

Council

17 October 2024

Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
(including statutory responsibility)

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Summary

This annual summary report provides an update on the progress made during the lifetime of the 2022-27 School Place Planning Strategy. It identifies areas of demand and makes recommendations to ensure that appropriate levels of good quality school places are available through to 2027 and beyond.

The report has previously been considered by the Cabinet on 1 October 2024, the decisions of which are set out at section 19 of the report.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Council is asked:

1.1.1. To agree the addition of £5.4m High Needs Provision Capital Allocation to the SEND capital programme and to approve the addition of:

- £600k to Rivermead at Stoke (9x589) to fund additional costs in the project as set out in paragraph 16.3.
- £200k to Danecourt to fund additional costs in the project as set out in paragraph 16.3.
- £4.6m to increase education provision for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as set out in paragraph 16.3.

1.1.2. To agree the addition of £798k of s106 funding to the Hundred of Hoo Academy expansion 9x592, as set out in paragraph 23.9.

- 1.1.3. To agree the addition of £21k to the capital programme for Pilgrim Primary School as set out in paragraph 23.10.
- 1.1.4. To agree the addition of £35,799.51 of s106 funding to Greenvale Primary School (9x566) as set out in paragraph 23.11.

2. Budget and Policy Framework

- 2.1. 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.
- 2.2. This annual review of the School Place Planning Strategy provides the latest information on the expected numbers of pupils. It proposes actions to maintain sufficient good school places for the expected numbers of pupils, whilst managing published admission numbers (PAN) to avoid oversupply.
- 2.3. The proposals in this annual review follow the School Place Planning Strategy Principles. They also support the Council Plan sub-priority to “Ensure all children and young people access a high-quality, inclusive education.” The proposals, as approved by Cabinet, would be delivered through available funding from the Education Capital Programme. Any additions to the Capital Programme are a matter for full Council.

3. School Place Planning Strategy

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. In April 2023, the principles were expanded to include a section on selection. These additional principles were approved by [Cabinet on 4 April 2023 under decision number 57/2023](#).
- 3.3. Several factors determine the most suitable school 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 (shown on the scorecard in Appendix 4). 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.
- 3.4. It is necessary to maintain a level of surplus school places to ensure that sufficient places are available for pupils who arrive 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. Medway will work towards this figure.

4. Annual review

- 4.1. Annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy will make proposals and recommendations 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.
- 4.2. This annual review, and the recommendations in it, are based upon the annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2024, using the latest available data. Appendix 1 sets out the forecasts for the mainstream primary and secondary planning areas.
- 4.3. 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.

5. Medway overview

- 5.1. Medway's Local Plan, yet to be formally approved, highlights the need for an additional 28,000 homes across Medway by 2041. A number of these have already been completed or are already under construction, for example at St Mary's Island and Rochester Riverside. The future publication of the Local Plan is expected to increase the rate of housebuilding. It is expected that the total population will increase to 291,000 in that time.
- 5.2. 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 to evolve during the development of the Plan.
- 5.3. The number of approved and proposed housing schemes means that demand for school places is expected to rise in the future.
- 5.4. The number of pupils expected from housing developments is based upon research by MORI. For every 775 new houses with 2 or more bedrooms, an average of 210 primary pupils will be produced. This is enough to fill a one-form entry primary school.
- 5.5. In recent years Medway received no basic need funding from government. The only funding available had been s106 developer contributions, paid by housing developers to offset the impact of pupils from new developments. Table 1 shows the Basic Need grant for 2023/24 to 2025/26. The 2023/24 grant has been allocated to the agreed projects listed in paragraph 14.1.

Table 1 - Basic need grant amounts

	Basic need
2023/24	£17,049,927
2024/25	£0
2025/26	£93,994

6. Academy Conversion Progress

- 6.1. Medway's first academies were created in 2009, under the original academy programme. From 2010 schools were able to convert to academy status either by choice, or because they were directed to by the DfE.
- 6.2. There are currently 23 LA maintained schools, and 80 academies (shown in Table 2). There are currently two further schools in the process of converting to academies, and six known further who may convert over the coming two years. Therefore, it is likely that by the end of 2026 or early 2027 there will be a maximum of 15 local authority-maintained schools remaining.

Table 2 - Number of schools by type

	Maintained	Academy
Primary	21	55*
All-through		1
Secondary	1	18
Special	1	4
Alternative Provision		2
Overall	23	80

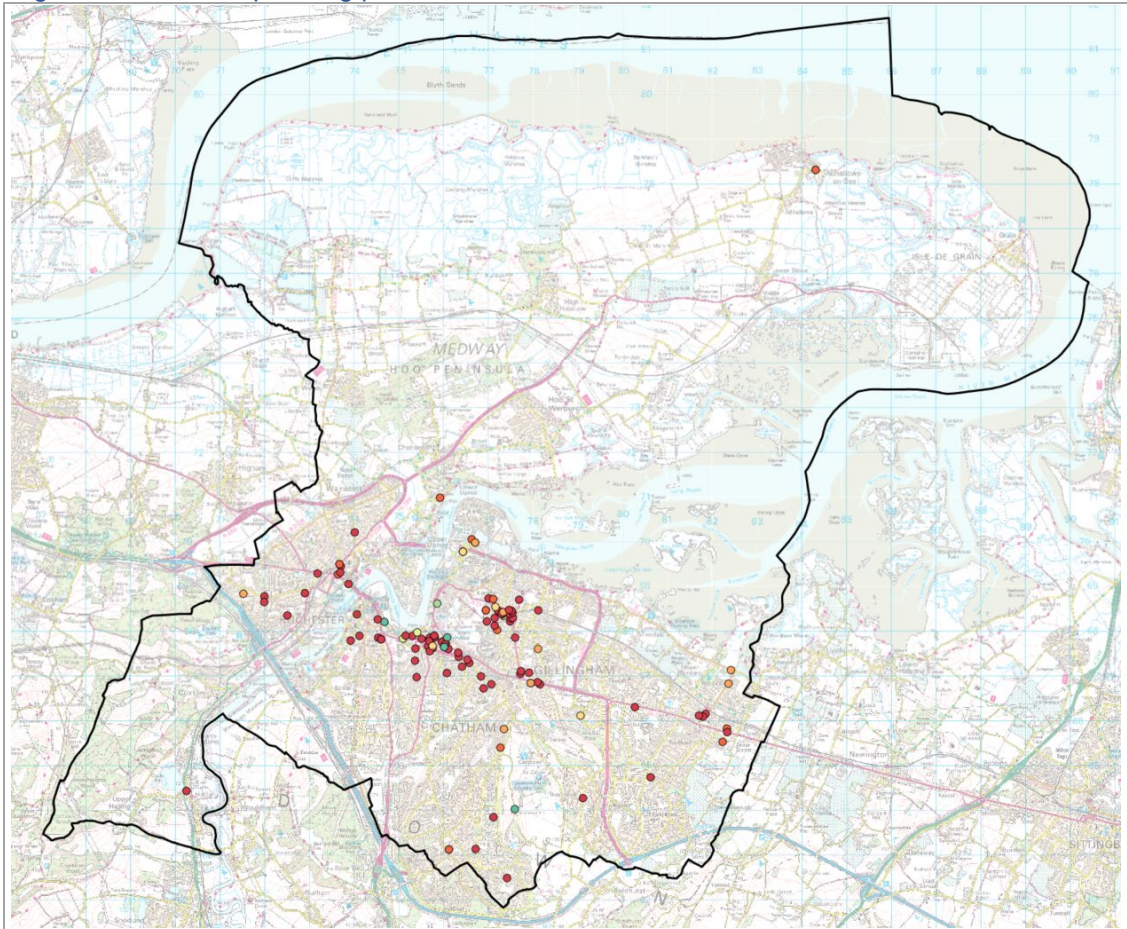
*Includes English Martyrs and St Thomas of Canterbury who converted on 1 October 2024

- 6.3. There are also seven independent schools, split into two primary, one all-through, one secondary, and three special schools.

7. Housing

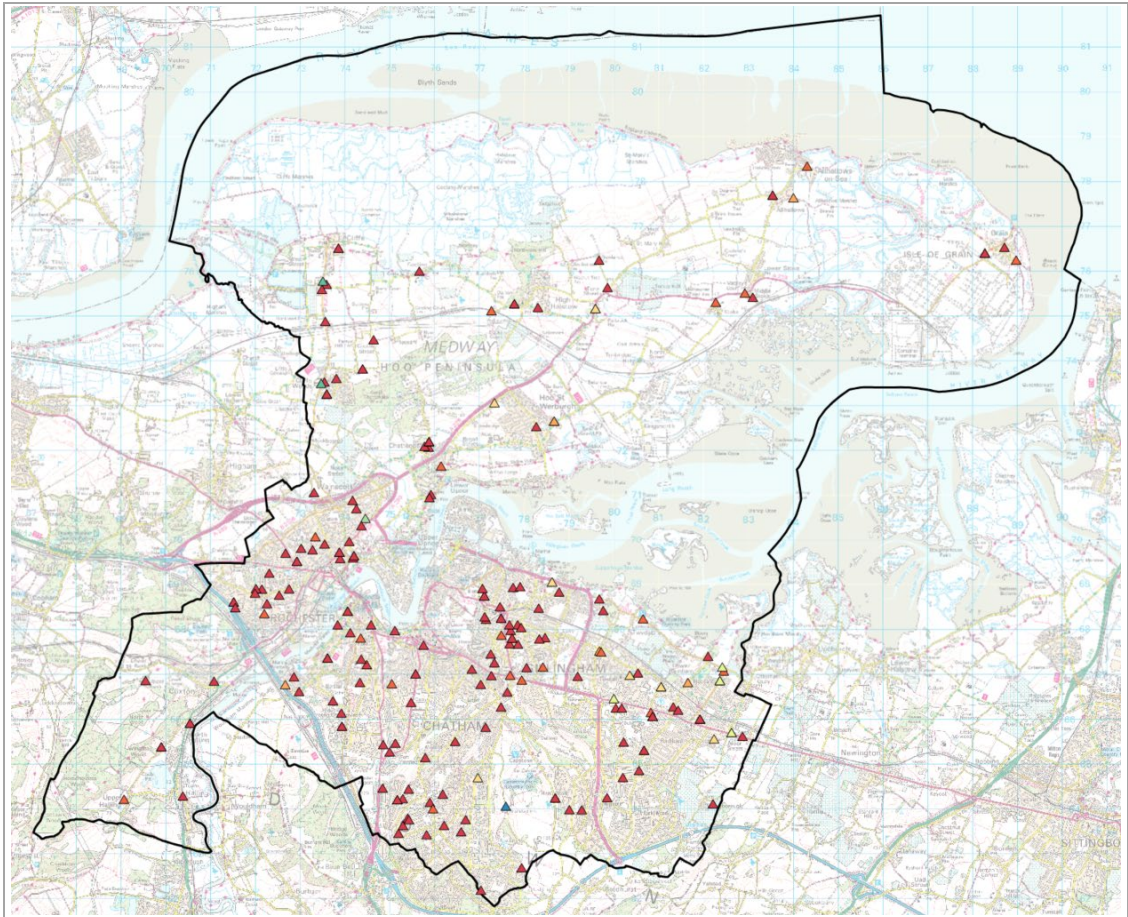
- 7.1. Applications for flats tend to be concentrated in town centre areas (Figure 1). Often smaller applications are for converting existing houses, shops and offices, or adding flats above commercial premises. This can cause an increase in pupil numbers in areas where schools are on limited sites with little or no capacity to expand.

Figure 1 - Flats with planning permission 2019 - 2024



7.2. Planning permission for houses are much more widespread across the authority (Figure 2). Smaller applications for houses are often adjacent to existing dwellings, in large gardens or on disused domestic garages. As with flats, these can increase demand in areas where it is hard to provide additional places. Larger developments can be on fields or farmland, on the edges of urban areas. These can have the opposite problem, where they are further from existing school provision, and so there is no single school which all pupils will attend.

7.3. Figure 2 - Houses with planning permission 2019 - 2024



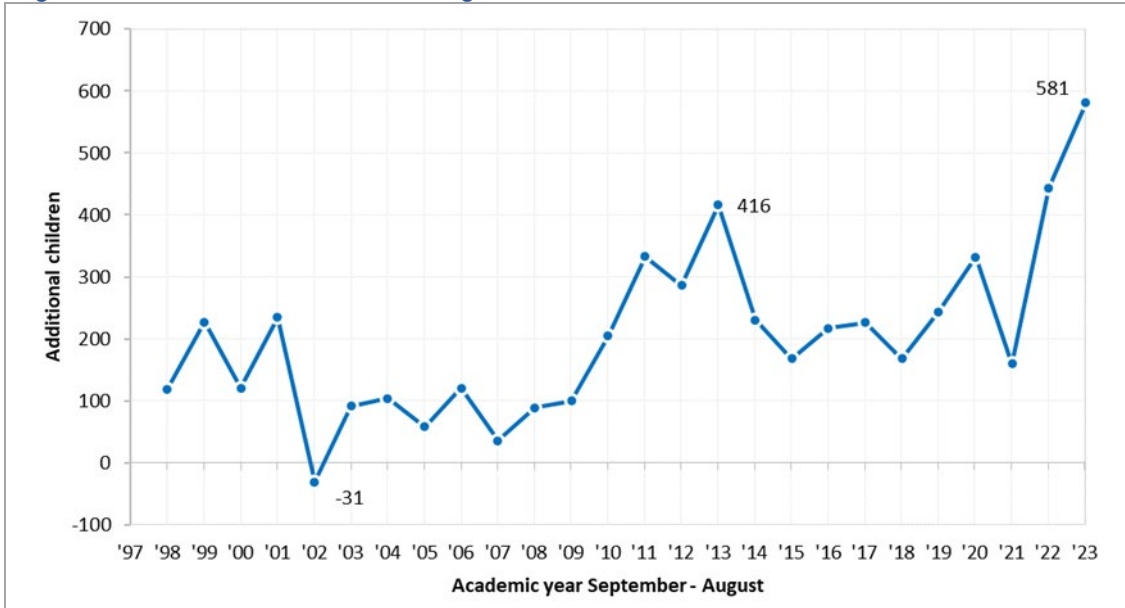
7.4. Large developments, such as Rochester Riverside, produce enough pupils to warrant a new school. The proposed developments around Hoo will require additional schools. The local plan means that they will be considered together, and jointly contribute towards new schools with some providing financial contributions, and others providing land and building schools. This will allow school places to be phased in to match the buildout of the developments.

7.5. However, there are other medium to large sized developments around Medway which have been brought forward ahead of the local plan being agreed. This makes it harder to provide a co-ordinated school expansion programme, as the land and financial contributions are not necessarily available at the right time to meet demand.

8. Inward migration

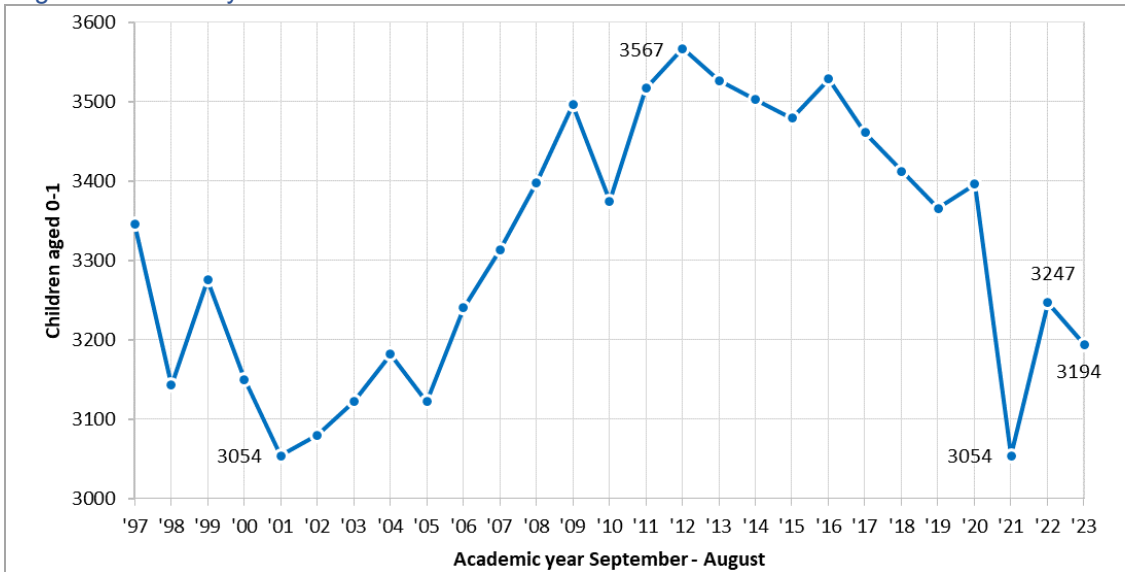
8.1. Figure 3 shows the net increase in pre-school age children (age 0-5 years), based on GP registration data. The 2023 total, 581, is the highest since Medway became a unitary authority. This is in contrast to births (Figure 4), which have been falling year on year. This migration is likely to be due, at least in part, to a recruitment drive by the NHS for staff at Medway Maritime Hospital and other local health facilities. It may also be that with increased house building, and lower house prices relative to elsewhere in Kent and London, more people are able to afford family housing in Medway.

Figure 3 - Net movement of children aged 0-5



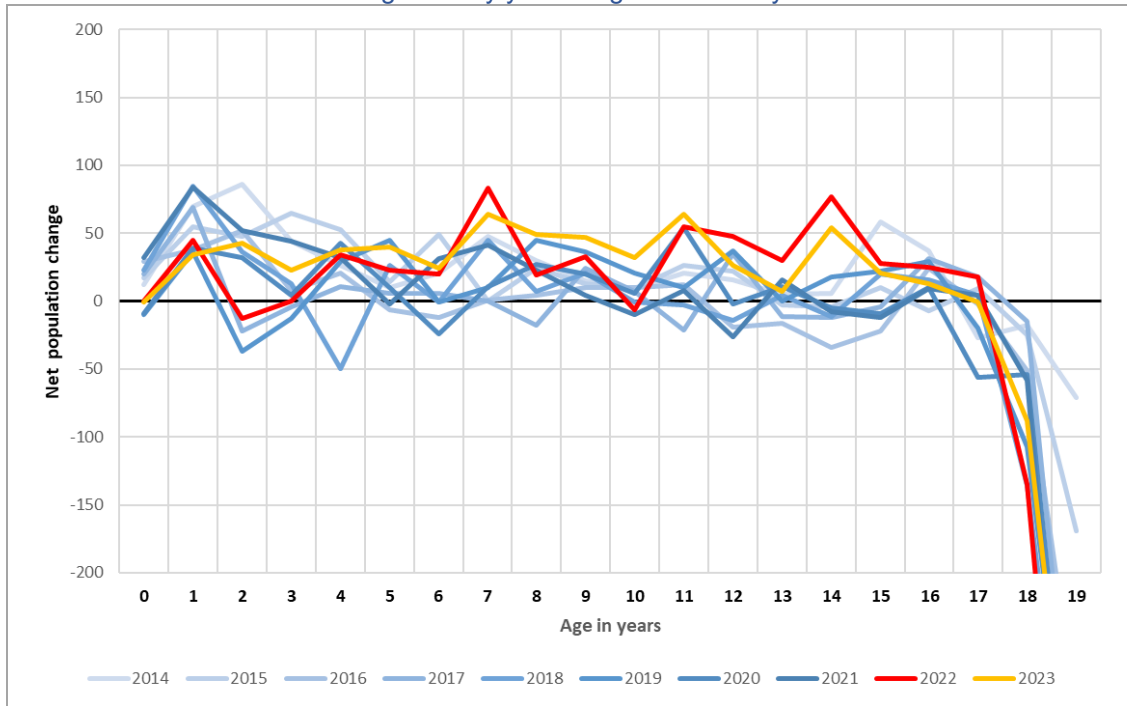
8.2. Births figures showed a sharp reduction in 2021. While rates were falling, this drop is likely to be due to a combination of the covid-19 pandemic, its associated lockdowns, and impact on the economy. Births have recovered slightly in subsequent years but are not yet back to the levels seen during the 2010's when births and pupil numbers increased significantly.

Figure 4 – Medway Births



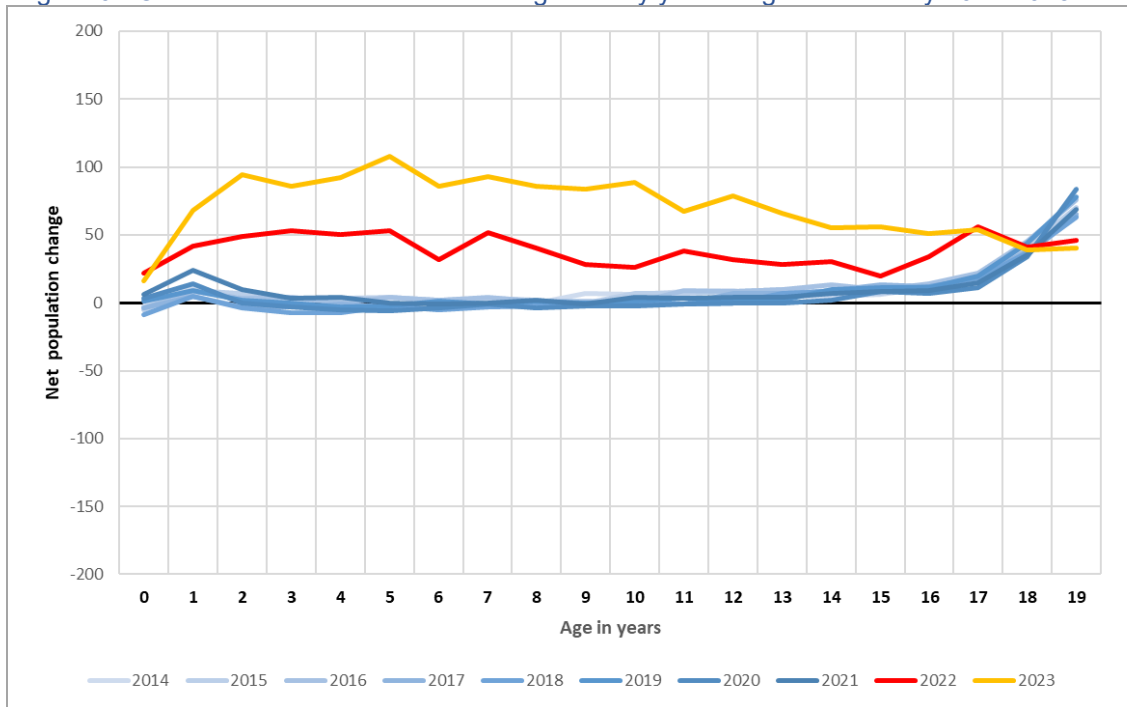
8.3. In the last 3 years Medway has seen large amounts of migration into the area across all school ages. Figure 5 shows the ONS estimated net internal migration by year of age for 2014 to 2023. The number of people of school age moving in is variable, and the most common feature is the number of college or university age young people moving out. The data for 2022 and 2023 shows a higher number of seven-year olds, and secondary age children (age 11-15) moving in.

