

Co-educational proposal by Medway Council at Chatham Grammar

FAQs

Q. Why are you suggesting the academy moves from being a single sex girls' academy with a mixed sixth form to a co-educational academy?

We believe this proposal is in the best interests of the whole community:

Students:

- Girls and boys achieve academically as well as each other in co-educational as in single sex schools.
- Girls and boys often prefer attending mixed schools and should have that option. This choice is currently very limited across Medway grammar schools.
- Local boys passing the 11+ would have access to many more local grammar schools. Currently boys face a restricted choice due to the challenging travel arrangements to some parts of Medway.
- Co-education provides an opportunity to enhance students' outcomes beyond academic performance and to improve personal and social wellbeing with increased focus on attitudes, behaviours and socio-emotional skills.
- Co-education enables all students to have greater and enhanced life outcomes.
- Co-education will provide an opportunity for all our students to transition more easily from Chatham Grammar into our mixed UKAT Sixth Form and have access to all opportunities offered by our Lead Sponsor the University of Kent.
- Co-education reflects a diverse society and prepares young people for life.
- Co-education provides students with a better understanding and appreciation of gender norms and consequently experience a more rounded education in its broadest sense in the 21st century.
- Co-education can help to reduce gender discrimination for both girls and boys.
- Teachers in co-educational schools can model equality in their teaching, providing a classroom environment which contributes to reduced gender prejudice and discrimination by encouraging more friendly and egalitarian attitudes between genders.

Parents/Carers:

- Have greater choice for the right type of selective school for their child – co-educational or single sex.
- Co-educational schools are very popular in Medway with parents/carers and we feel it is fair that parents/carers have that choice, currently limited, in the local area.
- The academy will prioritise sibling links in its over-admissions criteria to support parents/carers who wish to send their children to the same school.
- Parents/carers of Year 5 and 6 children may prefer a co-education secondary school as it provides continuity from our mixed local primary schools in Medway.

Local Schools:

- The Local Authority's joint proposal to take forward three currently single sex schools to offering co-education, will lead to greater parity, equality and accessibility for our local communities.

Local Authority:

- As the demand for secondary school places for both sexes rises over the coming years, a mixed grammar school is best able to meet the growing need for places.

Q. How will you meet the needs of boys?

Facilities:

- The school already has a co-educational UKAT Sixth Form so boys' toilets for Sixth Form students are already in place.
- In the existing buildings for our Years 7 – 11 we have plans to introduce new boys' toilets.
- The Sports Hall already has two sets of changing rooms and toilet facilities.

Curriculum:

- Co-education would provide us with the opportunity to review and enhance the curriculum offer to ensure all students have an appropriate curriculum – this includes PE provision.
- The Trust has significant curriculum experience in meeting the needs of both boys and girls.

Pastoral Care:

- The academy will continue to use a Personal Tutor (PT) and House System to provide support and pastoral care, with the added opportunity of a mixed cohort being representative of today's society.
- The academy already meets the pastoral needs of boys in the UKAT Sixth Form.

Transition pathways for boys:

- Boys will be assigned to PT groups to ensure they feel fully included and supported in all Chatham Grammar PT activities. Any new male student would have equal access to our team of SEN experts, as well as our robust wellbeing offer unique to Chatham Grammar.
- Boys entering in Year 7 would be invited to attend our bespoke CG Summer School which enables new students to transition from primary to secondary with ease and excitement in preparation for their start in September.
- Boys already attend our Super Saturdays and other community events based at Chatham Grammar through our flagship Partnership Development Programme delivered by UKAT supporting Year 4/5/6 students.

Q. Will the proposed change mean that the Local Authority may not be able to meet the demand for grammar school places for girls?

No, we do not believe that will be the case as we have currently have more places for girls than boys.

Q. Would a move to being a co-ed school reduce choice for parents of girls as boys would have more choices of schools?

No, the proposal for all three schools to go co-educational status will mean that there is an even distribution of places for both girls and boys in selective schools across Medway.

