

**Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools
7 April 2015**

RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION NUMBERS

The Governing Bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools have been consulted on the proposed admission numbers for their schools for the 2016/17 school year. Requests from the governors and background information are provided below.

Admission numbers are set by reference to a school's net capacity. In primary schools the net capacity is calculated on the basis of the number and size of teaching spaces which are designated as class-bases. In secondary schools this is based on the number, size and type of teaching spaces and the age range of the school.

The net capacity formula provides a maximum and minimum number of workplaces and this guides the setting of the admission number. The formula also produces an indicated admission number (IAN). It is permitted to set an admission number higher or lower than the IAN.

If an admission number is proposed lower than the indicated admission number, the admission authority (the Local Authority for these schools) must publish this information for parents in a local newspaper and on its website. Parents may then object to the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator about the school's admission number being set below the IAN.

a) SECONDARY

District 7 – South Ribble

07 / 107 – Walton le Dale Arts College and High School

Current Admission Number	=	160
Indicated Admission Number	=	160
Proposed Admission Number	=	157
Governors' Proposal	=	157

Head teacher / Governor Comments:

Proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) for September 2016

The school's current published admission number (PAN) is 160.

Officer Comment:

The situation for the last three years intakes has been as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>1st Preferences</u>	<u>Offers</u>
2015	135	137
2014	126	110
2013	96	100

The most recent net capacity assessment was undertaken in October 2014. This produced a minimum / maximum range of workplaces from 762 to 847 (equates to a PAN between 152 and 169). The indicated admission (IAN) number was set at 160 which is the current PAN. This request is therefore to set a number slightly below the IAN.

It terms of current demand and offers being made this will not impact on meeting parental preferences.

There will be a need however to revisit the situation annually and to look at pupil number forecasts in order to monitor future demand in the area – especially as the City Deal development progresses.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this school's PAN is lowered from 160 to 157 for September 2016. This to be reviewed each year in relation to forecasts for overall demand in the area.

District 14 – Rossendale

14 / 107 – Whitworth Community High School

Current Admission Number	=	118
Indicated Admission Number	=	125
Proposed Admission Number	=	118
Governors' Proposal	=	130

Head teacher / Governor Comments:

Proposal to increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) for September 2016.

Prior to September 2014, the PAN of 118 had not been reached for several years and no year group within the school reached its capacity.

In September 2013 there were 113 new starters in year 7 and number has now risen to 118 (with a waiting list in operation for others). In September 2014 there were 118 offers for year 7 places plus waiting list initially of 14. After various changes 118 pupils started in September 2014 (with a residual waiting list).

The table below shows the changing picture in terms of parental preferences:

	1st prefs	2 nd prefs	3 rd prefs
2013 (current Y8)	96	61	36
2014 (current Y7)	113	38	23
2015	115	45	29

A 4 tutor group entry means that there are 29/30 pupils per group - 29/30 per teaching group. This is considered to be too high. With 5 tutor groups (as in current Y7) then 118 allows 23.6 pupils per tutor group.

A PAN set at 130 would allow 26 per group. This is a more cost effective structure than is currently in place in year 7. Having 5 tutor groups permits increased staffing. The higher PAN would attract additional financial resources which will facilitate having 5 groups averaging 25/26 pupils.

Current applicants made their preferences for secondary places in September 2015 prior to the school's Good Ofsted in December 2014. This may mean that families offered Whitworth as 2nd / 3rd choice etc may be less likely to pursue their original preferred schools or academies. It is reasonable to assume that the positive Ofsted report will impact positively on future parental preferences leading to an upward trend in applications.

Officer Comment:

The popularity of this school is increasing as demonstrated by the rise in parental preferences. It's location in Whitworth near to the border with Rochdale means that an increased PAN would be very unlikely to have any impact on other Lancashire secondary schools or academies. It is more likely that Rochdale residents may increasingly seek places at Whitworth High. The current net capacity assessment of available teaching space supports a higher PAN.

The only slight concern is that pupil number forecasts show no basic need for additional places in this area at present and indicate that when numbers start to grow current capacity would be adequate. Individual schools do however market themselves and recent waiting lists and proximity to the County border would mean that increased intake would satisfy a greater proportion of parental preferences.

