

Admission Appeal School Defence Statement – Year 7 September 2021 Entry

Background

Dane Court Grammar School is a co-educational selective school, with an academic and challenging curriculum. We have high expectations of our students. We expect our students to work hard and treat others with respect at all times.

Curriculum and expectations

Students are expected to work at a very high level throughout their time at Dane Court Grammar School. Our students are continually challenged. They experience a fast-paced curriculum which involves them studying fifteen different subjects in Year 7. As an IB World School, our curriculum is broad and internationally-minded; all students study two modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3. Students admitted to the school must have strong reading and writing skills and be very confident in the application of mathematics to a wide range of subjects. They must be able to cope with a demanding academic programme from the very start of Year 7.

We have very high standards and expectations of all students. Our GCSE and IB outcomes indicate that we are one of the most academically successful schools in East Kent. We are very proud of the education we provide. We feel strongly that we have a very important role to work with our most disadvantaged students to give them every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Number on roll/offers

Our net capacity for years 7-11 is 825 students and we currently have 898 students on roll in years 7-11. We are therefore already 73 students over capacity.

Admission to Dane Court is limited to those deemed selective on the basis of their performance in the Kent selection tests. We will offer 165 places on 1st March 2021. The school is oversubscribed for September 2021, with 359 applications. The school is also oversubscribed in Years 7-11 and it has a large Sixth Form.

The school cannot admit any more than 165 students in September 2021; doing so would prejudice the provision of efficient education and the efficient use of resources.

There are currently 1193 students on roll at Dane Court. There are between 174 and 200 students in each year group in Years 7 to 11, made up as follows:

Year Group	Total
Year 7	200
Year 8	174
Year 9	175
Year 10	175
Year 11	174

How does the school admit students?

Details of students whose parents have expressed a preference for a place at Dane Court Grammar School, together with results of the Kent Test, are given to the school by Kent County Council. Where the number of applications for places from those deemed 'selective' exceeds the school's published admission number (currently 165), the school's admissions officer applies the following set of admissions criteria. Preference is given to:

1. Students in Local Authority care or previously in Local Authority care;
2. Students with medical/health and special access reasons;
3. Students with a sibling, currently on roll who will be in school at the time of entry;
4. Students living closest to the school, measured in a straight line from a central point on the school site.

Where the number of students in each year group exceeds the school's published admission number, these students have been admitted as a result of the decision of appeals panels, either into Year 7 or through subsequent in-year appeals.

The work of the school's admissions officer is supervised personally by the Headteacher to ensure that the above criteria are correctly followed and that it complies with the admissions code. Appeals for admission are handled independently of the school by Kent County Council.

What is the school's published admission number, and how many students has it accepted above this number?

Our published admission number (PAN) is 165 students (200 in the current Year 7 and 175 in the current Year 9). Each of our year groups at present contains more than the PAN; the additional students above the PAN have all been accepted through Year 7 appeals and in -year appeals.

In 2020, due to an unexpected increase in the number of grammar assessed pupils in Thanet, and following a request from Kent County Council, the school agreed to admit an additional 35 students into Year 7 in September 2020, taking our total number of Year 7 students to 200. This is 35 over PAN. Additionally, in 2018, also at the request of Kent County Council, we agreed to take 10 additional grammar assessed students, taking the PAN to 175 in the current Year 9.

How is the school organised?

The school is organised into six houses, named after European cities. Each house acts as a 'school within a school' of up to 200 students. The houses are arranged vertically, each house comprising one form from each year group. Each house acts as the extended 'family' for a student; students remain in their houses throughout their time at the school.

In Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3), students are taught in form groups for most subjects. Most form groups contain up to 30 students; the average form size is 29.4.

In Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4), students are taught in option groups for many of their lessons. The size of these groups depends on the demand for the subject, most being around 24-32 students. Mathematics, English and the sciences are taught in seven groups in Years 10 and 11. Students are streamed by ability in mathematics; high ability sets may have up to 34 students; lower ability sets may have as few as 20 students.

What impact has the admission of additional students above the PAN had on students educationally and in terms of Health and Safety?

Educational impact

To accommodate the additional 35 students in Year 7 in September 2020, we have added an additional form group. There are 28 or 29 students in each form group. The additional form has created 50 additional hours of teaching across the two-week timetable cycle, spread across the full range of Key Stage 3 subjects. This has also increased the load on classrooms, with a particular impact on specialist teaching spaces.

