

Minutes of Schools Forum Meeting 21st September 2022 at 2.30 pm

Members:	Position:	Voting:	Attendance:
Vacancy	Primary Maintained Headteacher	Voting	n/a
Vacancy	Special Maintained Headteacher	Voting	n/a
Victoria Richmond	Primary Academy Headteacher	Voting	Absent
Cathy Reid	Secondary Academy Headteacher	Voting	Present
Fiona May	Special/PRU Academy Headteacher	Voting	Present
Stephen Avis	CFO Multi Academy Trust	Voting	Apologies
Richard Warnham	Governor Primary Maintained	Voting	Present
Barbara Fincham	Governor Primary Academy	Voting	Present
Clive Mailing - (Vice-Chair)	Governor Secondary Maintained	Voting	Present
Peter Martin - (Chair)	Governor Secondary Academy	Voting	Present
Justin Stuart	Governor Special and PRU	Voting	Apologies
Hannah Cartwright	Early Years Representative	Non-voting	Absent
Simon Cook	16-19 Provider Representative	Non-voting	Absent
Kirstin Barker	C of E Diocese Representative	Voting	Present
Clare Redmond	RC Diocese Representative	Voting	Apologies
Vacancy	Teaching Unions Representative	Non-voting	n/a
Stuart Gardiner	CFO Multi Academy Trust	Voting	Present
Vacancy	SPI over 19 Provisions	Non-voting	n/a
In Attendance:			
Celia Buxton	Assistant Director of Education and SEND LA		Present
Maria Beaney	Finance Business Partner LA		Present
Sarah Phillipson	Transcribed Governance Professional		Present
Paul Clarke	Head of School Services		Present
Rebecca Smith	Head of Service, Education		Present

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1. Welcome, attendance and apologies:

As noted above.

The meeting was quorate.

2. Declaration of Interests:

Stuart Gardiner noted that he was now a Trustee at Rainham Mark Educational Trust.

Clive Mailing stated he was no longer a Governor at St Augustine's.

The remainder of Members: No changes to the previously disclosed Declaration of Interests and any matters relevant to the agenda.

3. Minutes from the previous meeting on 06 July 2022:

Accuracy: The minutes were agreed upon as an accurate representation of the meeting.

Matters Arising:

None.

4. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair:

Please advise Sarah Phillipson on any nominations.

Decision - Peter Martin - Voted and agreed as the Chair of the Schools forum.

Decision - Clive Mailing - Voted and agreed as the Vice-Chair of the Schools forum.

5. Round One Monitoring 2022-2023 - Maria Beaney:

MB explained that this report sets out the updated position on the school's budget for 2022/23.

MB discussed the 2022-23 Budget and Round One Forecast tables below.

Block	The current budget is £000	R1 Forecast £000	Variance £000	Percentage Change
Schools Block	43,110	43,130	20	0.0%
Central Services SB	958	1,037	79	8.2%
High Needs Block	36,438	44,528	8,090	22.2%
Early Years Block	17,210	17,199	(11)	-0.1%
Dedicated Schools Grant	97,717	105,894	8,178	8.3%
Other School Grants	4,495	4,495	0	0
Total Schools Budget	102,212	110,660	8,178	8.3%

The forecast position on the DSG deficit reserve by the end of 2022/23 is forecast as:

	£000
Opening DSG Deficit/(Surplus)	20,457
In the year (Surplus)/Deficit	8,178
Closing DSG Deficit/(Surplus)	28,635

MB explained that the Local Authority and the DfE are still discussing an agreed safety value for the DSG Deficit Management Plan. However, until this revised plan is approved, the LA continues to move forward and monitor the progress made on the proposed project.

Round one 2022-23 Variances:

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Schools Block:

The Schools Block is forecasting a minor overspend of c£20,000.

There is a forecast pressure of £192,000 on the growth fund budget due to the requirement to pay for 60 places at one primary academy, rather than the budgeted 30 places and 30 different places at one secondary academy. The LA is still discussing with the EFSA about the GAG funding recoupment deduction that will be deducted from Medway's DSG allocation for 2022-23. The forecast is based on the maximum deduction Medway will incur.