However the net capacity assessment in November 2011 shows an indicated admission number of 125 and with rising demand it is more appropriate to set the PAN at or over this In relation to meeting customer needs.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this school's PAN is increased from 118 to 130 for September 2016.

b) PRIMARY

District 2 – Fylde

02 / 001 – Carr Head Primary School

Current Admission Number	=	34
Indicated Admission Number	=	34
Proposed Admission Number	=	34
Governors' Proposal	=	30

Head teacher / Governor Comments:

Proposal to lower the Published Admission Number (PAN) for September 2016.

The school's net capacity assessment identifies a minimum of 210 (30 x 7 classes) pupils and a maximum of 240 (238 = 34 x 7 classes). The current PAN at 34 is in line with the maximum capacity. This number causes logistical difficulties in key stage 1 and cramped classrooms in key stage 2. With this in mind the governors are proposing a reduction in the PAN in line with the school's minimum capacity and in accordance with guidance that primary school admission numbers should ideally be in multiples of 30, 45 or 60. The governors recognise that the school does not have the capacity to extend to a PAN of 45 and so wish to bring this in line with the statutory maximum infant class size of 30.

Currently there are 4 infant classes (R, R/1, Y1/2 and Y2) which cause our youngest children to be in classes that change each year throughout key stage 1 (reception through to year 2). Parents of pupils in key stage 1 have expressed concern about the impact of mixed age classes. Parents report that they feel their children are separated from their friends as they move into different classes in the infants. This has a negative impact on the child's wellbeing and experience of school. Their learning can suffer due to the stress they experience through this separation.

The Y1/2 class has a stigma attached to it for those parents that have children in Y2. The headteacher reports that she has been approached by four sets of Y2 parents who feel that their child will be disadvantaged because they are in the Y1/2 class. This stigma is replicated for those parents of Y1 children who are in the YR/1 class. Parents of reception children who are placed in YR/1 class have met with the headteacher to challenge whether their children are fully accessing the Early Years curriculum.

Whilst it is clear that the perception of parents is that mixed aged classes do not work, the governors recognise that the school has worked hard to address parental concerns in order to overcome perceived difficulties across the infant's age range. This includes joint planning across classes and key stage 1, as well as teaching maths to whole year groups. The governors recognise that the attached stigma has been long established and that this has in the past given parents cause to move their child to an alternative school. An admission number of 30 would eliminate the need for mixed age classes and would mean that children would remain with the same cohort throughout their time at Carr Head.

The governors are concerned that the current reception cohort has 36 pupils (2 of whom were admitted following successful appeals). One of the children in this cohort has severe physical disabilities and requires specialised furniture and equipment to be used in the classroom. Whilst this is manageable in the YR class the governors are concerned that as this cohort moves in to key stage 2 as a single class, the classroom capacity will be over stretched. A lower admission number would mean that any future successful appeals would limit the negative impact on individual classroom capacity.

When the children reach KS2 each cohort is placed in a single age class. The admission number indicates that there should be a maximum of 34 pupils in these classes, however due to the appeals process this can be larger. In the recent past, one key stage 2 class consisted of 38 pupils. This puts additional strain on the teacher's wellbeing and workload – marking 38 books for 4 different lessons each day takes significantly longer than marking sets of 30 books.

Governors are concerned that these larger class sizes also result in cramped conditions and stretched resources, including the proportion of teacher time spent with each child. The governors are aware that one parent is removing their child at Christmas (2014) due to what is considered to be an excessively large number of children in the class (34). This parent has stated that whilst Carr Head does everything it can for her child, the sheer volume of children in the class mean that teacher time per child is very limited. The parent had not taken the decision lightly but felt that her child's education had suffered in lower key stage 2 due to the size of the class. If the PAN is reduced, this will ultimately class sizes across key stage 2 and increase the teacher time per pupil.

The PAN of 34 results in an additional class in the infants. This impacts negatively on whole school organisation. The quantity and length of library, ICT and PE sessions have to be reduced to facilitate 8 rather than 7 classes. Access to music resources and the wooden play equipment in the playground is also reduced due to the additional class in key stage 1. A PAN number of 30 would reduce the number of classes to 7 which would result in increased access to limited resources within school. The 8th class means that school has to employ additional teaching and support staff which impacts negatively on staff facilities – staff toilets, staff room and shared teacher work space.

