

SUPPORTING STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO ADMISSION APPEALS FOR 2022/2023



Appealing for a place in Year 7 for academic year 2022-2023

Weald of Kent Grammar School's roll has more than doubled over the past 10 years with a current roll of 1932.

The school considers that to admit pupils who have not been assessed as academically suitable would be prejudicial to the provision of an efficient education and the efficient use of resources.

Curriculum provision

Weald of Kent is a selective school, admitting students who have been assessed as suitable for a grammar school education under the Kent County Council procedure for entry into secondary education. Therefore, the curriculum, which is broad and balanced, is designed to meet the particular needs of students who are academically more-able. The pace of learning is rapid and the work challenging, as you would expect from a selective school.

Experience tells us that students who have not been assessed as suitable for a grammar education in the PESE test, and who have not consistently achieved 'exceeds expectation' across the primary curriculum, struggle to keep pace with their peers. This creates significant additional need which can prejudice the education of others in the school. Additionally, and more significantly, we have found that it can lead to issues of personal self-esteem and potential emotional harm to the child.

Accommodation

The school's PAN is 270. On 01 March 2022 we offered 330 places. The maximum capacity in our classrooms is 32 students. This is because the physical space available in our classrooms limits the total capacity. In addition, in order to comply with Health and Safety regulations in relation to safe working practice in science classrooms, we must not allow class sizes to exceed 32. The school will not be able to offer safe or effective teaching should the total number of students in the year exceed 352.

At key stage three, students are taught in form groups apart from DT, where classes are split into smaller groups of no more than 20.

It is not possible, at this stage of the school year to employ additional staff, or to create more classroom space within the school buildings.

The national resignation date for teachers to be able to start at a new school in September is 31 May. All recruitment and selection processes for permanent members of teaching staff must be completed by this date. Employing temporary, or supply staff will prejudice the education that we are able to offer to all students. However, this issue is moot, as we do not have the physical space to accommodate any additional forms of entry in the coming academic year as detailed.

Historically, we have exceeded capacity at the Sevenoaks campus. For the first 3 years of its operation taking 4 forms of entry in order to support Kent to allocate grammar spaces to children in this area. However, we are no longer able to accept an additional form of entry at the Sevenoaks campus and can only accommodate 3, which is our published plan for that site. This is to ensure that we have sufficient teaching spaces available long-term at the Sevenoaks campus where extension is not possible due to the limitations on the site as a whole, which is shared between three school provisions. Should we take an additional form at this campus location, we would not be able to offer 6th form teaching at this site due to the constraints on space that this would create. This would significantly prejudice the educational opportunities of all students attending the Sevenoaks campus.

We have already agreed to accept two additional forms of entry at Tonbridge this year, taking the total number of form groups to 11, with 8 based at Tonbridge. This will mean that our Tonbridge Campus is at maximum capacity for the year ahead. A full site survey, supported by Kent, has confirmed that there are no additional or underused spaces at this campus location.

In summary, the school does not have the physical space, or the staffing capacity, to accommodate more than 11 forms of 32. This means that the maximum number of students the school can accommodate in year 7 in September 2022 is 352 students. To exceed this number would significantly prejudice the education of all students.

Conclusion

Weald of Kent supports the admission of students who have been assessed under the PESE tests as suitable for a grammar school education, provided the total number of students in year 7 for September 2022 does not exceed 352.

For students who have narrowly missed the grammar assessment mark on the Kent Test, and for whom there is significant evidence of the student working at 'exceeds expectations' across the primary curriculum, we are confident that they can become successful members of the Weald of Kent community, providing the total number of students in year 7 for September 2022 does not exceed 352.

For students who do not meet the above criteria, we would ask the appeal panel to be mindful of the extent to which this would be prejudicial not only to their education, but also the education of other students attending the school.

Finally, Weald of Kent is able to accommodate 352 students in year 7 for September 2022, but no more than this, as a result of constraints on the physical space available at the school (across both campus locations) and the availability of staff as detailed above.

In considering the prejudice argument, the school would request that the panel consider the wider implications for all students should our maximum capacity of 352 be exceeded.

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