Cabinet

25 August 2026

Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27

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

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Summary

This annual review sets out progress against the strategy, shows areas of emerging demand and makes recommendations to ensure that sufficient school places are available.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Cabinet is requested to:

1.2. Approve the reallocation of the £612,713 underspend from the Rivermead project to the Danecourt Secondary project, as set out in paragraph 9.8 of the report.

1.3. Recommend to Council the addition of £5 million from the 2026/27 High Needs Capital Allocation to the Danecourt secondary project, as set out in paragraph 9.4 of the report.

1.4. Recommend to Council the addition of £400,000 from the 2026/27 High Needs Capital Allocation to the All Saints SRP project, as set out in paragraph 9.9 of the report.

1.5. Recommend to Council the addition of the St Margaret's Infants SRP project to the Education Capital Programme, and £220,000 from the 2026/27 High

Needs Capital Allocation to this project, and approve the commencement of design and tender process, as set out in paragraph 9.10 of the report.

1.6. Approve the allocation from the High Needs Capital Allocation grant of £60,000 to the Napier Primary SRP project as set out in paragraph 9.12 of the report.

1.7. Approve the allocation from the High Needs Capital Allocation grant of £40,000 to the St Margarets Junior SRP project, as set out in paragraph 9.12 of the report.

1.8. Recommend to Council the addition of the Riverside Primary phased expansion project to the Education Capital Programme, and the allocation of £1,621,988.52 s106 towards this project, as set out in paragraph 7.8 of the report and approve the commencement of design and tender process,

1.9. Recommend to Council the allocation of £42,500 additional s106 funding to The Beeches free school project on the Rowans site for play equipment and outreach cabin project, as set out in paragraph 10.2 of the report.

1.10. Approve the allocation of £5,811.33 s106 funding to Greenvale Primary for additional furniture to facilitate the transition from an infant to primary school, as set out in paragraph 7.12 of the report.

1.11. Approve the addition of the Howard 3G pitch project to the Education Capital Programme, and the allocation of a £150,000 s106 funding contribution, as set out in paragraph 8.5 of the report.

1.12. Note the progress made, which has ensured the Council has met its duty, and sufficient school places are available.

2. Suggested reasons for decisions

2.1. Approving the recommendations in section 1 of the report will ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, and the most effective and appropriate use of public funds.

3. Budget and Policy Framework

3.1. 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.

3.2. 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." Delivery of any approved proposals would be through available funding in the Education Capital Programme. Therefore, this is a matter for Cabinet. Any additions to the Capital Programme are a matter for full Council.

3.3. The Cabinet approved the School Place Planning Strategy Principles in May 2022, as part of the School Place Planning Strategy. These guidelines ensure that changes are based upon improving schools and raising standards, so the Council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

3.4. On 27 March 2025 the Department for Education announced that Medway would receive £25,497,189 of Basic Need funding for the period 2026 to 2028. They also announced £4,837,957 of High Needs Provision Capital for 2025/26. This funding was allocated to projects in the 2025/26 annual review and progress can be seen in Appendix 3 of the report.

3.5. In 2026, a further £5,721,975 High Needs Capital was allocated for 2026/27.This report sets out plans to use this grant, along with any remaining funding rolled over from previous allocations, underspends, and s106 developer contributions.

3.6. The costs provided in this report are estimations based upon national benchmarking data (Appendix 4) and recent projects undertaken in Medway. They will be confirmed after progressing through the detailed design and procurement process. This may result in a need to transfer funding, add additional funding where costs may have increased, and through virements between the project budgets when the finalised costs are known. Projects may also need to be re-prioritised until sufficient funding is available. Virements over £2 million will be brought to Council for agreement, those between £1 million and £2 million will be brought to Cabinet, and those up to £1 million will be brought to the Director of People for agreement.

3.7. Currently our estimated costs for the projects in this report, and those required from the local plan, are based around the following:

- 1 FE primary expansion £4-5 million.
- New 2 FE primary school £8-10 million.
- New 3 FE primary school £10-12 million.
- 1 FE secondary expansion £5-6 million.
- New 6 FE secondary school £40-45 million.
- New 8 FE secondary school £45-50 million.

3.8. It is expected that there will be future capital funding from central government for mainstream and specialist provisions. However, at this time the levels and timings of future funding are unknown, and further reports will be presented for approval and the addition of projects to the programme at the relevant times to ensure that sufficient school places are maintained.

3.9. Members will be updated on project progress through future annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy.

4. Annual review

4.1. Annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy will highlight emerging need and propose actions for providing sufficient school places. These proposals are based on the latest information, and analysis of local and national policy and strategy.