Q. What will the impact be on local girls' schools?

1. Non-selective schools:

As only students deemed selective could gain a grammar school place, we do not believe that a change to becoming a co-educational grammar school would impact on a non-selective school as it would not change the proportion of students being deemed selective.

2. Selective schools:

Fort Pitt and Holcombe Grammar School will be offering places to both girls and boys so the proposal will ensure that there is more choice for both girls and boys in the local area, so this provides greater access and creates more choice.

Q. Which year groups will boys be allowed into in 2025?

We would be concerned about meeting the needs of an individual or small group of male students in year groups that are currently all female. Therefore, we would invite boys to only join Year 7 in 2025 rather than join other existing year groups.

Q. How will this change impact on the ethos of the academy?

We do not intend to change the ethos and mission of the academy. We will continue with the core values of Chatham Grammar and we are committed to our existing parents/carers that the single sex education and ethos that they opted for will be maintained in their year groups.

Q. Why are you proposing this now?

The proposal has been instigated by the Local Authority in response to the challenges faced by the local community regarding the disproportionate number of places available for young people in selective schools in Medway.

This is part of UKAT's vision to significantly impact on the lives of all its communities that it serves. The Trust aspires to reach out to all young people, both girls and boys in the local community with an aspirational and educational offer that is inclusive, dynamic and forward thinking.

This is part of the new UKAT Sixth Form's plans to offer natural progression pathways to both girls and boys as we develop the UKAT Sixth Form into a centre of excellence for academic pathways with a focus on health and medical sciences.

This is part of the new focus for UKAT to develop plans to build positive partnerships with key educational providers across Medway to enhance and enrich the educational offer to all its students.

Q. How will this affect students currently in the school?

The current year groups are all female in Years 7-11 and we provide a co-educational offer in the UKAT Sixth Form. For those in Years 7-11 there will be very little or no effect on their

academy experience. The expectation is that the co-educational transition will start from Year 7 2024, with very limited impact on other year groups.

Q. How will this affect Sport and Extra-Curricular opportunities?

As part of the curriculum review we will assess the sporting opportunities for boys.

The school currently has a mixed staffing PE Team. The existing sports facilities will equally suit the needs of both girls and boys.

The academy is constantly reviewing extracurricular provision to ensure students have a wide variety of opportunities.

Q. Will there be a change in the academy's' name, logo and uniform?

No, we will continue as Chatham Grammar. We will keep our existing Chatham Grammar uniform and a new range of items will be added to provide boys with a full uniform offer in line with our current girls uniform.

Q. What will the over-subscription criteria be for the academy?

A separate admissions consultation document with the new proposed determined arrangements will be provided as part of the consultation process.

Q: What will the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) be for Chatham Grammar and the other two schools involved?

Chatham Grammar's PAN will remain at 150 students.

Q. What will the balance between girls and boys be in a Year group?

We cannot select by gender to artificially determine the proportion of boys to girls.

We anticipate that the balance between boys and girls will evolve over time.

Initially we expect there to be a higher proportion of girls than boys in a year group. However, over time we anticipate that the proportion of girls and boys will become much more even.

It should be noted that it is our understanding that the experience of other mixed grammar schools in Kent and Medway is that they have a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls.

Q. What will happen if the consultation proves that this proposal is not viable to proceed with the proposal to go co-ed?

In this case the academy will continue as a single sex grammar school for girls.

What happens next?

No decision, other than to consult, has been made at this stage.

The Local Authority is consulting widely from Friday 1st December 2023 to Friday 12th January 2024 to hear and collect parents/carers/students/staff views.

As well as complying with DfE advice and admissions law on consultation timescales, we are keen to give all interested parties as much time as possible to give us their views. The Local Authority will then assess these views and a number of other factors and decide whether it and the schools should proceed to submit a formal business case (including the proposed new admissions arrangements) to the Secretary of State for Education.

UKAT would also be required to enter into updated agreements with the Secretary of State to reflect the co-educational status of the academy in the event that the application proceeds and receives the Secretary of State's approval.