

School Defence Statement from the Admissions Authority
Appeals for Admission in September 2026

We are proud of our school and the quality of education it offers, and it is tempting to want to offer the opportunity to attend to as many students as possible. However, that must be tempered with a recognition that at some point the school may become too big to offer the individualised care and attention that we are currently able to offer. Every child wants to feel known, valued and cared for as an individual - that's what parents want for their child at school too - and there is a concern that the individual knowledge of each student is diminished if the school gets too big.

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. These figures were 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 1145.

The school consistently fills all 180 places for entry to Year 7 and predicts that this trend will continue. We expect therefore the number on roll figure will rise towards 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, we are at full capacity with our existing accommodation 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 a week there are NO spare rooms capable of housing a normal class group of 30. Further evidence of our stretched capacity can be found in the pressures on specialist teaching spaces such as IT rooms, science labs or sports facilities.

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). Lunchtime queues are further exacerbated when students are admitted over PAN. During parent's evenings too each extra student equates to 10 extra appointments to accommodate. **In simple terms the corridors don't get any wider, the canteen doesn't get any bigger and parents evenings can't get any longer, yet all are impacted by an increasing school population.**

Similarly, all the opportunities on offer - the CCF, Duke of Edinburgh, Young Enterprise; all the casts of our many drama performances, the 140 trips on offer annually - all have a limit. At present we are, largely, able to offer opportunities for all - but at some point, there simply won't be enough staff, nor indeed a big enough stage or hotels/coaches large enough to accommodate ever increasing numbers, and inevitably some will go disappointed.

So, a balance to be struck - big enough to offer all of the above, but small enough to deliver on our promises and cater to each individual child.

Individually each student has no significant impact - it is hard to argue that 31 students in a class is vastly different from 30, similarly 32 from 31 or 33 from 32, but clearly a line must be drawn somewhere. Cumulatively, however, it is easy to see an impact; as a result of decisions made by the independent appeals panel in recent years we now have some 45 additional students to cater for each lunchtime and some parents evenings now have 120 more appointments required. In admitting over PAN this year will be further exacerbated.

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 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 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 therefore the quality of provision, support and care for the many, and for the individual, would be compromised.

We believe that class sizes of no more than 30 (and an **absolute** maximum of 32) allow us to know the **whole child/every child** and is the best way to ensure the delivery of outstanding provision for all of our students.