Figure 5 - ONS estimates of internal migration by year of age for Medway 2014-2023



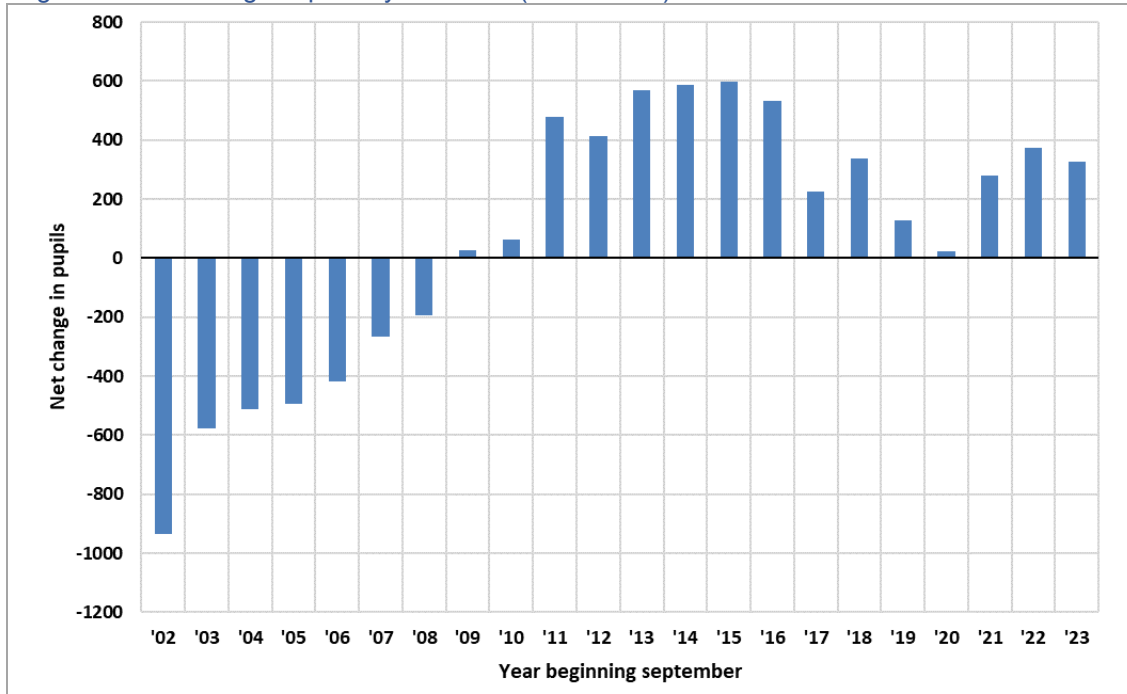
8.4. In contrast, Figure 6 shows ONS estimates of international migration for the same period. There is little change in the pattern for 2014 to 2021, but 2022 and 2023 show a very large increase in all ages from 0 to 17. This would be approximately equivalent to at least one extra class in every year group from Year R to Year 13. This migration is likely to be related to a recruitment drive by the NHS.

Figure 6 - ONS estimates of international migration by year of age for Medway 2014-2023



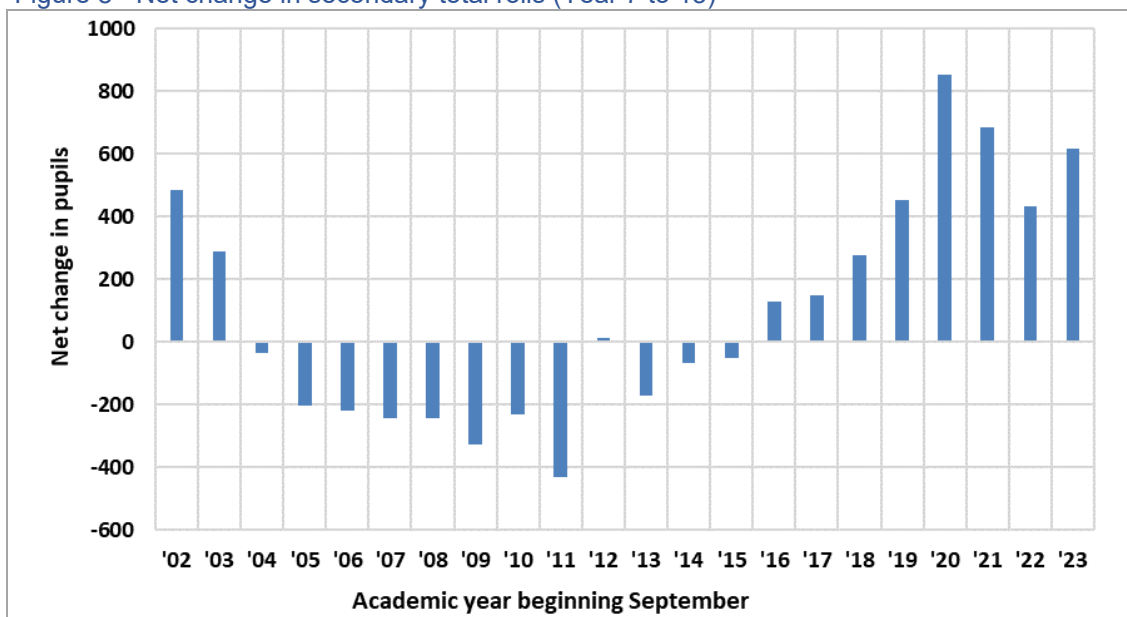
- 8.5. The impact this has had on primary school total rolls is shown in Figure 7. Total rolls had risen from 2009 as increased birth cohorts reached school age, and then net change was reducing to reflect falling births. Then from 2021 onwards there has been a return to increasing rolls.

Figure 7 - Net change in primary total rolls (Year R to 6)



- 8.6. The pattern is similar for secondary age pupils (Figure 8). Total rolls started to increase from 2017, due to the increased primary cohorts starting to reach secondary age. Total rolls were showing a net reduction from 2020 to 2022, and then showed an increase in 2023. Year 7 rolls had been forecasted to peak in 2022 or 2023. However, inward migration has increased primary rolls, and forecasts suggest the Year 7 peak will possibly be in 2028 or 2029.

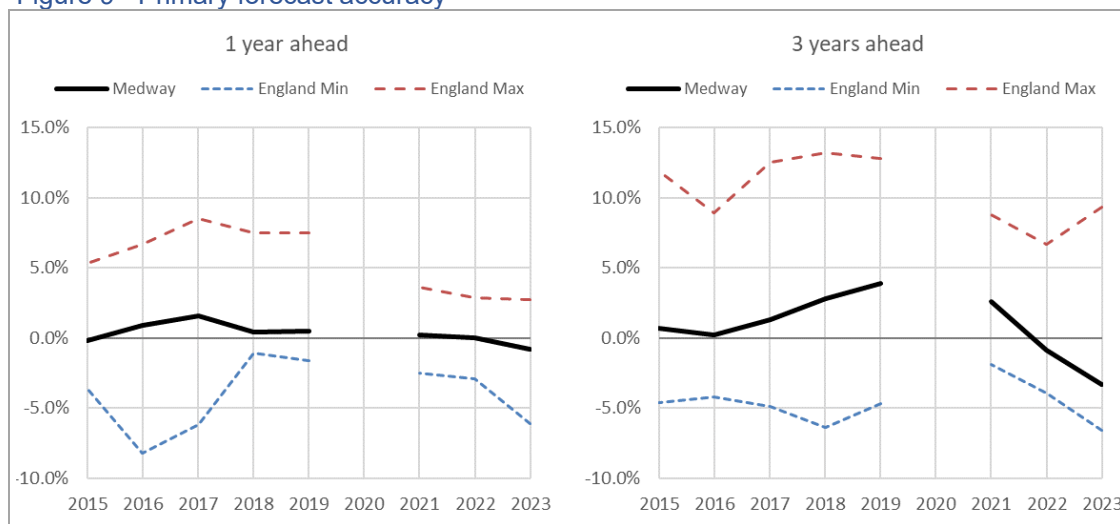
Figure 8 - Net change in secondary total rolls (Year 7 to 13)



9. DfE Local authority school places scorecards

- 9.1. The Department for Education produce an annual scorecard for local authorities which compares their performance in providing school places based on five metrics: forecast accuracy, quantity, quality, cost, and preference (Appendix 4).
- 9.2. For the most recent scorecard, Medway's primary school forecast for one year ahead was a 0.8% underestimate, below the national average of 0.0%. For three years ahead Medway had a 3.3% under-estimate, below the 0.8% under-estimate nationally. These under-estimates, particularly for three-years ahead, are due to the high levels of unexpected inward migration of primary age pupils. Figure 9 shows how Medway's forecast accuracy compares to the England minimum and maximum forecast accuracies over time. There is no data for 2020 as the collection was cancelled by the DfE due to the Covid pandemic.
- 9.3. The three years ahead figures are generally less accurate than one year ahead. Medway's accuracy for one year ahead forecasts is within 1% for seven out of eight of the last scorecards. For three years ahead, Medway is within 1% for three out of the eight scorecards. This is because primary total rolls have been increasing significantly as larger cohorts pass through the system. Longer term forecasts cannot always predict these increases, as they assume that trends will continue at a constant rate. At Primary there is less historic data on a cohort; children start school four years after they are born. For secondary, there are eleven years between birth and starting year 7.

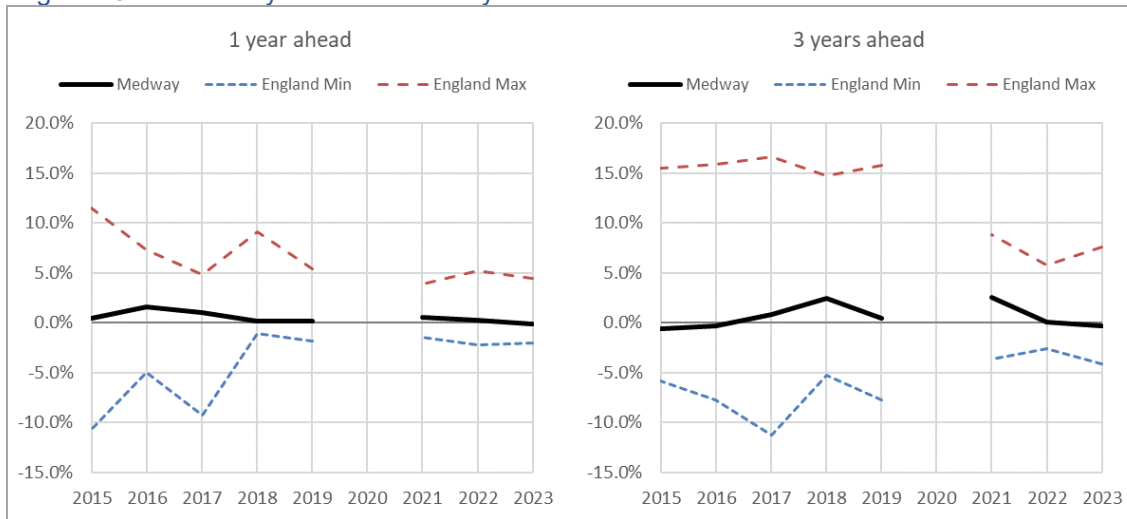
Figure 9 - Primary forecast accuracy



- 9.4. Medway's secondary school forecast for one year ahead was a 0.1% underestimate, better than the 0.8% over-estimate nationally. For three years ahead Medway had a 0.3% underestimate, better than the 0.6% over-estimate nationally. Figure 10 shows how Medway's forecast accuracy compares to the England minimum and maximum forecast accuracies over time.

