

EDUCATION CONSULTATION

Proposed new primary school in Paddock Wood

11 March to 22 April 2026



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Kent County Council (KCC) is asking for your views on a proposal to open a new primary school in Paddock Wood. This would help meet the growing need for school places as the town expands.

Context

In England, all new schools must be set up as “Free Schools”, which means they are run by academy trusts. When a local authority needs a new school, it invites academy trusts to apply to run it. This is known as the Free School Presumption process.

Before embarking on the launch of a Free School Presumption competition, local authorities are encouraged by the Department for Education (DfE) to conduct a local consultation. The consultation aims to publicise the need for a new school to local community stakeholders and potential academy trusts. This consultation is in accordance with the published DfE guidance that can be access via this link:

[Establishing a new academy: the free school presumption route - May 2024¹](#)

This consultation will run for 6 weeks from 11 March to 22 April 2026 and KCC welcomes responses to the consultation during this period.

Why is KCC proposing the establishment of a new school?

KCC has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30 (KCP) is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link: www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision

We look at birth rates, local population changes, and new housing developments to predict future demand for school places.

Paddock Wood has seen significant housebuilding in recent years, consequently the forecast for the Paddock Wood planning group shows there may not be enough school places in the area without a new school.

Details of the proposed new school:

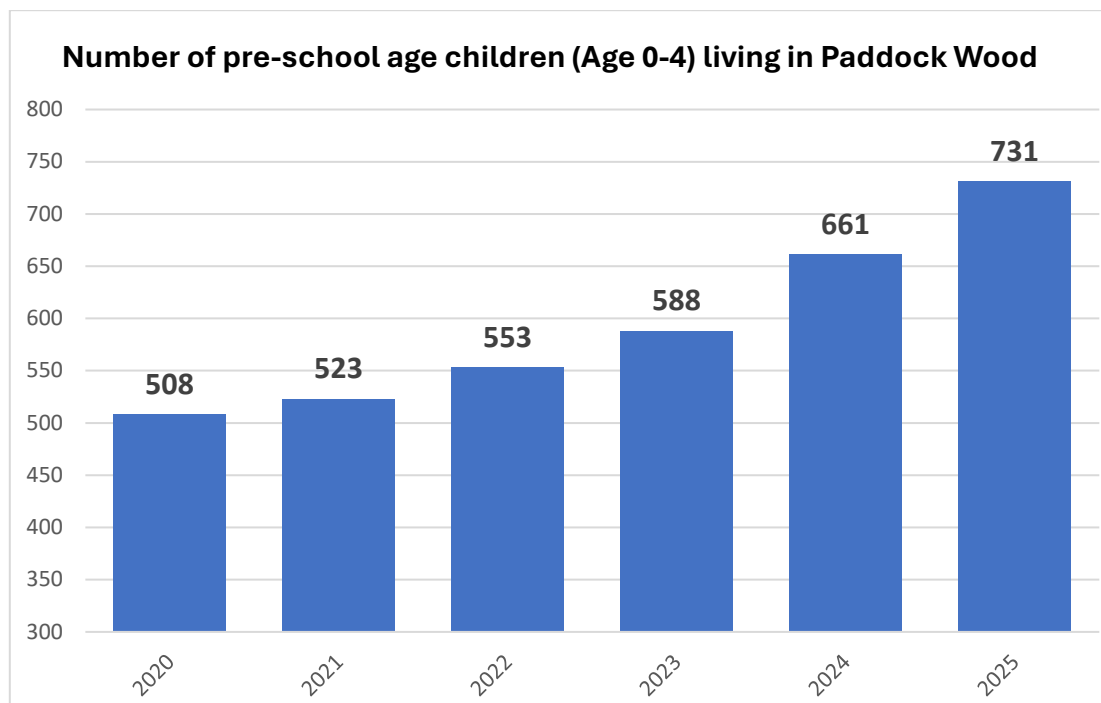
To meet this need for additional places within the Paddock Wood planning group KCC will seek to establish a new primary school within the town to open in September 2028. The new school would include classroom space to accommodate 1FE (30 places in each year group) and core facilities, such as a hall and kitchen sufficient for 2FE (60 places in each year) to support future expansion when needed. The new school would also include a 26 place nursery and a 14 place Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) to support children with additional needs.

Analysis of demand:

Paddock Wood has grown relatively quickly in recent years and 2,450 dwellings are included in the Borough Council's Local Plan. This means more families are moving into the area. Our

forecasts show that from 2028 onwards there will not be enough Reception places locally for those living in the town.

The chart below shows the number of pre-school aged children living within Paddock Wood over the last five years. Through both an increase in the number of children being born and children born elsewhere moving into the town, the total pre-school population has increased by 43% and is forecast to continue to increase.