Central provision funded by maintained schools (De-delegated Education Functions) - MB advised that the budget for these services is shown as part of the school block because the funding is top sliced from maintained schools ISB budgets, to pay for education functions the LA operates on their behalf as approved by the Schools forum. Academies can opt to purchase these services as a buy-back service via SLA online. There are small underspends of c£25,000 or less on the school improvement and trade union budgets.

Round two monitoring has just been completed, and there is an additional variance on the School Improvement fund due to the removal of the school improvement grant, which was £90,000 per year. The Government has cut this grant by 50% for this year, and next year cut the funding entirely. The LA will have to recover this from the central services delegated budget next year.

Q - Why is this grant being removed?

A - The Government initially wanted all maintained schools to pay for this. However, this felt unfair, so they gave an incremental grant that lasted for several years, which has now been scaled back.

Central Services Schools Block:

The overall position on the Central Services Schools Block is a pressure of £79,000 due to the forecast pressure of £83,000 on the Admissions and Medway Test Service, due to the increased venue and staffing costs.

Q - £83k on Medway test services, does this link to agenda item 8?

A - Yes, it is included in that agenda item.

High Needs Block:

MB explained a significant funding increase, a pressure of £8.1m is expected in 2022/23 due to EHCP's increased need, and they continued to be out-of-area providers.

The 2022-23 budget assumed an average 2% unit cost increase for providers; however, the average unit cost increase is around 7% or (£1.9m), 5% higher than budgeted. Some unit cost increases are higher than others; for example, some independent providers request increases of c20%.

As of January 2022, Medway had 2,697 EHCPs, and we predict numbers will increase to 2,853 EHCPs by the end of January 2023. A 5.8% increase.

Q - Mainstreams are facing difficulty with children facing SEND challenges, and the number of children coming into the area is increasing. What is the strategy to address these issues?

A - The Safety Value Plan will cover this in the next meeting and outline the program to address this.

A School forum member noted that there are children who should be in SEND provision but are compliant, so the children are left in mainstream schools.

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Q - Table 2.1 - The totals do not seem to add up; why is this?

A - There is a mismatch when the adjustments with the DfE went through and created a variance.

The Schools Forum NOTED and COMMENTED on this report.

6. School and Academy Funding Formula Consultation 2023/24 - Maria Beaney:

MB explained that the National Funding Formula (NFF) operational guidance was published by the Education and Skills Finance Agency (ESFA) in July. The advice is designed to help Local Authorities (LA), and their Schools forums plan the local implementation of the funding system for 2023-2024 and move towards an NFF.

The LA must engage in open and transparent consultation with all maintained schools, academies and free schools in the area and with its Schools forum about any proposed changes to the funding formula, including the methods, principles and rules adopted.

The Schools forum is required to approve expenditure funded from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) even if the Schools forum has approved the spending in previous years and the central services schools block of the DSG.

Timetable:

The proposed 2023-2024 School and Academy funding formula timetable is contained in Appendix 1. Historically there has been a low response rate from schools and academies to our funding formula consultations. One of the most consistent reasons for non-returns is the consultation window of two weeks, so following on from 2022/23, the window will again be three weeks. The Schools forum is asked to approve adopting the proposed timetable in Appendix 1.

2023-24 Changes to the National Funding Formula (NFF)

The proposed formula for 2023-24 is similar to a procedure for 2022-23. However, we have updated the following changes:

- a. Unit values have been increased as set out in Appendix 2.
- b. Based on the most up-to-date school and pupil characteristics data.
- c. Sparsity funding is now based on road distance instead of straight-line distance from the pupil's home to school, and a sparsity distance taper has been introduced, in addition to the existing year group size taper.
- d. Pupils eligible for free school meals are now taken from the October 2021 school census instead of the January 2022 census.
- e. In calculating low prior attainment proportions, data from the 2019 early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) and key stage 2 (KS2) tests are used as a proxy for the 2020 and 2021 assessments, which were cancelled due to the pandemic.
- f. Due to COVID-19, there was no school census in May 2020, so it was impossible to detect a pupil's arrival at a school between January and May 2020 in the usual way. Instead, where a pupil who was not at the school in the January 2020 census has an entry date recorded in the October 2020 census between the date of the January 2020 census and the date of the (cancelled) May 2020 census, that pupil attracts mobility funding (providing the school itself was open before the January 2020 census).
- g. To comply with the new formula guidelines the split sites and exceptional building funding elements of Medway's formula may have to be removed. Medway will consult on this as part of the consultation.

