



Media Release
Friday, 19 June 2020

Proposal to delay Kent Test 2020 until October

A proposal has been submitted to Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to delay this year's Kent Test by approximately a month.

We appreciate that the closure of schools to the majority of pupils during the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety for families about their children's education, and for those whose children will participate in the Kent Test, the current unknowns about a return to school in September are adding to the pressures. We were therefore keen to provide clarity and information to schools, parents/carers and pupils as soon as we were able to.

We also recognise that being away from school for an extended period will have had an impact on all children's learning, although some more than others. The proposal, submitted to Richard Long by the Children, Young People and Education directorate, would allow pupils longer to settle back into the classroom.

The proposal also seeks to increase the number of schools parents/carers can name on the Secondary Common Application Form (SCAF) from four to six for one year only.

As soon as it was announced that schools would close to most pupils from Friday, March 20, contingency planning began, looking at what adjustments might be needed to the Kent Test process in different situations as the pandemic unfolded. KCC staff have been engaging with schools, central government and other selective Local Authorities to explore ways of delivering an 11+ assessment process for the pupils due to start secondary school in 2021. We contacted all 431 primary and junior schools in Kent and of the 325 which responded, 91% supported the proposal to delay the Kent Test.

Matt Dunkley, KCC's Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, said: "While the pathway to a return to normal school life is still not fully understood, we know it is important that schools, parents/carers and children have adequate notice of any adjustments to the Kent Test process. It has recently become clear that Year 5 pupils are no longer expected to return to school before the start of the new academic year. We are mindful of how much classroom time students have missed and want to give all those taking part the opportunity to settle back into school life before the Kent Test. Proposals are therefore being made to delay the Kent Test by around one month, with testing for children in Kent schools to potentially take place on Thursday, October 15 and children from outside Kent to be tested from Saturday, October 17. It is important to point out, however, that while these are our current preferred plans, no one knows what will happen over the coming months with regards to Covid-19 and if Government guidance changes and it is no longer thought safe to accommodate children in school for the testing then our proposal will need to be revised; the safety and well-being of all the pupils and staff involved has to be our overriding priority.

"Assessment through testing has the benefit of being available to students regardless of their current education setting, so it remains our current preference for a selection method. Our process also contains the head teacher appeal stage, which enables further consideration to be given to pupils where it is felt their test scores did not reflect their true ability. KCC will continue to work with schools to help them prepare to apply any social distancing requirements in the new school year. All selective authorities are awaiting advice from the Department for Education about their preferred approach, but in the meantime we want to have discussions with schools so that we can be confident of delivering testing in a fair and safe way for all pupils taking part."

The Kent Test is usually held in early September, allowing parents to know their child's results before they apply for secondary schools at the end of October, a date fixed in national legislation. As a delayed process will mean that results are unlikely to be available until late November, it is proposed that the number of schools that can be named on the Secondary Common Application Form (SCAF) be increased from four to six for one year only, enabling parents to name up to two grammar schools without reducing the number of non-selective schools on their application.

Families considering a grammar school for their child should ensure that they register them to take part in the process by the deadline of Wednesday, July 1. Familiarisation material, which can be used at home, is available via the Kent Test pages on www.kent.gov.uk

A Forthcoming Executive Decision (FED) notice has been published on KCC's website (<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=115&RD=0&bcr=1>) providing formal notification of the proposals. The decision will be considered in mid-July and should be finalised before the end of the current school year, barring any extensions to the democratic process. Between now and when the decision is made, we will continue to work with the Department for Education and schools to ensure all necessary measures are in place by the Test date. These plans are based on central government's current advice in relation to the wider reopening of schools and are subject to change where Covid-19 guidance is updated.