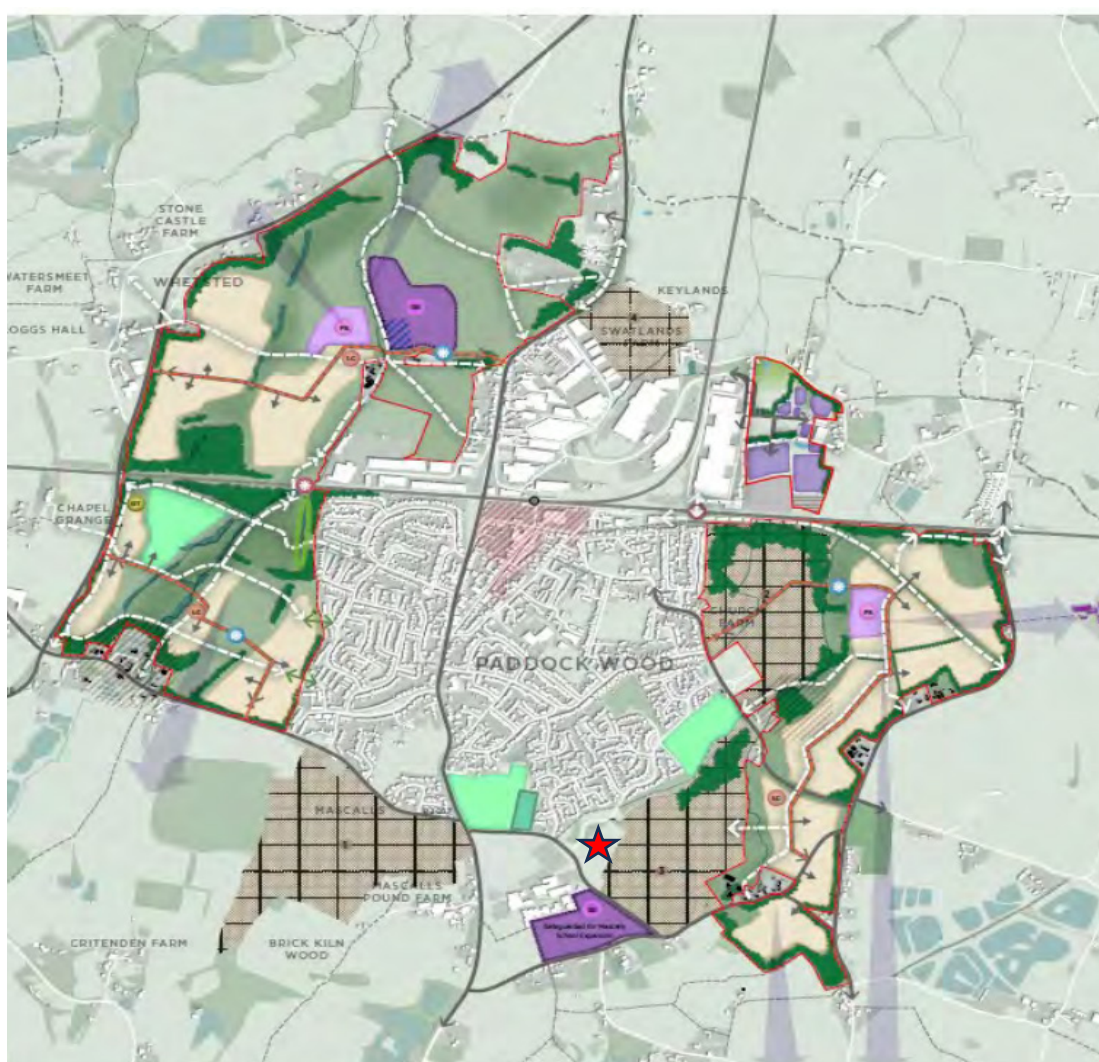


The table below shows the forecast deficit of Reception places in the Paddock Wood planning group if no additional places are commissioned:

Planning Group	2024/25 capacity	2026/27 (F)	2027/28 (F)	2028/29 (F)	2029/30 (F)	2030/31 (F)	2031/32 (F)	2032/33 (F)	2033/34 (F)	2034/35 (F)	2034/35 capacity
Paddock Wood	120	-7	-27	-50	-29	-38	-44	-47	-48	-49	120

The proposed site for the school was secured by the County Council as part of planning permission granted for homes off Green Lane, known as Mascalls Grange.

The masterplan below shows the planned expansion of the town- those sites hatched are under construction. The star indicates the site of the proposed primary school.



If KCC proceeds to establish a new school, a full design of the buildings and associated outside space will be undertaken; with that design subject to a planning application. Local stakeholders will be able to provide their views on any design as part of the planning application process, which will include consultation prior to the application being submitted.

What happens next?

When this consultation ends, we will report the findings to the KCC Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, who will decide whether to move to the next stage of opening. This will take place at the KCC's May meeting of the Children, Young people and Education Cabinet Committee, a meeting viewable to the public.

If the decision is made to proceed, there will be more opportunities for interested parties to provide feedback via the formal presumption processes and as part of the formal planning application approval process.

How to let us know your views:

We would like to hear your views on a proposal to open a new primary school in Paddock Wood

Please submit a response **no later than midday 22 April 2026** by:

- Completing the online response form at www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations
- Sending a copy of the response form by post to: Nick Abrahams, Children, Young People and Education, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ
- Emailing: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk. Please put 'Proposed new primary school in Paddock Wood' in the subject line.

Additional information

- We have completed an Equality Impact Assessment to see if the proposal could affect anyone unfairly. We welcome your views on the assumptions we have made and the conclusions we have drawn.

To view the document, go to www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

- KCC is the Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision in Kent. You can view the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision Kent 2026 to 2030 at: www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision