

**Proposal:**

**To reduce the schools Pupil Admission Number from 40 to 30.**

Further detail:

The school currently has a PAN of 40 and has done for at least 10 years. It was for a short period before that set at 45, in response to the spike in pupil numbers associated with the Brockhill housing development at Norton Barracks. Prior to this housing being built, it was a very small rural school with pupil numbers in the region of 6 or 8 per year group.

With all major building work in our catchment complete for the foreseeable future, pupil numbers have settled over the last 5 or 6 years to a level which is consistently at or around 30, with the following projection from the Local Authority:

2017: 29      2018: 30      2019: 24      2020: 34      2021: 23

Because of the relatively affluent nature of some of our catchment and our location we invariably have an intake which is 3 or 4 less than our catchment number, so for example this year we have 25 new starters in our reception class. This is partly due to some parents opting for private education and partly due to some parents taking available places in neighbouring schools within the two tier structure of Worcester City. Additionally for the same reasons we suffer a decline in pupil numbers as they progress through the year groups with the result that we generally have a Year 4 leavers group that is 2 or 3 children smaller than when that year group joined the school in Reception.

Every two to three years the school has no choice but to accommodate an intake in excess of 30, but typically only 1 to 3 children above this legal limit on maximum class sizes for Reception and Key Stage 1. This causes considerable issues:

- **Financial:** the provision of an additional Reception class with resulting average class size of 16 or so children is quite simply not financially viable. Current funding levels dictate schools such as ours need to be achieving average class sizes of at least 26 or 27 children in order to balance the budgets without seriously impacting on the quality of education we can provide. The school has adopted mixed year group classes in Years 1 and 2, and then in years 3 and 4, in order to smooth these spikes above 30 in the intake, and in previous years have also adopted mixed year groups that encompass Year R through to Year 2, but even this would no longer be financially sustainable.
- **Structural:** adoption of one or two Reception classes and subsequent changes to friendship groups as they move through the school is disruptive to both the staff and children. In addition, it is a difficult situation to explain to prospective parents, as we cannot be definitive on what the structure will look like at the start of term until pupil application numbers are reasonably firm; we have to be honest with these parents and explain that their child may be in a class of 30 reception children, may be in a class with 16 reception children, or may potentially be in a class that has both Reception and Year 1 children.
- **Emotional:** planning and implementing the school structure is one of the most daunting tasks the school leadership team faces every year. It becomes emotionally draining and was particularly difficult when the changing structure required a redundancy process which resulted in two highly capable teachers having to leave the school. We have since tried to avoid a repeat of this by taking any additional staff required on temporary contracts, but this is far from ideal, with these teachers, often NQT's being very aware that their time with us is likely to be short term and with little notice period.

We have frequently made informal requests to the LA to reduce our PAN over the last 5 or 6 years, but have always been met with resistance. It is frustrating that lowering a schools PAN brings no benefit at all to the LA, who would much rather have available capacity just in case it was ever needed. Now that NJK is an academy school, and our own admissions authority, we can fully explore the benefits and drawbacks of lowering our PAN by formally seeking the views from all of our stakeholders, such as the Diocese, parents, neighbouring schools etc. and then make an informed decision.

We should point out, to avoid confusion, that whilst there are plans for a significant amount of housing in our locality, on what is commonly referred to as the Ketch car boot fields, this falls outside of our catchment area. The development also includes provision for a two form entry Primary School and the LA have already identified Worcester City schools (Primary and Secondary) that would receive the Section 106 money to allow expansion to accommodate an increase in their pupil numbers for the development that so far has planning permission granted. At no time have the LA consulted with NJK regarding taking children from this out of catchment area.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

1. When could this be implemented?  
Our admissions number for September 2018 is already fixed at up to 40, but If the decision is taken to proceed, from September 2019 intake would be reduced to a maximum of 30.
2. How would it affect the size and character of the school?  
We would remain a Church of England school and would work very hard to maintain the close knit, family feel and supportive culture that we currently have. Depending on the decision on the proposal to change our age range, we would essentially be no larger than what we have been three or four years ago. Our maximum potential size currently is  $5 \times 40 = 200$  children and we could become either  $5 \times 30 = 150$ , or  $7 \times 30 = 210$ .
3. What if NJK becomes oversubscribed?  
Forecast data suggests that we will not be oversubscribed from within catchment for the foreseeable future. If we are oversubscribed, we will implement the proposed 2019 admissions policy which can be found on the website under the consultation section. This follows the current Local Authority criteria and in brief, this policy admits pupils in order of: looked after children, followed by siblings in catchment of children already at the school, followed by other children in catchment, followed by siblings from out of catchment, followed by children of staff members, followed finally by children out of catchment based on a distance measurement.
4. Could we accept more children?  
The PAN sets the number at which the school will effectively refuse admission to applicants as set out in the draft policy. Should circumstances change, we can apply an increase in PAN, on either a temporary or permanent basis. For example, if there were significant issues affecting the development on Ketch fields and the Local Authority asked us to consider taking children from this area, we could consider a temporary increase in PAN to accommodate a bulge year, subject to a full evaluation of the impacts on the schools finances, availability of class bases, impact on education of the children etc.