

**Admission Appeal Defence Statement  
Secondary School – Bullers Wood School  
Admission Appeal for Year 7 in September 2021**

Published Admission Number: <b>232</b>
Number of Applications received: <b>853</b>
How many places were offered on national offer day: <b>232</b>

<b>Places Offered – (Please catalog oversubscription criteria)</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
EHCP	tbc
Children Looked After	tbc
Siblings	tbc
Children of Staff	tbc
Proximity	tbc
Total number of pupils offered a place;	<b>232</b>
Rank position of last child offered a place;	tbc

<b>Distance of last child allocated a place (N/A if not applicable);</b> tbc
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**Please note that all tbc numbers/distances will be issued when the appellant receives their completed appeals pack, 10 school days in advance of the appeal date.**

*Please set out below the reasons why to admit additional children would prejudice the provision of effective education or efficient use of resources. What are the implications for the school in delivering the curriculum if additional children were offered a place?*

*Additional information such as Threshold Statements, Scheme Statements, Secondary Transfer, Oversubscription Criteria to be attached if applicable.*

*Additional information:*

- *Please provide details of the School Capacity;*
- *Number of pupils on role in each year group;*
- *Number of teaching groups for the year 7; and*
- *How the school organizes its classes*
- *Room sizes being taught in*

Our Planned Admission Number (PAN) is 232. Our net capacity when last assessed by the Borough is 1341 students. We currently (22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021) have 1580 students on roll.

**School Design**

1. The school is a mixture of old and new buildings. Three of the main buildings

were designed as houses. Alongside these, over many years, academic buildings have been added. Although innovative use has been made of the once residential accommodation, many of the learning spaces in these buildings are irregular in shape and, crucially, smaller than regulation classrooms would be in a purpose-built building, which means they cannot accommodate 30 students. All classrooms are utilised to maximum capacity for the entire week. We don't have any 'built in' lockers, meaning many lockers are situated in classrooms, further diminishing the available space for desks and seats. This means that the admission of an additional student would have practical implications. In ICT lessons, students would have to share PCs which may mean not all students are able to complete the practical work during a lesson. In Science there would be fewer practical lessons, with the teacher having to demonstrate more and/or the students having to share equipment. This would be a particular disadvantage to students preparing for new GCSEs with an increased practical content. Similarly, in Design Technology practical opportunities would be decreased. In more traditional class-based subjects it would mean three students sharing a desk space for two. Alongside this there would be decreased teacher/student contact ratio.

2. Bullers Wood occupies a wooded site with conservation status. Although large, the site is constrained, with limited open areas for playground or for further development. There remains a need for renewal of general teaching accommodation. The school has proposals to replace an existing modular classroom block with a new building of 20 classrooms; however though we have planning permission for this, there has been a marked decrease in capital funding available – both nationally and in the Borough. The Borough acknowledges that any further increase to the school roll would not only require further development and careful design; but would also need to incorporate non-teaching and ancillary accommodation to meet the current shortfall elsewhere.

### Situation for 2020

3. **School Number: 1580** – approximately 18% more pupils than the build has official space for. The problem has been exacerbated by Government legislation requiring that all 16-18-year olds be in education, training or employment. Sixth form numbers for September 2020 were 442. We anticipate similar numbers in sixth form this September.

At 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021:

Year	Males	Females	Total
Year 7	0	232	232
Year 8	0	232	232
Year 9	0	229	229
Year 10	0	232	232
Year 11	0	217	217
Year 12	37	185	222
Year 13	47	169	216
<b>Totals</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1496</b>	<b>1580</b>

Please note our PAN increased from 220 to 232 for the entry of our current Y10 cohort.

4. **Class sizes** To enable students to receive the most effective education, members of the school's senior staff decide on optimum numbers for each upper, middle and lower ability group in each subject. These are already at maximum and careful planning has been undertaken to accommodate the increased PAN. To increase the number of students would reduce the effectiveness of teaching. Year 7 is divided into 8 teaching groups.
5. **Classroom sizes** in specialist areas (Science, Drama & Technology, IT) are irregular and in many areas smaller than recommended minima. This is a **major timetabling restraint** and means that we are physically unable to increase class sizes. 30 is the maximum number that can be accommodated in our largest classrooms, however a number of specialist classrooms (e.g. Science, Drama & Technology, IT) are significantly smaller (15-20 students) and already overcrowded.
6. **Health and Safety**  
In and around the site – in corridors, on pathways and in social spaces – there are numerous 'pinch points' near staircases and classroom entrances, making circulation difficult at lesson changeover, and in eating areas at break and lunchtime. Careful management is needed to avoid Health and Safety issues in these circumstances. Safe, speedy and efficient evacuation in the event of an emergency is also a consideration and this becomes more problematic the more overcrowded the school becomes.
7. Teaching staff are contractually required to do duty at break times and many staff volunteer (with overtime) to supervise the lunch break. There is no contractual obligation for staff to supervise class changeover but all employees have a general obligation to support Health and Safety and they would be expected to intervene if they saw behaviour likely to give rise to problems.

### **Education Health and Care Plans/Pupil Resource Agreements/Targeted/Universal Pupils**

A clear example of Bullers being victims of our own success is the increasing numbers of pupils we have in this category. Pupils with Education Health and Care Plans and Pupil Resource Agreements have to be admitted when they nominate Bullers Wood, whatever their specific needs and whether we have the resources to meet them.

We currently have 16 EHCP students, with at least an additional three joining us in Year 7 in September. Most students with EHCPs, and many other students with identified Special Educational Needs will have a Teaching Assistant to support them, which adds to the overcrowding in classrooms and around the school buildings. Our complex site can present significant difficulties that are not easily surmountable.

### **Curriculum Changes**

The overcrowding outlined above, in conjunction with the major reforms of curriculum and assessment methods, means that the admittance of a further pupil will be harmful in several ways to the education of existing pupils.

Overcrowding leads to increased class sizes, stress and behavioural problems, diminishes the time teachers can give to individual pupils, increases teacher workload (assessment and monitoring of work), results in greater sharing of equipment especially in practical classes, and reduces the flexibility of the school to accommodate pupils with SEN in smaller groups.

### **Summary**

I ask the panel in coming to its conclusion to bear in mind:

- Our existing over-crowded school and the consequences for its management, existing pupils and staff.
- Our SEN numbers and associated Teaching Assistants and pressure on space.
- Ongoing financial constraints.
- Above all that there is a limit to the number of pupils who can be admitted without the considerable danger of undermining the very qualities which make this school so attractive. We have reached the limit as to how far the school can continue to cope with the consequences of significant over-subscription and the problems of managing it.
- Admission of another pupil would be prejudicial to the education the school is able to offer.

The Governing Body strongly urges the Appeal Panel to consider very carefully before asking the school to exceed its Admission Number.

**Please see also our admissions policy and statement from Bromley Admissions as to how the admissions criteria were applied in the specific student's case (which appellants will receive ten school days before the appeal date).**

Completed by: Mr T Millar, Headteacher Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021