

NAME

Your son was tested for entry to a Medway selective school in September 2017. That assessment indicated your son's ability as suitable for a place in a non-selective school.

Places in Year 7 at this school for the current academic year are open to boys who are successful in either the Medway or the Kent Assessment Procedures or any other nationally recognised test. In Medway this procedure involved the selection tests and a review process which the local authority has adopted. The criteria this year for automatic selection was a score of 495 or above. However, if a child was deemed 'non-selective' there was the opportunity for a parental request for a 'review'. As a result of this a review panel may decide that a child is of selective ability thus over-riding the cut-off score.

In Kent a child was expected to achieve an aggregate score of 320 to obtain a selective assessment with no score below 106 in each of the Mathematics, English and Reasoning papers.

On 1st March 2018, the school offered 149 places to children assessed, 'selective' as a result of either the Medway or Kent Assessment Procedure and in accordance with its over-subscription criteria. The Planned Admission Number, (PAN) for the school is 120 but the school, in association with the Local Authority, has agreed to exceed this.

The following information drawn from the school's over-subscription criteria indicates the various categories in which places have been offered.

- 1 - SEN/LAC - 1 places offered.
- 2 - Sibling link- 11 places offered.
- 3 - Trust Primary School link - 2 places offered.
- 4 - Staff link - 1 places offered.
- 5 - Health and special access - 1 places offered.
- 5 - Distance - 134 places offered.

The distance of the last child from the school to be offered a place was **51624.3 metres**.

The Governors are satisfied that places have been allocated correctly and in accordance with the school's over-subscription criteria.

The school cannot admit more than 150 students into year 7 for the following reasons:

As stated above, for this year only, the Governors have already shown flexibility by agreeing to admit 150 (30 over PAN) for September 2018. The school considers that going beyond this figure would be detrimental to the education of others and would compromise the efficient use of resources. A figure of 150 would give 5 classes of 30, so any more than this would make accommodating students in classes unfeasible; 5 classes of 30 would not compromise the safety and education of existing students. Without additional buildings the school cannot accommodate further increases in its PAN.

The intake will be organised in 5 forms of entry for this year. In each year group, many subjects have to set students according to internal assessment such as Mathematics and Science, and for subjects such as Design Technology for reasons of health and safety. For curriculum purposes, the school uses a range of 5-8 teaching sets depending on the subject, for example, in OT there needs to be 8 sets in years 7 and 8 to comply with health and safety regulations. By increasing the number of sets it (1) becomes more difficult to staff the classes due to national recruitment issues and curriculum reform, and (2) makes it impossible to accommodate these students without the need to build more classrooms. Also, all schools nationally have faced budgetary constraints for 2018/19, so we are unable to appoint any extra teachers at this stage. In reality, taking over 150 students would require cutting support and resources for our existing students. Therefore, going beyond 150 would cause us challenges, especially when we have to have smaller classes in some subjects for the reasons outlined above. Going beyond 150 would cause detriment to the learning of other students.

The school has enough specialist rooms to accommodate class sizes of 30, but no more; therefore, we cannot accommodate more than 150 students. Some class rooms are of smaller dimension, particularly JCT and Science classrooms in B Block. 30 is the very maximum that these rooms can accommodate. The corridors are also very narrow and an enforced one way system has had to be introduced to ensure students can safely move around the school at lesson changeover. The school population has grown by approximately 165 in the past 4 year, which represents over one year's cohort in the

school buildings. Therefore, the maximum number that could be admitted without detriment to the education of others or the efficient and effective use of resources is 150.

The key issue in considering an appeal for a place at this school is whether a boy is of grammar school ability and, therefore, has the capacity to access the pace and challenge of the grammar school curriculum.

This curriculum is designed for the top 25% of the ability range. Students below this level would struggle to engage with the curriculum and its delivery. Therefore, students who have not been deemed selective should not be considered for a place at Holcombe Grammar School. Any score around the 100 mark, (50th percentile) indicates average. A score below 100 suggests that there may be difficulty in that area unless there are mitigating circumstances. For an appeal to be successful there must be a strong case with compelling evidence.

Currently (2017-18) in each year group the numbers are as follows;

Year 7 -160, Year 8 - 118, Year 9 - 115, Year 10 - 110, Year 11 - 105

It is important that a boy is only admitted if he is of grammar school ability in order that the efficient use of resources and the education of other children is not prejudiced. This means that the time for conducting assessments, monitoring individual progress, pastoral care and using specific resources should be distributed as appropriate for a grammar school. Each individual child should receive an equal amount of time and use of resources.

Should your appeal be a late one, and heard outside the first round of appeals, and with your child already holding a 'selective' assessment, then a successful appeal will depend upon the capacity of the school to accept additional students without prejudice.

In summary, whilst the Admission Authority is sympathetic to the family's request for a place at this school it accepts the original decision not to offer a place. This is in order that there is no prejudice to both the efficient use of resources and the education of the other children who have been given places. However, the original decision may be overturned as a result of exceptional compelling arguments, with appropriate supporting evidence, put forward at appeal and persuading the Panel that your child is of grammar school ability.

Mr Gwynn Bassan
Executive Principal, April 2018.