The governors recognise that the overall maximum net capacity considers the school premises as a whole, rather than the capacity within each classroom. At present the key stage 2 classrooms are cramped with furniture for 34 pupils. A reduction in PAN would alleviate this problem, leading to classrooms feeling more spacious due to less furniture. Tables and chairs for 4 pupils take up a floor space of approximately 2 square meters. When supplemented by additional furniture for individual pupil trays this comes to an area of nearly 3 square meters.

In summary, the governing body of Carr Head Primary School strongly urge Lancashire County Council to agree to a PAN of 30 with effect from 2016 as they believe that this would maximise the overall educational experience of the children that attend the school.

Officer Comment:

The case presented by the head teacher and governors is accepted and it is clear that within the current infra-structure their professional view is that children attending the school would be best nurtured and educated if the PAN was lowered from 34 to 30. There is a fundamental understanding and acceptance in relation to all of the points raised and the reasons for their request.

This must however be balanced against the overall need for sufficiency of places within the local area which links to the Local Authority's wider strategic (statutory) role to effectively plan for and provide school places for all children and to co-ordinate admissions throughout its geographical area.

A previous School Admissions Code (February 2010) did require that an admission number must be compatible with the duty to comply with infant class size legislation – a maximum of 30 children per class with a qualified teacher for all ordinary teaching sessions.

This requirement has been removed for the last two updates of the Code (current version December 2014). It is still sensible to take infant class size into account as changes are being considered but this is no longer a mandatory requirement of the Admissions Code.

For the four primary schools situated in Poulton le Fylde the situation regarding reception admissions for September 2015 is as follows:-

School	PAN	1 st Preferences
Carr Head	34	22
St Chad's CE	35	38
St John's RC	30	35
The Breck	35	72

There are therefore been 167 applications for 134 available places. This includes 27 applications from the Blackpool area.

For the two primary schools in Carleton - Carleton Green and St Hilda's CE - there have been 55 applications for 75 places; including 5 from Blackpool.) Staining CE has had 25 applications for 35 places with 14 of these from Blackpool.

Overall therefore there have been 247 first preferences for 244 available places in the Poulton le Fylde area with 46 from Blackpool (18.6%).

The school's net capacity assessment was last completed in November 2014 and produced an indicated admission number at 34.

Provision Planning colleagues do support the school's request at this time but are mindful of the need to monitor the overall situation in the Poulton le Fylde area. If the PAN is lowered to 30 the school will need to be informed that there may still be the requirement for them to participate in place planning in the future and possibly consider expansion. Especially as the site would support additional accommodation.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this school's PAN is lowered from 34 to 30 for September 2016. This to be reviewed each year in relation to forecasts for overall demand in the area and the school to be informed about possible strategic place planning issues for the future.

District 6 – Preston

06 / 035 Fishwick Primary School

Current Admission Number	=	12
Indicated Admission Number	=	15
Proposed Admission Number	=	12
Governors' Proposal	=	15

Head teacher / Governor Comments:

Proposal to increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) for September 2016.

The school is growing and governors feel that an admission number of 15 would enable them to have a more manageable class size at 30 in mixed age classes further up the school. In previous years there have been admission appeals. The Children's Centre says that there are still some children travelling from the local area to the other side of town due to a lack of places.

Officer Comment:

This school has had a total of 39, 34 and 46 applications for places in 2013 to 2015 respectively. It was filled up to the current PAN of 12 in both 2013 and 2014 (offers for 2015 will be issued on 15 April). There were 8 admission appeals for September 2014 with 3 being allowed by the independent panel.

The net capacity assessment indicates a minimum of 105 available places (which equates to 15 per year group). Therefore an increase in the PAN would better fit the capacity of the school and would satisfy more parental preferences.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this school's PAN is increased from 12 to 15 for September 2016.

District 9 – Chorley

09025 – Clayton le Woods Manor Road Primary School

Current Admission Number	=	35
Indicated Admission Number	=	34
Proposed Admission Number	=	35
Governors' Proposal	=	36

Head teacher / Governor Comments:

The school's net capacity admission number is 37. Several years ago the governors applied for a reduction in the admission number to 35. This was granted, however since then it has become apparent that 35 as an odd number always causes difficulty when working in groups and pairs. For this reason the governors would like to amend the admission number to 36. The school has adequate staffing and accommodation to cope with the increase in numbers and in some classes there are already 36 children.

Officer Comment:

The most recent net capacity measure in September 2013 indicates maximum workplaces at this school of 240 (equates to a PAN at 34). The current PAN at 35 is already just above this maximum.

Forecasts do however suggest that there will be a need for additional primary places in this area. Any voluntary increase in capacity, no matter how small, is therefore welcomed if this will not compromise the education of the children involved or require unplanned capital commitment from the Local Authority.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this school's PAN is increased from 12 to 15 for September 2016.

District – Burnley

12 / 025 – Rosegrove Infant School

Current Admission Number	=	50
Indicated Admission Number	=	50
Proposed Admission Number	=	50
Governors' Proposal	=	60

Head teacher / Governor Comments:

Proposal to increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) for September 2016

Whilst the published admission number (PAN) remains at 50 the number of pupils in each class within a year group is not equivalent to Infant Class size (30). Therefore, when parents wish to apply for a place this has to be carried out through the appeals process. However, more often than not, this is simply a paper exercise as all appeals in the past have been granted due to the fact that we do not have 30 pupils in any class. This is stressful to parents, delays the admission of pupils to school and takes time for Lancashire County Council to put a case together. At present the size of some classes (due to appeals) is already over 25 and could accommodate 30 pupils.

The school currently has the following numbers in each class:

Reception	25	Year 2	27
Reception	25	Year 2	27
Year 1	27		
Year 1	27		

Officer Comment:

Children at Lowerhouse infants predominantly transfer to Lowerhouse Junior which already has a PAN set at 60. The proposed increase would therefore be a match and would better fit with the annual transfer process. An increased PAN set at 60 would alleviate the need for places in this area and reduce the requirement for parents to appeal.

Any residual appeals would be under infant class size legislation which would limit additional admissions and allow greater organisational stability.

The net capacity of the school does not, on the face of it, support the increase as the maximum of the range is 167 whereas 180 would be needed for an intake of 60 (in a 3 form entry establishment). However, this is because of small classrooms. There are sufficient rooms but these could be cramped with groups of 30 children.

The head teacher has however confirmed that there is a large hall (155 square meters) and adequate outdoor space. Also that the increase can be managed without building adaptations or expansion and that the site would not in any event support additional build.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this school's PAN is increased from 50 to 60 for September 2016.

District 13 – Pendle

13001 – BRADLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Current Admission Number	=	55
Indicated Admission Number	=	55
Proposed Admission Number	=	55
Governors' Proposal	=	60

Head teacher / Governor Comments:

Proposal to increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) for September 2016

In 5 of 7 year groups, the school has over 55 children but because of overall local demand there are already 60 in three year groups and almost 60 in another. A published admission number (PAN) set at 60 would be more appropriate for the school. It would also better match the requirement to adhere to infant class size regulations. It also matches with our capacity assessment.

Having a PAN at 55 causes some issues with regard to in year admissions. Parents must access advice from the Local Authority and navigate the admission appeal procedures. Whilst this is not a reflection of poor service by the authority the parents of many prospective new starters do not understand the system. With a PAN of 60, the school will be able to take greater control of the situation and establish better links with the families of new starters.

The Governing Body supports an increased PAN set at 60. The established appeals process has in any event led to year groups of 60 already.

Officer Comment:

Bradley CP School has traditionally taken more pupils than the 55, particularly on appeal.

Generally independent admission appeal panels have come to the view that the school can take up to 60 anyway in each year group. An increase to 60 will help to alleviate some of the pressure for places in the area.

The increase would reduce the need for parents to appeal and introduce additional organisational stability within the school.

The latest net capacity assessment of available teaching space produces a maximum range of 415 (equates to a PAN at 59). The school is therefore very slightly under what is normally required to support 2 forms of entry at its maximum capacity. There are enough class rooms but some of these are slightly undersized.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this school's PAN is increased from 55 to 60 for September 2016.