- 9.5. As with primary, there is no data for 2020, and the three years ahead figures are generally less accurate than one year ahead. Medway's accuracy for one year ahead forecasts is within 1% for seven out of eight of the last scorecards. For three years ahead, Medway's accuracy has been within 1% for six out of eight scorecards. Secondary forecasting has tended to be more accurate in the long term as the cohorts entering Year 7 have been tracked through primary.

Figure 10 - Secondary forecast accuracy



10. Early Years Sufficiency

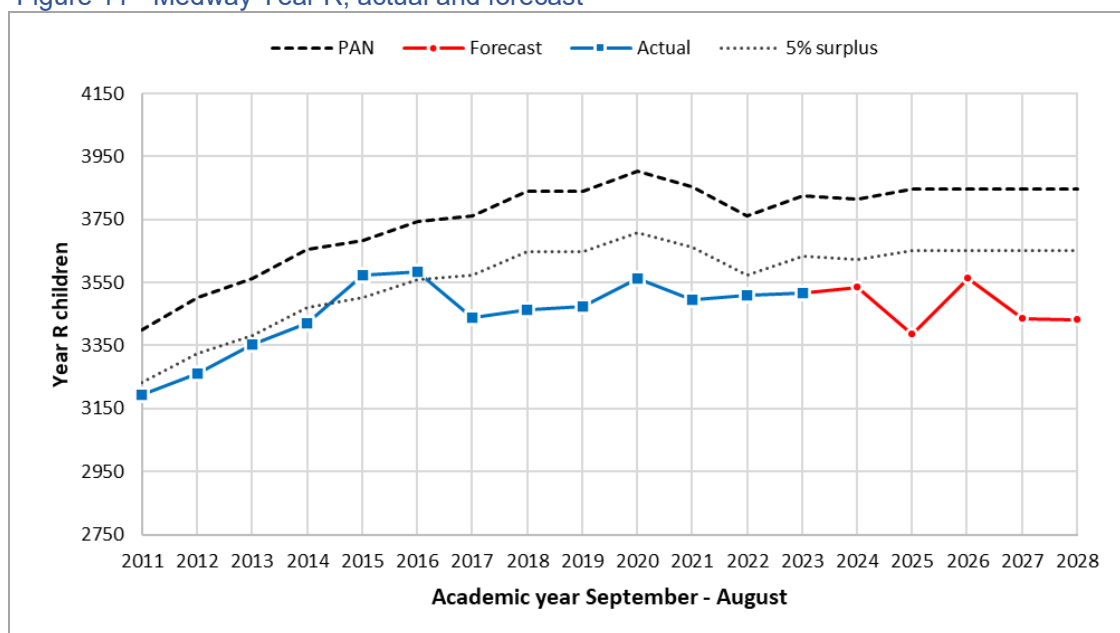
- 10.1. Local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, so far as reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). This means that parents are able to work because childcare places are available, accessible and affordable and are delivered flexibly at a range of high-quality settings.
- 10.2. Medway is committed to supporting as many families as possible to take up the extended entitlements offer of funded places for eligible working parents of children aged from 9 months to 4 years of age.
- 10.3. There are sufficient registered places to accept all of the eligible two-year-old children in Medway for either the new working parent entitlement or the parents receiving additional support entitlement.
- 10.4. There are sufficient registered places for the 3 and 4 year old universal entitlement of 15 hours and the 30 hour entitlement for working families.
- 10.5. The development of the extended childcare entitlement has meant that some parents/carers may not gain their first choice of provider and need to select an alternative provider of childcare.
- 10.6. From Autumn 2023 to Summer 2024, childcare places have increased with the addition of 23 new Childminders and 1 Academy early years provision.

- 10.7. Within Medway, we have been able to sustain the number of providers through the engagement of new provisions offering the government funded childcare.
- 10.8. There are 254 Early Years providers within Medway, offering approximately 6,134 childcare places.
- 10.9. The increase in the cost of living has concerned the Early Years Sector with reference to the higher costs of employing advanced level qualified staff.
- 10.10. In 2024, the Department for Education allocated Medway £564,464.90 from the Childcare Expansion Capital Grant. This money is to fund the expansion of provision for early years and wraparound care places. Using the DfE guidance on the grant as a basis, Medway asked providers to submit expressions of interest for funding. In conjunction with the Early Years team, projects were evaluated and selected on the of number of places provided and cost per place. The selected projects are set out in Appendix 5.

11. Primary Schools

- 11.1. Births reached a peak in 2012 (Figure 4), 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.
- 11.2. Since 2012, birth rates have generally been reducing each year, and this is a national trend. There was a sharp drop in birth rates from December 2020 (9 months after the first covid lockdown started in March 2020), before returning to the previous trend from 2022 onwards. Lower births in 2021 will impact the Year R numbers in 2025, while the 2022 increase in births will reflect in the Year R forecasts in September 2026.
- 11.3. 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.
- 11.4. Since 2017, total Year R figures have been fairly level, apart from a small peak in 2020 (Figure 11). Based on current birth rates and inward migration this trend is forecast to continue, although with a slight dip in 2025 and peak in 2026. The graph shows that the currently forecasted numbers are below the total Published Admission Number (PAN) of all Year R places in Medway.
- 11.5. However, this overall view hides localised pressure in the Peninsula West, Gillingham, Rainham North and Chatham planning areas. For some of these areas Reception capacity is expected to be sufficient, but there is forecasted to be a lack of space in other year groups due to children of varying ages moving into the area. It is difficult to predict the ages of children coming in to Medway, which adds to the complexity and challenge of pupil place planning.

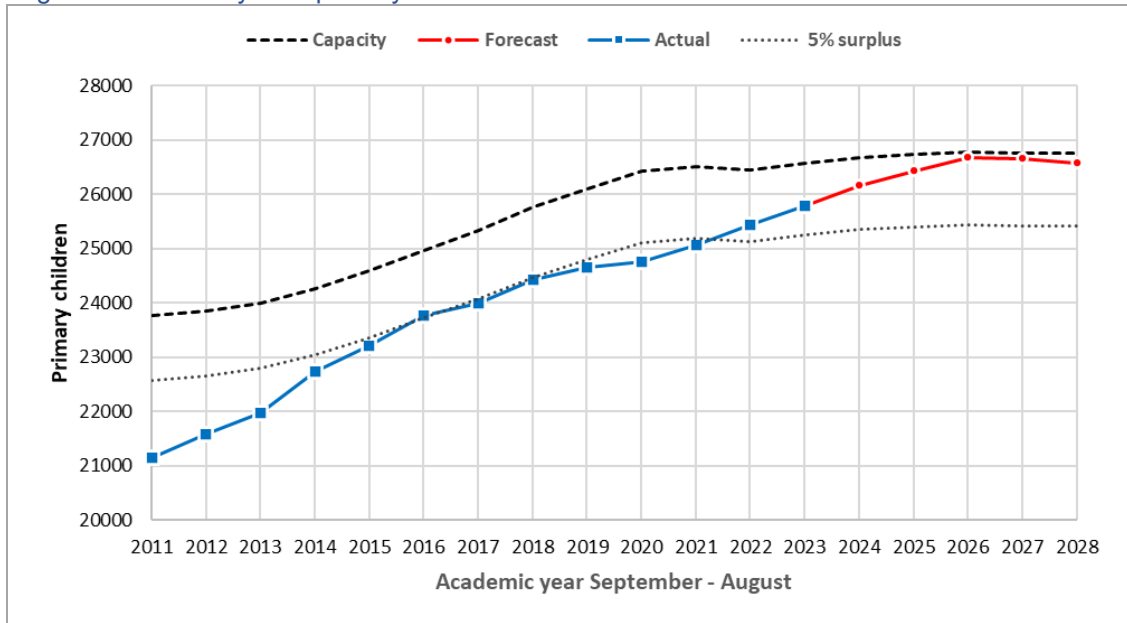
Figure 11 - Medway Year R, actual and forecast



- 11.6. It is likely that Year R forecasts will increase as more housing schemes are approved.
- 11.7. The number of pupils will increase as families move into the area. Families can move in with children of any age, so the impact on Year R numbers can be any time between immediately, or in 4 years. After 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.
- 11.8. Since January 2023 there has been significant unexpected inward movement of families to Chatham and Gillingham, driven in the main by significant recruitment into the NHS. As a result, some year groups are now full or over capacity. It is not clear to what extent this migration will continue. It is expected that the number of additional pupils moving due to the NHS in will ease over time.
- 11.9. This situation will be monitored to ensure that sufficient capacity can be made available for these incoming pupils if necessary. This may mean that emergency bulge classes are required to provide for these additional pupils. This may prove challenging as the schools in central Chatham and Gillingham are generally on restricted sites, with little space to expand capacity, coupled with the challenges of recruiting teachers.
- 11.10. Total pupil numbers in primary schools have been increasing as the larger Year R cohorts pass through the school system. They were forecast to peak in 2024, but increased migration means this is now likely to be 2026 (Figure 12). The expansion and new build work carried out as part of the capital programme up to September 2018, which has created 3,240 places, provided sufficient school places to meet demand. However, some further primary

capacity in some areas is likely to be required as housing development increases and where inward migration continues. 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.

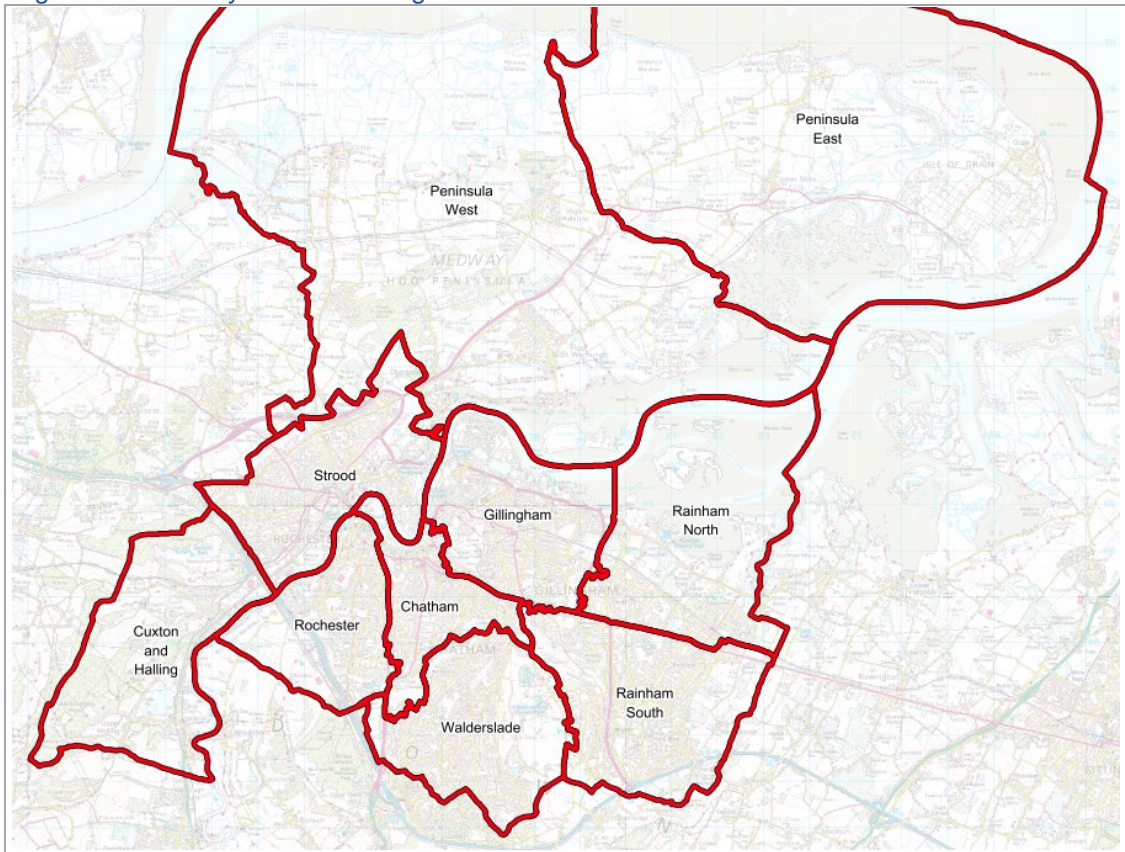
Figure 12 - Medway total primary roll



Primary pupil place planning areas

11.11. Medway has ten primary pupil place planning areas. Generally, pupils go to school in the same planning area where they live, 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 13 - Primary Place Planning Areas