4.2. This annual review and the recommendations in it are based on the annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2026. Appendix 1 of the report shows the forecasts for the mainstream primary and secondary planning areas, and Appendix 2 sets out the SEND forecasts.

4.3. The forecasts in this report only include the impact of housing developments with planning permission. As the local planning authority approves more housing schemes, future forecasts will reflect this, and demand for places will rise.

4.4. All local authorities aim to have a reasonable surplus of school places. This means that places are available for pupils who arrive during the school year, such as children moving into new housing. The nationally accepted level of surplus is 5%, to ensure places are available but without the risk of making schools unviable.

5. Medway overview

5.1. Medway's Local Plan shows the need for approximately 25,000 additional homes across Medway by 2041. The Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in December 2025. It is anticipated that the adoption of the Local Plan will be late 2026. This will result in an increase in the rate of housebuilding. In 2023 Medway's population stood at 286,800 and will grow significantly by 2041, which will lead to an increase in demand for school places.

5.2. School place planning officers are working with planning and development colleagues on the Local Plan infrastructure delivery plan and have developed a focused Education Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Appendix 5). Together, they are looking at the location and timing of new schools and expansions. This will continue to evolve during the development and implementation of the Local Plan.

5.3. There are other medium to large-sized developments which have started ahead of the local plan. This makes it harder to provide co-ordinated school expansions, as we are having to manage these in isolation. The land and financial contributions provided by them are not necessarily available in time to meet demand.

Local Government Reorganisation

5.4. The Government announced on 16 July 2026 that a new North Kent authority will be created through the merger of Medway with the Kent County Council boroughs of Dartford and Gravesham. This is expected to take effect from April 2028. Currently, the statutory responsibility for planning and providing school places rests with Medway Council within Medway and Kent County Council in Dartford and Gravesham. This responsibility will transfer to the new North Kent unitary authority.

5.5. The change in unitary authority area will impact on school place planning, forecasting and the delivery of education capital programmes. Over the coming months we will continue to work closely with our neighbouring boroughs to understand the wider demand for school places and assess how best to implement a coordinated approach to ensure sufficient school capacity across North Kent.

5.6. Until then existing statutory responsibilities remain unchanged, and Medway Council must maintain its successful delivery of school places and capital projects in line with demand.

6. Early years

6.1. Local authorities are required to secure sufficient childcare for parents who are working, 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, affordable and delivered flexibly at a range of high-quality settings.

6.2. 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.

6.3. There are 266 Early Years providers within Medway, offering approximately 6,379 childcare places.

6.4. In November 2025, there were 6,337 full-time equivalent places which is an increase of 42 full-time equivalent places.

6.5. 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.

6.6. 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.

6.7. 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.

6.8. Within Medway, we have been able to sustain the number of providers through the engagement of new provisions offering the government funded childcare.

6.9. 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.

7. Primary School actions

Peninsula and Strood

7.1. Forecasts for the Peninsula West planning area show that additional capacity will be needed to meet demand. This is due to a combination of increased births and people moving into the area. Both are related to the number of houses being built in and around Hoo village.

7.2. The Marlborough Centre (Specialist Resourced Provision) is being relocated from Hoo St Werburgh Primary, and this will create space which will be used to expand the primary school by 210 places from September 2028. The school will provide bulge classes in September 2026 and 2027, in advance of the permanent expansion work.

7.3. There is still forecasted to be shortfall in Year R places in 2026, but the neighbouring Strood planning area is forecasted to have a surplus. A number of pupils from the Chattenden and western Hoo area travel to Strood for school. Therefore, it is expected that the Strood surplus will cater for the Hoo shortfall.

7.4. In Strood there are expected to be a number of surplus places in Year R in future years, and it may be necessary to reduce Published Admission Numbers (PANs) at one or two schools to protect the financial viability of all schools in the area. This will be discussed with appropriate schools to ensure that the capacity remains available for when demand increases in the future.

Gillingham and Rainham

7.5. Due to inward migration to the Gillingham planning area, forecasts show an increasing demand for places in Years 4 to 6. However, Reception, Year 1, Year 2, and to some extent Year 3 are expected to have surplus places. It may be possible for schools to use surplus capacity in lower year groups to take bulge classes in higher ones.

7.6. The Academy of Woodlands is taking a bulge class in Year 4 in September 2026 to help manage this demand.

7.7. Some schools have requested to lower their PANs in Year R due to lower numbers of applications. This will be managed to ensure that capacity remains available to meet future demand, or if the space is needed for the bulge classes noted above. Numbers will rise again in future as local plan housing developments come forward. However further schools may still need to reduce their PANs, depending on inward movement to the immediate area.

7.8. Due to new housing in the Rainham North planning area, it is recommended that available s106 funding is used to carry out a phased expansion project at Riverside Primary School*. The first phase will be to add a special resourced provision (SRP), and over time as demand dictates and funding allows the school will be expanded to 3 forms of entry. Phasing the project will allow places to increase in line with the new house building, and availability of s106 funding from the developments. The SRP will provide an increase in specialist places in the area for pupils with EHCPs. This will reduce the number of pupils who will need to attend a special school. Currently there is no basic need funding available for this project, but as the school is in an area of new house building, s106 funding is available. This funding will be utilised from the list of schemes shown in Table 1. When the future phases are created a mix of basic need and s106 funding will be utilised (recommendation 1.8).

Table 1 - Available s106 contributions to use for Riverside Primary expansion

Planning reference	Integra code	Scheme name	S106 available
MC/16/2051	750214	Land at Otterham Quay Lane, Rainham	£1,154,739.53
MC/19/2898	750367	Land West of Station Road, Rainham	£365,481.92
MC/07/0924	750106	Land at The Junction Of Featherby Road And Beechings Way, Gillingham	£36,000.00
MC/22/1109	750456	Land at Lennoxwood adjacent to Petham Green, Twydall	£31,500.89
MC/22/1875	750381	Kingdom Hall, Bloors Lane, Rainham	£34,266.18
Total			£1,621,988.52

*It is expected that the whole expansion project will cost significantly more than funding currently available, and additional funding will be requested when we reach phase 2 and additional funding is available.

Chatham and Rochester

7.9. Overall, in the Chatham and Rochester planning areas there is forecasted to be sufficient space. However, there are also a number of housing developments in the two areas which may result in an increase in pupil numbers in future years.

7.10. Forecast show surplus capacity in Year R, and so some schools may need to reduce their PANs. As with other areas, this space will remain available for when rolls increase in the future. Recently there has been increased migration into higher year groups, rather than into Reception years.

7.11. In the 2025 annual review it was agreed to expand New Road Primary School, from a 1.5 form-of-entry (FE) school to 2 form-of-entry (decision numbers 112/2025 and 114/2025). This will provide additional capacity for the long term, and being a 2FE school is more financially and educationally viable than 1.5FE.

7.12. Greenvale Primary School expanded from an infant school in 2020, and so will take their first Year 6 class in September 2026. They will require a final instalment of funding for additional furniture to facilitate this. It is recommended to use £5,811.33 of available s106 funding from MC/20/0559 - Former NHS Walk-in Centre, 547-553 Canterbury Street, Gillingham, ME7 5LF (recommendation 1.10).

Cuxton & Halling

7.13. There are no actions currently proposed for the Cuxton and Halling area as they are forecasted to be sufficient spaces. However, there have been several large housing developments in the area in recent years, including over the boundary at Peter's Village in Kent. Forecasts will be monitored to ensure that sufficient places remain available.

Local plan – primary school provision

7.14. The housing developments expected to come forward under the local plan will require additional school capacity. The current plan for new school places offers the following options:

- Peninsula
    - Chattenden expanded by 1 FE and relocated.
    - High Halstow expanded by 1 FE and relocated.
    - Either one New 3 FE or two new 2 FE schools in Hoo.
- Chatham and Rochester
    - Greenvale expansion by 1 FE if required.
- Walderslade (Capstone Valley)
    - New 3 FE school.
    - New 2 FE East Hill primary school (approved in 2025, decision numbers 112/2025, 114/2025, 119/2025).
    - One new 1 FE school with 2 FE core facilities.
    - Lordswood expanded by 1 FE if required.
    - Kingfisher expanded by 1 FE if required.
    - Assumes Lidsing development provides a 3 FE primary school.
- Strood
    - Two New 2 FE schools.
    - Temple Mill expansion by 1 FE.
- Gillingham
    - 2 FE TBC.
- Rainham
    - Riverside Primary School expansion by 1 FE.

7.15. The actual number of places required will depend on the phasing of the developments. Education officers have been working with planning colleagues to produce the infrastructure delivery plan. This will set out the expected number and timing of schools to meet expected demand.

7.16. The main challenges in providing these new and expanded schools are sourcing sufficient funding and land. These new primary schools and expansions are estimated to cost between £94 and £114 million. Timing is also an important consideration. The new places will need to be available for when pupils move into the area, but not too far in advance, as empty schools can be financially unviable. While funding will generally come from s106 agreements, these contributions are generally paid as certain numbers of occupations are reached. Therefore, the funding for the schools will not always be available in advance of the pupils moving in.

8. Secondary School actions

Secondary non-selective

8.1. The Beyond Schools Trust have proposed that Greenacre School and Walderslade School will merge to become a single co-educational school, called The Capstone School. This is proposed to take place from September 2027. The PAN for the combined school will be 340 from September 2027, compared to 360 currently.

8.2. An extra classroom block is being provided at Strood Academy (decision numbers 112/2025 and 114/2025. This will allow the school to increase capacity permanently to help meet demand. This project is currently at the feasibility stage.

8.3. Due to work undertaken in previous years, there is forecasted to be sufficient non-selective places in Year 7 until 2028/29. St John Fisher took a bulge class in 2023/24, and so the space used for this should become available again for 2028/29.

8.4. A further option to expand non-selective provision is available at Brompton Academy. This is subject to further funding becoming available.

8.5. The Howard School are working with the Football Foundation to build a 3G sports pitch. Along with previous work, to expand the dining facilities, to enable the school to take bulge classes, the pitch will ensure that sufficient sports facilities are available to support them to take additional pupils in the future. It would also support community facilities in the area, as the pitch could be used outside of school hours. This pitch would be funded by a combination of a Football Foundation grant, and contributions from the Howard Academy Trust, and Medway Council. It is recommended to utilise s106 contributions up to £150,000 from the £166,017.91 available from 750367 - MC/19/2898 Land West of Station Road, Rainham (recommendation 1.11).

8.6. Table 2 shows the rolling programme of bulge classes (B) and permanent expansions (P) for the next four years. Discussions are ongoing regarding the potential bulge class for 2027/28.

Table 2 - Bulge class and expansion plan

2026 /2027	**2027 /2028**	**2028 /2029**	**2029 /2030**
Thomas Aveling (B)	Leigh Rainham (B)	Maritime (B)	
	TBC (B)	TBC St John Fisher (B)	
Strood Academy (30 places) (P)	Strood Academy (30 places) (P)	Strood Academy (60 places) (P)	Strood Academy (60 places) (P)

Secondary selective

8.7. The change of three selective schools to co-educational provisions from September 2026 is expected to increase the number of Medway children attending selective schools. This should in turn free up spaces in non-selective schools. It may take a few years for the full impact of this to be realised.

8.8. The percentage of offers to out of area pupils for selective school places fell to 16.5% in 2026, compared to 20.3% the year before. While the total number of offers also fell, the percentage in 2026 is the lowest in the last 5 years, even compared to years with fewer total offers. From 2027 the pass percentage will increase to 26% of the Medway cohort, and this will further increase the number of Medway pupils attending selective schools and provide more flexibility of places in non-selective schools.

Table 3 - Percentage of out of area offers for selective schools

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Percentage of offers to out of area pupils	18.8%	17.5%	20.5%	20.3%	16.5%
Total offers to selective schools	1057	1091	1108	1155	1117
Pass percentage	23+2%*	23+2%	23+2%	25%	25%

*23% from the test + 2% on review

Local plan – secondary school provision

8.9. As with primary schools, the local plan will also produce demand for additional secondary school places. The current plan expectation is for:

- Non-selective (all with potential to expand if required in future)
  - One 6/8FE school in Capstone Valley.
  - One 8FE school in Strood (for Medway and Gravesham).
  - One 6/8FE school on Peninsula.
- Selective
  - Either: six 1 FE phased expansions;
  - Or: One satellite 6 FE school on Peninsula or in Strood.

8.10. As noted in paragraph 7.16 above, the challenges in providing these new school places are finding sufficient funding and land, as well as timing the new provision to meet demand. These new secondary schools and expansions are estimated to cost between £170 and £195 million.

8.11. While the Lidsing development, on the Maidstone Borough Council side of the boundary in the Capstone Valley, includes a primary school, secondary pupils are more likely attend a Medway school. Therefore, Kent County Council will provide the secondary school element of the developer contribution to Medway Council. This will be combined with contributions from the other Medway developments in the Capstone Valley to contribute towards providing a new secondary school. However, as these agreed developments will only provide a total of approximately £20 million, there will be a shortfall of around £20- £25 million for this school. Discussions are ongoing as to how this funding gap will be closed.

8.12. A site has been identified for the secondary school, which will provide places for the Capstone Valley and Lidsing developments. This site is at Abbots Court Farm and is owned by Medway Council. The site is allocated for a 6FE secondary school in the submitted Local Plan[1] as part of Allocation HW3 in Policy SA7. Abbotts Court Farm has been identified as the optimum site to accommodate a new secondary school, subject to compensation for the loss of development value". Normally with developments of the size of Lidsing and the developments in the Capstone Valley, the developer would be expected to provide a site for a school, using their own land. Therefore, in this case, Medway Council is seeking s106 contributions from the developer for the value of the Council's land, as well as the usual build cost of the school and Medway Council is working with the developer, Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council on this.

9. SEND actions

9.1. Over the next 5 years, primary EHCPs are forecasted to increase by 411, and secondary EHCPs by 343. These figures are calculated from the historic proportion of pupils in each year group with an EHCP, plus the average year-on-year increase in EHCPs over time for that year group.

9.2. The Government published its Education Estates Strategy in February 2026. This looks to make schools inclusive by design and introduces the term inclusion bases to replace the terms SEN unit, and resourced provision. The overall aim is to increase the number of pupils with SEND who are able to remain in a mainstream setting. Medway has been working towards this in recent years, with addition of a number of resourced provisions to mainstream schools, with more planned for the future.

9.3. For 2026/27 the DfE allocated Medway £5,721,975 in High Needs Provision Capital funding. It is recommended that Cabinet add this funding to the Education Capital Programme as set out in paragraphs 9.4 – 9.10 below.

9.4. It was agreed in 2025 that a new secondary provision for Danecourt would be built, to provide additional SEND places within Medway (decision numbers 112/2025, 114/2025, 115/2025, and 116/2025). This included a commitment to borrow up to £16.21 million for the project (decision number 117/2025). The intention was that future grant allocations would reduce the amount of potential borrowing. However, due to escalating construction costs, the pre-design feasibility stage estimate for the Danecourt secondary project is now in excess of £30 million. It is recommended to add £5 million

[1] https://medway.oc2.uk/document/30

of the 2026/27 allocation to the Danecourt secondary project (recommendation 1.2). While this will not reduce the amount of potential borrowing required, it will avoid borrowing above the amount agreed. The costs have not yet been finalised due to the project being at the design feasibility stage, however, we do expect further allocations in the coming years, and these will be used to fund any additional costs or reduce borrowing levels.

9.5. The cost of borrowing £16.21 million over 50 years is currently estimated to be £911,355.32 per annum, or £45,567,766 in total. If additional High Needs grant funding becomes available and reduces the borrowing to £10 million, the cost would be £562,217.97 per year, or £28,110,899. If the need to borrow reduces to £5 million, the cost would be £281,108.98 per year, or £14,055,449 in total.

9.6. Secondary EHCP numbers are expected to rise by 343 over the next five years; currently 420 pupils are placed in independent schools in and outside of Medway at an annual cost of £21.8m. Without extra capacity the majority of additional pupils will need to be placed in expensive out-of-area and independent provision, with costly and distant home-to-school transport. The expansion into secondary provision at Danecourt will provide around 250 places. The Danecourt expansion results in future cost avoidance of around £12m per year when the provisions are full.

9.7. On average, home-to-school transport costs approximately £10,038 per year for a pupil placed out of area, compared with £6,853 per year for a pupil placed within area. This represents a saving of £3,185 per pupil per year. At full capacity, the additional local places provided through the Danecourt expansion would generate transport savings of approximately £796,250 per annum.

9.8. There is an underspend of £612,713 on the project to relocate Rivermead to the Stoke site (project code 9x589). It is recommended that this is reallocated to the Danecourt secondary project along with the funding set out in paragraph 9.4 (recommendation 1.2).

9.9. It was also agreed in 2025 to create a special resourced provisions (SRP) at All Saints Primary School (decision numbers 112/2025 and 114/2025). It is recommended that an additional £400,000 of the 2026/27 allocation is added to this project (recommendation 1.4). The reason for the additional funding is due to a change in scope of the project due to the restricted nature of the site.

9.10. A new project to create an SRP at St Margarets Infants is proposed, which will complement the provision at St Margarets Juniors. It is recommended to add this project to the capital programme and utilise £220,000 of the 2026/27 allocation towards the project (recommendation 1.5).

9.11. As noted in paragraph 7.8 above, it is recommended that Riverside Primary School in Rainham is expanded in phases, starting with an SRP. This funding will come from available s106 contributions as listed in Table 1 (Recommendation 1.8).

9.12. In 2025 SRPs were agreed for St Margaret's Junior School, and Napier Primary School (decision numbers 112/2025 and 114/2025). It is recommended that an additional £60,000 of the 2026/27 High Needs Capital Allocation is added to the Napier Primary SRP project, and £40,000 to the St Margarets Junior SRP project. These additions are needed following detailed design, escalating costs and site restrictions (recommendations 1.6 and 1.7).

9.13. It was agreed that The Beeches free school, currently operating from The Rowans site, in advance of the full DFE led project, will be located on the current Inspire Academy site when they vacate and relocate to the Cornwallis site (decision number 118/2025). This is expected to occur in 2027/28. This is subject to agreement by the DfE to change the designation of the school to provide for primary SEMH pupils.

9.14. In 2025 it was agreed that the Marlborough Centre would be relocated from Hoo St Werburgh primary to a vacant building at Twydall Primary School (decision numbers 112/2025 and 114/2025). As part of this relocation, it will be redesignated from an SRP to a special school. The Rivermead Inclusive Trust are undertaking the appropriate statutory consultation and submitting a business case for this to the DfE. The council have provided a letter of support to the trust as part of this submission. The DfE decision for this is expected early in the new academic year. A lease is in the process of being drafted and design work is ongoing.

9.15. The Rainham Mark Education Trust (RMET), who hold the lease for Twydall Primary School, is merging with the Aletheia Academies Trust, currently the proposed date for this is 1 October 2026. The Aletheia Academies Trust will need to sign off the new lease proposal and therefore this may lead to a short delay.

Local plan – SEND provision

9.16. The increase in pupil numbers through the local plan will come with a corresponding increase in children and young people requiring some form of SEND provision. This demand will be met through a combination of:

- Support at mainstream schools.
- Inclusion bases.
- Resourced provisions at mainstream schools.
- Additional special school places.

9.17. It is challenging, at this stage, to plan for long term SEND provision, as there is great uncertainty about the future diagnoses and the needs and quantum of pupils.

9.18. However, all new schools and some expansions at existing schools will include a new resourced provision. This will, over time, provide an additional 250-300 places.

10. Alternative Provision

10.1. The table below sets out the numbers on roll at Will Adams and The Rowans. There currently no plans to increase these numbers from the 65 commissioned places in each setting. The numbers on roll will fluctuate throughout the year, as Medway are moving towards a 12-week turn around model.

Table 4 - Alternative provision pupil numbers

	Will Adams	The Rowans
2024	44	47
2025	42	53
2026*	63	93

*These are the total numbers of pupils who have been through alternative provision in this period.

10.2. The Rowans is providing places for primary age pupils as part of the pre-Beeches project. To support with this, they require new play equipment, and an outdoor cabin for their outreach service. It is recommended to use additional s106 funding towards this project (9x604), a total of £42,500 from 750450 - MC/14/2912 - Dormers, 3 Upper Luton Road, Luton. The agreement for this development originally named Saxon Way and St Thomas of Canterbury. However, no further work is planned at these schools. The Rowans is 1.5 miles away from the development and is providing primary age places (recommendation 1.9), to pupils from across the wider Medway area.

11. Project summary

11.1. The following table (Table 5) summarises the proposed projects, described in the sections above, which will be funded using the basic need, high needs allocations, and s106 contributions.

Table 5 - Project summary

Project	S106	High Needs funding	Reallocated funds	Report paragraph	Recommendation number
Underspend at Rivermead to Danecourt			£612,713	9.8	1.2
Danecourt secondary phase (additional funding)		£5,000,000		9.4	1.3
All Saints Primary School ASD resourced provision (additional funding)		£400,000		9.9	1.4
St Margaret's Infant School ASD resourced provision (New project)		£220,000		9.10	1.5
Napier Primary SRP (additional funding)		£60,000		9.12	1.6
St Margarets Junior SRP (additional funding)		£40,000		9.12	1.7
Riverside expansion	£1,621,988.52			7.8	1.8
Beeches at the Rowans equipment	£42,500			10.2	1.9
Greenvale furniture	£5,811.33			7.12	1.10
Howard 3G pitch	£150,000			8.5	1.11
Total	£1,820,299.85	£5,720,000	£612,713		

12. Condition Programme

12.1. The DfE published an Education Estates Strategy in February 2026. This aims to manage, improve, and renew the school estate. Responsible bodies will be asked to submit an annual return from Autumn 2026 on how they are meeting the expectations in the School Estate Management Standards. There are also plans to introduce a data collection and sharing platform to allow responsible bodies and the DfE to share information. By Autumn 2026 the department aims to develop a decision-making framework around the use of mainstream school space when rolls are reducing, and pilot flexible use of surplus spaces for join up with Best Start Family Hubs, housing, neighbourhood health service and youth centres. The strategy also announced new funding programmes to tackle school condition and to support the school rebuilding programme.

12.2. Local authorities' have responsibility for the condition of maintained schools, to ensure that they are safe, warm, dry, and provide secure learning environments. The DfE fund the condition programme through an annual grant (Table 6). However, as the number of maintained schools falls and the cost of maintenance increases, the grant allows for less work.

Table 6 - School Condition Allocations.

Financial year	School Condition Grant	Maintained schools	Academies
2017/18	£1,466,745	43	61
2018/19	£1,016,147	33	70
2019/20	£1,016,147	32	71
2020/21	£901,891	31	72
2021/22	£901,891	31	72
2022/23	£775,901	27	74
2023/24	£774,589	27	74
2024/25	£608,453	27	74
2025/26	£775,464	21	82
2026/27	£930,486	19	84

While this year's allocation is an increase on previous years, and is welcomed, it does not support the backlog of work outstanding in schools. This is causing significant issues in school maintenance. The amount of funding available restricts the condition programme. Projects must be prioritised, causing delays of 2-3 years. Therefore, the school estate is deteriorating. There is a risk that academy conversions will reduce funding allocations further, making school maintenance challenging. Officers have highlighted this to the DfE directly, and it has also been raised through the regional and national meetings of the Education Building Development Officers Group (EBDOG).

13. Academy Conversion Progress

13.1. Medway's first academies opened in 2009 under the original academy programme. From 2010 schools were able to convert to academy status either by choice, or because the DfE directed them to.

13.2. Currently of the 19 maintained schools, four schools are in the process of converting to academy status for 1 September (shown in Table 7). We are aware that around six more are actively considering academy status, with a further four potentially considering it. The remaining five are undecided. It is likely that by mid-2027 there will be a maximum of 12 local authority-maintained schools remaining.

13.3. As the number of maintained schools reduces, there may be an impact on the council's ability to offer cost effective services to those remaining schools.

Table 7 - Number of schools by type – as at 1 September 2026.

	Maintained	**Academy**
Primary	13*	63*
All-through	0	1
Secondary	1	18
Special	1	4
Alternative Provision	0	2
Overall	15*	88*

*Assumes 4 schools convert successfully on 1 September

14. Risk Management

14.1. The table below shows the risks of not implementing the recommendations from this report.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places	If insufficient school places are available to meet demand, the Council would not meet its obligations.	Implement proposals to provide places in the areas of demand.	C2
That insufficient funding is available to fund proposals to provide sufficient places.	Limited basic need funding is available. The extent of the emerging need may mean that without more funding, the Council may not be able to implement projects to provide places. This could mean that the council does not meet its statutory obligation. The strategy refers to s106 contributions not yet agreed through the planning process.	Explore options to fund projects including bidding for funding initiatives. Ensure all s106 opportunities are realised. Alternatively, agree plan to borrow in advance of future funding receipts. Look at cost effective ways to supply places.	A2
That the level of forecast pupils does not materialise	If the expected numbers of pupils do not materialise, then the Council could have spent the funding elsewhere.	Continue to track births, migration and housing developments and accuracy of forecasting.	C3
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 places to meet demand	Continue to track births, migration and housing developments and accuracy of forecasting and start discussions with schools around school expansion or bulge classes.	C2

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
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

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	1 Critical 2 Major 3 Moderate 4 Minor

15. Consultation

15.1. This report does not require any consultation, but any proposals resulting from this report will include a consultation process, if necessary.

15.2. This report does not include a Diversity Impact Assessment. Individual proposals brought forward from this report will include assessments.

16. Climate change implications

16.1. This report has no direct climate change implications. However, when any project is progressed, the design and construction methods will look to make a positive contribution to the council’s climate change agenda.

16.2. Creating local provision for children and young people can reduce car journeys across Medway which would have a positive impact on air quality.

16.3. Schools encourage pupils to walk or cycle to school, and this becomes more achievable if the provision is local.

16.4. Officers aim to reduce the carbon footprint of the school maintenance and condition programme and school expansion or building projects. Examples include greener heating systems, LED lighting, improved insulation, photovoltaics, vehicle chargers, and using local contractors where possible.

17. Financial implications

17.1. Funding for projects in this report will come from Children and Adults’ Capital Programme. Procurement Board reports will request funding approval for each individual project.

17.2. We will request developer contributions from new housing schemes to fund new school places. We will consider Local Plan developments together to decide the most efficient use of developer contributions or developer provided schools.

17.3. Basic Need allocations are determined by the DfE based on the shortfall between forecasted pupil numbers and school places provided through the annual SCAP return. The below table sets out the annual allocations, which were allocated in the annual review of the school place planning strategy 2025.

Table 8- Basic Need allocations

Funding Year	Amount of Basic Need
Carried over	£118,432
2024/25	£0
2025/26	£6,141,650*
2026/27	£9,553,770*
2027/28	£9,895,762
2028/29	TBC

*In 2026 the DfE reallocated approximately £6m of funding from 2026/27 to 2025/26, but the overall allocation to Medway remains the same.

17.4. Table 9 shows the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation for recent years. For 2026/27 Medway has been allocated £5,721,975, and it is proposed to use this towards the projects set out in paragraphs 9.4 to 9.10.

Table 9 - High Needs Provision Capital allocations

Funding Year	Amount of HNPCA
2021/22	£1,939,762
2022/23	£13,540,524*
2023/24	£5,482,269
2024/25	£1,574,936
2025/26	£4,837,957
2026/27	£5,721,975

*Includes Safety Valve Intervention funding

17.5. Officers will fund the proposed projects using the most suitable combination of basic need, SEND grant funding, developer contributions, and where appropriate council borrowing.

