Consultation on the expansion of St Mary’s Island Church of England Primary School

9 January to 5 February 2017

Raising achievement through quality learning environments
This document is designed to:

- Notify you of Medway Council’s proposals to make statutory prescribed alterations at St Mary’s Island Primary School with effect from 1 September 2018, which will result in the enlargement of the premises and the extension of the lower age range from age four to two at the school to allow for the expected increase in pupil numbers
- Explain why these changes are being proposed
- Invite your comments on these proposals
- Inform you of, and invite you to, a public meeting to be held at St Mary’s Island Primary School on Wednesday 25 January 2017 at 6.00pm where this proposal will be discussed and questions answered.

The statutory process

The Department for Education (DFE) has set out the requirements and processes for making changes to the governance arrangements in maintained schools in the guidance ‘Making prescribed alterations to maintained schools’.

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

With this in mind, Medway Council is confident that the proposals set out within this document to expand provision at St Mary’s Island Primary School meet these criteria.

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

Why is there a need to expand schools in the St Mary’s Island area?

In Gillingham West, the school place planning area into which the school falls, as the graph below shows, the birth numbers have been steadily increasing since 2001 and although there was a decline between 2013 and 2015, last academic year the number of births started to rise again, and birth figures from the register office suggest that this year the number will rise again. This is likely to continue to increase as there are a number of developments underway, or due to start, in the area. This includes the final housing phase on St Mary’s Island.
Actual and forecast Year R – Gillingham West

The next graph below shows the actual and expected numbers of children requiring a reception place in the area, with the red line showing the current number of available places. These forecasts take account of expected numbers of children who will move into the area prior to requiring a school place. As these increased numbers progress through the schools, they will replace the smaller year groups in the older primary years. The forecasted number of pupils would leave less than 5% surplus capacity in the Gillingham West area in Reception Year. 5% is the nationally accepted buffer necessary to ensure sufficient school places are available to meet demand. If more families move in than expected, then there will not be sufficient school places for everyone.
The uncertainty surrounding future births and inward movement of families with children means that the council needs to be cautious when deciding how much, and when, additional provision is required. However, the recent trend of higher birth rates, together with significant levels of ongoing and new housing developments in the area, does suggest that the increase in children requiring a reception place will continue for the foreseeable future.

The proposed expansion of St Mary’s Island Primary School is just one of the measures planned to address the expected pressure on primary school places in the local area. Additional provision at Saxon Way Primary, Brompton Westbrook Primary, Napier Primary and Woodlands Primary in Gillingham, together with the new 3FE provision at New Horizons in Chatham and the additional Key Stage 1 capacity at The Delce Academy in Rochester has ensured that sufficient places have been available to meet recent demand. However, further provision is required to maintain a sufficiency of places and this particularly relevant in the St Mary’s Island area.

Why is the enlargement of the premises to St Mary’s Island Primary School being proposed?

The school currently provides Key Stage 1 and 2 education for children from the age of four until they transfer into secondary schools at age 11. It has been one of the most popular primary phase schools in Medway in recent years.

The school is currently a 2 Form of Entry (FE) with a published admission number (PAN) of 60. This means that the school admits 60 pupils into the reception year group each year. Following the proposed expansion, the school will admit 90 pupils into the reception year group; the school will then grow year on year.

As a 2FE primary school the pupil capacity is currently 420 and as a 3FE primary school pupil numbers could rise to 630, plus the nursery children, when all year groups are full.

In April 2014 Ofsted carried out an inspection at the school, and gave a rating of ‘good’ across all aspects of the report. This has led to an increase in the popularity of the school. For the intake in 2016 there were 70 first preferences, and 127 overall, for the 60 places available. In 2015 there were 92 preferences in total. The proposals are, therefore, in line with current local and national policy, which allows good and outstanding schools to expand to meet the preferences of parents.

Furthermore, there are a number of ongoing and proposed housing developments in the area, not only on St Mary’s Island itself, but also at Victory Pier, Colonial House, Kitchener Barracks, Chatham Waters, and the interface land at the Dockyard. These housing schemes will undoubtedly add further pressure to primary school places in the immediate locality.

We are consulting on the proposal, by way of a statutory prescribed alteration, to enlarge the premises to give the school sufficient capacity to provide for the additional pupils. A feasibility study to explore the options for the physical expansion of the school is underway. The feasibility study will consider the requirements for the additional accommodation, the suitability of existing accommodation, and the access arrangements to the site, including the management arrangements for additional staff, pupils and parents. To minimise disruption to the education of pupils it is likely that the building works will be phased in line with expected demand.

The project to expand the premises will be financed using the Central Government basic need grant, which is a fund for the creation of additional school capacity to ensure that sufficient school places are available in each local area. Further funding as required will come from developer contributions from new housing schemes in the area. This is where developers of new housing schemes pay a contribution to the Council to assist in the enhancement and expansion of essential community facilities.

Why is the ‘extension of the age range’ being proposed?

With the increase in pupils numbers highlighted above, there will also be an increase in demand for nursery places. Currently, the school does not offer nursery places, which results in local children having to travel some distance to attend a nursery. By extending the lower age range from four to two the school will be able to offer a
full early year’s foundation stage. The ‘enlargement of the premises’ will incorporate suitable buildings for the nursery provision on site.

It is Medway Council’s policy that where possible and practical a nursery stage will be included within expanded primary school provision in Medway.

**The next stages**

Following the four-week consultation period, Medway Council’s Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee may ask to see a report on the responses and comments to this proposal, which would be presented to them in March 2017.

On 4 April 2017 Medway Council’s Cabinet will consider the responses to this consultation and the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. They may then decide not to proceed with the proposal, or to authorise a four-week period of statutory representation when notices will be published to give interested parties the opportunity to formally object or comment.

If there are no objections to the statutory notice period in the late spring 2017, Medway Council can decide to go ahead with the proposals. If there are one or more objections Medway Council, as Schools Commissioner under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, will consider the objections before determining the outcome.

**Consultation timetable**

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Four week Public Consultation period</td>
<td>9 January to 5 February 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Consultation meeting in St Mary’s Island School Hall</td>
<td>Wednesday 25 January 2017 at 6.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Outcomes of Consultation</td>
<td>9 March 2017 (TBC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report Outcome of Consultation to Cabinet</td>
<td>4 April 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four week Statutory Notice period</td>
<td>24 April to 21 May 2017</td>
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<td>Council decision on proposals</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
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<td>Implementation of expansion proposals if approved</td>
<td>1 September 2018</td>
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No decisions will be made until the consultation has been completed and local views have been carefully considered.
How to make comments

We would like to hear your views on these proposals.

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

Alternatively you can hand the form below to the school office at St Mary’s Island Primary School or send it to: FREEPOST RRUY-ZBTJ-CZZC, School Organisation, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR

Unfortunately it will not be possible to acknowledge receipt.

All responses must be received by **Sunday 5 February 2017**.

It would be helpful to have the following information:

Name ........................................................................................................................................
Address ......................................................................................................................................

I am (please tick)

Parent/ guardian   Governor
Member of staff    Local Resident
None of the above (please specify) ................................................................................................

With regard to the proposal to enlarge the premises and extend the lower age range at St Mary’s Island Primary School, to enable the school to increase its numbers in line with demand for places:

Please tick one box

☐ I **approve** of the proposal to enlarge the premises and extend the lower age range at St Mary’s Island Primary School

☐ I **object** to the proposal to enlarge the premises and extend the lower age range at St Mary’s Island Primary School

**Comments**

Please give your reasons as fully as possible to help us build the arguments for and against the proposals.

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

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