

## **Kent County Council Media Release**

### **Sponsor and planned opening date for new free special secondary school announced**

A new special free school being planned for Kent is scheduled to open its doors to its first pupils in September 2022.

The secondary school, which will provide 120 places for young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, including Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and social communication difficulties, will be built on the former Danley Middle School site in Halfway Road, Minster, on the Isle of Sheppey.

Following a competition process overseen by Kent County Council and the Department for Education (DfE), we are delighted to announce The SABDEN Multi-Academy Trust has been appointed to run the new school.

The SABDEN Multi-Academy Trust is based in East Sussex and has a proven track record of providing specialised education to young people who demonstrate challenging behaviour and who may have social, emotional, mental health difficulties. The Trust comprises of three schools for pupils with SEMH issues, an Alternative Provision Pupil Referral Unit and a school within a secure residential facility all in East Sussex. The Trust is also opening a new Alternative Provision Free School in September 2020 called 'The Workplace', again in East Sussex. The Trust aspires to work in collaboration with KCC to create an outstanding SEMH school on Sheppey, which will offer life-changing opportunities for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

Frank Stanford, CEO of The SABDEN Multi-Academy Trust, said: "The Trust is thrilled to be opening this ambitious and aspirational new school on the Isle of Sheppey. We will offer a personalised curriculum with a strong focus on academic, literacy and personal development. We will offer outstanding opportunities for children, young people and families on Sheppey and look forward to seeing this innovative school come to fruition."

The need for a special free school on the Isle of Sheppey was identified by KCC in previous versions of its rolling Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent. A Wave 2 (Special School and Alternative Provision) bid was submitted to the DfE in October 2018 for funding for a new special free school for secondary pupils on the

Isle of Sheppey. KCC was advised in March 2019 that the bid was successful and that a competition process to find a sponsor for the proposed school would take place. Richard Long, Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, said: "I am delighted that The SABDEN Multi-Academy Trust has been appointed to run the new free special secondary school on the Isle of Sheppey and that building work will commence soon with the intention of opening this much needed provision in September 2022.

"The new school will enable local children requiring a special school place to access suitable provision within their local community, enhancing their opportunities to develop social links and become more independent. It will also help the County Council to ensure maximum effectiveness of High Needs budgets by reducing demand for SEN (Special Educational Needs) Transport and independent provision.

"I shall enjoy watching the new school take shape and I very much look forward to meeting staff and the first cohort of pupils in just over two years' time."

A name for the new school is yet to be announced.

The announcement of the sponsor and the intended opening date comes as the DfE revealed that in the region of 3,000 extra school places will be created across the country for pupils with the most complex needs.

### **Notes to journalists:**

- Kent County Council's latest Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent can be found here: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision-plan#:~:text=The%20Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education,located%20in%20the%20right%20areas>
- Read the Department for Education's media release about new special free schools across the country here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-places-created-in-new-special-free-schools--2?utm\\_source=84701c9b-f1fe-4960-83d5-3286e2f628cc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-places-created-in-new-special-free-schools--2?utm_source=84701c9b-f1fe-4960-83d5-3286e2f628cc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