17.6. As s106 contributions are paid in instalments, there can be a delay in receiving the full contribution for a development. Therefore, in some cases it may be necessary to borrow in advance of these payments being received. This will only be considered where there is a high likelihood of the contribution being received.

17.7. Guidance from the Department for Education on securing developer contributions for education highlights the role that local authority borrowing powers can play in providing up front funding of for education in relation to s106. It states that “To support the delivery of strategic development at pace, you may need to forward-fund school provision within an urban extension or new settlement, using basic need funding or local authority borrowing if necessary and recouping these costs later through developer contributions secured by a planning obligation”.

17.8. The table below shows the received and agreed Education Section 106 funding. Officers will use this funding towards creating places to meet demand. The Council receives s106 receipts in instalments as a development reaches trigger points. This can make it challenging to plan too far ahead. Education officers work closely with planning officers to understand the phasing and progress of the various developments to help with place planning.

17.9. An additional £40.1 million has been requested against housing schemes not yet approved through the planning process. Not all of these developments will be approved, so this is a maximum figure. The amount also includes some developments which are expected to provide schools on site rather than financial contributions.

Table 10 - Amounts of s106 funding

	Nursery	**Primary**	**Secondary**	**Total**
1. Agreed s106 funding	£5,747,936.31	£14,202,429.64	£16,419,998.79	£36,370,364.75
2. Received funding	£3,443,717.95	£9,166,359.51	£7,371,354.35	£19,981,431.81
3. Spent funding	£2,705,748.57	£6,268,789.41	£7,649,174.37	£16,623,712.35
4. Available (incl. borrowing, =row 3 - row 2)	£737,969.38	£2,897,570.10	-£277,820.02	£3,357,719.46
5. Available (excl. borrowing)	£1,273,436.46	£4,039,047.64	£2,449,959.87	£7,762,443.98
6. To come (development not started)	£3,094,049.85	£7,317,576.49	£8,666,178.98	£19,077,805.32
7. To come (development started)	£82,882.30	£205,445.16	£2,634,115.44	£2,922,442.90
8. To come (total, =row 6 + row 7)	£3,176,932.15	£7,523,021.65	£11,300,294.42	£22,000,248.22
Total available in future (=row 4 + row 8)	£3,914,901.53	£10,420,591.75	£11,022,474.40	£25,357,967.68

17.10. Occasionally, other funding sources and initiatives become available such as targeted basic need initiatives. Where possible the Council will look to make use of those opportunities to reduce the demands upon the limited funding available.

17.11. Table 11 shows how much the DfE funded Medway in the most recent Basic Need allocations, and the s106 contribution rates from the Medway Guide to Developer Contributions.

Table 1 - Per pupil funding rates for Basic Need and s106 contributions

	Primary funding per pupil	Secondary funding per pupil
Basic need funding	£21,928	£28,175
s106 expansion contribution	£16,759	£18,870
s106 new school contribution	£21,451	£24,153

17.12. Table 12 shows the cost per pupil for new schools, based on Medway estimates, and DfE scorecard estimates.

Table 12 - New school cost estimates per pupil

	Primary cost per pupil	Secondary cost per pupil
New 2 FE primary cost – Medway estimate	£23,810	
New 2 FE primary cost – DfE scorecard estimate	£27,590	
New 6 FE secondary cost – Medway estimate		£39,130
New 6 FE secondary cost – DfE scorecard estimate		£33,424

17.13. Therefore, neither the Basic Need nor the s106 contribution rates provide sufficient funding to construct a new school. The challenge is providing places within the funding available. We will endeavour to make the most effective use of available funding by selecting the most appropriate procurement process, using efficient building designs, choosing a construction method which works best with the site available, using modular buildings where appropriate, and value engineering to achieve the best overall solution. However, it is expected that shortfalls in funding will occur on the majority, if not all, projects and additional funding streams will need to be identified. This has been highlighted as a major risk in the table at 14.1.

18. Legal implications

18.1. 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.

18.2. There is a strong expectation on Local Authorities to consult interested parties to develop their proposals prior to formal publication. This is part of their duty, under public law, to act rationally and consider all relevant factors. Specific proposals brought forward from this report will go through this consultation process.

18.3. For expansions at academies, the academy trust must carry out the 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.

18.4. DfE guidance states that Basic Need allocations do not factor in the cost of land acquisition, so it is particularly important that any land required within larger development sites for schools is provided at no cost to the local authority wherever possible.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Mainstream Forecasts
Appendix 2 – SEND Forecasts
Appendix 3 – Project progress
Appendix 4 – DfE Scorecards
Appendix 5 – Education Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Background papers

School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27