The Schools forum noted the changes to the NFF and the complete list of rates for 2023/24.

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Decision - The Schools forum members voted to APPROVE the adoption of the proposed timetable in 2.1 and Appendix 1.

Decision - Schools forum members noted to SUPPORT the Council's request to mirror the NFF rates wherever possible in Appendix 2.

Decision- Schools forum members noted to SUPPORT the Council's proposals on the consultation with schools and academies as outlined above and using the rates in Appendix 2 as part of the consultation.

Next Steps:

MB advised that Medway will now consult with all Schools and Academies in Medway about the options outlined in this report and will report back to the Schools Forum.

An e-mail will be sent to all head teachers, governors and school finance officers for both Schools and Academies, inviting them to offer a consultation response.

The Schools forum members noted and commented on the report as shown above.

7. School Effectiveness Service - Rebecca Smith:

Key points to note:

Section 3 - Outlining the core functions and the role of maintained schools.

Increasing involvement in response to inclusion issues. For example, growing numbers of those elected to be educated at home, working with the inclusion team, etc., across several agenda items. This is what the school improvement grant pays for, which is being removed and is a part of the national educational agenda for academies. Moving away from just supporting the Maintained Schools to support all.

RS report stated that Medway Council shares the ambition to ensure all children and young people receive a high standard of education locally that prepares them well for a successful future, and schools are rich, diverse communities inclusive of all children and young people. This includes focusing on supporting learners with special educational needs to be educated alongside their peers in their local schools.

The School Effectiveness Service receives £269k from the Schools Block. This report provides information on the function of the School Effectiveness Service and an update on the service's priorities.

The Function of the School Effectiveness Service:

The School Effectiveness Service works with Education leaders, Governing bodies, Trusts, the Regional Director (formally called Regional School Commissioner), the Department for Education and Ofsted to secure this ambition.

It also works alongside leaders in collaborating with wider stakeholders and supports strategic education partnerships within Medway and the Southeast region. Within the landscape of national change, the focus of this team is to facilitate system leadership and support the strategic coherence and effectiveness of education delivery locally.

The service also fulfils the statutory duties of the Council, which are broadly contained within the 1996 Education Act 13, to promote high standards within education, permitting all aspects of the Council's plans. This educational excellence role is the responsibility of the Director of Children,

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Adult Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services, supported by the portfolio holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement.

The first strategic council plan priority, enabling all children to achieve their potential in education, is the driver for all work of the School Effectiveness Service. To achieve this priority, School Effectiveness works in partnership with the following strategic groups:

- Medway Education Partnership Group (MEPG)
- Medway Headteacher associations (MELA & MSHA)
- The four primary zones
- SEND Partnership Board
- Inclusive Education Oversight Group
- Medway Cultural Strategy
- Child-Friendly Medway
- Thames Gateway Teaching School Hub Partnership Board
- Medway and Swale ICP Children's Clinical and Professional Advisory Board
- Medway Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board

Operational Role of the Service:

The School Effectiveness Service champions children's best interests by monitoring the performance of all schools in Medway, whether academies, community schools, voluntary aided or controlled schools or free schools.

The service draws on the full range of information available to it, including quantitative performance data, national tests, examination results, inclusion data and Ofsted reports, and softer intelligence such as levels of complaints and compliments. There is a sharp focus on providing support for those identified as vulnerable or dealing with particularly challenging circumstances, whether an individual pupil, group or whole school concern. Tracking is used to provide an evidence base for priorities and strategic planning.

Working within the context outlined above, School Effectiveness Service is:

- A strategic partner within MEPG to align local priorities with the Government's five key areas within the White Paper Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child (March 2022): sufficiency, admissions, safeguarding, attendance and ensuring quality
- Responsible for coordinating intelligence and the registering of risk across the education service beyond school effectiveness, including attendance, inclusion, safeguarding, SEND, admissions, finance, governance, health and safety, human resources and property
- Responsible for the analysis of performance at key stages 1, 2, 4 and 5, identifying strategic strengths and areas for development and communicating this to all stakeholders, ensuring a coherent message of performance is known to inform improvement planning
- Responsible for quality assurance across a range of measures
- Responsible for the administration of statutory assessment through statutory briefings on delivering the phonic check and key stage one and two reviews, monitoring the administration of statutory assessment tests and delivering moderation and the consensus of standards in reading, writing and mathematics against the key stage one and two teacher assessment frameworks
- A facilitator of support to colleagues at all points of their career, from early career teachers to executive leaders and into system leadership in partnership with the local teaching school hub and Canterbury Christ Church University

