcomes of Consultation if required	28 July 2022
Report Outcome of Consultation to Cabinet	23 August 2022
Consultation on admissions arrangements	6 weeks starting October 2022
Schools submit business case to RSC	December 2022/ January 2023
Formal implementation of proposals if approved	1 September 2024

- **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.

Email your comments to prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can hand the form below to the school office at Chatham Grammar, Fort Pitt Grammar, or Holcombe Grammar, or send it to: **FREEPOST RRUY-ZBTJ-CZZC, School Organisation, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR**

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to acknowledge receipt. A copy of our privacy notice can be found at www.medway.gov.uk/privacynotice

All responses must be received by **Sunday 26 June 2022**.

It would be helpful to have the following information:

Name

Address

I am a (please tick all that apply)

Parent/ guardian

Governor

Member of staff

Medway Resident

None of the above (please specify)

Non-Medway resident

With regard to the proposal to change Chatham Grammar, Fort Pitt Grammar, and Holcombe Grammar schools to co-educational provisions:

I **approve** of the proposal

I **object** to the proposal

I **neither** approve nor object

Comments

Please give your reasons as fully as possible to enable us to gauge opinions for and against the proposals. If completing on paper, please use additional sheets if necessary

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

বাংলা	331780	ગુજરાતી	331782	ਪੰਜਾਬੀ	331784	کوردی	331841	أروو	331785	Русский	332374
中文	331781	हिंदी	331783	Polski	332373	ଏଓଡ଼ିଆ	331786	فارسی	331840	Lietuviškai	332372

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