Primary summary

- 11.12. Between 2013 and 2020, 3,240 primary school places have been added. This additional capacity has so far ensured that the Council continues to meet its duty to provide sufficient school places. Forecasts are updated twice each year and compared with weekly birth numbers to monitor any significant differences, enabling officers to plan accordingly.
- 11.13. As the graphs in Appendix 1 – section 3 show, demand for Year R places is falling in some areas, in line with declining birth rates. However, with the number of housing schemes expected in the coming years, demand will likely rise again.
- 11.14. Peninsula West has been one area with pressure on places. Therefore, in July 2021 the Cabinet granted approval, under decision 84/2021, to expand the Hundred of Hoo Academy primary phase by 1 Form of Entry (210 pupils), funded primarily through section 106 receipts. However, forecasts now suggest that even further capacity will be required in the area. Several housing developments have been partially or wholly completed, and this is possibly part of the cause of increased births in the planning area in 2022. This cohort will reach Reception age in 2026, and if it reaches the forecasted size, will likely require either at least one bulge class or permanent expansion to accommodate it. To that end, a feasibility study has been undertaken at Hoo St Werburgh Primary School to explore the expansion to three form entry.

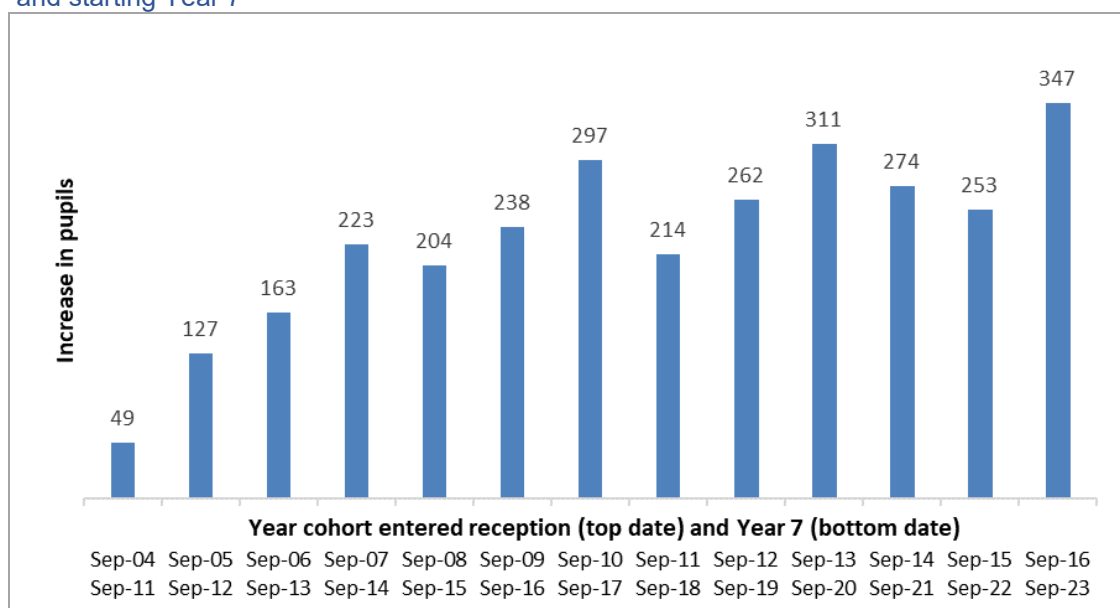
- 11.15. Gillingham has received large numbers of additional pupils, thought to be due to the NHS recruitment drive for Medway Maritime Hospital. This has had an impact on some year groups, some bulge classes were created but total rolls are still forecasted to go over capacity. Officers are in discussion with schools to look at additional bulge classes.
- 11.16. In Rainham North there is expected to be a bulge in Reception numbers in 2026. This is expected to be below the PAN for the area, but total rolls may then be pushed over capacity from 2026. Space in Rainham South may balance this out, however, demand from Gillingham may fill any spare places. To prepare for the possibility that additional capacity will be needed, a feasibility study has been carried out at Riverside Primary School (Rainham).
- 11.17. Similarly, movement into Chatham may put some year groups over capacity. There may be places in Rochester and Walderslade to balance this, but the situation will need to be monitored in case demand in these areas also rises. Opportunities to expand in Chatham exist at Greenvale Primary School and New Road Primary School. This has been discussed with the schools, and feasibility studies will be undertaken to ensure we are in a position to proceed as demand dictates.
- 11.18. A large development of 800 homes has been approved at East Hill in the Capstone Valley. This development comes with land for a primary school, but the amount of housing will only require a one form entry school. Building a new school would cost around £7m and would result in two small schools within a short distance of one another. The developer contribution from this scheme for primary and nursery is only £3.1m. The affordable and preferred option, therefore, is to expand Kingfisher Primary School, which would increase it from one to two forms of entry. It is a popular school, rated Good by Ofsted, and is the nearest school to the development. It has a good sized site, which would allow it to expand, and would be affordable within the s106 funding. Other local schools have also been considered, and Lordswood Primary School is available as a backup option, or when additional capacity is required in the future. Should a financial contribution be provided, the land identified on the site for the school would be reallocated to the developer.
- 11.19. In September 2022 the Rochester Riverside Church of England Primary School opened Year R in temporary accommodation, to meet demand from the major housing development at Rochester Riverside. The new building was completed for occupation from September 2023, when the school admitted pupils in Year R and 1, as well as Year 2 and 3 due to additional demand.
- 11.20. Given the forecast position as set out in Appendix 1, which is based on the January 2024 census and recent expansions, we will need to be prepared to take action to increase mainstream primary provision. The additional, unforeseen inward movement of families to Chatham and Gillingham since January 2023, as set out in paragraph 11.8, may require bulge classes to provide additional capacity. The feasibility studies which Cabinet have been asked to approve will enable us to react more quickly as demand dictates. The situation will be monitored and scrutinised on an ongoing basis and

further proposals will be brought forward in future reports at the appropriate time.

12. Secondary Schools – Non-selective

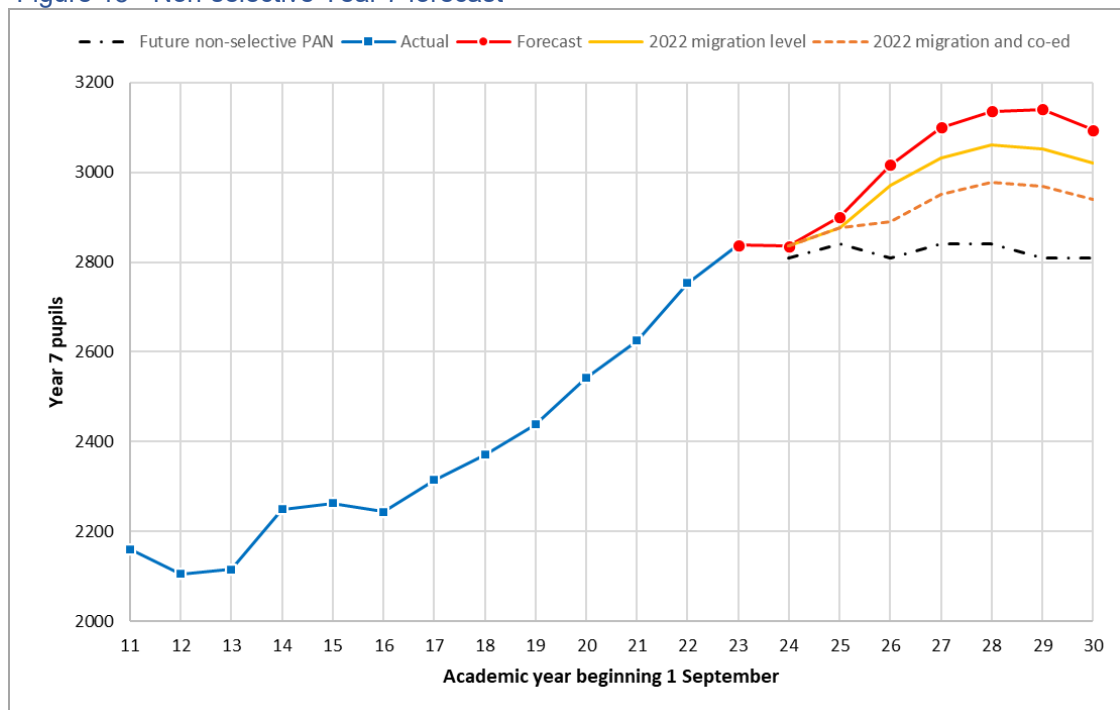
- 12.1. There are two secondary planning areas, one for the six selective schools, and one for the fourteen non-selective schools. Both planning areas cover the whole of Medway, as secondary age pupils are more independent and can travel further than primary pupils. This also means a significant number of pupils can travel from outside Medway. These out of area pupils are accounted for when forecasting.

Figure 14 – Number of additional pupils joining a cohort in the time between starting Year R and starting Year 7



- 12.2. The bulge in primary age pupils is transferring to secondary schools. The pressure on places began in year 7 as the larger of primary cohorts fed into secondary education and is now extending through all year groups. The large primary cohorts are also being further increased by inward migration, creating larger than expected secondary rolls. Figure 14 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.
- 12.3. The peak Reception cohort from 2016 (shown in Figure 11) entered Year 7 in September 2023. After this Year 7 rolls (Figure 15) had been expected to fall slightly and then grow at a lower rate. However, sustained levels of inward migration have pushed forecasts higher, and over the future PAN. The impact of the covid pandemic has been to delay plans, affecting housebuilding, house sales, and the planning of families. This may impact the numbers of pupils arriving from new housing, causing further uncertainty.

Figure 15 - Non-selective Year 7 forecast



- 12.4. The longer-term forecast has grown rapidly over recent years, mainly due to primary rolls seeing increased inward migration. Until 2021, bulge classes and expansions, either in place or planned, would have made sufficient places available for forecasted rolls. The forecast is based on recent patterns of migration, which could potentially reduce in future.
- 12.5. Figure 15 shows the forecast (in red), alongside three variations. The first (shown in yellow) is an estimate of the Year 7 forecast if the level of migration was the same as 2022. The maximum shortfall in places in 2029/30 is reduced from 330 to 241 under this scenario.
- 12.6. The second variation (shown as dashed orange) of the forecast is based on the 2022 level of migration, and also takes into account the proposed change of three selective schools to co-educational provisions in 2026
- 12.7. This forecast variation assumes that 2% of the Year 7 cohort that would have gone to a non-selective school instead goes to a Medway selective school. These pupils would displace out of area pupils from selective schools. The number of Medway pupils attending a Medway selective school would increase, and the spaces they would have taken in non-selective schools would be available for Medway pupils. In this scenario the maximum shortfall in places is reduced from 330 to 159 in 2029/30.
- 12.8. The third scenario, where migration remains at the current level, and the co-ed proposal goes ahead is not shown on the graph as the figures are very similar to the 2022 migration level line (shown in yellow).
- 12.9. Implementation of the proposed change of three selective schools to co-educational provisions of was planned for September 2024, pending a

decision by the Regional Schools Director. However, due to concerns about the potential for a legal challenge, the DfE requested further consultation, and escalated the decision for ministerial level. The final decision on these changes was expected to be made by the Secretary of State in May 2024. However, the announcement of a general election on July 4 meant that the decision could not be made during the pre-election period. Implementation had to be delayed to September 2026 as there was insufficient time for schools to appropriately plan for 2025, for example to amend school prospectuses and discuss with parents to make them aware.

12.10. The co-ed changes will provide a fairer balance of selective places for boys and girls where currently there is a disparity and will potentially allow more Medway pupils to attend. This will mean a larger proportion of Medway pupils will be able to attend a Medway selective school, in turn freeing up the places they would have taken in non-selective schools. Subject to the approval of the proposals, officers will work with the three schools to ensure the necessary physical changes to the buildings are in place. Cabinet agreed the funding for these on 4 April 2023 under decision number 54/2023, and decision number 55/2023 allows for the Academy Trusts to manage projects where they own their site.

12.11. The PAN shown in Figure 15 includes the planned bulge classes and expansions shown in Table 3 below. This plan has been produced in collaboration with schools and trusts.

Table 3 – Bulge class and expansion plan

2024 /2025	2025 /2026	2026 /2027	2027 /2028	2028 /2029	2029 /2030
Maritime (60 places) (B)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)
Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)
Robert Napier (B)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)
Howard Year 8 (B)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)
Waterfront UTC Year 9 (B)	Thomas Aveling (B)	TBC (B)	Leigh Rainham (B)	Maritime (B)	
			TBC (B)	TBC (B)	

P= Permanent, B= Bulge

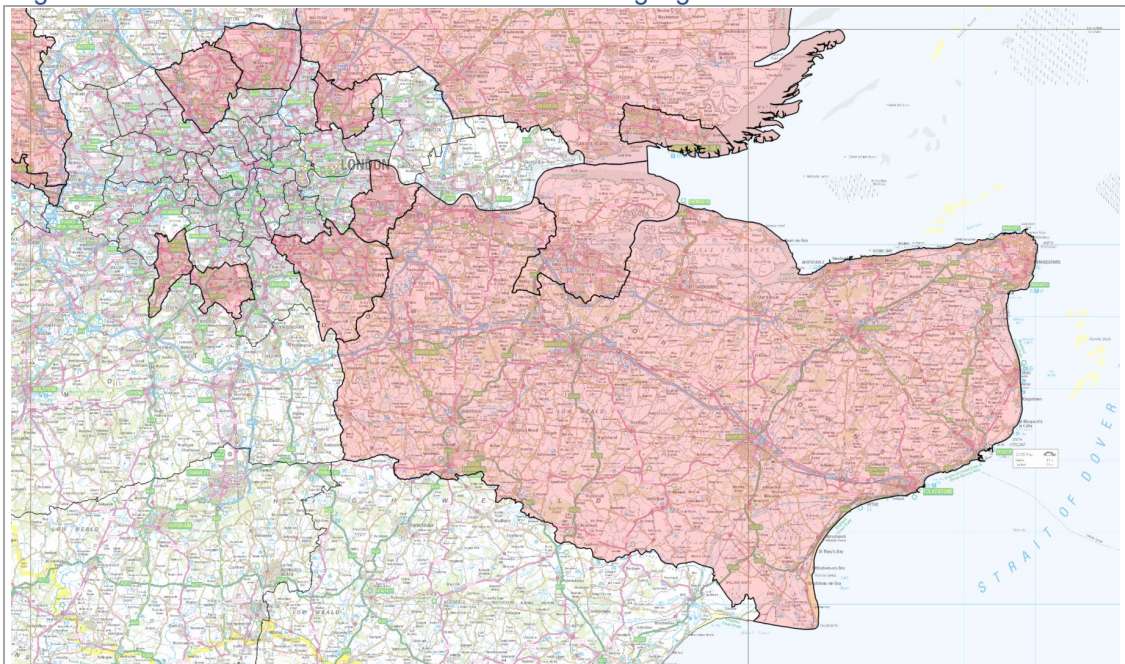
12.12. As shown in Table 3, there are bulge classes in 2026, 2027, and 2028 that are yet to be agreed. There are ongoing discussions with schools to determine the most suitable locations where this additional capacity can be provided, but due to schools already having other bulge classes or been expanded, options for future bulge classes are limited.

12.13. Officers will need to factor in future growth in numbers to allow for in-year admissions as each cohort progresses through the school. When planning to meet the demand we will include a level of additional capacity to ensure places are met without the need for future emergency bulge classes, as the capacity will either be in place or planned to be.

13. Secondary Schools - Selective

13.1. Thirty five out of 153 local authorities in England have selective schools. This includes several authorities in the southeast (Figure 16), but most London boroughs are not selective. The distribution of selective schools is uneven. For example, Essex has 6 times as many secondary age pupils as Southend-on-Sea, but both have four selective schools each. Medway has six selective schools, and 1.5 times as many secondary pupils as Southend.

Figure 16 - Local authorities with selective schools highlighted in red

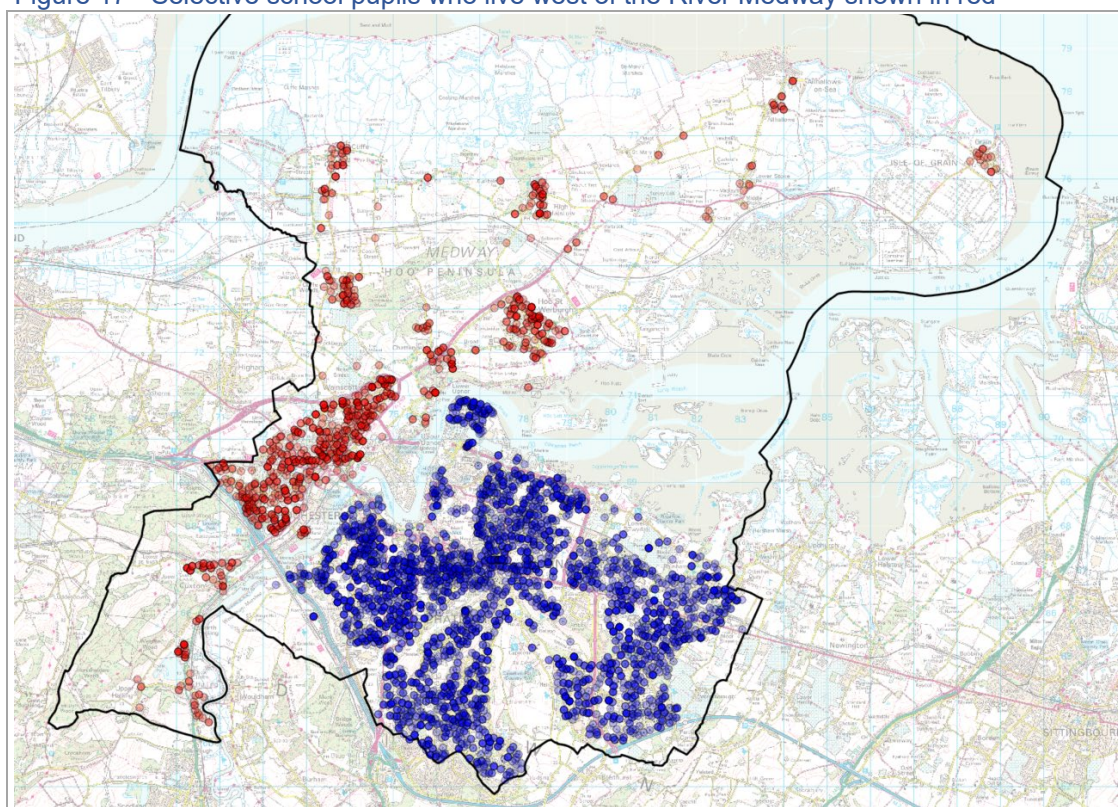


13.2. Disparities such as this, and the geographic spread of selective and non-selective authorities mean that demand for selective places creates unequal cross-border flows. Of the 35 selective authorities, 26 (including Medway) are net importers of pupils.

13.3. 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.

- 13.4. The proposed change to co-ed will rebalance girls and boys selective places in Medway. This will help to make more places available for local pupils. This includes those who live in the Kent villages near the Medway border, whose nearest secondary school is in Medway.
- 13.5. Officers are exploring ways with grammar schools to enable more Medway resident pupils including those with SEND and who may be disadvantaged to access the selective system.
- 13.6. There is no grammar school provision on the northwest side of the River Medway, and so currently 444 pupils from the peninsula area, 739 from Strood, and 108 from Cuxton and Halling (a total of 1291 pupils) travel daily into Rochester, Chatham, and Gillingham to attend a grammar school (Figure 17). There is expected to be a large number of dwellings built on the peninsula around Hoo as part of the local plan proposals, so demand for grammar school places is also expected to increase.

Figure 17 - Selective school pupils who live west of the River Medway shown in red



- 13.7. The Government's Free School programme does not include new grammar schools. Therefore, additional selective places can only be added at existing schools. 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.
- 13.8. It is recommended that the opportunity for providing selective education on the peninsula continues to be explored, and officers are investigating how this may be achieved. As no new grammar schools are possible, there would need to be 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. It would be dependent upon a site and sufficient funding becoming available.

- 13.9. Having grammar school provision on the peninsula would significantly reduce travel patterns through Medway and, in turn, time spent travelling for pupils. Over time this would free up places in the urban grammar schools for local children from varying backgrounds.
- 13.10. The overall grammar school forecast (Appendix 1 – section 4) compared to actual capacity indicates that demand will continue to exceed available capacity. However, sufficient places are available for Medway pupils who pass the Medway test, as excess demand comes from out of area pupils. It is important to note that the graph only takes approved housing schemes into consideration. 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.

14. Primary and secondary mainstream actions

Previously Agreed actions

- 14.1. The projects listed in Table 4 below were agreed by Cabinet on 18 October 2022, under decision numbers 111/2022 and 112/2022. Cabinet agreed on 4 April 2023 that funding for these would be added to the Schools Capital Programme under decision number 54/2023, and this was ratified by full Council on 20 April 2023. Progress on these projects is shown in Appendix 3.

Table 4 - Agreed projects

School	Sector	Increase in places	Estimated cost
St Nicholas Infants	Primary	70	£2.10m
Hundred of Hoo Primary*	Primary	210	£0.80m
Luton Primary	Primary	Zero	£0.40m
Grammar co-education	Secondary	Zero	£2.70m
Maritime Academy Temp site*	Secondary	180 temp	£0.30m
Victory Academy	Secondary	150	£3.45m
Greenacre Academy	Secondary	100	£3.50m
Hundred of Hoo Secondary	Secondary	150	£3.25m
Robert Napier	Secondary	150	£2.94m
St John Fisher*	Secondary	30 (Bulge)	£0.03m
Total		830 (1040)	£19.47m

*Completed

- 14.2. On 26 September 2023, Cabinet agreed to for a feasibility study at Riverside Primary School (Rainham), under decision number 155/2023. They also agreed a project to provide additional dining capacity at Leigh Academy Rainham under decision number 156/2023.

