

# Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 01/20

Date: September 2020

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To provide an update on Grammar School Places

## Grammar School Places

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To meet increasing demand for selective school places, Medway has funded the expansions of three grammar schools (Holcombe, Rainham Mark and Sir Joseph Williamson's) to provide 450 places (yrs 7-11) and supported the successful Selective Schools Expansion Fund (SSEF) bid at Rochester Grammar providing another 150 places.

Sufficient places are in place to meet demand expected from Medway pupils and some out of area pupils, including local out of area pupils from boundary areas such as Lordswood, Walderslade Woods, Higham, Upchurch etc. This is based upon 25% of the Medway cohort requiring a grammar school place. This peaks at 935 pupils in 2022/23, and there are 1055 official selective year 7 places available.

However, for this to work, pupils do need to achieve a pass in the test. It also requires local parents when making their preferences for a grammar school place to name all options within Medway and not just pinning their hopes on one. If they were to be unsuccessful in acquiring a place at their one nominated school due to distance as these schools are usually oversubscribed, then they are not automatically allocated a place at another grammar school and out of area pupils who named those schools would be above them in ranking at the schools.

Therefore, we encourage parents to use all of their preferences to minimise the potential of not being granted a place at a grammar school.

Notwithstanding that, in recent years, all pupils from Medway who qualify and want a place at a grammar school, have acquired one even if it has not been on national offer day due to the way they have stated their preference.

All Medway's grammar schools have now amended their admissions arrangements to favour Medway pupils in their oversubscription criteria, but that still requires parents to apply for them appropriately.

In 2019 there were 245 out of area pupils granted a place at a Medway Grammar School, this represented 23.5% of the overall grammar places allocated. Of those 44% came from Kent, many in the immediate surrounding areas. For 2020 intake, the number drops to 200 out of area, at 18.6% of the total, of which 63% come from Kent.

This shows that overall the changes to the admissions criteria and the encouragement given to parents to apply for more than one school at grammar schools is having an effect and will continue over the coming years, favouring Medway pupils followed by local Kent pupils.