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- A developer of system leadership through the promotion of best practices within learning zones and online collaboration through the use of, e.g. The Medway Reading Collaborative and Curriculum Diversity
- A conduit for integrated working between schools and the Council. It promotes and engages schools with Council initiatives, including Child-Friendly Medway, Positive Behaviour Support programme, Family and Schools Together: healthy eating programme, and Climate Change
- The connection between schools and SACRE
- Responsible for the role of Local Authorities in the intervention of Schools Causing Concern, for local-authority-maintained schools (in line with the September 2022 DfE guidance for local authorities and RDs)

Current School Effectiveness Service Priorities:

The School Effectiveness Service builds an effective school-to-school support system based on collaboration and shared effort that supports schools to be increasingly autonomous and responsible for their improvement through:

- Strengthening locality-based working so that there is more coordinated and integrated work between schools, early years settings, post-16 providers, Early Help services, health, social care and other partners
- Identifying the best performing schools, (Ofsted, attainment and progress) teachers and school leaders and use them across the system to develop and disseminate best practice
- Promoting and supporting the use of Leaders of Education, National and Local and deploy them well to support improvement in other schools
- Supporting governors to carry out their role effectively by becoming better informed about best practices; using data to plan for school improvement; keeping the performance of their schools under review; and taking prompt action where necessary
- Promoting more effective partnerships, working with academy sponsors, academy trusts, employers, health commissioners and providers and other key stakeholders to build capacity for system-wide improvements
- Strengthening locality-based working so that there is more coordinated and integrated work between schools, early years settings, post-16 providers, Early Help services, health, social care and other partners
- Providing support for schools so that achievement gaps close for pupils on free school meals, children in care, young offenders and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities

School Effectiveness Statutory Duties:

RS advised that the Local Authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide a range of services to their communities. The specific statutory responsibilities for the School Effectiveness service were shared in detail with the Schools forum and related links to access complete regulations.

The Schools forum members noted and commented on the report as shown above.

8. School Place Planning and Growth Funding - Paul Clarke:

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PC explained that this report is a summary of the annual review of the School Place Planning Strategy and will be presented to Cabinet for approval on 18 October 2022. The information sets out the action taken to ensure demand for school places is met, and it also sets out the forecasts for the next 5 years for Primary and for secondary and any actions required.

Place Planning Update:

In the primary sector, limited action is required as, with birth rates falling, it is expected that Medway will have sufficient primary school places for the next 5 years.

The expansion at Hundred of Hoo to 2FE is underway, and this is the only area where some pressure on places is being experienced. Indeed, in other areas, schools are reducing PANs and intakes, some permanently and some temporarily, to maintain control over educational and financial viability and to give certainty over planning.

However, in the secondary sector, there remains pressure on places despite opening the two new free schools, Leigh Academy Rainham in 2021 and Maritime Academy in 2022.

The report sets out the shortfall in places, particularly for the non-selective sector and recommends a plan to ensure that sufficient places are met.

The forecast shortfall in non-selective secondary school places is as follows. This will be a rolling picture and allow an overview of what is required. (Updated annually)

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

A programme of projects is proposed to ensure places are provided together with a plan of bulge classes. As highlighted in the table, the other places will require bulge class growth funding from the years stipulated unless they are permanent expansions.

The programme will be funded via the children and adults education capital programme. Central Government has allocated £17m to Medway for this purpose and, when added to available section 106 funding, provides a total of £21m.

