



School Defence Statement from the Admissions Authority
Appeals for Admission in September 2024

The Published Admission Number (PAN) of the school is 180.

The net capacity of the school is 1222 students and the indicated admission number (the number of students that would be required for each admission year for the school to admit up to the net capacity) stands at 189. This figure was determined by the DfE after careful measurement and evaluation of the site in 2022 after the addition of our new classroom block - Sherlock.

The current number on roll figure is 1165.

The school has consistently filled all 180 places for entry to Year 7 over the past seven years and predicts that this trend will continue and therefore the number on roll figure will rise to around 1200 where it will remain going forward.

We normally consider 6 classes of 30 to be the maximum number we can take without prejudicing the education of the girls already admitted to the school. To admit an additional child over 180 would prejudice the provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources because of the reasons given below.

The daily life of the school would indicate that despite the 1222 assessment our existing accommodation is at full capacity and we have to allocate resources strategically, and to maximum efficiency, just to operate our current curriculum for our current students. There are very few free rooms around the site for any given period and several times over the week there are NO spare rooms capable of housing a normal class group of 30. Further evidence of our stretched capacity can be found during exam season, where we often have to resort to using office space to room smaller examination groups and during parent's evenings, where each extra student equates to 10 extra appointments to accommodate.

In addition, we also have problems enabling girls to have lunch in a dignified and appropriate manner because of a lack of space. Despite utilising a longer than average lunch break (1 hour), students are still confined to eating in the Main School Hall. This space is also fully utilised teaching space and a main examination centre. It is therefore regularly unavailable and even when available as an eating space, lunch is necessarily curtailed to allow appropriate cleaning in advance of afternoon lessons. In short, we have barely sufficient space at present so do not wish to make matters worse by admitting over PAN. In addition, lunchtime queues are further exacerbated when students are admitted over PAN. Individually each student has no significant impact but as a result of decisions made by the independent appeals panel in recent years, cumulatively we now have some 45 additional students to cater for each lunchtime. In admitting over PAN this year that will be further exacerbated.

To further illustrate the current constraints we mitigate, many teaching staff no longer have full time teaching rooms. Instead, they must now move around the site to different rooms to teach different groups. This is not ideal as it means transporting resources and wastes time, but we do it to make best use of existing space. Post 16 lessons (which tend to be smaller) are accommodated

in smaller rooms to allow larger KS3/4 classes to be able to access larger rooms which are already in short supply.

The Principal is concerned that students in Years 7 and 8 should be in groups of no more than 30 for Science and PE, in particular, for Health and Safety reasons related to practical work.

It is our conclusion that the school is **FULL** and cannot offer any further places over and above 180. The main reasons for this conclusion are:

- 1. The school already is essentially, and practically, at full capacity;**
- 2. Projected figures for suggest this will become more acute;**
- 3. There are limited rooms capable of accommodating individual classes of 30+;**
- 4. The current curriculum demand means almost all of these rooms are fully utilised in their own curriculum areas;**
- 5. The school already timetables imaginatively to maximise the use of its accommodation;**
- 6. We see little room for increasing capacity in individual classrooms and/or across the site.**
- 7. The school infrastructure/systems are already operating at capacity - canteen, examinations and parents evenings are challenging and the daily flow of students between lessons causes bottle necks in corridors. Put simply the corridors are no wider and canteen no bigger but the school now has some 200+ students more than it had less than 10 years ago with only 3 extra classrooms to accommodate them.**

We must also register our concerns at the potential impact on the quality of provision caused by increasing class size. Class sizes beyond 30 undoubtedly impact on the amount of teacher time for each individual student. Teachers also face increasing pressure marking additional work & therefore the quality of feedback, vital to secure progress, may also be negatively impacted.

The DFE commissioned research report of December 2011 entitled '**Class Size and education in England**' advises that; 'in smaller classes, individual pupils are the focus of a teacher's attention for more time; there is more active interaction between pupils and teachers; and more pupil engagement. In larger classes, there is more time spent by pupils interacting with each other; more time spent by teachers teaching the substantive content of the subject knowledge; and more time spent on non-teaching tasks like taking registers.'

It also notes that '96% of parents believed that the number of children in a class affects the quality of teaching and learning. In the same study teachers and headteachers were also found to consider class size to be an important issue.'

The Folkestone School for Girls has a duty of care to all students and is committed to providing outstanding levels of academic support and challenge, pastoral care and a comprehensive range of character education & personal development opportunities to each and every individual student as part of our **whole child/every** child ethos. There is a genuine concern that this endeavour would be increasingly more difficult with enlarged class sizes and that therefore the quality of provision, support and care for the many, and for the individual would be compromised. We believe that maximum class sizes of no more than 30 allow us to know the **whole child/every child** are the best way to ensure the delivery of outstanding provision for all our students.