Proposed actions

- 14.3. The following projects will provide additional provision to meet demand coming through as highlighted by the forecasts. Projects will be prioritised within the available funding. Projects will be subject to a formal design, planning, tender process and follow appropriate procurement routes.

Primary

- 14.4. Feasibility studies have been completed at Riverside Primary School (Rainham) and Hoo St Werburgh Primary school, to look at meeting increasing demand in Gillingham and Rainham North, and Peninsula West areas. Projects at these schools are required to provide additional places. Without sufficient basic need funding, the only funding currently available is s106 contributions. A report will be brought to Council to request the addition of these schools to the capital programme when sufficient funding is available.
- 14.5. Additional capacity will be required to meet demand from the development at East Hill (paragraph 11.18), therefore reports will be brought to Council to request a feasibility study and the addition of Kingfisher Primary School to the capital programme when sufficient funding is available..
- 14.6. Demand in Chatham has risen and to ensure that, if necessary, projects can be carried out to provide additional capacity, reports will be brought to Council to request feasibility studies at Greenvale Primary School and New Road Primary School, and the addition of the two schools to the capital programme when sufficient funding is available.

Secondary

- 14.7. No additional capacity is currently planned for selective schools. Instead, it is expected that the change of three schools to co-educational provisions will allow more Medway pupils to attend. This will have the follow-on effect of relieving some pressure from non-selective schools.
- 14.8. Officers continue to monitor forecasts to determine if any future capacity is required in non-selective schools. This will depend on future levels of migration. Officers are in contact with schools and trusts, and if additional bulge classes are required then they will determine the best ways and locations to provide these. Table 3 sets out the planned bulge classes in non-selective schools and this will be updated annually.
- 14.9. However, demand indicates that a new secondary school is likely to be required. Details of this will be brought forward in a separate report at the appropriate time.

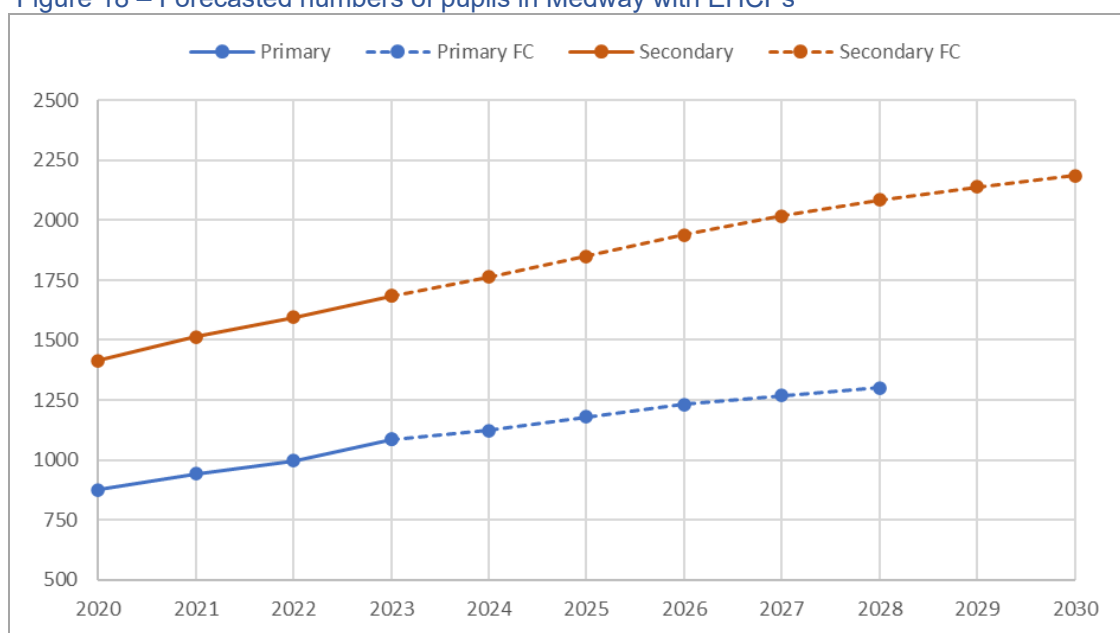
15. Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 15.1. In line with increasing pressure on mainstream places, demand for special school provision has also risen and is forecasted to continue rising (Figure 18). 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 needs and disabilities.

- 15.2. In 2023 the DfE widened the scope of the School Capacity (SCAP) return to include forecasts of demand for SEND places at special schools, SEN units, and resourced provisions. Officers have developed a forecasting system to provide this information, and, as with mainstream forecasts, will monitor the accuracy of these each year.

Figure 18 – Forecasted numbers of pupils in Medway with EHCPs



Primary age¹

- 15.3. Among primary age pupils, the largest need type is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (410 pupils, 38% of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)). This has increased from 283 pupils, 32% of EHCPs in 2020/21. The second largest need type is Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) (277 pupils, 26% of pupils with EHCPs). This has increased from 203 pupils, 23% of EHCPs in 2020/21. Numbers of pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) as a primary need has stayed at a consistent number (87) between 2020/21 and 2023/24. However, more pupils are being identified with SEMH as secondary need, and so additional appropriate capacity needs to be created. Officers are working with schools, trusts, and the DfE to address this.
- 15.4. Overall, most primary age pupils with EHCPs are taught in mainstream schools, including those in resource provisions and SEN units (507 pupils,

¹ Figures are based on the January 2024 census.

47%, down from 55% in 2020/21). 405 pupils attend special schools (37%, up from 36%). 169 pupils attend independent schools or schools outside Medway (16%, up from 9%).

- 15.5. Placements in out of area and independent schools are highest for pupils with an EHCP for ASD (75 pupils, up from 39 pupils in 2020/21), followed by SEMH (39 pupils, up from 14) and SLCN (28 pupils, up from 7).

Secondary age¹

- 15.6. Among secondary age pupils, the largest need type is ASD (610 pupils, 36% of pupils with EHCPs). This has increased from 513 pupils in 2020/21, but the proportion of EHCPs was still 36%. The second largest need is SEMH (345 pupils, 20% of pupils with EHCPs), which has increased from 289 in 2020/21, but the proportion has again remained the same.
- 15.7. For secondary age pupils with EHCPs the majority attend special schools (701 pupils, 42%, down slightly from 43% in 2020/21). There are many more pupils taught in independent schools and out of area schools (650 pupils, 36%, up from 39%), compared to those in mainstream schools, resource provisions, and SEN units. (333 pupils, 20%, down from 21%). The additional resourced provision planned as part of the capital programme will redress this to some extent.
- 15.8. The SEND picture is complex, as pupils may have multiple needs. For instance, a pupil with ASD as their primary need may also have SLCN. This comorbidity makes forecasting and organising additional capacity to meet pupil's precise needs challenging.
- 15.9. For secondary age pupils, the largest number of independent and out of Medway placements are for pupils with ASD (263 pupils, up from 192 in 2020/21), SEMH (204 pupils, up from 152 in 2020/21), MLD (64 pupils, up from 45), and SLCN (54 pupils, up from 29).

Programme

- 15.10. The SEN Capital Programme, a central government initiative between 2018 and 2021, allocated a total of £2.3m to Medway and provided 164 additional places and facilities for pupils across Medway with Education Health and Care Plans.
- 15.11. 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. The main areas of need highlighted 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). Appendix 2 sets out the forecasts for the various need types.

- 15.12. 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 is being added to enable the resourced provisions. A number of special schools are also being expanded. This will ensure that the most appropriate provision is in place to meet the pupil need. The agreed list of projects is shown in Table 5.
- 15.13. This programme will aim to reduce the need to place children and young people in out of area placements. This will support the pupils in remaining close to their family and friends, will enable local transport and where possible and appropriate, enable young people to develop skills to support independent living. It will also reduce travelling times for the most vulnerable pupils which in turn will reduce transport costs, and the overall programme will contribute towards reducing the High Needs Budget deficit.
- 15.14. The overall proportion of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan catered for in a mainstream school in Medway is below national levels. However, this picture is complex, with some non-selective secondary schools having a higher proportion than national. Work is ongoing to ensure mainstream schools receive the appropriate support and resources to enable them to cater for an increasing proportion of children with SEND.
- 15.15. 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.
- 15.16. Expansions to provide additional secondary SEND places at Abbey Court School (56 places) and Bradfields Academy (100 places) have completed.
- 15.17. The ASD resourced provision at Strood Academy for 25-32 secondary aged pupils opened in the existing building in September 2022. This was initially available for five pupils, and the capital project is now complete.
- 15.18. 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 SEMH and ASD. 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. It is expected that subject to formal DfE approval that the school will be in place for September 2026. Formal planning approval has been granted subject to a number of planning conditions.

16. SEND actions

Previously agreed actions

- 16.1. A total of £16.7m is available for SEND projects, which is a combination of SEND capital grant, Safety Valve Intervention (SVI) programme, and roll over from previous programmes. Cabinet agreed that this funding could be used for the projects listed in Table 5 on 4 April 2023 under decision number 54/2023. Progress on these projects is shown in Appendix 3.
- 16.2. Due to escalating construction costs, insufficient funding is available to complete all the previously approved SEND projects. Officers are seeking a suitable selective school to provide a 25 place resourced provision for grammar ability pupils with ASD as the project at the Sir Joseph Williamson Mathematical School can no longer proceed. When the school is identified, a report will be brought to Council to request the approval of the new project and the virement of the funding. Table 5 sets out the revised programme subject to Cabinet and Council approvals.

Table 5 - Agreed SEND actions

School	Need	Sector	Increase in places	Cost
Victory Academy Resourced Provision	SEMH	Secondary	25-32	£2.5m
Strood Academy Resourced Provision*	ASD	Secondary	25-32	£2.3m
Leigh Academy Resourced Provision	MLD	Secondary	25-30	£2.3m
Suitable selective school TBC	ASD	Secondary	25-30	£2.4m
Inspire Special School interim increase*	SEMH	Secondary	40	£1.3m
Rivermead Expansion	ASD	Secondary	40-50	£2.9m
Danecourt Expansion	ASD/SLD	Primary	40	£1.4m
Pre-Beeches @Rowans*	SEMH	Primary	20	£0.55m
Total			299 (max)	£15.7m

*Completed

Proposed actions

- 16.3. Central Government has allocated Medway an additional £5.4m to create SEND places, which is in addition to the amounts described above. It is proposed to utilise this funding on the following projects:
- £600k to Rivermead at Stoke (9x589) to enable the completion of the project due to escalating costs and planning restrictions. Previous estimates indicated £2.9m for the project but following detailed design and planning conditions the costs have increased.
 - £200k to Danecourt to enable the completion of the project due to escalating costs. Previous estimates indicated £1.4m for the project but following detailed design and relevant surveys, cost have increased.

- £4.6m to increase education provision for children with EHCPs. A report will be brought to Council to request the addition of these schemes to the capital programme when the schools have been identified.

Council is asked to add this funding to the capital programme (recommendation 1.1.1).

- 16.4. Cabinet previously agreed to add the Resourced Provision expansion at Delce Academy to the capital programme (under decision number 54/2023). However, the expansion is no longer required there. The pupils will now attend Pre-Beeches, and so the Cabinet has asked to approve the additional capacity, and the reallocation of £250K from the Delce project (9x605) to Pre-Beeches at the Rowans (9x604) to provide additional primary SEMH capacity
- 16.5. Now The Rowans are taking additional primary age pupils, they need to be able to provide hot meals for students. Their current kitchen is insufficient, and so will require expansion. Cabinet has approved this additional work, and a virement of £350k from the underspent project at Inspire (9x601), to provide additional funding for the project at The Rowans and funding for the kitchen (9x604).
- 16.6. Future SEND places and resourced provisions beyond the approved schemes set out above are likely to be needed and officers recommend undertaking feasibility studies to determine where this would be possible. Places are particularly needed for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- 16.7. To provide a smooth pathway for pupils in special schools, Medway will look to create all through special schools. Currently Abbey Court and Bradfields operate in that way, and therefore over time we will explore the options to create secondary provision at Danecourt and primary provision at Rivermead and Inspire Special Schools.

