



Via email, Date 22.12.23

Dear Sir Andrew and Mrs Allen,

Consultation on Admission Arrangements – Great Bookham School

We are extremely surprised and disappointed to have received your letter dated 28 November 2023. The letter states that you are seeking feedback on a potential increase in the published admissions number (“PAN”) for Great Bookham School from 30 to 60 for entry in reception level, and from 15 to 30 for entry in Year 3.

As a close partner, neighbour, and feeder school, we greatly appreciate and expect contact and discussion on any and all matters that affect local schools and residents. We are extremely concerned that you have not seen the need to reach out directly to us via informal or formal channels. Going forward it would be greatly appreciated if we could strengthen our co-operation in the interest of both schools, especially on such important matters as PAN sizes. An email to our office inbox on this matter falls below this standard.

Great Bookham School (previously “The Dawnay School”) had admission numbers into reception well below PAN in the last three years. These numbers were 13, 15, and 26. Live births in Mole Valley have decreased by 14% since 2012, and a continued decline for the need of reception places is expected (Surrey School Organisation Plan 2022-2032). This confirms the message of the Strategic Sustainability Conference in 2021 run by Surrey County Council which we attended that clearly stated the need for all schools to prepare for reduced intakes due to low birth rates.

As school governors, we have a duty to provide best value to residents and to ensure the sustainability of the school. As such, we have an interest in keeping schools at target capacity. An increase in PAN in the local area will have a detrimental impact on the viability and sustainability of all local schools. This includes the The Great Bookham School requesting the increase in PAN as provisions in place for higher numbers are likely not going to be fully utilised.

Weakening local schools will in the long run result in a reduction of choice and quality of provisions. It will remove the plurality and diversity of schools and educational settings on offer, while imposing hidden costs on our community, such as increasing commutes and concentrating traffic flows. At a time when absenteeism and home-schooling are on the increase, a reduction in choice is counter-productive, a worse-than-zero-sum policy for the school system in general, and for parents in particular.

Given the above, and how this has been approached, we are at a loss how an increase in PAN at reception intake at Great Bookham can be considered. We therefore strongly object to this proposed approach and would like the school to reconsider.

Yours sincerely,

Mark

Mark Rogers

Chair of the Governing Body, on behalf of the Full Governing Body

Head Teacher: Ms Rebecca Mole