



## **Proposal to decommission the 12 place Specialist Resourced Provision for pupils with speech and language needs at River Primary School, Dover from September 2026.**

### **Introduction**

We would like to hear your views on a proposal to decommission the Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) for children with speech and language needs (S&LN) at River Primary School from September 2026.

The SRP at River Primary School was commissioned for the start of the September 2015 academic year. At that time, there was a need for additional specialist provision for pupils specifically with S&LN. River Primary School was identified by colleagues in the National Health Service as doing particularly well at supporting pupils with S&LN. When full, it was expected that 12 places would be commissioned.

In order to meet the changing needs of pupils, SRPs now need to provide for pupils who may have wider communication needs in addition to purely speech and language. This may include Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Accommodation and site constraints at River Primary School mean the premises do not lend themselves to widening the need type that can be supported.

### **Reasons for the proposal to decommission the SRP**

In recent years, the number of pupils for whom the SRP at River Primary School has been deemed appropriate has fallen significantly. Currently there are only four pupils accessing the SRP and all will move on to secondary school within the next two years.

The reduction of the number of pupils placed in the SRP at River Primary School is due to a number of factors:

1. The introduction of The Balance System across the county, which is upskilling mainstream staff, providing a strategic approach to supporting pupils with speech and language needs. This means that the needs of a greater number of pupils can be met within their local school rather than through an SRP.
2. There are increasing numbers of pupils with additional communication needs in addition to speech and language, in particular, ASD. Therefore, we need to commission SRP places which have the resources and facilities to support pupils who have multiple communication needs, including SLCN and ASD.
3. Whilst the number of pupils supported by River's SRP has fallen, the number supported by the SRP at Whitfield Aspen School has grown significantly (by over 100 places since 2015). This is because it has the existing resources and expertise to support pupils with multiple need types including SLCN and ASD.

In September 2026, there will be two existing pupils supported by the SRP still at the school. The school staff are committed to ensuring they would continue to receive the high-quality teaching and learning support they currently receive until they transfer to secondary school.

## Existing SRP provision in Dover District and plans for future development

There are currently two SRPs for primary aged pupils in Dover District, these being at River Primary School and Whitfield Aspen Primary. Whitfield Aspen School is designated as an SRP for Profound, Severe and Complex Needs (PSCN). This means that they have the facilities and staff to support pupils with a variety of need types including SLCN and ASD. It is the largest primary school SRP in Kent, with currently 192 pupils on roll in the SRP.

The SRPs at Whitfield Primary School and River Primary School are located less than two miles apart. This concentrates provision at a point in time when we are looking to create more localised provisions, enabling pupils with additional needs to attend a suitable provision nearer to their homes.

There is no primary SRP provision in Deal and Walmer whilst there is provision at secondary level at Goodwin Academy in Deal. This is a gap that we are looking to address. We are working with partners to create a 14 place primary SRP in Deal/Walmer which would support pupils with multiple needs, including ASD. We expect this to be consulted on in December 2025 where stakeholders will be able to give their views. If approved, the SRP will open in September 2026.

An SRP in Deal/Walmer would reduce the distances that residents in Deal, Walmer, Sandwich and the surrounding villages have to travel to secure specialist provision.

## How to find out more and give your views on the proposal

You can find out more by attending a public drop-in meeting at River Primary School on Monday 24 November 3pm-4pm. School staff and KCC officers will be available to answer any questions you may have.

You can give your views by:

- Completing the online form at [www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)
- Handing your response form into reception at River Primary School, Lewisham Road, Dover CT17 0PP
- Posting the response form to: Office Manager, River Primary School, Lewisham Road, Dover CT17 0PP
- Emailing: [school.consultations@kent.gov.uk](mailto:school.consultations@kent.gov.uk). Please put 'River Primary School' in the subject line.

## Timeline

The table below sets out what happens next:

Date	Information
10 November to 8 December 2025	Four-week informal consultation period. Responses need to be received by midday on Monday 8 December 2025.
Monday 24 November 3pm-4pm	A drop-in information session will be held at River Primary School where those interested can ask questions about the proposal.
20 January 2026	Following the informal consultation, all views received will be reported to KCC's Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee.

	The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills will decide whether or not to proceed to the next stage which is issuing a public notice on the proposal to decommission the SRP.
February 2026	Should the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills decide to issue a public notice, the proposal would be published in the local media and a further four-week formal consultation period is held.
March 2026	Following the outcome of the four-week public notice period, any responses would be reported to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, who will decide if the decommissioning of the SRP should go ahead or not. If the decision is to decommission, no places would be commissioned from September 2026 and the school would no longer have the SRP designation.