The proposed programme is as follows:

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Table 2

School	Sector	Increase in Places	Est Cost
St Nicholas Infants	Primary	70	£1.50m
Hundred of Hoo Primary	Primary	210	£0.70m
Luton Primary	Primary	Zero	£0.25m
Grammar co-education	Secondary	Zero	£2.50m
Victory Academy	Secondary	150	£3.00m
Greenacre Academy	Secondary	100	£3.70m
Hundred of Hoo Secondary	Secondary	150	£3.20m
Robert Napier	Secondary	150	£2.85m
A Grammar School	Secondary	150	£3.20m
Total		980	£20.90m

Following Cabinet in October 2022, a report will be presented to the Procurement Board in November 2022 to outline the proposed programme and obtain permission to start the required design, planning and tender processes. Any formal consultations will be undertaken appropriately; although all the appropriate academies, it will fall to the individual schools to consult on any increase supported by Council Officers.

The proposed permanent and bulge class actions will ensure sufficient places are available and provide schools with certainty over numbers and staffing requirements in advance. This will avoid the need for last-minute actions and provide Medway with sufficient permanent capacity going forward.

Table 3 below sets out the proposed plan to meet the shortfall in the 'Extra Forms of Entry required' row on Table 1.

Table 3

2022 /2023	2023 /2024	2024 /2025	2025 /2026	2026 /2027	2027 /2028	2028 /2029
Hundred of Hoo (B)	Hundred of Hoo (B)	Maritime (B)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)	Victory (P)
N/R	Leigh Rainham (B)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)	Hundred of Hoo (P)

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N/R	Greenacre (B)	N/R	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)	Robert Napier (P)
N/R	TBC	N/R	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)	Greenacre (P)
N/R	Maritime (B) (R)	N/R	N/R	Thomas Aveling (R)	Leigh Rainham (B)	Maritime (B) (R)

Q - Can we please clarify the investment to Luton Primary School that will generate zero new places?

A - This is part of the nursery development that needs a safe building fit for purpose. It costs more and more for maintenance every year and could become a health and safety issue. This funding is to knock down this area and rebuild it. If this isn't addressed, these children would need to be housed in the Central School, reducing places.

Q - It is worth noting that whilst the co-ed Grammar proposals will not add places, they will provide far greater flexibility classes to meet demand?

A - Yes, this is true and will bring flexibility to the overall capacity.

Q - Can we please clarify the process by which "A Grammar" school in table 2 will be identified to provide additional places?

A - The LA will have a process to assess which grammar school is the most appropriate to expand and will be in consultation with the Trusts at the time.

Q - Could we please clarify table 3 in point 2.9, have the schools agreed to these additional classes?

A - Yes, they have all been spoken to and agree to this.

Q - Can you clarify what P means, please?

A - P = Permanent, B = Bulge classes and Rs are reserves.

Q - In terms of transparency of the process, has there been a consultation around the non-selective?

A - We also spoke to the CEO and Headteachers about some of these expansions. It was not opened up entirely, but I tried to talk to most. We looked at those where it was possible to expand.

Q - Why has it not been discussed with all? Are we expecting schools to plan for this without the guarantee of funding?

A - The process was to give schools the plan, to plan accordingly and allow the LA to budget for this in the future. The duty of transparency is essential; LA, aim to focus on areas that require the most support. Support will be very transparent. The team targets the schools that need to provide and have those conversations. If this need is more general, we are happy to do so. All figures are published annually, and discussions are open to all.

A Schools forum member noted that it was essential for this process to be transparent.

Q - We are talking about capital funding. Will this have an impact on the Revenue budget funding going forward? Developer contributions funding will this be tapped into?

A - Yes, this will happen, and the full report covers this for the Cabinet. Section 106 funding will be used first. Likely, we will not be able to afford to do all of this in the current timescale.

Special Educational Needs:

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The reports also set out a SEND project programme to provide additional in-house provisions, mostly in resourced provisions at mainstream schools.

The Central Government has allocated just under £8m Capital funding for this purpose over two years. The overall programme to meet needs exceeds this figure, but projects will be prioritised within available budgets, and officers will continue to seek additional funding to complete the programme.

The costs are based on a similar project going ahead currently.

Table 4

School	Sector	Increase in places	Est Cost
1x SEMH Resourced Provision	Secondary	25-32	£2.4m
1x MLD Resourced Provision	Secondary	25-30	£2.4m
1x ASD Resourced Provision	Secondary	25-30	£2.2m
2x Resourced Provisions	Selective	50-60	£4.6m
Temp increase at Inspire School	Secondary	40	£1.2m
1x SEMH Resourced Provision	Primary	25	£0.25m
Total		Max 217	£13.05m

Summary:

The LA will continue to forecast twice yearly to maintain robust oversight of place planning, but the actions above should provide sufficient mainstream places for the next seven years. The LA will continue to monitor SEND places and forecasts, and seek additional funding to ensure appropriate places are provided within Medway wherever possible to reduce the need to place out of the area.