17. Alternative Provision

Current and future position

- 17.1. There are currently 130 secondary places allocated for pupils to receive education through alternative provision because they are unable to access school due to an exclusion, and 45 places for medical need. Included within this are short-term assessment placements that can be assigned when it is viewed by the secondary Fair Access Panel that there is insufficient information about a pupil or good reason to believe that the pupil displays challenging behaviour/significant SEN beyond what a mainstream school would normally be able to successfully address and they have come from out of the county.
- 17.2. The GFC school closed as of 31st August 2024 and so will no longer be supporting alternative provision on their site.

- 17.3. 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). 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.
- 17.4. A full review of alternative provision took place in the Autumn term 2022. The review considered how AP aligns with and supports the wider SEND system, as outlined in the SEND Green paper 2022. It also considered how best to further increase the capacity of Alternative Provision to support pre-emptive and reintegration activity, including revolving door and outreach. There is continued work towards the outcomes of this review.
- 17.5. Academy 21, an online provider, is used to help support young people who have been permanently excluded before accessing alternative provision if this is deemed appropriate. Alternatively, the young people return directly to mainstream education.

18. Condition Programme

- 18.1. Local authorities are responsible for the condition of maintained schools, to ensure that they are safe, warm, dry, and provide secure learning environments.
- 18.2. The condition programme is funded by an annual DfE grant (Table 6). However, as the number of maintained schools falls, and the cost of maintenance increases, the amount provided allows for less work to be completed.
- 18.3. This is causing significant issues in maintaining schools. The condition programme is restricted by the amount of funding available. Projects have to be prioritised, causing delays of 2-3 years. Therefore, the school estate is deteriorating. There is a risk that further academy conversions will reduce funding allocations further, making it challenging to maintain schools appropriately.

Table 6 - School Condition Allocations

Financial year	School Condition Grant
2017-18	£1,466,745
2018-19	£1,016,147
2019-20	£1,016,147
2020-21	£901,891
2021-22	£901,891
2022-23	£775,901
2023-24	£774,589
2024-25	£608,453

19. Cabinet

- 19.1. The report was considered by the Cabinet on 1 October 2204 and its decisions are set out below:
- 19.2. The Cabinet noted the progress made against the School Organisation Plan and School Place Planning Strategy frameworks, which had ensured that the Council had met its duty and sufficient school places were currently available to meet demand.
- 19.3. The Cabinet recommended Full Council approve the addition of £5.4m High Needs Provision Capital Allocation to the SEND capital programme and the addition of:
- £600k to Rivermead at Stoke (9x589) to enable the completion of the project due to escalating costs and planning restrictions. Previous estimates indicated £2.9m for the project but following detailed design and planning conditions the costs have increased.
 - £200k to Danecourt to enable the completion of the project due to escalating costs. Previous estimates indicated £1.4m for the project but following detailed design and relevant surveys, costs have increased.
 - £4.6m to increase education provision for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- 19.4. The Cabinet approved the reallocation of £250K from the Delce resourced provision project (9x605) to Pre-Beeches at the Rowans (9x604) to provide additional primary Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) capacity.
- 19.5. The Cabinet approved the virement of £350k from the Inspire temporary classroom project (9x601) to Pre-Beeches at the Rowans (9x604), to provide additional funding for the project at The Rowans and the additional kitchen work.
- 19.6. The Cabinet recommended Full Council approve the addition of £798k of agreed s106 contributions from planning applications: MC/21/3379 - Land South of Stoke Road; MC/21/2612 - The Hollies Sharnal Street High Halstow;

MC/19/0287 Land at Town Road Cliffe Woods; and MC/16/4268 - Land North of Commissioners Road Strood, to the Hundred of Hoo Academy expansion project 9x592. Noting that should the Council not receive the full allocation of s106 funding expected, then alternative forms of funding would need to be found, such as other grants or contributions.

19.7. The Cabinet recommended Full Council approve the addition of £21k of s106 funding from planning application MC/05/1031 - Alps, Borstal, to the capital programme for Pilgrim Primary School to replace the play equipment for the use of Pilgrim School children.

19.8. The Cabinet recommended Full Council approve the addition of £35,799.51 of s106 funding from planning applications: MC/19/0866 – Former Redvers Centre; MC/18/3659 – Chatham Waterfront Globe Lane; and MC/20/0559 Former NHS Walk-in centre 547-553 Canterbury Street, to Greenvale Primary School (9x566) to fund additional furniture.

20. Risk Management

20.1. The following would be assessed as risks if recommendations from the individual proposals flowing from this report were not 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.	CI
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.	BI
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.	DIII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
That the level of inward migration exceeds forecasts	If inward migration continues at unexpected and unprecedented levels, there will be pressure placed on areas of Medway to provide further additional capacity to meet school place demand	Continue to monitor births, migration and housing developments and accuracy of forecasting and start discussions with schools around school expansion or bulge classes.	CII
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.	CII
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.	BIII

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

21. Consultation

- 21.1. No consultation is required for this report, but any specific proposals that result from this report will include a consultation process as appropriate.
- 21.2. No Diversity Impact Assessment accompanies this report. Assessments will be provided for individual proposals brought forward from this report.

22. Climate change implications

- 22.1. No climate change implications arise directly from this report. However, when any project is progressed, designs and construction methods will consider such impacts and look to contribute to the Council's ambitious and exciting climate change agenda.

- 22.2. Creating local provision for children and young people is expected to reduce car journeys across Medway which would reduce any negative impacts upon air quality.
- 22.3. Pupils are encouraged by schools to walk or cycle to school, and this becomes more achievable if the provision is local.
- 22.4. 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, using LED lighting, improving insulation, installing photovoltaics, providing vehicle charging points, and where possible using local contractors.

23. Financial implications

- 23.1. 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.
- 23.2. 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 cumulatively to identify the most suitable and wider use of developer contributions or developer provided schools to provide the most benefit.
- 23.3. In recent years no basic need funding had been provided by central government to Medway Council to provide additional mainstream 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 allocated £17,049,927 in basic need funding to Medway. There is no basic need allocation for 2024/25, and £93,994 for 2025/26. These allocations are based on the shortfall between forecasted pupil numbers and school capacity provided through the annual SCAP return.

Table 7 - Basic Need allocations

Funding Year	Amount of Basic Need
2023/24	£17,049,927
2024/25	£0
2025/26	£93,994

- 23.4. For 2023/24 the government allocated £7,961,522 for SEND, and a successful bid through the Safety Valve Intervention programme realised an additional £7,188,479. In March 2024 the government allocated Medway an additional £3,872,793 for 2023/24, and £1,574,936 for 2024/25.
- 23.5. Officers will seek to fund the projects proposed in paragraphs 14 (mainstream) and 16 (SEND) using the most suitable combination of basic

need, SEND grant funding and available section 106 receipts and therefore remove the need to fill any funding gaps through borrowing.

- 23.6. The table below sets out the received, agreed, and requested Education Section 106 funding. When received, this funding will be utilised at the appropriate schools to create additional places to meet demand. S106 receipts are often received in instalments and over a period of time as the trigger points are reached, this can make it challenging to plan too far ahead, but education officers work closely with planning officers to understand the phasing and progress of the various developments to assist with place planning.

Table 8 - Amounts of s106 funding

	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Total
Agreed s106 funding	£4,999,744.83	£11,729,580.67	£13,302,992.02	£30,032,317.52
Received	£2,937,834.44	£7,045,238.20	£5,252,866.04	£15,235,938.68
Spent	£2,327,259.02	£6,251,913.14	£7,792,930.75	£16,372,102.91
To come (started developments)	£135,775.39	£1,218,406.11	£953,859.10	£2,308,040.60
To come (not started)	£2,167,576.54	£4,271,368.09	£7,498,879.05	£13,937,823.68
To come (total)	£2,303,351.93	£5,489,774.20	£8,452,738.15	£16,245,864.28
Available (inc accruals)	£610,575.41	£793,325.07	-£2,540,064.71	-£1,136,164.23
Available (excl accruals)	£727,635.87	£1,037,651.58	£751,515.08	£2,516,802.53
Total future available (total to come + available inc accruals)	£2,913,927.34	£6,283,099.27	£5,912,673.44	£15,109,700.05

- 23.7. 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.

- 23.8. 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.

- 23.9. The expansion project at Hundred of Hoo Academy was approved by cabinet (decision number 111/2022) and added to the capital programme (decision number 54/2023). The project would have provided a block of classrooms for the sixth form, and available s106 funding has been allocated to it. However, due to increasing demand created by new housing in the area, the scope of the project has been increased. It will now facilitate a permanent 1FE expansion, and so will need further funding. This will come from agreed s106 contributions (shown in Table 9). These contributions have not been received, but the additional capacity is needed immediately. The academy trust has helpfully agreed to forward fund the project on the proviso that the s106 funding is passed to them as each instalment is paid by the developer. This project is being carried out under a legal agreement, the format of which cabinet authorised under decision number 55/2023. The trust will be reimbursed in stages as the developers pay the contributions. Cabinet has agreed the addition of this £798k of s106 funding to project 9x592 in the capital programme as each instalment is received. There is no expectation for the Council to borrow any funding in advance of the s106 receipts being received. The Leigh Academy Trust are taking the risk on this and only when funding is received from these schemes will this be passed on to the trust. Should the council not receive the full allocation of s106 funding expected, then alternative forms of funding will need to be found, such as other grants or contributions.

Table 9 - s106 contributions allocated to Hundred of Hoo

Planning ref	Site	Amount
MC/21/3379	Land South of Stoke Road	£72,716.17
MC/21/2612	The Hollies, Sharnal Street, High Halstow	£85,938.20
MC/19/0287	Land at Town Road, Cliffe Woods	£471,047.40
MC/16/4268	Land North of Commissioners Road, Strood	£169,002.77

- 23.10. Temporary accommodation was provided on the Pilgrim School site while the delayed Rochester Riverside Primary School was being completed. This was the most suitable location because Pilgrim is near to the Rochester Riverside site, and part of the same trust. However, as part of the enabling works for the temporary accommodation play equipment which had been provided by the parents association had to be removed. Therefore, £21k of s106 funding from planning application MC/05/1031 - Alps, Borstal, is being requested to replace the play equipment for the use of Pilgrim School children. Cabinet has recommended to Council this addition to the capital programme (recommendation 1.1.3).
- 23.11. The project to facilitate the transition of Greenvale Primary School from an infant school to a full primary has experienced an overspend of £12,347.97. The school will now take junior year groups as part of the expansion, and requires funding for additional furniture. These costs will be covered from available s106 funding from planning applications MC/19/0866 – Former

Redvers Centre, MC/18/3659 – Chatham Waterfront, Globe Lane, and MC/20/0559 Former NHS Walk-in centre, 547-553 Canterbury Street. Cabinet has recommended to Council the addition of £35,799.51 from these agreements to the capital programme for this purpose (recommendation 1.1.4).

24. Legal implications

- 24.1. 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.
- 24.2. There is 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.
- 24.3. 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 Director 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.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Mainstream Forecasts
- Appendix 2 – SEND Forecasts
- Appendix 3 – Project progress
- Appendix 4 – DfE Scorecards
- Appendix 5 – Early Years Capital Grant Projects

Background papers

[School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27](#)