The additional form group has required an adaptation to our established house system, with two Year 7 forms in one of the Houses, thereby creating extra burden on our pastoral system.

As a result of the admission of an additional form group in September 2020, in 2021-2022, we are unable to create an additional form group for staffing, timetabling, financial and site reasons.

Following Year 7 and in-year admissions appeals over recent years, additional students have led to larger classes in Key Stage 3 and larger GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11. This inevitably has an impact on the amount of individual attention for each student.

The admission of additional students in 2021 would affect the amount of individual attention for students, with a significant effect on vulnerable students and those with special educational needs or disabilities.

In many smaller rooms, particularly in the older part of the school, larger class sizes would limit space and restrict movement within the lesson, making it exceptionally difficult for the teacher to circulate in order to monitor and support students. This would affect all students but, once again, it would have a disproportionate effect on vulnerable students and those with special educational needs.

The admission of additional students would also have a negative impact on other important school events. For example, assemblies would have to be redesigned and limited to reduce student numbers, thereby curtailing opportunities for students to come together as a community.

Health & safety implications

In terms of health and safety, the school has made the necessary assessments of risk and taken a number of measures to ensure that the potential hazards associated with the additional numbers are minimised and contained. Special arrangements are also in place for students with temporary or long-term mobility needs.

Dane Court benefited from a rebuilding programme under the 'Building Schools for the Future' scheme in 2010, including four new suites of teaching rooms, the provision of wider corridors, 'plazas' and open communal spaces. Part of the school was not rebuilt but was reordered, opening up some of the smaller classrooms and installing additional staircases in the older part of the building.

Bells are not sounded for the ends of lessons, resulting in classes being dismissed at slightly differing times, limiting the overcrowding of corridors and communal spaces. Members of staff

are on duty during break and lunch times to make sure that students use corridors appropriately. Lunchtimes are staggered to reduce time spent queuing. As a result of these measures, there have been no reported incidents of injury attributable to overcrowding.

Any pupils allocated through the admission appeals process in 2021 will put additional strain on the school. To admit more students can only be at the expense of the safe and efficient education of those already on roll. The health and safety of students will be compromised, particularly during break-times and lesson transitions.

What is the capacity schedule for the school? i.e. how big is each classroom and how many students each classroom can hold?

The Department for Education recommends that a classroom should be 55m² or larger to accommodate 30 students and one teacher. Dane Court has 30 classrooms smaller than 55m² and 21 classrooms that are 55m² or larger. All classrooms 55m² or larger are equipped with 30 chairs and desks. Some of the smaller classrooms are used for teaching smaller groups, such as some sixth form classes; others, between 45m² and 55m², are equipped with 30 desks and chairs for whole-class teaching, but space is restricted. In these rooms, additional students would make it exceptionally difficult for the teacher to circulate in order to monitor work and support students.

Of the larger classrooms, six are between 58m² and 65m², and three are larger than 66m². In addition, there are six 'plazas' (large open-plan spaces which can be used for teaching up to two classes at a time) and a number of specialist workshops and laboratories of varying sizes.

Other areas of the school are already at full capacity. For example, our school hall, where we hold assemblies, and our canteen, have limited space. Any additional students would make a significant difference to the smooth and safe running of the school.

Special considerations in light of new arrangements to mitigate against the risks of Covid-19

To mitigate against the risks of Covid-19, we have introduced a range of protective measures in order to comply with government guidance and social distancing advice. These measures include the introduction of year group bubbles and zones, timetable adaptations and a one-way system. The admission of additional students through the appeals process will reduce the effectiveness of these measures and make social distancing within school even more challenging.

In the classroom, teachers and other adults should maintain 2m distance from students, and students should keep socially distanced from each other, this is particularly difficult in some of our smaller classrooms. To add additional students at this time would potentially compromise the health & safety of the teacher and all students in the class. In some classrooms, it would not be possible for the teacher to maintain a safe distance from all students. Additional students would also increase congestion in year group zones and corridors, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the one-way system that is in place to reduce the mixing of bubbles.

The school is always very mindful of health & safety but in these very challenging times, the safety, health and wellbeing of students and staff must be our first priority.

Please be advised that each parent/carer who lodges an appeal will have a personalised defence statement forwarded to them as part of their case papers.

Martin Jones
Headteacher
February 2021