PC advised that the proposal has already gone to the Cabinet; it has been consulted and returned to Cabinet, who have approved it to move to the next stage, where the individual schools complete their consultations. On the basis that these are successful, the LA would then take a business case for each school to the RSC early in the new year for approval. The RSC is already aware of this and that it is an all-or-none approach.

The Schools Forum NOTED and COMMENTED on this report

9. Medway Test Arrangements and Review - Paul Clarke:

PC explained that the Schools forum sets out the current process and timelines for the Medway Test, registrations for this year and outlines areas for improvement within the current process and outcomes.

Current Process and Timelines:

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The below timeline sets out the dates and milestones around the 2022 Medway Test, which ensures that the process is undertaken appropriately and within time to enable parents to make informed decisions around their choice of secondary school for their child.

Date	Event
9 am on Wednesday 1 June 2022	Registration for the Medway Test (11+) opens
5 pm on Thursday 30 June 2022	Registration for the Medway Test closes.
Tuesday 5 July 2022	Closing date for special arrangements requests from schools
9 am on Monday 5 September 2022	Secondary school applications are open.
Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 14 September 2022	Medway Test dates for children who attend a Medway maintained primary/junior school.
Saturday 17 or Sunday 18 September 2022	Medway Test date for children who attend non-Medway schools. One day will be allocated to each child who attends a non-Medway primary or junior school.
Tuesday 4 October 2022	Results of the Medway Test
10 am Monday 10 October 2022	Closing date for receipt of Medway Test review requests
4 pm on Tuesday 11 October 2022	Deadline for primary and junior schools to submit review work to Medway Council.
Thursday 13 October 2022	Medway Test school work reviews
By Friday, 21 October 2022	Review decisions posted to parents and carers
5 pm on Monday 31 October 2022	Secondary school applications close.

The dates meet our contractual obligations with the external provider, GL.

Every Medway state-funded primary school undertook the test in their schools during the week of 12 September. Usually, some schools prefer not to run the test during the week, and their pupils will take the test in a test centre at the weekend. However, this year 100% were born in their home school.

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Out of area pupils take the test in one of 8 test centres at the weekend. The test centres are the six grammar schools (both Saturday and Sunday) and two non-selective schools, Hundred of Hoo and Leigh Rainham (Saturday only). We split the pupils at the test centre evenly across the sites at 150 pupils per day.

Registrations Data:

This year there were more registrations for the Medway Test than in previous years, as shown in the table below:

Year	Medway Pupils	Out of Area Pupils	Total
2022	2086	2196	4282
2021	1936	1988	3924
2020	1883	1919	3802
2019	2003	1727	3730

The Schools forum members noted that there had been an increase in pupil premium (PP) pupils from Medway taking the test in recent years due to a concerted effort to increase PP numbers, including directly approaching PP parents, encouraging them to register, and following this up later in the process. The LA also write to schools during the registration process to advise which children are registered and again asks them to encourage parents to register for the test. The LA is also working with the Grammar Headteachers to support them.

Year	Medway PP Pupils	% of Medway Overall Cohort	% of PP Pupils Taking Test Against PP Cohort
2022	449	12.2	21.5
2021	343	9.3	17.7
2020	235	6.6	12.4
2019	297	8.5	14.8

Areas for Improvement:

Going forward, we are looking to improve the Medway test process and outcomes further, and the following are areas being explored:

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- Improving the review process - currently, whilst there is an allowance for up to 2% (approx. 70 pupils) of the cohort to acquire a grammar school place through the review process, often only a handful are successful. Officers will work with the grammar schools to implement guidelines to ensure a fair process.
- Inclusion of a Non-verbal reasoning element to the test - to assess a broader range of aptitude and redress some of the gender variances.
- To increase the numbers of pupils with EHCPs who attend a selective school - currently, there are very few pupils at selective schools with EHCPs. We are working with the particular schools to look at introducing resourced provisions.
- Reassessing the Special Arrangements process and protocols for the test - to ensure that all pupils eligible for special arrangements apply appropriately; too often, there are late applications, despite regular reminders. Late applications are currently not processed due to time restrictions.
- Improving the guidance and communications with parents in advance of the test - whilst the guidance is comprehensive and continually evolving and improving, we need to continue to ensure that the messages article, early in the timings of registration, are foremost in parent's minds.
- Reassessing the percentage of Medway pupils passing the Medway Test. This will enable more Medway pupils to acquire a place at a selective school and reduce the number of out-of-area pupils. This figure will need to fluctuate dependent on the cohort size each year, and will form part of the annual admissions consultation, which takes place each Autumn.
- Exploration of selective provision on the West side of the river - this year, around 1250 pupils travel daily from the peninsula, Strood, Cuxton and Halling to attend one of the six selective schools. As more housing is brought forward, this number will increase. Officers are exploring the options for a particular school annexe on the west side of the peninsula to help meet that demand in the coming years. The main challenges are capital funding, a suitable site, and a complex process to acquire approval from the DfE; we continue to investigate the options around this.
- Development of a Selective Education Policy - to cover all aspects of the selective system, including the Medway test and its processes. This will be developed during 2023, with consultation later in the year, with implementation in September 2024.

The above areas for review will be explored, and implemented as necessary and appropriately over the coming years. The test processes are annually assessed, and opportunities for improvement are continually on the agenda. Going forward, officers will continue to work with the headteachers to develop plans and proposals as we have done in recent years through the Medway Test working groups.

Q - Improving the review process, have we considered adopting the Kent approach of HT appeal?

A - We are investigating different approaches now and talking to Heads etc.

Q - Inclusion of a Non-verbal reasoning element to the test. This is worth adding to the assessment and reviewing the writing paper discriminating against students with SEND - dyslexia.

A - Yes, we will be doing this.

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Q - Reassessing the Special Arrangements process and protocols for the test. Special arrangements should be on the same basis as public examinations. It is ridiculous that a child will get extra time for their GCSE exam but not for the 11+. I speak from personal experience of my children not being given access arrangements for their 11+ but having these in place at their secondary school. All primary schools will have considered what arrangements they will make for children taking their Ks2 SATs. These should be replicated for the 11+?

A - Yes, very much so, and I will be looking at how these are granted and carried out.

Q - Reassessing the percentage of Medway pupils passing the Medway Test will enable more Medway pupils to acquire a place at a selective school and reduce the number of out-of-area pupils. This figure will need to fluctuate dependent on the cohort size each year, and this will form part of the annual admissions consultation, which takes place each Autumn. I do not understand this proposal. Is it lawful to have a different pass mark for Medway children compared to non-Medway children?

A - Not the case, not a different pass mark, only the % of numbers set in Medway, e.g., 23% capacity is currently 28%, and the proposal is to increase this 23% for Medway-based children.

Q - Exploration of selective provision on the West side of the river. Are the DfE supportive of any proposals?

A - Yes, they are supportive

Q - Development of a Selective Education Policy. This policy should incorporate aspirations for proportions of students attending Oxbridge and Russel Group Universities etc?

A - I will take this into account.

Finance:

With the constant increase in the number of pupils taking the test and the increased costs of the external contractor, the budget available for the Medway Test is now insufficient. It has not changed for several years. It is recommended that the budget for the test is increased by £60k to reflect this.

The Schools forum Members NOTED and COMMENTED on this report.

10. Funding support business cases item:

None.

11. AOB:

Schools forum Membership - Sarah Phillipson:

Nominations of:

- Fiona May as Special/Pru Academy Headteacher representative
- Richard Warnham, as Governor Primary, Maintained representative
- Barbara Fincham as Governor Primary Academy representative
- Clive Mailing, as Governor, Maintained a Secondary representative
- Peter Marting as Governor Secondary Academy representative
- Kyle Taylor as CFO MAT representative

Decision - These were agreed upon and noted by the Schools forum Members.

11. The Forward Plan - Date, time, agenda and venue of the next meeting:

**Minutes of Schools Forum Meeting
21st September 2022 at 2.30 pm**

- 07 December 2022
- 11 January 2023
- 17 May 2023

All 2.30 pm virtual meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm.

Signed by (Chair) Date: